

WHAT LIES BEHIND VS WHAT LIES AHEAD

Lakeview Baptist Church

July 26, 2020

Philippians 3:12-16

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Introduction

It would be an understatement to say that these are troubled times. We are writing history and the future to some looks very bleak and others would see that future will be prosperous. As humans we have their tendency to repeat the things that we do, according to the things that we have done in the past. We are creatures of habit. In this message today, the Apostle Paul, proclaims that the things of the past, should stay there.

I do not know what the new “normal” will be. I have no crystal ball. However, one thing I do know...we make the future, today.

I HAVE NOT ALREADY REACHED PERFECTION

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

(See vss 8-11 to gain the reference to “this.”)

Not that I have already obtained this – The goal of trusting Jesus is to know Him in a personal relationship. To know Him in the power of His resurrection which comes from the throne room of God. To know Christ will also be to know suffering. Paul says that these have yet to be achieved in his life.

I press on – has the connotation of a “race.” I strive to become all that Christ has for me.

I strive to become perfect, for anything less will be failure.

FORGETTING THE PAST AND LOOKING FORWARD TO WHAT LIES AHEAD

13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

I press on in order to see what lies ahead.

I ran the 880 yd run. It is not a sprint, however the last 30 yards are. Races are won and lost in the “stretch.” When I was preparing to run, my coach would constantly tell me not to look behind me, for that is not the race. But to look at the finish line. To visualize crossing it before anyone else. For I was not running a race against others...I was running against a clock that never slows down or speeds up.

I was running against a clock that never slows down or speeds up

THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS THE UPWARD CALL OF GOD

14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

To continue Paul’s use of terms of the “games”, he refers to the “goal.” His word usage refers to the finish line or the bullseye of a target.

Paul’s life is purposeful, for he constantly aims toward a heavenly goal. The prize is the fullness of blessings and rewards in the age to come, most especially being in perfect fellowship with Christ forever.¹

May I say that there are many who claim the name of Christian, that have taken their eyes off the prize of the heavenly calling. They have shifted their eyes from the finish line and are looking around for something else.

What is the new “norm” when it comes to the church? We do not know.

Barna Report states that 1/3 of people surveyed, that considered themselves “regular attenders of church” have not watched one live stream of a church service.

YOU ARE NOT MATURE YET

15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Mature – spiritually mature. The spiritually mature will share in the perspective of Paul, that the eternal things are the most important things in this life. Let that sink in for a moment.

Eternal things are the most important things in this life.

NEVER GIVE UP...NEVER

16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Paul is emphasizing to “hold on to the progress you have already attained.

Tug of War, is a game I have played many times in my life. Through my childhood years and later into Bootcamp, I have engaged in tug-of-war. Every inch gained must be held and prized. To press on to the

¹ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2286.

mark of winning the competition, there must be no slipping or reversal. To do so would be to give up ground that has already been worked for and won. It will be difficult to regain that ground.

As children of God, we are in a tug-of-war in this earthly life. Daily we apply pressure and become victorious or we lose ground and feel defeat. We must be consistent in our conduct and goals.

To visualize only the finish line, excluding all the distractions, in pursuit of being victorious in this life, is to be found victorious when we meet Christ in eternity.

Conclusion

To live a life for Christ, that would leave us exhausted on this field of battle, in order to hear “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” is the “bulls eye” and “finish line” of this life.