

Philippians, Chapter Three, Lesson Three

REACHING FOR THE GOAL Philippians 3:12-16

STIMULATE

** At the conclusion of last week's study, we summarized those things Paul had listed for us; which proved to be of surpassing value when compared to all that the world has to offer. There were five of them, do your recall what they were from Philippians 3:7-11?

- 1) Knowing Jesus Christ! (V. 8)
- 2) Righteousness by faith. (V. 9)
- 3) Knowing the power of His resurrection. (V.10)
- 4) Partaking in His suffering. (V.10)
- 5) Being conformed to His death. (V.10)

** We also noted that "it is no small thing to change your value system". How have you done this week in taking a closer look at your own personal evaluation system as it applies to your walk with Christ?

It has been a daily preoccupation for me to be actively "**Rejecting the World**" and its value system and to joyfully replace it with those things of eternal value in Christ!

MOTIVATE

** It has been said that one ought to have a goal in life. For the maturing Christian our goal should be Christlikeness in all that we say and do. As we take a close look at who we are in Christ, what are the two negative perspectives which can be used to prevent us from "**Reaching for the Goal**"?

- 1) We either think too low of ourselves and thus dishonor the work of Christ in our lives . . .
- 2) We develop an over confident and inflated view of ourselves and begin to operate as if we do not need Christ's help anymore.

** In today's passage the apostle is going to encourage us with the proper balance for living the Christian life. He will show us the importance of "**Reaching for the Goal**" each day as we live for the Lord. Please join me now in Philippians 3:12-16.

Read passage (V.12-14) (V.15-16)

Opening Prayer

Reaching for the Goal

INVESTIGATE

V.12 ** As Paul closed out our study last week, he said it was his desire to "attain to the resurrection from the dead". Has he already accomplished that?

No - "Not that I have already obtained it..."

** To what does Paul equate attaining "to the resurrection from the dead..."?

"...or have already become perfect..." teleioo lit. to bring to an end, to complete

Paul is saying that although God has saved him by His marvelous grace, He [God] is not done with Paul yet, not by a long shot. The process of sanctification will continue throughout the life of the apostle and us as well.

** How would you Biblically substantiate the fact that we will be perfect when we are with Christ?

1Corinthians 13:9-12 - We will "fully know"!

1John 3:2 - "...we shall be like Him..."

** Does the fact the he is not yet perfect discourage or disable Paul in his walk and ministry with Christ?

Absolutely not!

** What does he do, even though he is fully aware of his glaring imperfections?

He "presses on". dioko lit. "to put to flight, to pursue". Unhindered by his known shortcomings, Paul pursues the goal of becoming more like Christ. He believed in the process of sanctification by Christ. cf. Philippians 1:6, 4:13 and 2Thessalonians 2:13

** For what is Paul pressing on toward?

That he may "lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus". Because Jesus had laid hold of Paul, back in Acts 9:4 and 9:15, Paul would now do all that he could to cling to Christ.

V.13 ** As Paul reminds His readers that he does not think he has arrived spiritually, he lays out for us a two step plan for victory in our efforts to be "**Reaching for the Goal**". What is the first step?

1) "...forgetting what lies behind..." This is the first critical element that will keep us "**Reaching for the Goal**" of Christlikeness.

** There are two forms of remembering what lies behind or "looking back" into our former lives. Let's consider each one.

The first is to "look back" with a longing to regain our sinful patterns. cf. Genesis 19:23-26 - nabat lit. "to look", Lot's wife disobeyed God in looking back with a desire for that which she had given up.

Luke 9:61-62 - Those who want to be saved will loose their opportunity by "looking back" to the elements of their former sinful lives.

The second is to "look back", once we are saved, to our failures in such a way that we become hopeless or discouraged from effectively serving the Lord. cf. Hebrews 8:12 - "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more".

Psalms 103:12 - "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us".

Isaiah 43:25 - "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins".

Paul refused to let either form of "looking back" to hinder him from "**Reaching for the Goal**" of genuine Christlikeness in this life.

** What is the second step Paul is willing to take in his victorious pursuit of "the Goal".

2) "...reaching forward to what lies ahead..."

** Do we always know "what lies ahead"?

No, in fact we most often do not!

** Then the question becomes, "How can we do this?"

All see - 2Timothy 4:7-8 (Read passage)

We must:

- 1) Fight the good fight
- 2) Finish the course
- 3) Keep the faith

** For how long?

Until we receive the "crown [which is] righteousness" from the Lord on "that day".
cf. 2Corinthians 5:10

V.14 ** Back in Philippians 3:14, Paul further develops this idea of "**Reaching for the Goal**" by using the word "press on" again. What is it that he is pressing on for now?

"...the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." This "calling" is worthy of our pressing on; in that it is a "holy calling", one designed by God to set us apart. cf. 2Timothy 1:8-9

** What are some practical ways in which we can press on toward this "holy calling"?

- 1) Remember who we are! cf. 1John 3:1
- 2) Remember Whose we are! cf. 1Corinthians 6:20 and 1Peter 1:18-19

V.15 ** This sounds like a good balance, if we desire to live our lives "**Reaching for the Goal**" of Christlikeness, we forget those things in our past and press on to what lies ahead. Is Paul now saying that there is a special group of believers that can maintain this balance because they are already perfect?

No - When he refers to "as many as are perfect", he is talking about those who are "maturing" in Christ (which is every believer). He uses a different word here in verse 15 from the one he used back in verse 12. Teleios - lit. "having reached its end, complete, perfect or mature" is referring the work Christ has done in us positionally. cf. Colossians 2:9-10 (pleroo, to make full, or complete)

** What if we disagree with the Scriptural evaluation of "**Reaching for the Goal**" of Christlikeness by maintaining this balance?

God will set us straight! cf. Ephesians 1:17, 1Thessalonians 4:9

V.16 ** Being mindful of the very comforting thought that it is God Himself that enables us to grasp Scriptural truth and apply it to our lives, what does Paul say that we are to do with this Biblical balance?

"...let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained."

** What is the striking difference between this standard and the resurrection from the dead to which Paul referred at the opening of this study?

We have attained to the standard! While not yet obtaining perfection, or the resurrection of our bodies, we have in this life (by God's marvelous grace) attained to the standard of the Word of God.

** Is it possible to walk away from the standard, to focus on our past failures or forget our moment by moment dependency upon the Lord?

Yes it is! That is why we must be like the apostle and strive to always be "**Reaching for the Goal**" of Christlikeness. cf. 1Timothy 6:11-12

EXTRICATE

** Did Paul spend his days beating himself up for his past sins, or exalt himself because he was an apostle of Jesus Christ?

No - he maintained the proper balance and kept his eyes on the Lord, rather than any preoccupation in self-evaluation. cf. 1Corinthians 4:3-4

DELINEATE

** What were the two steps to help us maintain this proper view of ourselves, while we are "**Reaching for the Goal**"?

1) Forget all the lies behind.

- a. Possessions and position
- b. Our sinful past

2) Reach forward to follow Christ in our "holy calling" of serving God in His name.

EVALUATE

** As you look closely now, at your own heart, where do you fall short?

Do you nullify the redeeming work of Christ by saying you are not good enough and God cannot use you?

Do you exalt yourself to self-sufficiency by forgetting your daily dependence upon the Lord?

** That second example is more subtle than you might think.

When we fail to prayerfully consider decision, when we fail to pray for our needs, when we fail to look in His word for guidance or instruction, we are subtly declaring our self-sufficiency!

ACTIVATE

** Are you willing to commit to "pressing on" for Christ's sake, by living everyday "**Reaching for the Goal**" of Christlikeness in all things?

Remember 1Timothy 6:12 - We are to "Fight the good fight of faith" without a preoccupation of evaluating our own holiness or the lack of it! Christ is our judge, we need to be preoccupied with living like Him!

Closing Prayer