

Philippians 3:7-16 – “Pressing on Towards the Goal”

Introduction: **Because our goal is knowing Christ, we forget what lies behind and pursue that goal ahead.**

1) Forgetting What’s Behind

- In this section, Paul expresses his point using the imagery of a runner (see also 1 Cor 9:24-27; 1 Tim 4:6-10). What this image demonstrates is that a runner cannot be preoccupied with the track that has already been covered. To be mentally focused on past success or failure means that they are distracted from the distance yet to be run.
- **First** of all, Paul must forget whatever good things he might have had. This means that he needs to abandon whatever righteousness he thought he had before God (Phil 3:2-6). He can do this only because he knows that he has the righteousness of Christ (v.9).
- **Second**, Paul must not be distracted by his failings in the Christian life. He admits that he is not yet perfected, and yet, Christ has laid hold of him (v.12). It is on this basis that that he can avoid distraction over how far he has yet to go. Christ’s love for him is the basis of forgetting what lies behind.

2) Pursuing What’s Ahead

- If we pick up the running metaphor again, what has not been defined thus far is the goal to which the runner is running. Paul says that he is seeking first and foremost to **know Christ** (v.8, 10). To know Christ is different than the way we might know our Prime Minister or even our family, it is an intimate knowledge based on our unity with him. This knowledge is only complete when we see him face to face, which is why the goal in verses 12, 13 is the resurrection. Resurrection gives full **knowledge of Christ**.
- In verse 10 we get the two ways in which we can begin to know Christ even here and now. **First** we experience the power of his resurrection, and we receive this whenever we see the spirit at work in our lives. **Second** we also gain an intimate knowledge of Christ in our sufferings for him. Through that we get a small taste of the life he lived and how much he loved us.

3) Holding to What Has Been Attained

- What does this mean for the year to come? It means we strive every day to reach the prize that awaits us. This is not a prize for good works, rather, it is a spiritual race which will one day be won! However, we should be striving for the victory that we will attain in heaven.
- This is the attitude of the mature Christian (compare 1 Corinthians 2), that of striving to attain the prize. This also means that we do not backtrack in our Christian race. We

seek to hold fast to how far we have come, we seek more and deeper knowledge of him, and when we fail we fix our eyes on him again.