

# Not Perfect But Pressing Toward It

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[0:00] Philippians chapter 3 beginning in verse 7 and reading to verse 16. But whatever it was to my prophet, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things, and if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

[1:28] I have a package here this morning, and it's labeled salvation, and inside are all the blessings of salvation that are mine in Jesus Christ.

And so I open up the package, and I find that inside there are two boxes, and all the blessings of salvation are found in one of those two boxes.

The one is labeled, already, and it's open. The other is labeled, not yet, and it's sealed, shut.

And so I open up the one that says already. It's open. And I see that I have been chosen in Christ before the creation of the world.

I am enjoying the fruits of that spiritual blessing. And I see that I'm adopted as one of His children. I'm justified.

[2:34] I'm justified. That means God counts me righteous because of Jesus' blood and righteousness. He puts His righteousness to my account. I'm looking deeper in the box.

My sins are forgiven. I'm enjoying that right now. The Holy Spirit has been given to me. I've enjoyed a new birth. I've enjoyed His indwelling, sanctifying work in my heart.

The power of His resurrection. The power of Christ's resurrection working in me. I'm enjoying that presently. It's breaking the power of reigning sin.

It's setting me free from sinful habits. Communion with Christ. Fellowship with Him. Right now, that's in this box here. And many, many more things.

It's all present tense. Blessings of salvation. But there's another box. And it's sealed. And it says, not yet. In other words, there are many blessings of salvation that the child of God is made to wait for.

[3:40] Now, those blessings are as much mine as the others. But I am made to wait for their enjoyment until later. Indeed, until after death.

And for some of them, even until after Jesus Christ returns. What's in that box? Well, the Bible tells us.

A new heavens and a new earth. Where only righteousness lives. Wow, what a blessing of salvation. To be a part of a new heavens and new earth where there's no busy devil to tempt me. Where there's no alluring world to distract me. And there's no traitorous flesh to give me over to the enemy within me. Blessing of salvation.

Final vindication. Correcting all the wrongs that have ever been done to me. From a wee boy where my brothers cheated me. All the way up to whatever's happened in my life recently.

[4:41] The wrongs done to me. Final vindication. Have to wait for that one, don't we? Until the final judgment. Perfect knowledge of Christ.

To know Him even as I am known. Perfect fellowship with Him. Full redemption of the body. Perfect bodily health. No sickness.

No suffering. No death. Pain free living. Sorrow free existence. Our prayer this morning proved that we're still waiting for that one too, aren't we? Perfect conformity to Christ.

Sinless perfection. Well, these are all found in the not yet box. Blessings of salvation. But throughout church history, there have always been those who have claimed to have found a secret that has opened up this box.

And that they're already here and now enjoying those blessings of salvation. In one form or another, it's the claim to have the blessings that are for later, here and now.

[5:50] That essentially is the problem behind much of the health, wealth, and prosperity preaching that abounds in our land and throughout the world today. Expecting the health, the perfect health that is promised to us.

Expecting it now rather than later. Expecting the prosperity. There's to be no poverty. No want. No need in heaven. But expecting it here and now.

It's the confusion of the boxes. They're wanting the not yet to be enjoyed already. And another form of this error that has reoccurred down through history is those claiming to have arrived already at sinless perfection.

There it is in the not yet box. One day, I'm going to be like Christ. We're going to see Him as He is, the Bible says for believers.

That we'll see Him as He is and we'll be made like Him. Because we'll see Him as He is. Well, many have made the extravagant claim of here and now.

[7:03] Being made perfectly like Jesus Christ. Sinless, uninterrupted, perfect fellowship with the Savior.

Now, you find it in several of the letters in our Bible and the epistles that claim was being made. And it appears that the church in Philippi had some within them that were also troubling the people of God at Philippi by making that same extravagant claim for themselves.

That they had arrived at perfection in Christ. That they had been raised with Christ. And so, therefore, they are right now enjoying the full perfection that is found in the salvation of Jesus Christ.

They know Christ perfectly. They know all about the power of His resurrection. The fellowship of His sufferings. And being made like Him. That's what they presently enjoy.

Now, what you believe affects how you live. And such a view is dangerous. And it was prone to have serious effects on the conduct of these people.

[8:10] It could lead them to spiritual complacency. Thinking that you're holy enough. No need to grow in holiness to advance in likeness to Jesus. I've already got there. And it's highly likely that this error was also one of the things that was fracturing the unity in the church at Philippi.

Remember, that's been a theme throughout the book. Paul's been addressing their need to live in unity. Being of one mind as you strive together for the faith of the gospel. And this error here was probably fracturing their unity and surely threatening to do it even further harm.

It's not hard to imagine how such vain conceits would destroy the unity of the body. To have some of you out there thinking that you were perfect. Well, as long as you're reveling in your own perfect performance, you see, you're certainly not going to be looking out for the interests of others.

And not esteeming others better than yourself. You're rather despising them. And looking down your nose at them.

They haven't arrived, you see. Well, that's the sort of thing that Paul is warning against. Looking down on their brethren. Rather than esteeming them above them.

[9:29] Perhaps that's one of the reasons that verse is here. Because they had these here. Who were claiming perfection here and now. So Paul must correct this false claim of perfectionism.

And correct it he does. But he doesn't do it with all guns blazing. With a theological argument. He does that elsewhere. But here he takes a different tact.

Here he comes with a personal word of testimony. Let me tell you how it is with me. He says to the church at Philippi. And he shares his own personal experience.

And so here in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 12. We have Paul's emphatic denial. Followed by his equally emphatic affirmation.

His denial first. Not. Not. That I have already obtained all this. Or have already been made perfect. You see the denial?

[10:28] Don't let anyone misunderstand this point. I have not already obtained all of this. What's the all this? Well he's just talked about it. Knowing Christ. Oh there's still more about Jesus that I need to know.

I haven't arrived there. There's still more of the power of his resurrection. That I need to know more of. I haven't arrived. And obtained that yet. There's still more fellowship with him in his suffering. Still more. To be made like him. In his death. No I have not already obtained all this. Neither have I already. Been made perfect.

Still much sin to be daily confessed. Paul would say. To be put to death. To be denied. To be watched and prayed against. Paul in very clear words is saying.

I am not perfect. I have not arrived. I have not yet been made perfect. There are sins of commission in my life. Things that I do. That are wrong. There are thoughts in my head that are sinful.

[11:31] There are actions that I do with my body that are sinful. There are motivations and attitudes and desires that are sinful. And then there is a host of sins of omission. The good that I should do.

I don't do. And to him who knows to do good and doeth it not. To him it is sin. So Paul is acknowledging. I'm not the finished product.

Yet. There is more to be done in this great work of salvation. God still has the hammer and chisel out with me. And there is much to chip away in my life.

He is the husbandman. The farmer. And he has still got the pruning shears. And there is a lot of growth of sin. That needs to be pruned out of my life. I have not arrived at perfection.

Now think about it. These are not the words of a novice. Just setting out on the Christian life. We would expect that. Of course you haven't arrived. You are just two days old in the faith. No.

[12:33] These are the words. Of a seasoned apostle. With 30 years of. Of ripened maturity. Under his belt. And he is the one who says.

I have not yet attained. Neither have I already yet. Been made perfect. Now that personal testimony of Paul. Would carry a lot of weight at Philippi.

You remember Paul himself. Had first brought the gospel to Philippi. Ten years earlier. He is their father in the faith. And they looked up to him. They loved and esteemed him.

They probably looked up to him. As the holiest man. That they had ever met. I suppose we would too. If we were at Philippi. And Paul came to town. No one has ever walked the earth.

As holy as this man. Outside of Jesus Christ. And yet. It is him. Who clearly says. Perfection is not. In the. The already box.

[13:33] Perfection for me. Is still in the not yet box. And he does it. To shame those. Who are claiming. To have already arrived. At perfection. It is kind of like.

The little league ball player. Who. Is bragging to his teammates. About how he is the perfect hitter. And. He says.

When I am batting. I have trained my eye so well. That. I keep it right on the ball. As it is hurling toward me. And I watch it so closely. Before I knock it. I can read the Rawlings label on it.

And everybody. Wow. This guy is really something. That is higher than what. I have achieved. I never knew that. That was even possible. And then Derek Jeters.

Comes to town. And he is. He is putting on. An exhibition. And all the little league teams. Are there. And after the exhibition. There is a time. For question and answers.

[14:30] And some little kid asks. Derek. Can you read. The label on the ball. As it is being pitched to you. No way.

I haven't even come close to that. Can you imagine. How small. That little bragger. Must feel about now. As. Everybody had heard his boast. And now.

Here is this champion. Professional baseball hitter. And he says. No way. I have not arrived at that. Paul is seeking. By his own personal testimony. To shame these.

Who are making such extravagant claims. Of perfectionism. And sometimes. Preachers of the truth. Are thought. Of too highly. And you think.

That just because. We preach these things. That. We have already. Attained them. Because. We say. These things. With. With. With. With unction. And with. With power.

[15 : 25] And with. Some felt. Sense of them. You assume. That we therefore. In these areas. Have them. Perfectly. In line. In our lives. And I assure you.

There is nothing. That I say to you. That I don't have to go home. And confess. And labor after. In my own heart. In life. And Paul wants to rule out. Any misunderstandings. Don't any of you. Go away. Thinking. That I am perfect. Whatever all these guys. In the midst. Are claiming. Don't you think. That I am one of them. As for me. I have not yet. Been made perfect.

So that is his great denial. And. What is interesting. Is that he immediately. Follows it. Follows it up. With an equally. Emphatic. Affirmation. He asserts a truth.

Not that. He says. But this. And what is the affirmation? Not that I have already. Been made perfect. But I press on. To take hold of that. For which.

[16 : 18] Christ. Jesus. Has taken hold. Of me. Now the word here. For press on. Is a very active word. It can also be translated. I run after.

I seek. I pursue. It's the very same word. For persecute. I track down. I chase after it. I strive for it. And it's. It pictures for us.

Either a foot race. Or a hunt. Or someone is running. And seeking something. It's a picture of a man. In hot pursuit. And he's pressing on.

What does he say? In order to take hold of something. So he's reaching. He's going to say that again later. I think in verse 13. He's going to talk about straining. And stretching. But here's a man running.

And he's reaching for something. He wants to take hold of something. He wants to grab something. To seize it. And to make it his own. What is it that. That Paul's running so hard.

[17 : 14] And reaching out to grab. Well. He wants to lay hold of that. For which Christ Jesus. Laid hold of him. The very same thing. For which Christ laid hold of him.

He wants to achieve. And to make his own. So it begs the question. Doesn't it? Why has Christ taken hold of. The apostle Paul. Well. Well.

To make me holy. He says. To make me like himself. Without sin. He chose me in Christ. Ephesians 1.

4. Before the creation of the world. To be holy and blameless. Before me. That's why he chose me. In Christ. That I might be holy and blameless. In his sight.

Romans 8. 29. For those God foreknew. He also predestined. To be conformed. To the likeness of his son. So that. He might be the firstborn. Among many brothers.

[18 : 13] God wants a whole family. Of brothers. Who look just like. His one eternal son. And so he's predestined us. To be conformed.

To the image of Christ. That's the reason. He's laid hold of us. In salvation. That's the reason he chose us. From eternity past. That's the reason in time. He laid hold of us. And saved us. That we might be. Just like Jesus. And that's why he sent his son. To affect that salvation. In our lives. So Paul here.

When he talks about. I want to lay hold of that. For which Christ took hold of me. He's thinking back. 30 years. To his own conversion. And he's thinking. How he was going down that road.

To Damascus. He was taking the fast route. To hell. Wasn't he? Persecuting Christians. Running from God. And Christ.

[19 : 09] Arrested him. Christ took hold of him. It's a forceful word. Christ seized him. Far enough. Saul of Tarsus. That's it.

You're done. Persecuting Christians. From now on. You will preach my gospel. And be persecuted. As a Christian. In making my glories known. To the Gentiles.

He's thinking. Christ laid hold of me. Isn't it a wonderful thing. Christian. To remember. That salvation. Is Christ laying hold of us. Yes. We came to him.

And embraced him by faith. What a wonderful. Thing to realize. That the Bible says. That he first laid hold of us. Paul would still have been going.

Right on. Down the road. To Damascus. Doing his persecuting business. Had not Christ laid hold of him. Why did he do it? That he might rescue him.

[20 : 04] From ruin. And make him. Just like himself. And now he says. I want to lay hold of that. For which Christ laid hold of me. I want to be like Christ.

I want to pursue. And become like Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. He would tell us.  
The Savior did not lay hold of me. To leave me in this battle. With my sin forever. He's going to make me holy. One day. Perfectly holy. He's going to make me just like him. One day.  
This battle doesn't go on forever. When I see him. I'll be made like him. For I'll see him as he is.  
Psalm 17. 15. As for me. I will behold thy face. In righteousness.  
I shall be satisfied. When I awake. With thy likeness. I'm going to awake. With the likeness. Of my Savior. And that's what I can't wait. To lay hold of.  
[21 : 04] And that's what I'm running after. That's what I want to grab hold of. That's the great end of God. In salvation. To gain glory to himself. By making sinners. Who are more like the devil.  
To be just like his son. Now notice. Though Paul acknowledges his imperfection. He's not at all content with it.  
Do you see that? He's not at all content with it. Don't think I've already arrived. But don't you either think that I'm satisfied. With imperfection.  
I press on. To be perfect. Is his word to us. To achieve that goal for which Christ has saved me. He's not okay at all with the fact. That he daily sins against his God.  
And thought. And word. And deed. In fact. His greatest grief in life. Is that he still sins. Against such a good and gracious master. His great grief.  
[22 : 02] Is that he does not love. And obey the Lord Jesus. More than he does. Oh that my heart. Could. Could love him. And praise him more. He would say. Listen to his groan.  
In Romans chapter 7. Oh. He wants to please him. But he doesn't do all that he should do. And all that he wants to do. And it's not right.  
That I should have such a holy and perfect savior. And me not be more like him. So though he's not attained perfection. He is still passionately pursuing it.  
And that's a strange mixture. Sadly the church doesn't get that too well. Those that. Would say. Well. We're not holy. And we can't be holy till heaven. Seem to have some kind of way of thinking. And processing that. That they therefore say. Well. If I can't be holy. Then I guess I just got to.  
[22 : 57] If I can't be perfect. Then I just guess I have to wait. Until Christ comes back. And we sit and wait passively. That's not Paul. It's not the biblical response to this reality. Not at all.  
He's not kicking back on his spiritual recliner. Saying I know I still sin. But then nobody's perfect. Nobody can be perfect. And so I just sit passively. And waiting for that day.  
When I'll see Christ. And he'll make me perfect. There is nothing of that in this text. You'll look in vain to find. Any kind of complacency. Any kind of self-satisfaction.  
Contentment. With where Paul is. In likeness to Christ. His whole life. Is one passionate pursuit of Jesus. And perfect likeness to him.  
He must become increasingly. Like his Savior. Like his obedience. Like his humility.  
[23 : 55] Lord why is it that I cannot do one good thing. To another person. Without having some pride. Well up inside one. I want to be more like you Jesus. I want to know more of your patience.  
In the midst of provocation. I can't take it when my son does this and that. But oh I see my Savior. And the Pharisees. And Sadducees. Picking and provoking him.  
I see his patience. Perfect patience. I want to be more like Jesus. I want to witness like he witnessed to the lost. I want to tell people about the Savior.  
Thirsty people. Like that woman at the well. Who was trying to fill her life with water. That would not satisfy. I want to tell her about the water of life. That if a man or woman drinks.  
He'll never thirst again. I want to be like Jesus. His undergirding joy. His self-sacrificing love. His unruffled peace.  
[24 : 54] And knowing that he will not be exactly like Christ. Until the day of Christ's return. Does not kill his efforts. At pursuing perfection.  
It rather stimulates his energies. And it stirs up a whole hearted passion in him. To be conformed to Christ. It's the same Paul. Who knows he's not perfect.  
And knows that that must wait. It's in the not yet box. Until he sees Christ. It's the same Paul who says to the Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians 13.11. Finally brothers.  
Goodbye. Aim for perfection. I haven't reached it. But I'm aiming for it. And I'm running after it. But if I can't reach it. Why try? Well it's not an all or nothing proposition. Progress can be made. In likeness to Christ. There is such a thing as growth.

[25 : 53] In grace. And in likeness to Jesus. The Savior. And besides that. The prize is to be given one day. That glorification.

Transformation. Into the likeness of Christ. But who's the prize given to? It's only given to those who pursue it. Who are pursuing holiness. Pursue holiness. Pursue holiness.

Track it down. There's that same word. Hebrews 12.14. For without it. No man will see the Lord.

And so we find the same thing. That we found in John. Where John says in his first epistle.

The first chapter. If anybody claims to be without sin. He's a liar. The truth's not in him. He makes God out to be a liar. That's pretty serious. And then he turns around.

In a verse later. And says. But I write these things to you. So that you might not sin. If you claim to be without sin. You're an heir. It's a lie.

[26 : 48] But folks. Your aim every morning. Should be. Not to sin. Sunday. April. 29th. 2007. That's our aim.

That's why he writes these things to us. That's what Paul's running after. That's what he's reaching out for. And he knows one day it will be his. He's not chasing a fantasy. Of his own brain.

But a promise. That's held out before him. And it motivates him. To become more like Jesus. So I have to ask you. What is your attitude. Toward your imperfection? Are you okay with it?

Or are you up in arms against it? Do you make it an excuse. For spiritual laziness. And slothfulness. Or is it a spur.

To press you on. To greater likeness. To Jesus. Because the truth is. We too are on the fast lane to hell. And Jesus Christ laid hold of us.

[27 : 47] And we now. Are to be. Seeking to lay hold of that. Very same thing. For which Christ laid hold of us. To bring us to heaven. To see him. To be made like him. Perfect.

As he is perfect. Verses 13 and 14 follow. And it's really. A rehashing. Of the same. Denial.

And affirmation. But it's not vain repetition. Additional information is given. Brothers. I do not consider myself. Yet to have taken hold of it.

What's that? Hold of what? Well that perfection. That he's just denied. I don't consider that I've yet taken hold. There's his denial again. But. Here's the affirmation.

One thing I do. I press on toward the goal. To win the prize. For which God has called me heavenward. In Christ Jesus. Before he says.

[28 : 44] He's pressing. To take hold of that. For which Christ took hold of him. Now he says. I'm pressing forward. To take hold of. The prize. For which God. Has called me heavenward.

You see. The whole trinity. Is involved in our salvation. Christ has taken hold of us. But God has given a call. And he's called us heavenward. He's drawing us heavenward. Drawing us home. And what's he bringing us heavenward for?

To make us like his son. To live in his presence forever. To reflect his image. Without taint. And so Paul's saying.

You know. I'm evaluating this. And. I don't consider myself yet. To have taken hold of it. But I am. Still. Running. This is the one thing I do.

I'm pressing. On. I'm. I'm running. I'm keeping up the chase. To win the prize. To reach the goal. Well.

[29 : 41] Is it. A prize. Or is it a goal? I believe it's the same. To see Christ. And to be made like him. Is a goal. In that. It's what I am. Running after. And it's a prize.

In that it will be graciously. Rewarded to me. To be made like Christ. Given by God. God. And so Paul returns. To his favorite metaphor. Of the athlete running.

And he's giving us more information. In these two verses. About the way he is running. How is he pressing on. Toward the goal of perfection. Well. Forgetting what is behind.

And straining toward. What is ahead. Folks. We sometimes get it backwards. And we forget. What is before us. And ahead. And we strain. Over what is behind us. No no.

He runs. Forgetting. What is behind. Kids. Some of you have run. Track. And one of the first things.

[30 : 38] That coaches often tell. Maybe not you. But. I've heard it before. The first thing you learn. About running. Is you don't look back. You don't look back. It can be dangerous.

To run one direction. And to look another. Can't it? You can stumble and fall. But it's not only dangerous. It. It slows you down. To twist your neck.

And your torso. To look around behind. And try to run this way. It. It impedes your forward progress. And so. Coaches are right. Keep your eye on the goal.

That's where you're going. And so you look forward. And you run this. You forget about the. What's in your rear view mirror. You forget where you've already come. And you look forward. Now this does not mean. That we are never to remember the past. There are verses in scriptures. That call us to remember. Many many things. And our sins. It's not wrong sometimes.

[31 : 37] To be remembering our sins. In and of itself. So. We're not just applying. Any thoughts about what's in the past. Is wrong. We need to forget about anything. In the past.

That's not his meaning. We don't have time to prove it. From other scriptures. But what he is telling us. Is don't let what happened back there. Hamper you. Slow you down.

In any way. From. Your present race. To be like Jesus. As you're running this race. Reaching for the prize. Don't let what happened back there.

Impede your progress. Slow you down. We're not to be fixated. On the past. To where it hampers us. Some people are so absorbed.

With what's behind them. That they live in the past. They live and dwell. In the past. Consider three ways. That this can happen. First of all. Could be that there's some past sin.

[32 : 35] Or failure. That has you paralyzed. Because. You're still thinking. About your sin and guilt. Something you did. And it's impeding you.

You're not pressing on. After likeness to Jesus. Because. You're carrying guilt. For that sin. Folks. We weren't meant to. To run the race. With the heavy burden.

Of sin. We're meant to continually. Be throwing off our burden. Throwing it off. And running the race. Without this burden of guilt. From past failure.

Or sin. So you say. Well what do I do? I can't argue. I have this. And I. It is slowing me down. And I keep looking back to it.

You need to get to Jesus. You need to revisit Calvary. You need to come and see. Your sins being punished. On the middle cross. The man. The God man there. And you need to realize.

[33 : 32] And act fresh faith. On the fact that. His blood and righteousness. Really does cover your sins. It really does take them away. That he suffered enough.

He paid enough. To actually take your sin away. So that there's no more to be suffered. Come to Christ. And cast the weight of your sin.

Upon him. And believe. Believe God's promise. That if we confess our sins. He is faithful and just. To forgive us our sins. And to purify us. From all unrighteousness. Believe the promise. That he. Forgets. He's chosen to forget. Our sins.

And sing. With Philip Bliss. My sin. Oh the bliss. Of this glorious thought. My sin. Not in part. But the whole. Was nailed to his cross. And I bear it no more.

[34 : 30] Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Oh my soul. Now that's how we're to run this race. Uninhibited you see. By. This weight of sin and guilt. From past failures.

Maybe it's not past sin. Maybe it's past achievement. That Paul's referring to here. He was boasting as a Pharisee. Wasn't he? On all that he had done. And was. And maybe he's.

Saying. I'm forgetting that too. Past achievements. Have a tendency to. If we focus on them. To leave us complacent. And self satisfied. We rest on the laurels.

Of some past success. I'm doing pretty good. I've come a long way. Look how far I've come. We say to ourselves. And. We're reveling in some. Past glory days.

Of our Christian life. As if we're holy enough now. Enough like Jesus now. To not need to chase after. Greater likeness.

[35 : 27] But you see. This backward look. Is also killing your endeavors. To further. Likeness to Jesus. There's never a time. In this life.

There's never an experience. Of any kind. That the Christian has. Upon which. We might sit down. And rest. In our performance. There. Now. I can rest. Kids.

Is a race. The time to rest. No. A race. Is a time to run. The time to rest. Is after the race. And we're still in the race.

We haven't cut the tape. At the finish line. So we don't even look back. And rest. In our past. Victories. And successes. Or we'll be hindered. From running. Maybe it's not sin.

Maybe it's not past achievement. Maybe it's past disappointment. That's left you disappointed. And bitter. Against God. God. Two weeks ago.

[36 : 22] This evening. Chuck and I. Were down. In Mesa. And we were. Privileged to hear. Jeff Thomas. Preaching on discouragements. In the ministry. And he.

Relayed a story. To us. Of. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. Who. Made. A visit. To a certain town. And there was a gentleman. In that town. Who was a headmaster.

A principal. Of the school. And. And he had become. So cynical. Toward God. And religion. That it was influencing. The rest of the children. At the school. And these.

In the church. Were very concerned. And they asked. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. If he would go. And talk to this man. And he agreed to. He went into his home. And. And said. Sir. What's the problem here.

Why. Why so cynical. Against God. You weren't raised that way. What's happened. And he said. Well I suppose. It all goes back. To. To that day. In. In such and such a day.

[37:17] In such and such a year. And. I was on a sub. In the Mediterranean Sea. And. And. And suddenly. A. German torpedo. Hit us. And. And.

We went straight to the bottom. Straight to the bottom. And Dr. Lloyd-Jones says. Well that's interesting. But I'm sure you haven't told me. Everything that happened that day. What else happened that day.

And he said. Well. Well I was doing this and this. That morning. And then I went to this chore. And that. And. And then. The torpedo hit us.

And we went straight to the bottom. And he asked him again. But sir. I'm sure there was something else. That happened that day. What else happened. Tell me. Tell me. What else happened that day.

And. And he dug for more details. About what had happened. Until the torpedo hit. And. We went straight to the bottom. And Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones says. That's your problem sir. You're still in the bottom.

[38:13] Of the Mediterranean. You see. Emotionally. And mentally. He had. He'd never worked past that. And now he's bitter against God. Because they went straight to the bottom. Well. Wasn't there some rescue operator.

Here you are. You're healthy. You're alive. But he was hung up on some disappointment. Some of us might be. Looking back to a disappointment in our life. And we're just a bit.

Disappointed with God. Bitter with God. And we're looking back. And we're not moving on beyond that. Yes. All these things. And other ways.

Can inhibit our race. Our running with. With. Alacrity and speed. After likeness to Jesus. Paralyzing us. And so we must constantly.

Be discarding thoughts from the past. And replacing them with God's truth. Not giving them the time of day. Forgetting what is behind. Behind. That's one way he's running.

[39:12] Forgetting what's behind. But. He's also. Secondly. Straining toward what's ahead. Christians are preeminently a people. With a forward look. A focus that is forward looking.

What's ahead. Is the thing that holds the Christians. Gaze. What's ahead for the Christians. Seeing Jesus. And becoming like him. Perfectly like him. Being saved to sin no more. Whatever progress Paul has made to this date.

And becoming like Jesus. The goal is still in front of him. Not behind him. So he's straining every nerve. Every muscle. Stretching forward. To make that his own.

So that's how he's pressing on toward the goal. He tells us in 13 and 14. He's pressing on. Forgetting. And straining. Straining. Forgetting the past. Straining to what's ahead. And notice he's doing it.

[40:10] To win the prize. This man's running. To win the prize. Now some of us run for exercise. Or we run for our health. Or we run. To see the birds.

Along the way. Or the flowers. That are in bloom. And. We counted a. Success. If we get back home. Without a heart attack. That's. Why we run.

But there's a whole nother way. That people run. Some people run. For competition. Some people run. To win the prize. It's a whole nother way.

Of running. They're not looking around. At the trees. Are they? And for birds. And flowers. They're looking ahead. To the finish line. And they're straining.

There's a forwardness. To their gate. They're reaching out. As it were. To reach that prize. On the other side. Of the finish line. That's what they're after.

[41:06] They're dead in earnest. And you can tell. The difference. Between one. Who's running. To win the prize. And one. Who's running. For their health. So.



Which one are you? How are you running. After. Lightness to Jesus. What would the newspapers. Say of you. If a reporter. Followed you around. For one week.

Is she. Running for her health. Or is she running. To win the prize. What would you say. If you wrote. Your own personal testimony. Like Paul is. Would you.

Be able to. Truthfully. To say. I'm running. To win the prize. I'm dead in earnest. About this thing. I want to be like Jesus. I must be like Jesus. Jesus. That's what Paul says.

Are you more zealous. To be like Jesus. Today. Than you've ever been. In your life. Before. Or have you grown. Weary. Have you lost.

[42:02] Your first love. And that immediate. Passion. That you had. To be like Jesus. We have to ask. Ourselves. These things. Here's a man. Thirty years old. In Christ. And he's still.

On the full stretch. For God. He's still. Wanting to be like Jesus. He's just. Reaching. For all. He's worth. He's not. Lost his passion.

He's not. Lost the goal. He's. He's got it. In sight. So where do I need. To be more like Jesus.

I see my pride. I need to come to Jesus. And see how meek. And lowly. He is. I see my disobedience. I need to come to him. And see. How he was obedient. Unto death. And oh.

I want to be obedient. Like he is obedient. I see my greed. And selfishness. And then I. See him. Who is rich. Made poor. For our sakes. That we through his poverty.

[42:57] Might be made rich. I see my self-servingness. And he says. Not my will. But yours. Be done.

Have we grown used. To our besetting sin. We won't be perfect. Like Jesus. Till heaven. So I'm not going to work. On my anger. Not going to work. On my impatience. Not going. We can't stop.

We haven't cut the tape yet. The finish line. Still before us. And so we must run on. And the thing that keeps us running this way. After Christ. Likeness. Is what we have our eyes on.

And so the writer to the Hebrews says. We run the race marked out for us. With perseverance. Fixing our eyes on Jesus. We see him. In all of his perfections.

And we keep running the race. We have that spur in our sight. Run on John. There's more to be enjoyed. Of likeness to Jesus. Here and now. For sinners. Saved by the grace of God.

[43:56] And indwelt by his sanctifying spirit. And as we look on him. We see him. We get to know him more. And we know. That we'll be made like him.

For we'll see him as he is. He who has this hope in him. Purifies himself. Doesn't sit back and say. I'll wait till that day. But whoever has this hope in him. Purifies himself.

Even as he is pure. 1 John 3. 3. This was the one thing. That Paul does then. Do you have a one thing about you? A supreme thing.

The one thing. That kind of umbrellas. Your whole life. And existence. And everything you do. This is the one thing. About the apostle Paul. He's pressing toward the goal. To win the prize of likeness. To Jesus. Being with him. And being like him. He chased after it. With single minded fervor. Marcus Lone says. This one thing. Possessed his heart. Dominated his mind.

[44:53] And ruled his life. To be like Jesus. And it gave purpose. And unity. And thrust. And power. To his life.

There's not so much. Of the strength of our life. Drained out of us. Because we're not people. Of one thing. We dabble in 12 things. And an over preoccupation. With our body.

And with sports. And recreation. And things. And money. And we're dabbling. And our lives are just. Their influence is so weak. Because we're all spread out.

And pursuing other things. Like little rivulets. Coming down the mountain. And there's just tiny little trickles. All these things in our life. And Paul brings them all together.

Into one rushing river. One thing I do. Running after. Likeness to Jesus. The thing for which God has called me heavenward. May the Lord give us.

[45:52] To run. With passion. To be like Christ. So his testimony is meant to spur us on. Even as it would have. The Philippian believers.

And he closes with three short directives. Number one. This is verses 15 and 16. If you're a mature Christian. You will agree with what I've said.

Wow. How do you argue with that? If you're a mature Christian. You will agree with what I've said.

That's what the holy apostle says. He's a spokesman of Christ. All of us who are mature.

Should take such a view of things. These things that I've been telling you about. We're not perfect yet. You all should take that same view. That's in the not yet box.

For us. And if you're a mature. You will agree. That you're still imperfect. And still need to pursue. Likeness to Jesus. You prove your maturity in Christ.

[46 : 48] Not by claiming to be. Perfect like him. You prove your maturity in Christ. By claiming. To be so unlike him. That's a powerful. Way to conclude.

This. Address. Isn't it? It's a very clear sign of immaturity. To claim perfection. Paul's saying. And we saw it in Paul himself. The more.

Like. His Lord. That he became. The closer he gets to Jesus. The more of his beauties he sees. The more he sees of his own.

Ugliness. And sees that he is not like. His master. As he wants to be. And you can trace it out. You can find it.

In 1 Corinthians 15. He's been a Christian for 20 years. And he says. I'm the least of all the apostles. And four years later. In Ephesians 3. He says. I'm the least of all the saints.

[47 : 48] And six years later. He says. I'm the worst of sinners. 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy. As he grew up in the Christian life. As he matured.

He grew downward. In humility. In the sense that he was not yet like his Lord. It was George Whitefield. In the 52nd year of his life.

Who said. Tomorrow. I will begin. To begin. To be a Christian. I feel. So much. Like a beginner. At this matter.

Of being like Jesus. I'll. I'll start. Tomorrow. To begin. To begin. To be a Christian. That's the mature.

Approach. All else. Is immaturity. Secondly. If you don't agree. With what I'm telling you. God will teach you. Your mistake. Verse 15. And if on some point. You think differently.

[48 : 45] That too. God will make clear. To you. And thirdly. Live up. To what. You do know. Verse 16. Only let us. Live up.

To what. We have. Already. Attained. That's no small thing. To do. Is it? Is that. One point. Itself. Not enough. To prove.

That we are not. Yet perfect. That everyone. Here. Knows more. Than you live up to. Right? You know. More commands. Than you keep. Perfectly. We all know more.

Than what we live up to. That in self. Proves the point. That Paul's been making. He's just. Driving that nail. You know. He drives the nail home. And then he turns the board over. And bends the nail over.

Here at the end. With this. These three staccato. Statements. If there's one fact. Edward Payson said. If there's one fact.

[49 : 39] One doctrine. One promise. In the bible. Which. Which has produced. No practical effect. Upon your attitude. Or conduct. Be assured. You do not truly believe it. Live up.

To what you know. God reveals his truth. Not to swell our heads. But to affect the way. That we live. So live up to the light. That you have. And God will.

Reveal more and more. To you. That's the principle. Of John 7. 17. The doer of the truth. Will have more light given. So. Live up to the truth. That you do know.

And God will show you. More. So here's the aged apostle. 30 years in Christ. And he's still running. Like a teenager. Reaching for the goal.

Of likeness to Jesus. Mrs. Howard Taylor. Was 75 years old. And she says. I press on. The finish is the thing. The finish is the thing. So many fail at the end.

[50 : 36] Doesn't matter how old you are. How old in Christ you are. You're not done. The tape's not been crossed. It's the finish. So many fail at the end. We want to finish well. Says Howard.

Mrs. Howard Taylor. So may we. Run the race. Looking to Jesus. Fixing our eyes on him. That we may. Run on to the day.

That we do cut through the tape. We see our savior. And we're made like him. And we receive a rich welcome. To everlasting glory. There's higher ground yet.

There's more of Christ yet. To be known. To be imitated. I'm pressing on the upward way. New heights. I'm gaining. Every day.

Still praying. As I onward bound. Lord. Plant my feet on higher ground. Lord. Lift me up. And let me stand. By faith on heaven's table land.

[51 : 33] A higher plane than I have found. Lord. Plant my feet on higher ground. That's the cry of the apostle Paul. Is it yours today? The very one who creates the desire in you.

Is the one who is able to satisfy that desire. Let's go to him. And let's spread before him our desire. To know him better. To be more like him. Reflecting his image. More to this world. That needs to know Christ. Let's pray silently. And then I'll close. Our Father. We thank you for the testimony of another believer. Who is just like us. Born in sin. Laid hold of by Jesus Christ. Still struggling with sin. Yet he had the Holy Spirit in him. Creating desires of yearning. And hungerings. And thirstings. And panting after greater likeness to Christ. We thank you that there's nothing that we see in the apostle Paul in this text.

[ 52 : 37 ] That is not available to us. Come and work such desires within us. Come and show us more of the beauties in Christ. We might see how far short we come of reflecting his likeness. Rather than sitting back and excusing our laziness. We would feel our hearts strangely drawn out to him. To run after him. And to long to be holy. And to pursue holiness with all of our hearts. Lord you're worthy of having a people just like you. Will you not come and make us more like yourself. Finish then your new creation. Pure and spotless. Let us be. Let us see your great salvation. Perfectly restored in thee. And come and lay hold of sinners this day. Who are on the fast lane to hell. Stop them in their ways. And turn them round. And do it to make a name for yourself. And to make another sinner into the likeness of the Savior.

[ 53 : 37 ] We ask in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.