

The Book of Philippians

“Keep Pressing Forward”

Text: Philippians 3:12-14

Letting go of the past, reaching forward, and pursuing Christ are the keys to spiritual maturity.

Forward Progress:

Paul acknowledges that he has not yet attained perfection (Phil. 3:12).

- In Greek, the word “perfected” means *mature* or *complete*.
- Paul understood that spiritual maturity required a deliberate, ongoing commitment to seeking God.
- This is evident in his use of the phrase “lay hold of,” which conveys the idea of overtaking by surprise and the sense of seizing an object.
- We, too, like Paul, must recognize that we haven’t arrived yet and that there is still room for growth.
- Just as infants don't become toddlers overnight, Christians also don't attain spiritual maturity overnight (1 Peter 2:2).

Spiritual maturity requires perseverance.

- Often, people let setbacks and disappointments keep them from pursuing God.
- (James 5:11) – James urges believers to remain patient and steadfast in their faith despite opposition.

Paul’s Strategy for Forward Progress:

Paul shares three insights from his life that helped him move forward in his pursuit of Christ (Phil. 3:13-14).

1. Forget the past.

- Paul did not build a memorial to his past victories (1 Cor. 9:24-27).
- Let go of your past mistakes and setbacks so they do not control your life.
- Your past does not disqualify you from being used by God.
 - Moses murdered a man (Ex. 2:11-12), yet God used him to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt.
 - Paul had a history of severe persecution of Christians (Acts 8:3; Gal. 1:13) and later became one of the greatest apostles.

- God sees you not through the lens of your past but through the redeeming power of Jesus' blood (Psalms 103:10; Is. 43:25; John 3:17; Eph. 1:7).

2. Reach Forward.

In a race, the runner must strain every nerve and muscle and draw on every ounce of strength to win. This is true of Paul's life.

- Paul left his past behind and reached toward the future God had in store for him.
- Continuously reaching forward is a commitment to embrace the new things God has prepared for us (Is. 43:18-19).

3. Press Toward the Mark.

- During Paul's time, runners pursued the white line in the stadium. If they kept their eyes fixed on the line, they would not be disqualified from the prize (1 Cor. 9:24).
- Likewise, we must keep our eyes fixed on the prize. What mark are we pressing toward?
 - Communion with Christ (John 17:3; Phil. 3:7-10).
 - Christlikeness in our character (John 15:8).

Spiritual maturity (Phil. 3:15-16).

- Those who are spiritually mature have committed to focusing on Jesus and to pursuing Him wholeheartedly.

Call to Action:

1. Don't let past failures, disappointments, or successes keep you from moving forward.
2. Keep growing spiritually; don't become complacent about where you are.
3. Press on by pursuing Christ and becoming more like Him every day.