

Pressing On To The Goal

Franklin Church of Christ
Edwin Crozier
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AM Worship

Introduction:

The past week has been a week of reflection and planning for many, as we noted in our last lesson. Hopefully, we have all taken time to consider exactly how well we have and how well we plan to fight the good fight, finish the course and keep the faith (*cf.* **II Timothy 4:7**). As we begin this new year, we need to hone in on the concept of goals. On your job you have goals. Perhaps your company has goals relating to profits, sales quotas, quality standards, productivity, time without accidents, etc. Companies do not survive without goals. Amazingly, some of us who idolize goal setting in the work place walk through our spiritual lives aimlessly. No doubt, we attend the assemblies and Bible classes of the church regularly; we work at praying and reading our Bibles regularly. However, many of us have no spiritual growth goals. We hope growth will just kind-of happen. With this mindset, we might pick up a tidbit here and there, but we will not grow consistently. We must set goals and establish plans for growth. Examine Paul's approach in **Philippians 3:7-21**, noting six keys for pressing on to the goal.

Discussion:

- I. Consider the end first.
 - A. A catch phrase in modern management and leadership literature is "begin with the end in mind." That concept is not new. Paul demonstrated it nearly 2000 years ago. In **Philippians 3:11, 14**, Paul explained everything he did was focused toward the ultimate goal of resurrection.
 - B. Before we can ever focus on what we want to do with our lives tomorrow, next week, next month or next year, we must know what we want our lives to lead to on the whole. A day of judgment is coming (**John 5:28-29**). We need to settle once and for all what we want to happen to our souls on that day. As Moses said in **Psalm 90:12**, we must learn to number our days. That is, we must learn that our days on earth have an end. What do we want then? Once that goal is set, we can begin setting our goals and plans for the coming year, month, week or day.
- II. Develop the proper attitude.
 - A. In **Philippians 3:13**, Paul said, "Have this attitude." This is more than just PMA—Positive Mental Attitude. It is not enough for us to just tell ourselves over and over again, "I think I can, I think I can." There are actually three aspects of this proper attitude.
 - B. First, we must recognize we have not yet reached the goal (**Philippians 3:12**). Too many Christians act as if they have arrived. They know there are a few minor adjustments that could be made here and there, but overall they are pretty good and so they will not worry about it. If we are going to grow, we must realize that we have room for real and significant growth.
 - C. Second, we must be spurred on by the future and not bogged down by the past (**Philippians 3:13**). We must not get so depressed by past failures that we quit trying. At the same time, we must not become so elated by past successes that we become blinded to our need to grow.
 - D. Third, we must have a press on attitude (**Philippians 3:13**). We must have an attitude that says we can make it and we will keep plugging away no matter what happens. But we must have more than just a press on attitude, we actually have to press on. While it is part of the proper attitude, it is so important that we must recognize it as a third key to reaching our spiritual goals.
- III. We must press on.
 - A. In order to press on we have to come to grips with a great paradox. We have to be content with where we are spiritually and at the same time be discontent with it. Paul said, "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect" (**vs. 12**) Despite this he did not despair regarding salvation. He was content, resting in God's grace. At the same time, he was discontent. As long as God granted him time, Paul was going to grow. We have to learn that balance. We must have enough contentment in God's grace not to despair and enough discontent with our own state that we keep pushing ourselves to grow in Christ.
 - B. We must be happy with progress. Paul's statement that he had not attained the goal yet but was pressing on demonstrated he was noting his progress. "I am not there yet," he said, "but I am getting closer." While we keep the big picture in mind, we have to be happy with the baby steps to that goal. We have to be patient with ourselves and others as we grow.

C. Pressing on means putting one foot in front of the other. We know that the ultimate goal is the resurrection. What subordinate goals must we meet to reach that goal? We find a list of subordinate goals in **II Peter 1:5-8**. We have to gain faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, kindness and love. Yet, we are not likely to master any one of these over the next year. Instead of being overwhelmed by the big picture, we need to look to the next step. What goals should I make for this year to help in accomplishing these major goals? Is there a particular temptation I want to overcome? Is there a passage or book in the Bible I want to understand? Is there a character trait I want to develop? What daily disciplines must I develop to reach these goals? Prayer and Bible reading are a must for all spiritual goals. What about time spent with other saints? Pressing on means establishing these steps and then following through with them. If we falter or fall, we simply pick back up and keep pressing on.

IV. Follow the standard.

- A. According to **Philippians 3:16**, we must live by the standard we have received. Every company that establishes goals has standards. For instance, a company may set a high production goals. But they will not weaken their product quality to reach product goals.
- B. Spiritual growth is the same. In all we do, God has established standards for us. As Solomon wrote in **Ecclesiastes 11:9**, we can follow the desires of our heart, we can establish the goals we desire, but we must remember we will stand before God as judge for how we go about accomplishing our goals. As you strive for your smaller goals, do not allow yourself to cut corners, take shortcuts or lose sight of your ultimate goal. Keep the proper perspective by learning and following God's word to reach your goals.

V. Remove what will not help you reach your goals.

- A. Paul provides the most difficult aspect of reaching our goals in **Philippians 3:7-8**. In this passage, Paul said he was willing to lose, cut off or get rid of anything that kept him from reaching his important goals.
- B. Certainly, sinful attitudes and activities must be removed. Obviously, sinful influences must be limited. Other personal goals that are mutually exclusive of God's spiritual goals for us must be removed. At the same time, this may mean we have to get rid of some activities that are perfectly fine in and of themselves. We have to learn that we have the time to do anything we want to do. But we do not have the time to do everything we want to do. An activity may be good. It may be worthy. It may be pure. But if it distracts us from accomplishing our prioritized goals, we need to learn to cut it out.

VI. Connect with people who are accomplishing what you want to accomplish.

- A. Finally, **Philippians 3:17** demonstrates that we must connect with others who have already or are successfully accomplishing the goals we have. This will include examining the saints of scripture and following the examples they have set for us. As **Hebrews 12:1** said, we have a great cloud of witnesses to look to and follow.
- B. More than that, we ought to connect with one another here. It may include just carefully observing the lives of successful living saints and trying to mirror their spiritual devotion. However, it would be even better if we actually connected with them. Ask them for help. Develop relationships with them in order to help stimulate you to love and good deeds.
- C. Remember **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**. Two are better than one. Three are better than two. Develop a handful of relationships with people who will help you overcome and push you to grow, reaching your goals.

Conclusion:

Please do not walk blindly through this new year. Consider where you would like to be spiritually by this time next year and establish plans to accomplish those goals. Connect with others to help you reach them. Pair down the activities that will hinder you from reaching them. Whatever you do make sure it helps you press on for the ultimate goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.