Life-Changing Resolutions For The New Year
Philippians 3:12-14 (NKJV)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians the third chapter. And let's read those familiar words of the apostle Paul in verses 12-14.

Philippians 3:12-14 (NKJV)

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

PRAYER

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INTRODUCTION

How many of you have made at least one resolution for the New Year?

According to a recent study, about 45% of Americans make New Year's resolutions each year, and four out of five people who make New Year's resolutions give up on them by the end of January.
Some of the most common resolutions people make each New Year are: To lose weight ....... to start exercising ....... to get more organized ....... to stop smoking or stop drinking ....... to spend less and save more ....... and to spend more time with family.

**ILLUSTRATION**

I was reading the other day about a young boy who asked his father what resolutions he had made for the New Year. The father said, “Son, my resolution is to do everything possible in the New Year to keep your mother happy.”

The little boy then went to his mother and asked her what resolutions she had made for the New Year. The mother said, “My New Year’s resolution is to do everything possible to make sure your father keeps his New Year’s resolution.”

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In this message I would like for us to consider some truly LIFE-CHANGING RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR! Our success in keeping these life-changing resolutions is not dependent upon our own self-will or human effort, but rather our complete surrender to the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Here is ............

**Resolution #1: I RESOLVE To “PRESS ON!”**

Two times in this brief passage, the apostle Paul resolves to “press on.”

First, in **verse 12** Paul says, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.”

And then look again at **verse 14**. Paul says, “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of GOD in Christ Jesus.”
1. In these two verses Paul is giving us a very realistic view of the Christian life. He is telling us quite frankly that he has not yet “attained” the perfect life in Christ. He has not yet “reached his goal” of perfect Christ-likeness.

But rather than viewing this “unattained goal of perfect Christ-likeness as unattainable” Paul uses it to motivate him to “press on” until he does attain it in eternal glory.

2. Many Christians live the Christian life much like the Israelites lived life in those forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

   The people had come to the region of Mount Seir which was located southeast of the Promised Land in what we know today as the country of Jordan.

   It was in this region the people seemed to have totally lost their bearings. They kept going around Mount Seir over and over again. They were constantly in motion and yet they were making no progress at all. They were not getting any closer to the Promised Land.

   Finally in Deuteronomy 2:3 (NASB) God spoke to Moses and said, “You have circled this mountain long enough. Now turn north.”

3. Oh brothers and sisters, how long have we been “circling the mountain?” How many years have we done the same thing over and over and over again without making any real progress towards our Promised Land?
4. Like the apostle Paul, **WE MUST RESOLVE TO PRESS ON!** We should never be content to live one year the same way we lived the previous year and the year before that and the year before that.

5. One of the most serious dangers we face in the Christian life is the danger of getting stuck in a spiritual rut.

   Many Christians have simply stopped advancing! They have stopped making any forward progress in their spiritual life.

   - They **keep the same habits** year after year.
   - They **keep going back to the same sins** year after year.
   - They stop learning.
   - They stop growing.
   - They stop learning.
   - They stop reading their Bibles.
   - They stop praying.
   - They stop climbing to new and greater heights in their spiritual life.

   They just keep “circling the same mountain” year after year after year!

6. Brothers and sisters, **“we aren't in the Promised Land yet!”** **Our RACE isn't over! Our WORK isn't done!** It is time for us to “stop circling the same mountain year after year and START PRESSING ON!”
7. Blow the “dust” off your Bible and start reading it! Find a “prayer closet” and start using it! Find a place of service and do it! Find a need and fill it! And each LORD’S DAY find your PEW and be in it!

8. Let us RESOLVE TO “PRESS ON!”

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Now, here is ........

RESOLUTION #2: I WILL RESOLVE To FORGET THE PAST

Verse 13a “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND........”

1. There is an inseparable “link” between this second resolution and the first. You see, it is impossible to “press on” or make progress in your spiritual life if you constantly dwell on your past!

2. There were certain things Paul had to “forget” in order to press on towards the goal!

   - Paul had to forget that he stood by holding the garments of the people who stoned Stephen to death and that he had given his consent to Stephen’s execution.

   - Paul had to forget that he was “the ringleader” of terrible persecution against the early New Testament Church.

   - Paul had to forget that he once was a proud member of the self-righteous Pharisee religious sect.
3. And when I say “forget” I don't mean Paul completely “erased” all these things from his memory, but rather that he chose NOT to dwell on these awful things of his past and allow them to hinder his pursuit of Christ-likeness.

4. I saw a statement the other day that read: “GOD doesn't care about your past, He only cares about your future!” (listen to that again, and chew on it a little bit!)

(A) We must resolve to FORGET OUR PAST MISTAKES.

We have all made lots of mistakes in life, some with very serious consequences. And it seems like when we are discouraged......or when we are depressed......or when we come to the end of another year......we often start dwelling on the numerous mistakes we have made. We start circling the mountain of REGRET over and over again!

Brothers and sisters, you and I cannot “undo” our past mistakes, but JESUS CHRIST did something about it when HE offered Himself as our ATONING SACRIFICE on the cross of Calvary.

When SATAN reminds you of your PAST, remind SATAN of his future!

(B) We must resolve to FORGET OUR PAST HURTS.

There are many “hurts” in life. People say “hurtful words.” People “do hurtful things.” People disappoint us. People betray us.

No doubt someone hurt you last year. And there is a real good possibility you hurt someone last year.

If you and I don’t “let go” of those past hurts we can easily develop a “victim mentality” and become bitter and resentful.

CHRIST chose to “forget” and “forgive” the wrongs done to Him, and we must RESOLVE to do the same!
We must resolve to FORGET OUR PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

J.R. Miller once said, “Nothing hampers or hinders a man more than thinking over the good or great things he has done in the past.”

You see, it is very possible to spend so much time gloating over all the things we “have done” or “used to do” that we become unfruitful and unproductive in the present.

Forget about all the good deeds you did last year and focus on the good deeds that need to be done this year. Forget about the hours of Christian service you gave last year and focus on the Christian service you must give this year!

The LORD will remember your good deeds and your Christian service when He comes with His rewards; so for now let us resolve to FORGET OUR PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS and focus on the work at hand.

I WILL RESOLVE To PRESS ON!
I WILL RESOLVE To FORGET THE PAST!

And thirdly....... 

RESOLUTION #3: I WILL RESOLVE To REACH FORWARD FOR THE ETERNAL PRIZE

vs. 13, 14 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of GOD in Christ Jesus.
1. Notice those two phrases “reaching forward” and “pressing toward the goal.”

Paul is using “athletic” terminology here; more specifically he is painting a word picture of the marathon runners in the ancient Olympic games.

Think back to those images you have seen of an Olympic marathon runner towards the end of the race. When the runner passes through the tunnel into the Olympic stadium for the final lap of his or her 26 mile journey, they are exhausted and their every muscle in their body is racked with pain.

But with “the finish line” in sight, they find the resolve to “kick it into a whole new gear” and give it all they've got for those final 100 yards. They don't wave at the crowd. They don't stop to get a drink of water. They don't stop to get their picture taken. They have their mind focused on one thing and one thing only, and that is “finishing the race!”

And as they draw near the finish line the runner “reaches forward” and “presses toward” the tape so he can finish his race victoriously!

2. Brothers and sisters, 2015 is more than just a New Year on the calendar. It is a sobering reminder that you and I are getting closer and closer to the completion of our race! We are now one year closer to “the finish line” than we were this time last year.

3. So let us RESOLVE TO REACH FORWARD AND PRESS TOWARDS THE GOAL by giving our all to the LORD this year!
In closing, let me just say this: It should never be the goal of any Christian to live a New Year the same way we lived the old year. It should always be our aim to make noticeable spiritual progress from one year to the next. In order to do that......

WE MUST RESOLVE TO PRESS ON!
WE MUST RESOLVE TO FORGET THE PAST!
WE MUST RESOLVE TO REACH FORWARD FOR THE ETERNAL PRIZE!

This New Year may the LORD bless you with........

Enough happiness to keep you sweet,
Enough trials to keep you strong,
Enough sorrow to keep you human,
Enough failure to keep you humble,
Enough success to keep you eager,
Enough friends to give you comfort,
Enough wealth to meet your needs,
Enough enthusiasm to look forward,
Enough faith to banish depression,
Enough determination to make each day better than yesterday.

(author unknown)