“Pressing On Toward the Goal”
Philippians 3:12-14

Tonight we want to spend just a few minutes studying some of the most familiar words ever written by the apostle Paul. Please turn with me in your BIBLES to Philippians the third chapter.

READ: PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14

P R A Y E R

Introducton

I have always been amazed by Olympic athletes.

Most Olympians are “every day” people like you and me. Many of them have regular jobs. Many have families to support. And a great number of them are pursuing college degrees.

And yet each of them is focused on reaching a “higher goal”……and that is to make to the Olympic games. Many of them invest years of their life just to have the opportunity to compete in an event that may be over in as little as 10 seconds.

Most people have NO GOALS, NO DREAMS and NO PLANS. They simply live life one day at a time and take whatever life brings their way. For many, the greatest goal in life is to get out of bed each morning and draw a paycheck at the end of the week or month.

Christian, what is your goal in life? What is the one thing that “drives” you and motivates you? What is the one thing you are most passionate about?
Do you realize GOD HAS A GOAL FOR YOUR LIFE AND MINE? Tonight as we look at our scripture text here in Philippians 3, we want to consider three questions about GOD’S GOAL for your life and mine.

Here is our first question.........

I. What Is God’s Main Goal For My Life? verses 7-11

Read: VERSES 7-11 again

1. Paul wrote NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS, but writing New Testament Books was NOT his main goal in life.

Paul PREACHED THE GOSPEL, but preaching the gospel was NOT his main goal in life.

Paul ESTABLISHED CHURCHES, but establishing Churches was NOT his main goal in life.

2. Paul’s main goal in life was TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST.

You notice Paul says in verse 7, “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.”

Imagine Paul sitting down with a ledger book in front of him. On one side of the ledger are THE PROFITS and on the other side of the ledger are THE LOSSES.

On the PROFIT SIDE of the ledger Paul wrote......

- To know Jesus Christ. v. 8, v. 10
- To know the power of His resurrection  v. 10
- To know the fellowship of sharing in Christ’s sufferings. v.10
- To become like Christ in His death. v. 10
- To attain the resurrection from the dead. v. 11

And on THE LOSS SIDE of the ledger, Paul simply writes two words: EVERYTHING ELSE!

3. THE GOAL TO KNOW CHRIST JESUS was Paul’s greatest passion and desire in life.
IT WAS THAT GOAL THAT DROVE HIM AND MOTIVATED HIM in everything he did.

4. Do you realize this is also GOD’S MAIN GOAL for your life and mine?

   TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST supersedes everything else we may set out to do in this life.

   TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST is far greater than any personal or career goals we might set.

5. TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST is by far the most NOBLE goal anyone can have in this life.

   -Which is a greater goal, to CLIMB THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN or TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST?

   -Which is a greater goal, TO SAIL AROUND THE WORLD or TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST?

   -Which is a greater goal, TO WIN A GOLD MEDAL IN THE OLYMPICS or TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST?

   -Which is a greater goal, TO FLY TO FARTHEST STAR or TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST.

6. Every day when you and I get out of bed our main goal for the day should be TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST BETTER TODAY THAN I DID YESTERDAY!

Now here’s our second question.........
II. How Do I Measure Where I Am In Reaching That Goal?

1. One of the keys to reaching any goal in life is to be able to “measure” progress.

   - For the SALESMAN whose goal is to become “Salesman of The Year” the goal is measured by comparing this year’s sales with last year’s sales.

   - For the OLYMPIC RUNNER whose goal it is to win a Gold Medal, the goal is measured by checking his current times on a stop watch with his previous best times.

2. How do we “measure” how we are doing in attaining our GOAL OF KNOWING CHRIST JESUS?

   Paul tells us in VERSE 12...........

   “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.”

3. Notice those words, “Not that I have already obtained all this.” What does “this” refer to? It refers to those things Paul just mentioned in verses 10 and 11.

   - I want to FULLY KNOW CHRIST and experience the complete POWER and FREEDOM and JOY that comes from living in the light of His resurrection.

   - I want to have the same attitude CHRIST had whenever I face trials and experience the same PEACE CHRIST experienced even in His times of great suffering.

   - I want to live IN VICTORY now as one who has already been resurrected from the DEAD on this side of the grave.

   BUT I HAVE NOT ALREADY OBTAINED ALL THIS....... I HAVEN’T REACHED MY GOAL.......I’M NOT THERE YET!

4. Warren Wiersbe says, “A divine dissatisfaction is essential for spiritual progress.” We see that “divine satisfaction” in
Paul’s statement, “Not that I have already obtained all this.”

Will you and I reach the full measure of Christ-likeness in this life? NO! We will not FULLY AND COMPLETELY KNOW CHRIST JESUS UNTIL WE ARE IN HIS ETERNAL PRESENCE.

But that should not keep us from PURSUING THE GOAL! We must keep “pressing on” until the final goal is obtained.

5. How can we “measure” just where we are in obtaining our goal? How can we determine how much we have grown spiritually?

II Peter 1:5-8 says………

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge:

6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;

7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. To determine how you are doing in obtaining your goal of truly KNOWING JESUS CHRIST, you and I need to measure two critical areas: OUR INPUT and OUR OUTPUT.

(A) As far as INPUT ask yourself………

-How much time do I spend in the word?
-How much time do I spend in prayer?
-How much time do I spend in fellowship with other Christians?

(B) As far as OUTPUT ask yourself………
7. I don’t know about you, but there are still many areas of my life where I fall far-short of Christ-likeness.

-I would like to say I always show the LOVE OF CHRIST to everyone, but I have to admit I sometimes fail.

-I would like to say I always show THE JOY OF CHRIST, but the truth is I whine and complain more than I should.

-I would like to say I always demonstrate THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST, but the truth is “bad drivers” drive me nuts.

-I would like to say I always handle every situation with THE KINDNESS and GENTLENESS OF CHRIST, but the truth is some people can bring out the worst in me.

-I would like to say I always show THE FAITHFULNESS OF CHRIST, but the truth is I know I often fail people in spite of my best intentions.

-I would like to say I always demonstrate THE SELF-CONTROL OF CHRIST, but my waistline would prove me a liar.

8. You see, like Paul, I know “I have not already obtained all this. How about you? This is why we must continue to “press on!” We haven’t reached our goal yet!

What Is God’s Main Goal For My Life? That I know Christ Jesus.
How Do I Measure Where I Am In Reaching That Goal?
I realize I haven’t obtained it yet, nor will I attain it in this life, and yet I will keep pressing on toward that goal.

Now here’s the third question……..

III. What Must I Do To Reach The Goal?

1. Any goal worth pursuing involves sacrifice, commitment, determination and dedication. This is especially true in reaching the goal of CHRIST-LIKENESS.

2. In verses 13,14 we see three KEYS to attaining our goal.

   KEY #1: BE FOCUSED

   v. 13   Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, (NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY!) BUT THIS ONE THING I DO.” (REPEAT)

   Paul was a man with a SINGLE FOCUS….A SINGLE AIM a SINGLE Purpose in life and that was TO KNOW CHRIST JESUS.

   Illustration: Have you ever noticed the eyes of an Olympic runner when they are standing on the starting line waiting for the gun to go off? They aren’t focused on the other runners. They aren’t focused on crowd. They aren’t focused on any other events being contested in other parts of the stadium. Their eyes are totally focused on the finish line.

   PAUL’S SIGHTS WERE FOCUSED ON THE FINISH LINE!
   THIS ONE THING I DO!

   The problem many of us have is that CHRIST doesn’t have our COMPLETE, UNDIVIDED ATTENTION. The more attention we focus on the things of the world the more it hinders our spiritual progress. SO THE FIRST

   KEY #2: BE FORGETFUL

   v. 13   Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: (now listen carefully) FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND AND STRAINING TOWARD WHAT IS
Most of the time “being forgetful” is a bad thing. Have you ever been talking to someone and you can’t remember their name to save your neck? Or have you ever walked into a room and forgot why you’re there? That kind of forgetfulness is embarrassing, isn’t it?

But the kind of “forgetfulness” Paul is talking about in this 13th verse is a GOOD THING!

Paul certainly had things in his past he was ashamed of. We learn in Acts 7 before he accepted Christ, he had given his approval to the stoning of Stephen and even allowed Stephen’s killers to lay their clothes at his feet while they did it.

In Acts 8 we learn that Paul, or SAUL as he was known in those days was the chief persecutor of Christians, doing everything he could to destroy the Church.

Realizing he could not CHANGE THE PAST, HE HAD TO FORGET IT AND MOVE ON!

Satan, our accuser knows if he can get us to remember OUR PAST SINS AND FAILURES, he can impede our progress……..rob us of our joy…..and steal our victory.

We must believe in GOD’S PROMISE that HE HAS FORGIVEN AND FORGOTTEN OUR SINS, therefore we too must FORGIVE OURSELVES and FORGET OUR PAST.

Look not back on yesterday so full of failure and regret;
Look ahead and seek God’s way—All sin confessed you must forget. —DJD

KEY NUMBER 1: BE FOCUSED
KEY NUMBER 2: BE FORGETFUL!
Then KEY NUMBER 3 is: **BE FAITHFUL!**

v. 14  I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which GOD has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

The Greek word Paul uses in this verse for “PRESS ON” is the word DioKO (DY-YOKO) which the term the ancients used to describe how a hound would pursue a fox. The hound would relentlessly pursue the fox until he gained his prize.

Paul was determined to “press on” to “relentlessly pursue” the prize until he obtained it.

**NO TURNING BACK!**
**NO REGRETS**
**FAITHFUL TO THE VERY END!**

Church roll books are filled with the names of people who “started the race” but didn’t finish it. They may have made that great confession of faith and been baptized. But soon their commitment wained and their spiritual flame died out.

May you and I faithfully….relentlessly pursue the prize for which God is calling us heavenward in Christ Jesus.

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**CONCLUSION**

The year was 1968. The place, MEXICO CITY.

The closing ceremonies of the MEXICO CITY OLYMPIC GAMES had just finished. The spectators were picking up their belongings and preparing to leave Olympic Stadium when the P.A. announcer asked them to remain in their seats.
Outside the stadium the sounds of police sirens could be heard and the flash of blue lights seen encircling someone making his way toward the stadium.

The man was JOHN STEPHEN AKWHARI, the marathon runner from Tanzania, Africa. The last marathon runner had entered Olympic Stadium hours earlier before the closing ceremonies even began. The medals had already been awarded. WHY WAS JOHN STEPHEN AKWHARI SO LATE?

As AKHWARI entered the stadium, the confused spectators soon realized he was covered with blood. He had taken a terrible fall early in the race, whacked his head on the pavement, severely damaged his knee and endured a trampling by other runners before he could get back on his feet.

The crowd rose to their feet and began cheering on the injured runner as though he was the Marathon champion. When JOHN STEPHEN AKWARI crossed the finish line the crowd let out a thunderous roar!

AKHWARI was quickly whisked off to a nearby hospital to be treated for his injuries and severe dehydration.

The next day, AKHWARI was interviewed by a sports journalist. The first question the journalist asked was, “Why, after sustaining the kinds of injuries you did, would you ever get up and proceed to the finish line when there was no way you could possibly win the race?”

JOHN STEPHEN AKHWARI said, “My country did not send me over 11,000 kilometers to START A RACE, BUT TO FINISH ONE.

The analogy is obvious isn’t it? CHRIST has NOT called you and me to START THE RACE, He has called us to FINISH IT!

And so this 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 CHRIST IS CALLING ME HEAVENWARD IN CHRIST JESUS.”