

I Press On

by Bob Jennings

The sermon emphasizes the importance of perseverance and striving for the goal of heaven, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.

Scripture: 1 Kings 14:11, 2 Chronicles 14:11, Matthew 6:33, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 3:12, Philippians 3:14, Philippians 4:13

Topics: "Pressing On"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the past dedication and fervor of believers in their pursuit of God's kingdom. They emphasize the importance of constantly seeking God through prayer and studying His Word. The speaker also highlights the need to maintain childlike faith and make sacrificial decisions for the sake of the kingdom. They urge believers to continue pressing forward, acknowledging that there is still much to learn and experience in their relationship with God.

Transcript

That verse, that phrase, We rest on Thee, I looked it up, it's 2 Chronicles 14.11. Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, Lord, there is no one besides Thee to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength, so help us. The Lord our God, for we trust in Thee, and in Thy name we have come against this multitude, so King James, we rest on Thee. Would you open your Bibles please to Philippians chapter 3, speaking about songs and where the song had its origin.

Does anyone know the origin of that song, I'm Pressing on the Upward Way? Go ahead. Does anyone know the origin of that song, I'm Pressing on the Upward Way, the scriptural basis for it? Well, that's another title of it, yeah. Well, it's right here, Philippians chapter 3. In verse 12 and verse 14.

I press on, I press on. Let's read verses 10 through 16. 7 through 16.

Paul had warned them in chapter 3 about the dogs of false circumcision. And then he says what the true circumcision is, one thing is we put no confidence in the flesh. He says in verse 4, if anyone wants to put confidence in the flesh, I far more.

Look at my qualifications, my external qualifications in Judaism, circumcised and this and this and this. But he says in verse 7, whatever things are gain to me, those things I've counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Scales just hit the opposite, you see.

More than that, I count all things, not just whatever things, I count all things, loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For whom I have suffered the loss. He doesn't only say I counted as loss, I actually, I have suffered the loss of all things.

And count them but rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, win Christ. And may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering being conformed to his death.

In order that I may obtain the resurrection from the dead, not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on. Towards a goal for the prize of the upward call in James, the mark for the prize of the high call of God in Christ Jesus.

Let us therefore as many as are perfect have this attitude and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you. However, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. For the title, I will select those three words in verse 12 and again in verse 14.

I press on. Both presses there are the same Greek word incidentally. In the King James, the first one is translated I follow after and that's what the word means.

It means to follow hard after, it means to pursue, often it's translated persecute. The book of Philippians is filled with striking outstanding verses. Like 4.13, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Like 1.6, I am confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Like 2.9, wherefore God has highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name. But to me, I think this has always been the most outstanding favorite verse to me in the book of Philippians.

That is 3.14 or 13 and 14. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call. Call, what is it that really makes you tick? How would you sum it up? What is that one main thing? What is your chief aim? He would put it this way.

I press on. This one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. This one thing I do, I press on for the goal.

Now admittedly, the Christian is complete, right? When he comes to Christ, when he's joined to Christ, there is a sense in which he is complete. Colossians 2.9, you are complete in him. We are seated with Christ in heavenly places right now.

It says in Romans 8.1, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. We are complete in him. Yet in another sense, we are not complete.

As this text teaches, it implies that there is a future attainment. Yet there is progress here commanded. I press on.

Progress is here commanded and expected and testified. We are complete and yet Paul says here in verse 12, I'm not complete. I have not obtained it.

I have not already become perfect, but I press on. And so, as with a baby, there's growth expected. As with a warrior, though he's promised the promised land, yet the battle must be waged and he must lay hold of that that has been promised already to him.

As a runner, he may have the trophy at the beginning of the race, but he's got to win the race nevertheless. And so he must press on and strive for that goal. For the outline, I have just three different aspects of this one phrase.

I press on. First of all, the future tense. Paul, he's pressing on.

On toward what? Then the past tense. Pressing on from what? And then the present tense. Pressing on with what? First, I press on toward what? Future tense, as depicted or indicated by this phrase in verse 13, and 13 and 14 will be the main text that we're looking at.

Future tense, reaching forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward what? We have this phrase, as I mentioned, in 12 and 14. I press on.

Let's look at the first usage of it in verse 12. He says in 12, I'm pressing on to lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. John Hamilton was just sharing with me that he's been talking with some men and I who are interested in coming to the meetings, and one is beginning to see sovereignty.

And here's another verse, isn't it? Teaching the prevenient grace of the Lord. He says, I want to lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. The picture is maybe like a king sending out some men to lay hold of some particular man who has some special skill or service and bringing him into service, into duty, into service for the king.

Or maybe like in the realm of athletics, you know, Billy Sunday in his early before Christ years was playing baseball in Iowa and there was some coach or scout from some major league team in Chicago that was out there and saw him play and saw him run and they laid hold of him. We want you to come on in. And so that's what the Lord did with this man Saul of Tarsus.

We read of it in Acts chapter 9 how the Lord laid hold of him. And so what was it, Paul, that the Lord laid hold of you? Or why did he lay hold of you? Well, right after that conversion experience where he met the Lord of Glory on the Damascus Road, the Lord spoke to Ananias to go and lay hands on him. He resisted a little.

The Lord said, Go ahead, because he is a chosen vessel, a chosen instrument of mine. Why? That he may bear my name. That's one reason.

Oh, there's a lot of different ways of saying it, but that's one reason why the Lord laid hold of Paul and every one of us who are Christians. He laid hold of us that we might bear his name. Like a banner carrier with a name on it, you know, bearing the name so everyone can see it.

Like a woman who marries a man, she takes on her his name and bears his name. And so Paul was always interested to fulfill that high calling and bear the name of Jesus over the ocean waves and climb the steeps and cross the vales to bear the name of Jesus to the regions beyond. That's why he was laid hold of.

But having said that, is this verse what that teaches exactly? That's the way I have always taken it. But I don't think that that is what this verse is saying. And the reason is because of the second usage, which gives us more definition.

One reason here is that verse 13 would nullify that interpretation. He said, brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it. In other words, he is not talking about something in terms of time.

He's not talking about something in terms of sanctification. He's not talking about something that he's entered into a little bit and wants to enter into it more. But I haven't laid hold of it yet.

And then I say the second usage of I press on in verse 14 gives more definition. Look at that. I press on for the goal, for the prize.

It's foot-racing terminology, right? Talking about goal, talking about prize. Here the runner is out. He's out stretching, reaching, gapping for breath, running toward that goal.

And when he makes the goal, he then receives the prize. So what is the goal? And what is the prize? What is it that he is pressing for? What is this goal and prize? I think we have some meaning or some clue in this phrase upward call, high call, King James. And another phrase, we have the phrase heavenly call.

So surely it's talking about heaven. God calling out a people from sin to heaven. God calling out a people from earth below and saying, move up higher, inherit this high, with this high calling, inherit glory and heaven.

And this matches, that matches with verse 9 and 11. Verse 9, that I may be found in him. Surely that's talking about future tense, not present tense.

And verse 11, in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. Surely that's future and not present. And so this goal then is finishing the course, finishing the race, making it to the end.

That is the end of our life. That is arriving at heaven's gate. What is the prize? I press on toward the goal for the prize.

What is the prize? There would be many ways of saying it. It's heaven. It's the crown.

The crown, there henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will award me on that day and not me only. Speaking against this idea that only special ones get special crowns, then not me only, but to all those who love his appearing. It's the kingdom.

Come, you blessed of the Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. We're in the kingdom of grace. Now let the glory then.

It's joy. Enter into the joy of your Lord. It's rest.

They shall rest from their labors. It's glory. Hebrews 2.10, in bringing many sons to glory.

And in another place, a far more exceeding and eternal rate of glory. It's full salvation. It's a new body, a brand-new body.

And that's brought out three times here in this passage. For twice, verse 11, attained of the resurrection from the dead. And then in verse 21, will transform the body, the new heavens and the new earth.

Another way of saying it is life in all of its meaning and fullness. That's the prize. Another way of saying it, and no doubt the most complete, is that it is, the prize is, the Lord Jesus Christ himself being with him.

Ultimately it's Christ. The songwriter says, even my goal is God himself. In addition to the prize, there's truth in that too.

Isaiah 25, this is our God. It will be said on that day, this is our God for whom we have waited. Here's the prize at last.

John 17, I pray that they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. 1 Thessalonians 4, thus we will be always with the Lord. Comfort one another with these words.

He himself is the prize. And again, we shall see him face to face. And again, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

In contrast, the others, that is those who do not obey the gospel, those who do not obey the Lord, they will pay the penalty of what? Eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. They'll miss him, the prize. And it goes on to say, when he comes, to be glorified in all his saints and to be admired by all those who have believed in him.

He's the prize. So my point here is, Paul, what are you pressing on for? You say I press on? What are you pressing on for? I am pressing on for heaven, for seeing the Lord of glory and being with him. Making it at last into the realm of glory.

Pressing on for that. You see, there are really, there's three couplets here in this passage. Maybe this will help.

I don't know about you, but I have always had difficulty in reading this passage. I mean, everything seems so wonderful and glorious, but yet I haven't felt real comfortable with what it exactly means. And I think I feel comfortable with this, that Paul is talking about perseverance now and glory then.

There are three couplets that are in parallel. Look in verse 8. More than that, he says, I count all things to be lost and so on, sever the loss of all things, that I may gain Christ. And I've seen articles presenting that, that that's more of Christ now.

I don't think so. I think it's talking about ending up with the Lord in heaven. And it says in verse 9, and may be found in him.

So you see, verse 8 is present. Verse 9 is future. Then look in verse 10, the second couplet.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection. That's purely this present life. But then in verse 11, in order that I may attain to the resurrection, that's future.

Then a third couplet in verse 12 and 13, that's present tense. Not that I've already obtained it and so on, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of future tense. But then in verse 13, still present tense.

Do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet. This one thing I do. And then 14 is future tense.

So there's three pairs there. Now then, the second heading, past tense. Paul, from what are you pressing on? I press on from what? As indicated by this phrase, forgetting what lies behind.

A plowman can't look back. Or it won't help him to plow a straight line if he does. A runner, he shouldn't look back.

Remember lots, why? Forgetting what lies behind, pressing on from what, you see. What is it that we are to press on from? What is it that we're to forget? Are we to forget the Lord's benefits to us? Surely not. Psalm 103, do not forget all his benefits.

The disciples forgot the miracle of the loaves. No, it doesn't mean that, surely. Are we to forget our sins and God's dealings with our sins? No, we're not to forget that either.

It says in Deuteronomy 9, verse 7, Do not forget how you provoked the Lord to wrath in the wilderness. You parents, you spank your children and you don't want them to forget. On the other hand, though, yes, in a sense we are to forget our sins and the Lord's past dealings with us.

That is, not letting them defeat us or distract us. Any athlete knows that if he dwells too long on that mistake, he may well make another one. So we cannot remember those too much.

We've got to forget the if-onyms and the vain regrets, they are vain, forgetting that. What does this mean? Does it mean forgetting our past failures? I say in a sense it can mean that. But I think technically it means forgetting our past successes and attainments as a Christian.

Now think who this was. This was Paul. I press on.

This was the man who had planted churches everywhere around the Mediterranean, whose ministry was attended with power and signs and wonders, so much that he had a reputation in hell. Jesus, I know. Paul, I know.

This was the man who had special revelations of where he wrote most of the New Testament canon. This was the man who was caught up into the third heaven for special visions of God. And yet here this man is saying, forgetting what lies behind.

They came to Duncan Campbell and said, after the Hebrides revival and all the glory that attended that, they said surely now everything hereafter will be anticlimactic. He answered, never. He intended to press on.

He didn't intend to rely on his past attainments or the glory he had seen, God's presence with him. You see, it does not matter, brethren, how far up the mountain we've climbed. It doesn't matter how well we've climbed.

We're still up there and we must need to press on. There is a danger of a slump in the middle years where we've known the Lord for some time and then slide into a spiritual slump, a slumber, a laziness, a complacency, a self-satisfaction, a rut of boredom. Habakkuk 3.2, revive thy work in the midst of the years.

What work? Oh, for sure the work that he began in me. He began a good work in you. Revive thy work in me in the midst of the years.

Christmas Evans fell into a slump in the midst of the years. And the same with Powell Harris. Having been greatly used by God, they fell into a depression, a slump, not for a few days but months.

Just as with the physical body, in the midst of the years we can get that middle-aged spread. I mean, the young are trim and the old are often mean, but in the midst of the years things get sloppy. In a race, the same way, we need to catch that second wind and press on.

In a ball game, you lose your momentum and somehow you're not pressing on. In building construction, you know, you get the outer shell put up, things seem to go so fast and it's so exciting, but then somehow we lose the momentum and it seems like we'll never make it. In the growing season, the crop, you know, it sprouts up and it's really flourishing and then that summer drought sets in and it's alive, it's there and alive, but it's not pressing on.

In marriage, it seems that there are temptations that come in the midst of the years that don't come as a newlywed or as a fullwed. And so it is in our Christian life. Are you listening? We start out and everything is so fresh and so new.

There is so much excitement and vision and expectation and why it's an adventure to read the Bible and an adventure to pray and there's that early zeal and energy and hope. There's an admiration for those who are older in the faith and have been used by God. We respect them highly and we want to be like them.

We see false Christianity for the first time and there is a contempt for it, it is so disgusting. We see sin for what it is for the first time. We see that it's a real rip-off and doesn't pay, it doesn't produce, it doesn't satisfy and so there's this sensitivity to sin.

But alas, the years go on and there is this danger of becoming callous, becoming hardened, becoming presumptuous and becoming careless. It seems that gradually, you know that's normally the way the devil works, little by little by little, gradually the devil comes in and makes us feel that the sacred is commonplace, a sense of familiarity playing marbles with diamonds. We become content with our attainment spiritually and fail to press on.

We think somehow that we've pretty well seen everything that God has to say to us. I mean we've heard the tapes, we've heard the preachers, this one, that one and the other and we've read the great books and we think we've pretty well arrived, there's nothing much more new out there and we fail to press on. Paul says, forgetting what lies behind, I press on.

We become like a watchman on the wall in the middle of the night and fall sleepy. The Mexicans in the middle of the day take their siesta and so we fall into this woe of all woes and become at ease in Zion. Amos 6.1, more to those who are at ease in Zion.

Formerly, you see, we fled the city of destruction. Amid much opposition was our conversion. We scrambled through slews of despond.

We knocked at the wicked gate, at the door of salvation with all prayer. We dug like a miner for every nugget of Bible truth and we protected our wheat from the million eyes. I mean we wrote it down, every little thought that we got from our quiet time, we wrote it down so we wouldn't forget it.

We took notes at every sermon. We took notes listening to tapes. Oh yes, that's the way it used to be.

We were like violent men taking the kingdom by force, constantly watching in prayer, using our free time, using our lunch breaks for prayer and the reading of the Word, time to give some little fresh thought to God, this God who I've never known. We gladly took sacrificial steps of obedience, you see, for the Lord of

glory. We made weighty decisions, weighty decisions that would change the whole course and career of our lives spiritually.

We formerly had this childlike faith, you know, willing to risk so much to put the kingdom of God first. But now we've gone on some ways. We've got some spirits of immorality behind us.

We've got more to watch out for. And now it's a little more difficult, you see, to be so sacrificial and why there's more to lose. Yes, now we've got some mildly behind us and, well, it's more easy, you see, to take it easy and not press on.

We've got sweet friends, like-minded friends everywhere, and we are tempted to feel comfortable and not press on. We have come through much trembling, and now we've got some security and some assurance and we're not as likely to press on. We've got a sense that God is with us and we no longer come to the throne of grace with the same importunity that we used to, to press on.

We are established in our ministries and in our vocations and many perplexities have been solved in our lives and we're not as desperate as we used to be and we don't get in and press on. You know, we don't need to be in our spiritual life like it is in our physical life. Most folks, they quit growing when they get about 16 or 19 years of age.

They don't grow anymore after that, but we don't need to be that way spiritually. No, we can be way down to the end in a wheelchair and still press on. Do you have a growing edge in your life this morning, brethren? Are you able to say, I am pressing on, new heights gaining every day? If possible, I remind you to be like Samson and not even be aware that the spirit has been freed and has been departed.

Of course, not in full and total and absolute for the regenerate, but that sense of nearness, that sense of blessing, that sense of freshness. The spirit of God departed. It's possible to be like King Uzziah.

Why, he was helped greatly when he was a new king, when he was there struggling, making his way to establish the kingdom. He was helped greatly. But then the kingdom became established and he got proud and God left him.

It's possible to be like Jehu. Do you remember Jehu anointed by the prophet of God for the purpose of exterminating veil worship? And he did it well. He did it radically.

God was pleased with everything he did. But then we find in the next verse, 2 Kings 10.31, that Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the Lord with all his heart. You read that verse and you just know it's possible to become like Martha.

Preoccupied with your vocation, preoccupied with your work and with your serving and to forget that only a few things are necessary, really only one, Jesus told her. One thing I do. It's possible to leave the first love, that intimacy, that first degree of love, to be rich and in need of nothing and not press on, for the Emmanuel to become Ichabod.

It's possible to be like a ship and lose your breeze when you're not moving on, like a train. The power has gone out, but you're still coasting. Action without life is easy to become, to come to a place, brethren, where there is a sticking point in our lives.

Weightlifters talked about that. You've been adding on weight, ten pounds, ten pounds, ten pounds more, ten pounds more. Progress, progress, progress.

And all of a sudden you've come to this place where you can't push anymore. You've come to a sticking place, sticking point. One month goes by, two months goes by, you can't break through that thing.

Same way in the spiritual life. You've come safe this far. You've made progress so far, but now you're up against a brick wall and can't go anymore.

A sticking point. As I brought up some months ago, it's possible that for the brethren, for the saints, for the people of God to have a still in their lives, S-T-I-F-L. You had trouble with that still way back then and you are still having trouble with it.

It says, of godly Jehoshaphat and his reign, this and this and this were done, nevertheless, they still sacrifice and burn incense on the high places. And then we go on a few chapters later. Jehoash.

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord. A good king, a good reign. Now listen, apply this to yourself, for we are kings unto our gods.

But it says the same thing. Nevertheless, still they sacrifice on the high places. And then we go down through the same with Shemaziah.

They still sacrifice on the high places. And then we go down to the good reign of Azariah. They still sacrifice and burn incense on the high places.

The good reign of Jotham. They still sacrifice on the high places. The good reign of Manasseh.

I mean, after he repented, they still sacrifice on the high places. It's possible to come to a sticking point, feel that thing is there, I'm stuck, I'm up against a brick wall, the wall can't break through, and press on. Hear the heartbeat of the apostle Paul.

I press on. You see, the devil would threaten us. He would challenge us.

He would bluff us. He would say, look, like the Debussy told David, you shall not come in here. Don't take this ground.

Don't take this city. He would threaten us and say, the cost is too great. It's impossible.

You can't live without that sin. But David said, it says of David, nevertheless he took the stronghold of Jesus. I say, listen to the heartbeat of the apostle Paul.

He says, I press on. He says here in verse 10, that I may know him. He's looking forward when he shall know the Lord as he has known face to face.

But everyone who has that hope in him, he does this thing right now. Look, I want to know you more and more right now. I mean, what woman is engaged to a man that doesn't want to know more intimacy right now before that wedding day? What miner comes into a gold mine and is satisfied with the first day's haul? No, he wants more and more right now.

Paul says that I may know him. Oh, in what way do you expect to know the Lord right now? What are you talking about? Now, give me some practical illustrations here. Well, he says, number one, the power of his

resurrection, verse 10.

Paul was always talking about power. Now, keep in mind, we're talking about pressing on from what? Paul, didn't you know the Lord? Oh, yes. But I want to know him more.

Didn't you have the power of the resurrection? Yes, I want more. The power of the resurrection, he was always talking about his power. The kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power.

I labor striving according to his power, which might be worked in me. Power of the resurrection, to overcome sin. You see, when an airplane, when it loses power, it starts going down.

The gravity starts overtaking it and the plane goes down. When the power comes back, then it's able to overcome the force, the pull of gravity. The same way with sin, with lust, for that only gravity that remains in us.

Power of the resurrection! Paul says, that's what I need. That's what I want. That's what I press on for, yes, right now.

The power to say yes and the power to say no. Charles Spurgeon told these young preacher students, you'd be better to learn how to say no than to learn how to speak Latin. Isn't it true? John Piper, a preacher and a pastor from Minnesota, he was out on a preaching tour, staying in a motel.

After the meeting one night, he came in the motel room, weary, locked down, was going to turn the television on. And he thought, no, I won't do it. Lest I see something on there where by and defiled and lose my power, I've got to preach tomorrow.

You know, it is ridiculous, isn't it, for us to pray, Lord, lead me not into temptation and then turn right around and put ourselves in the place of temptation. The power to keep my mouth shut, the power to not retaliate, not take into account a wrong covered, the power to control my mind, my mental thoughts, the power to get out of bed, to study the Bible, rise up and pray. Let me read you just this excerpt from Tom Sadowski's letter which is addressed to all the church and I'll put it up on the board.

He says, after three weeks, I mean after a year and a half of suicidal thoughts and depression, of the grossest form, heaviest form, he says, three weeks after God met with him, he says, every single morning since April 17th, I have awakened, usually after just two or three hours of sleep, just flooded in my soul with joy, an enormously comforting sense of the love of God for me being shed abroad in my heart and working out through me to others in great excitement and anticipation as to what the Lord has in store for me in the day ahead. God, he calls me to awaken every day now for the past three weeks with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The very first words out of my mouth now are to this effect, Lord, I love you, I love you, I love you.

I do, I do, I do. Jesus, precious Jesus, those are his words. Now, the power of the resurrection, he got a dose of power.

He says here the fellowship of his sufferings. Paul, how do you want to know the Lord? You want to know the fellowship of his sufferings. Fellowship of his sufferings.

Those that survived the Titanic, they get together every now and then. What is this koinonia? What is this fellowship that they have? It's because they went through the same experience of suffering. Same way

with us and the Lord.

The fellowship of his sufferings. Going through the very same things that he went through. Do we look at sufferings that way as an opportunity to know the Lord better? Look at Job and his latter ends.

The Lord could have been bitter against God, the Father, because he dealt with him so. But nevertheless he said, Not my will, but thine be done. Conform to his death.

Conform. That is, shape. Every trial, every pressure, every suffering, it's the pressure you see from the Father's hand shaping us, conforming us into his image.

Every trial that comes from the Lord is a call from him to come and die with him. Conform to his death. Death to what? Death of self-life.

Why? Self-will. Last, I press on with what? What manner? What attitude? I point you to that word, press. Press.

It means pressure, right? Pressure against the flesh, the world, and the devil. It's not laid back and take it easy he's talking about here anyway. He's talking about pressure, putting pressure against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Swimming against the tide, upstream against the flow. That's the way we came into the kingdom. They pressed into it, Luke 16, 16.

That's a lot of the way we go through the kingdom to make it to heaven. Listen to Jonathan Edwards. I would give you advice.

To keep up as great a stride and earnestness in religion as if you knew yourself to be in a state of nature and were seeking conversion. We were violent for the kingdom or were we violent for the kingdom then? Now we should be more so. We are under more obligations.

Due to this, professors of religion often lose their sweet and lively sense of spiritual things and grow cold and dark and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows for as if they had done as the apostles did and pressed on, their path would have been as the shining light that shines more and more. Do not leave off seeking, striving, and praying for the very same things that we exhort unconverted persons to strive for and a degree of which you have had already in conversion. Pray that your eyes may be opened, that you may know yourself and be brought to God's footstool and that you may see the glory of God and of Christ.

Those who have most of these things have need still to pray for them. There is so much blindness and hardness and pride and death remaining that they still need to have the work of God brought upon them further to enlighten them and enliven them that shall be like bringing them out more and more from darkness into light. Think of this.

He says there are very few requests that are proper for an infinite man that are not also in some sense proper for the godless. I press on. Paul, what did you press on with? With what attitude? I press on with single-minded devotion to Jesus.

Verse 13, this one thing I do, one thing, one main thing that the Christian has to go for, forgetting what is behind, reaching forward to what lies ahead, pressing toward heaven, knowing God more, knowing Him

then. It speaks of a sacrificial devotion. Paul talked about that up in verse 7 and 8. I count it all off to gain Christ.

Rutherford says put a low value on everything else but Christ. And that Paul did. He says it's rubbish compared to this surpassing value.

Here's the best lie over here. A shipwrecked swimmer, if he tries to hang on to too much gold and silver, it'll take him down and he'll lose it all. He'll lose his life.

And put it on top of everything in the whole world and lose his soul. But Paul says, I count it all off to gain Christ. Let nothing get in the way.

Remember, brethren, this one thing that ought to be honored and it was Paul. I was talking with an inmate the other day. He had just made a profession of faith.

He'd been thrown in. He'd just began to read the Bible. He was talking like he'd seen life.

And I asked him, Doug, I said, do you know what is the main purpose in life? What is the main purpose for your life? What is the one main thing for you that you should do? And I told him. And he said, that really helps. That makes it simple, doesn't it? That you've only got one thing.

You don't have ten things out there that you've got to cheat for. This one thing I do. In conclusion, we ought to be gripped with the realization that we're not there yet.

We haven't made it to heaven yet. We've still got ground to take. We've still got a race to run.

We've come this far, but we can't look back at other runners. We can't look back at the ground we've covered here sure to be hindered or destroyed. You've got to look forward, headlong, stretching, reaching, gapping, running, pressing for the mark all the way to the end.

We're not there yet. Not yet, verse 12 and 13. Not that I've already attained.

I do not regard myself. Or do you think that you have pretty well seen all that God has had for you? Remember godly men like Isaiah, like Job, like Daniel, like Ezekiel, like John the Apostle. When God came to these godly men and revealed Himself in a fuller way, they were like dead men.

What have we seen of God? It could be compared to a grain of sand on the whole seashore. We've but seen the fringes of His ways. How many of you could just say, I know what's in three chapters in 1 Kings? I mean, you know, so much of the Bible is there to be explored, to be written down, written in our minds.

George Wheeler read the Bible, I think it was 15 times in the last five years, something like that. And he said toward the end of his life, I feel like I've just scratched the surface of what God has to say to me. What do we know of love? Loving God, loving the unlovely.

What do we know of cheerfulness in hard situations? What do we know of an ability to redeem conversations and to unify our brothers? What do we know of soul winning? What do we know of answers to prayer? I feel for myself, I know so little. Much reason to press on. This attitude, this attitude of an awareness of our shortcoming, of our imperfection, that attitude, brethren, is perfection.

But they have there in verse 15, Therefore let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude. What attitude? What is this perfect attitude? It's the attitude that I must press on. He who thinks that he has no sin is loaded with sin.

He who has no holiness thinks he has no holiness who thinks he has enough. Much shame. Lord, make me as holy as a saved sinner can be.

We ought to take the attitude of old Caleb. Before the end of his life, he was still saying, Give me this hill country. I want more.

How little we know of God. Look, there's time, isn't there? For we feel like we've given up. Do you women know that? Terry said, I can't go on.

What do you mean you can't go on? We're not done yet. We've got to go on. We're not to heaven yet.

He who endures to the end shall be saved. These things that Paul was talking about in those three couplets that I was mentioning, the verses that apply to the present tense and followed by future, what was Paul talking about? What's going on there? Paul was talking about, like Peter, making his calling and election sure. If you do these things, have your faith, this and this and this, they will assure you that you'll not stumble, but an abundant entrance will be ministered to you.

Making your calling and election sure. Not burning it, but making it sure. Confirming it.

So, Hosea says, let us press on in the world. I like Jesse North's watchword, password, it could be odd. Press on, brother.

But he always said, the early church, they were going on in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

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