

Reaching for the Prize – Part 1
Philippians 3:12-16
Series: Joy and Gratitude in Christ

1. Introduction

- a. In this section we will explore a metaphor comparing the Christian life to a footrace. Paul used frequent sports metaphors to markedly demonstrate the energy and determination that Christianity requires.
 - i. He speaks of boxing (beat the air...1Cor. 9:26).
 - ii. Wrestling (wrestle against flesh...Eph 6:12).
 - iii. Fighting (fought the good fight...2 Tim. 4:7)
 - iv. Medaling at an event (receiving a wreath...1 Cor. 9:25).
 - v. Running a race (here and various places)
 - b. In comparing the Christian life to a footrace, Paul demonstrates his passionate concern for growth...pressing forward no matter what pain and agony there might be involved.
 - c. In our last section, we learned that what Paul lost for the sake of the Cross was worthless and what he gained was exceedingly more valuable than anything that could be comprehended: Paul gained:
 - i. Knowledge, Righteousness, Power, Fellowship
 - ii. He lost: self-righteousness, works based salvation, morality
 - d. Today, though, Paul beckons us on in this Christian race. None of us have been spiritually perfected but all of us must be pressing towards that goal. Paul was actively pursuing the perfection of Christ.
 - e. Spiritual children must grow:
 - i. 1) It glorifies God, 2) It evidences salvation, 3) It demonstrates the gospel to others, 4) Assurance of salvation, 5) It keeps us from self-inflicted suffering, 6) It protects the cause of Christ from reproach, 7) It produces joy, 8) It equips us for ministry, 9) It enhances our witness
2. Verse 12A – Pursuing the prize requires a proper awareness - Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect
- a. The awareness of the need to improve one's spiritual condition is a necessary prerequisite to pursuing the prize of spiritual perfection.
 - b. Paul was not yet perfect and neither are we.
 - c. His knowledge of Christ was still incomplete

- i. **1 Corinthians 13:12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.
 - d. There must be some sort of holy dissatisfaction with one's current spiritual condition; we cannot be complacent and contented people that indulge or excuse sin
- 3. Verse 12B – Pursuing the prize requires a maximum effort - but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.
 - a. Press on means to run. It is an aggressive and energetic endeavor
 - b. Christ has overtaken us so we run after him for the very same reason
 - i. Paul's goal was consistent with Christ's goal of saving him
- 4. Verse 13 – Pursuing the prize requires a focused concentration - Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,
 - a. A maximum effort without focused concentration is useless. Every athlete knows that runners in a race must fix their eyes ahead of them; those who watch the crowd or their own feet are likely to trip and fall. To make a maximum effort in any athletic endeavor requires the participants to concentrate on a point straining ahead.
 - b. Paul maintained his focus by forgetting what was behind him. Past failures or victories do not guarantee failure or success today. Today matters.
 - c. Straining forward describes stretching a muscle to its limit; a runner straining every muscle to reach the finish line.
- 5. Verse 14 – Pursuing the prize requires a proper motivation - I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
 - a. Press forward – a continuous bearing down
 - b. Here we see that it was the prize that motivated Paul to run to win.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 9:24** Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.
 - c. The upward call (comes from God)
- 6. Verse 15 – Pursuing the prize requires a proper recognition - Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.
 - a. Paul was not in this race alone; all Christians are in this race.

- b. We are not practically perfected but we are positionally perfect
 - c. We are to think this way – this is a sign of maturity
 - d. Those that refuse to listen to Paul will hear the same message come from God.
7. Verse 16 –Pursuing the Prize requires a proper conformity - Only let us hold true to what we have attained.
- a. However could be translated “one more thing.” This last prerequisite for pursuing the prize might also be described as consistency. Having developed proper awareness, effort, focus, motivation, and recognition, believers must consistently keep living to what they have attained.
 - b. A believer must continue running in his lane until the race is done.
8. Benediction –
- a. **Hebrews 12:1** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,