

**SLIDE ONE** Progress with Jesus! ECN 10<sup>th</sup> December 1830 congregation  
Philippians 3v12-16 KL v17-21

I don't want to have the last word...  
*I want to share the preaching task and joy with another –*  
It's always about giving it away, for we only get to keep what we give away, long before my news was a reality, the rota had decreed and God had foreknown that **Katherine was set to be preaching tonight..... and as she's one of all-time favourite preachers... ..Id not want to miss out... so** tonight we are going to seek to honour and handle this splendid, rich and weighty passage... together in Philippians Three  
*And in Christ its not goodbye so much as see you soon!*

**SLIDE TWO** \*\*\* A lot of people have died climbing the Alps, falling off of the precipices. At the foot of one of the many mountains is a little grave, it's the grave of a man who tried to climb and fell to his death. The tombstone is very simple. It gives his name and then it says three words, "**He died climbing.**" That really should be the epitaph of the tomb of every Christian, They died climbing -- for the pursuit of Jesus is worth it... .

Here in Philippians 3, **Paul gave us so much more in his spiritual biography, his past (Phil. 3:1-11), his present (Phil. 3:12-16), and his future (Phil. 3:17-21).** We have already met Paul "the accountant," who discovered new values when he met Jesus Christ. In this section we meet Paul "the athlete" with his spiritual vigor, pressing toward the finish line in the Christian race. **As a result, he was not upset by things behind him, around him, or before him— things did not rob him of his joy!**

Some simple ideas from this passage.....

**SLIDE THREE** I. Be Dissatisfied With Your Position

"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." (v.12) Now Paul was saved and Paul was sanctified, but Paul was not satisfied. Content but also discontent!

Even though this man walked with God, had a dynamic prayer life, was winning people to Jesus right and left, and even writing inspired Scripture; he still said, "I have not arrived yet." He says in v.12, "I am not yet perfected." The word **perfected does not mean flawless, it means mature. Want more of Jesus, want more of the Holy Spirit! What is your want?**

**What Paul was saying was, there was still plenty of room for improvement in his Christian life.** He still had a lot of growing in the Lord to do. I find it amazing that perhaps the greatest man of God in all of the New Testament said on one occasion, "I am the least of all the apostles, and the chief of all sinners."

You think about it. If anyone could have rested on his laurels, Paul could have. He had seen the risen Lord, he had visited the third heaven, he was the world's greatest preacher, *he was the world's greatest missionary, he was the world's greatest church planter, he had a tremendous prayer life, he was a master soul-winner; yet, Paul said, "I am still not what I ought to be."* NOTE the humility, friends at Emmanuel it's for us to learn...

**Now the word perfect in v.12, and the word mature in v.15, is the same Greek word.** The two verses almost sound contradictory. For in v.12 Paul says, "I am not yet mature." Then in v.15 he says, "Therefore let us as many as are mature have this mind." Now what Paul was saying was this: He has not yet arrived at perfection, yet he is perfect enough to know that he is not perfect. In other words, *Paul was mature enough to realize he was not mature enough.* Did you know that one of the marks of maturity is to continuously realize just how immature you are?

Many Christians are self-satisfied because they compare their “running” with that of other Christians, usually those who are not making much progress. Comparison isn’t the goal – Jesus Christ is! Beware of pride, lean into that beautiful thing called humility. **Notice Paul did not compare himself with others; he compared himself with himself and with Jesus Christ!**

**One of the things that made Paul so great was that he was more concerned about his character than he was his reputation.** For reputation is what others think you are; character is what God knows that you are. Integrity is coram deo, living well before the gaze of God! *The reason why Paul was so successful is because he never thought of himself as being successful.* Paul was so full of God because he was so empty of self. **For "God sends no one away empty except those who are full of themselves."**

Always realize you can do be and do more for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **SLIDE FOUR** **II. Be Delivered** From Your Past

Paul not only had to conquer his pride, he also had to conquer his past. "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." **SEE (v.13) Paul had learned a great lesson. You can't focus on where you're going until you forget where you have been.**

You may not have noticed it, but Paul is using athletic language in all of this passage. The words "press on", "reaching forward", "goal", "prize". These are athletic terms. The Christian life is a race, and in a race there is one thing that is unimportant and two things that are all important. Where you have been is not important, but where you are and where you are headed is important. **No runner ever wins a race by constantly looking over his shoulder.** *Friend, you will never sail the ship of your life into the seas of the present with gusto and joy if your anchor is stuck in the mud of the past.* You cannot run forward if you are always looking backward.

\*\*\*\*I like the story of the little boy who was listening to his Sunday School teacher tell about Lot's wife and how she looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. He said, "Why that's nothing. My dad was driving a car to the shops yesterday, and he looked back and turned into a telephone pole."

**SLIDE FIVE** **Winston Churchill once made this statement: "If the present quarrels with the past there can be no future."** Well, Paul was determined not to let his past hinder his present or hurt his future. You see, there were several things that Paul had to forget.

*He had to forget past guilt.* Paul was a murderer, a blasphemer, a persecutor of the church; **the deep scar of sin was imbedded into his heart.**

**He had to forget past grief.** Paul had suffered terribly. He had been beaten, shipwrecked, scorned, left for dead, alienated, ostracized by his family.

**He had to forget past glory.** As far as the church was concerned Paul was "the toast of the town." He was a spiritual superstar. He had long passed Peter and John as the leader of all the apostles.

**He had to forget past grudges.** Paul had been mistreated, betrayed, lied to, and lied about, sold out by family and friends. Well, he had to forget all of those things if he was going to serve God and move forward. There are some you here who are going to have to clean out the skeletons in your closet and forget your past failures if you're going to move on with God.

You and I each have guilt, grief, glory and grudges we have to pass on.... step aside from, submit to Jesus!

Understand that the word "forget" does not mean "to fail to remember." There is no way you can ever erase the past totally from your memory. **"To forget" in the Bible means "no longer to be influenced by or affected by."**

Hebrews 10v17, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." That doesn't mean that God has a bad memory. **What that means is God will no longer allow our sins to affect our relationship to Him. This is the scale and beauty of the gospel, that our sins need no longer shape our future...**

\*\*\*I read a story years ago about General Robert E. Lee, who visited a lady in Virginia after the Civil War. She was extremely bitter toward the North and she took him out to her garden and showed him the scarred remains of one of her prized trees; a tree that evidently had gone back all the way to the Revolutionary War.

During a raid all of the limbs of this tree had been blown off... . Soldiers had carved their initials on it. **They had totally defaced the beauty of that tree.** She said, "General Lee, what do you think I ought to do about that?" I love his wisdom –echoing Paul here, "My dear madam, I think you ought to cut it down and forget it." **If you're going to be all that God wants you to be today and tomorrow, you need to cut down some trees in your past and forget them.**

### **SLIDE SIX** III. Be Devoted To a Purpose

The secret, I believe, of Paul's great life was he **understood the power of concentration.** Remember how I've spoken about it not so much as ADD but JDD – Jesus deficiency disorder... .. *See He says in v.13,* "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do." Paul said I'm going to give my life to one thing. **Those two words "one thing" are very important in the Bible.** When the rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked how to be saved, Jesus said, "One thing you lack." When Martha was arguing with Mary over what was really important in life, Jesus said to Martha, "One thing is needed." David said in Psalm 27:4, **"One thing** I have desired of the Lord, that I will seek."

Too many Christians are too involved in "many things," when the secret of excellent progress is to concentrate on "one thing." It was this decision that was a turning point in DL Moody's life. Before the tragedy of the Chicago fire in 1871, Mr. Moody was involved in Sunday school promotion, YMCA work, evangelistic meetings, and many other activities, but after the fire, he determined to devote himself exclusively to evangelism. **"This one thing I do!" became a reality to him. As a result, millions of people heard the gospel.** "Either pull out some of your irons, or put out the fire." **he said, "I would rather say this one thing I do than these forty things I dabble with."**

\*\*\*Soren Kirkegard, the great Danish philosopher, wrote a book with an interesting title, the title of it **Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing..** – our way of living is many things!!! Purity of heart, he said, is to will one thing. And, of course, the powerful motif of that book just booms in every chapter is that **Christians are only pure when they renounce all other things and pursue one thing.** And what is it? The truth of God. As you pursue the truth of God, you narrow to one thing. Purity of heart is to will one thing. He has a prayer in the book in which he prays, "So may Thou give to the intellect wisdom to comprehend that one thing. To the heart, sincerity to receive this understanding. To the will, purity that wills one thing. In prosperity, may Thou grant perseverance to will one thing. **Amid distractions, collectedness to will one thing. In suffering, patience to will one thing.**" **One thing.**

What was the one thing Paul was seeking? "I press toward the goal for the prize of **the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**" **V14 The word for "goal" is skopos, which means "to look at." We get our word telescope from that - It means a mark on which the eye is fixed.** The word "prize" is a word that means a reward for finishing a race. It is closely related to the word umpire, or the one who judges the race and awards the prize.

Paul had a one-track mind.

Concentration is the secret of power. Paul had a simple recipe for a revolution, and here it is: Set the right goals in life, and then build with focus, integrity and consistency... ..

**SLIDE SEVEN** **IV. Be Determined** In Your Process

**Twice in verses 12 and 14, Paul says, "I press on." It's a godly resolve, not a fleshly stubbornness!** You can forget your past, you can focus on your future, you can set goals for the present; but it will be more than just inspiration, aspiration, and perspiration that will get you to where you need to go; it will take determination.

*Faithfulness is a long obedience in the same direction!*

"Quitters never win, and winners never quit."

**God is not finished with you until you draw your last breath.** Don't you ever finish for God until you draw your last breath. Resolve that you will faithful and fruitful for the cause of Jesus in all of this life... .

The Apostle Paul had to overcome unbelievable obstacles as he climbed the mountains of life. He had to overcome stonings, shipwrecks, prisons, snake bites, robberies, beatings, famine, torture, and persecution. What did his faithfulness get him? And yes the Roman soldiers might have mocked him with a, oh "Another Christian bites the dust." **But ... .., Paul didn't bite the dust, Paul hit the tape; he made it to the finish line, and so can you.** Just remember it doesn't matter where you've been. What matters is where you are, where you're headed, and your determination to get there.

**SLIDE EIGHT** **Your faithfulness to the cause of Christ is part of our reward... ..**

"Why do you do it, Paul?" To gain the prize.

"How hard do you do it?" With maximum effort.

"How focused are you, Paul?" I concentrate on nothing else.

"How dependent on God are you?" When I fail I trust that He will reveal to me my failure and move me on... ..

Are you pursuing the prize? Are you growing? **Or are you standing in one spot looking backwards and spending most of your time defending yourself?**

*Friend, Don't be a stuck OR static saint!*

**SLIDE NINE** **"Run on from where you stand,** and never mind the past; The past can't help you when you're begin a new; Old failures need not halt, old triumphs never aid, Today's the thing, tomorrow soon will be; Get in the race and run it unafraid, and leave

the past to ancient history; What has been is forgiven; yesterday is dead, and by it you are neither blessed or banned; Take courage then, be brave and press ahead; run on from where you stand."

**To God be all the honour and glory – and yours be the joy!**