Good News Church GA

Midweek Connect

3-17-26

Sermon Series:

"Joy in the Journey"

Paul's letter to the Philippians

SCRIPTURE TEXT: Philippians 3:12-16

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but
I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. **But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.** 15 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Sermon & Book Notes

Sermon – *"The Focus of Joy (One Thing)"*
"Be Joyful" (Wiersbe) Ch. 9 – *"Let's Win the Race!"*

In Paul's letters, he used many illustrations to communicate the truth of the Christian life. Four prominent illustrations are from the areas of:

1) Military – "Put on the whole armor of God"
2) Architecture – "You are the temple of God"
3) Agriculture – "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap."
4) **Athletics – "Reaching forth to win the race" (Philippians 3:12-16)**

**12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but
I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.**

- In Philippians 2:12-13, when Paul tells us to *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you,"* he's saying…

  1) **Work out <u>YOUR</u> salvation**
     - Don't worry about anyone else / stay focused on yourself)
     - *"Comparison is the thief of joy."*
  2) Remember, your work is a result of <u>God first</u> working in you.

Q: How do we run the race (of the Christian life) to win the prize (of eternal life)?

- 5 Things Needed: 1) Dissatisfaction 2) Devotion 3) Direction 4) Determination 5) Discipline

1. **Dissatisfaction – "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it." – Philippians 3:13b**

    - ***"Dissatisfaction is the first essential to growth in faith (i.e., the race)."***
        - Paul was satisfied with Jesus, but he was not satisfied with his Christian life.
    - **Many Christians are self-satisfied because they compare their "running" with that of other Christians, usually those who are not making much progress.** Paul compared himself, not with other people, but with himself and with Jesus Christ.
    - Paul's "perfection" had a dual meaning. He was, at the same time, perfected (declared righteous) and also still having a long way to go to achieve perfection (demonstrating righteousness).
    - ***"The mature Christian honestly evaluates himself and strives to do better."***
        - Self-evaluation can be a dangerous thing, because we can err in two directions: 1) making ourselves better than we are
          2) making ourselves worse than we really are.
    - ***"A divine dissatisfaction is essential for spiritual progress."***
        - "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God." – *Psalm* 42:1–2

2. **Devotion – "But one thing I do." – Philippians 3:13b**

    - **The Bible has a lot of places where the phrase "One thing" is used.**
        - "One thing you lack." - Jesus to the rich young ruler (Mark 10:21)
        - "One thing is needful." (Martha was distracted and distressed. Mary was focused and at rest.) – Jesus to Martha (Luke 10:42)
        - "One thing I know, I once was blind but now I see." – the man who received sight (John 9:25)
        - "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, **to gaze on the beauty of the Lord** and to seek him in his temple. – Psalm 27:4
    - **"Too many Christians are too involved in "many things," when the secret of progress is to concentrate on "one thing."**
        - Olympic athletes are successful because they focus and specialize on one thing.

3. **Direction - Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead." – Philippians 3:13c**

- **The Believer should be future-oriented, *"forgetting those things which are behind,"* which means that we break the power of the past by living for the future.**
- St. Patrick is a great example of someone who did not let the past get in the way of his future. Born in Great Britain (397 A.D.), Patrick was kidnapped by Irish marauders while on a family vacation at the beach. He was enslaved for 7 years but came to faith in Christ during the desperation of slavery. Long story short… Patrick was able to escape, return to Great Britain, and be reunited with his family. He felt called to ministry and started seminary but also began to sense a clear calling (through undeniable dreams and visions) to return to Ireland as a missionary with the gospel of Jesus Christ. He knew that doing so would be risking his life. When runaway slaves were captured, they were tortured and killed. Nevertheless, Patrick returned straight to his slave owner to share the gospel. That man rejected Patrick's message of salvation, went into his house, lit the house on fire, and burned himself up in the blaze. Even though he rejected the Good News of Christ, many others received it, and Ireland ended up converting in large measure to faith in Christ. If Patrick had focused on his past, he never would have gone back to Ireland. But he let go of the past, leaned into the present and future, and brought the gospel to the Irish people.

4. **Determination – "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." – Philippians 3:14**

- *"I press on…"* carries the idea of **<u>intense endeavor</u> (i.e., *getting after it!)***
- **The 2 extremes to avoid here are:**
  1) I must do it all.
  2) God must do it all.
     - **The proper perspective is to realize that "God works in us that He might work through us."**
- *"Some Christians are so busy 'dying to self' that they never come back to life again to run the race. And others are so sure they can make it on their own that they never stop to read the Word, pray, or ask for the power of the Lord."*
  – Warren Wiersbe
- **What's the goal that we're pressing on towards?** *"The prize of the high (upward) calling of God in Christ Jesus."* – Philippians 3:14
- No matter how successful we may be in the eyes of men, we cannot be rewarded unless we *"take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."* – Philippians 3:12

5. **Discipline – "All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained." – Philippians 3:15-16**

- **It's not enough to run hard and win the race; the runner must also run with integrity and obey the rules.** Any infringement can disqualify the athlete.
    - *"No contestant in the games is crowned, unless he competes according to the rules."* – 2 Timothy 2:5

- The most common ways that we "break the rules" (lack integrity) in running the race to win the prize are: 1) selective obedience 2) secret sin.

FINAL THOUGHTS - The pressure's off!

Braden's conversation with Jude Pruitt

- BRADEN: "How did you overcome the obstacles you've faced and end up doing so good in wrestling?"
- JUDE: "I realized that whether I win or lose, my parents are still gonna love me. So, I was free to wrestle my heart out, no matter what."

The same is true for us. We can forget what is behind, strain towards what is ahead, overcome obstacles, press on, and win the prize ***"for which Christ Jesus took hold of me (Phil. 3:12b)."*** You can take hold of the prize of life (both now and in eternity) because Jesus has taken hold of you. And once Jesus takes hold of you, He will never let you go.

Discussion Questions

1. What jumps out at you from the scripture text, book reading, or sermon notes?
2. Why did things behind around, and before Paul not upset him or rob him of his joy?
3. Why is a "healthy dissatisfaction" essential in the Christian race?
4. What happens when Christians compare their "running" with that of other Christians? How can self-evaluation be a dangerous thing?
5. What does the author mean when he says we need to "break the power of the past by living for the future?" Personally, what does that look like in your life?
6. How would you evaluate, in general, the amount of determination that Christians put into their spiritual race vs. their career or recreational race? What does that look like for you?
7. What are some practical ways that we can make changes in our lives, such that our spiritual race becomes the top priority of our lives?
8. Why is it necessary for the Christian runner to have integrity and obey the rules of the race? What are some of the most common rules among Christians (in general, and us personally) running the race?
9. What's your primary take away from this discussion?