

- the Lord and hearing His “*well done*” was Paul’s passion.
- 3) Earning a crown will not be for **our** glory, but so that the Lord will be glorified with our lives (See 1Co 3). Can you imagine standing before the Lord and hearing Him say, “Welcome to heaven. I have prepared a place for you, but I have no reward for you. You did not earn the **incorruptible crown** as you did not bring your body into subjection. You polluted your body with nicotine or alcohol, or filled your thoughts with porn. I have no **crown of rejoicing** for you. You were not a witness for me. You did not earn a **crown of righteousness** as you lived for yourself rather than looking for my coming. I cannot give you a **crown of life**. You complained instead of enduring trials cheerfully. Neither do I have a **crown of glory** for you. You did not minister and serve others. I have a place for you, but no reward.” We do not want to hear that!

b. Keep running swiftly toward the goal

- 1) To *press toward the mark* is to run swiftly toward the goal.
- 2) Paul’s goal was to receive God’s prize. That prize was not an earthly reward but that of the high calling, the calling that comes from God above.
- 3) Christians have a calling from God in Christ Jesus to live for God’s glory. God assures us that He will reward all who live for His glory. (1 Corinthians 15:58) “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*” (1 Corinthians 3:14) “*If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*”

Conclusion: In the year to come, I challenge you to do as Paul did. **Let go of the past.** Stop allowing your failures, burdens, emotions, sickness, losses or successes to hinder your progress. **Stretch out to the future.** With God’s help, set some spiritual goals for the New Year (**Bible, habits, witnessing, roles, baptism or membership**). **Keep running toward the goal.** Run to win God’s prize. God wants to give you a crown for His glory. Run for it with a passion.

Song: Have I Done My Best - 368

Press On!

26 December 2021 AM – Philippians 3:13-14 – Scott Childs

Introduction: Born in 1909, Glenn Cunningham, when he was just 8 years old, was severely burned in a school fire in which his older brother perished. His legs were so badly burned that doctors recommended amputation. His mother refused to let that happen. The doctors said he would never walk again. Glenn, claiming his life’s verse, (Isaiah 40:31) “*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*”, set to work. After hours upon hours of painful therapy, he took his first steps two years later. Glenn was determined with God’s help, not just to walk, but to run and that he did. In 1934, he set the world record for the mile run at 4:06.8. In 1936, Cunningham finished second in the world Olympics. His life is a testimony of perseverance in the face of incredible odds.

Just as Glenn Cunningham had a goal of living out his life’s Bible verse and pressing on, so must Christians. Perhaps as an encouragement to others, the Apostle Paul declared that he had not yet reached his goal. He then challenged the Philippian believers and us to press on!

This past year has been a trying year for many of you. Some of you have lost your jobs. Others have lost relatives. Some of you are weighed down by sickness or disease. Yet others have struggled with emotional stress and stressful relationships. For you, it has been a difficult year.

Transition: With that in mind, I want us to turn our attention to the words of Paul’s testimony in which he encourages us with **three duties** as runners in God’s heavenly race. Read Philippians 3:13-14.

1. Duty: Let go of the past, v.13

a. Looking back is distracting

- 1) No successful runner looks back. He keeps his eyes focussed on his race.
- 2) God wants us to have a single focus in this life.

b. Forgetting is no longer caring for the past

- 1) God is not telling us to blot memories from our brain. That is usually impossible.
- 2) God’s intention here is that we **stop carrying for the past.**

We must **stop** focussing on the past; **stop** letting the past get us down.

- a) Often, the devil will remind us of past failures. No matter how you have failed, if you have confessed it to God and forsaken it, God wants you to stop thinking about it. Claim God's promises. (Proverbs 28:13) "*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*"
 - b) Past burdens, sickness, emotions and problems are very real and often painful, but focusing on them can paralyse us.
 - c) Losses in the past may threaten to discourage us. We must do as David did when faced with great loss. (1 Samuel 30:6) "*And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.*"
 - d) Even past successes can distract us. We may become proud of our success. Pride is one of our worst enemies. Pride will harm our character. It will make us unpleasant to be around. Prideful success may make us satisfied. Worst of all, it robs the glory from God and causes God to work against us. (James 4:6) "*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*"
- 3) When tempted to remember unpleasant events of the past, immediately pray. It is often more helpful to pray with a godly friend. Don't be too proud to ask them to pray with you. Let go of your past. You cannot change it. With God's help, you can overcome it.

2. Duty: Stretch out to the future, v.13

a. Reach fourth

- 1) The word Paul used here means to stretch out towards something. The root word often depicts the stretching forth of the hand.

- 2) As a runner leans forward and stretches out his legs, we must do the same in the Christian race.
- 3) Stop being satisfied with a basic Christian life. Make it your **passion to grow** spiritually. (2 Peter 3:18) "*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*"

b. Reach forth unto those things which are before

- 1) Glenn Cunningham reached out to the future. He claimed God's word and set high goals for himself.
- 2) Paul had a passion to know Christ (v.8, 10).
- 3) God wants us to reach out toward the goal He sets for us. Ask God what goals He has for your future.
 - a) For you it may be the goal of daily reading your Bible in the year to come.
 - b) It may be the goal of completely conquering a sinful habit with God's help. When yielded to God, no habit is unbreakable.
 - c) Perhaps your goal is to strive to bring family members to salvation through prayer and godly example.
 - d) Your goal may be to fulfil your God-given role as a spouse: husbands to lead lovingly, wives to respect submissively (Eph 5:21-33).
 - e) Perhaps your goal ought to be to follow the Lord in baptism or to join our church membership.
- 4) Stretch yourself out and set some spiritual goals for the year to come. Make it your desire truly to grow spiritually and to glory Christ.

3. Duty: Keep running toward the goal, v.14

a. Focus your eyes on the goal

- 1) In ancient races, winners received a garland crown of leaves and flowers.
- 2) Paul longed to receive God's prize. **He was not striving to earn heaven (that is impossible)**. His longing was for the heavenly reward for Christian character and service. He was not competing with others. Receiving a crown from