

The Wait is Over

Let's Go! #1 - Speaker Mike Laramie - December 29, 2024 - Philippians 3:13-14

INTRO: Good morning church! We are introducing a two-part series today called "Let's Go!" - where we will explore the idea that we are called at times to wait on the Lord, but other times we wait even when we are called to go. This was the question which faced the Israelites when they reached the Red Sea, "Should we wait or should we go?"

Pharaoh and his many chariots caught up to God's people and they faced destruction at the edge of the sea. The people cried out that God had led them this far only to see them fall in the wilderness. Moses, however, faithfully believed that God would fight for them if they stood firm and believed. But even he didn't expect to hear what God said next:

Series Text: Exodus 14:15-16 (ESV) The Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to **go forward**. Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may **go through** the sea on dry ground.

Do you ever feel that it is hard to know when to wait or when to go? Reminds me of that silly song by the Clash, "Should I stay or should I go?" It can be uniquely challenging to know what to do as a Christian because so much of our Christian faith is based on trust and dependence on God. But there is a distinct line between rightly trusting in God's will, power, and provision and being spiritually passive or lazy.

Need: Maybe today you are at a decision point in life about a job opportunity or a relationship or something major like that. Carefully praying and trusting in the Lord is right, but it doesn't stop there. Pursuit is what follows. When it comes to our walk in Christ this is always the right pattern ... prayer and then pursuit. Some of us have been saying for a long time, "I don't know what God desires of me." I pray today you will hear plainly that He desires for you to pursue Him with all of your being.

Transition: Friends, the wait is over, it's time to pursue Christ with all of your heart. Today, we will see how the apostle Paul endeavored to pursue Him.

BODY: In Philippians 3, the apostle Paul instructed the church in Philippi that the one thing he did was press on towards the goal God had called him towards. We can do this one thing and pursue God's goal for us. How do we pursue God's goal for us? The text gives two ways to pursue God's goal for your life.

Read Text: Philippians 3:13-14 (ESV) ... But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

How to Pursue God's Goal for Your Life:

1. Forget what's behind.

EXP: Paul says that in order to press on towards the goal he must first forget. But let's first ask the question, "What is the goal?" For Paul states:

"**I press on**" (14) (διώκω, *diōkō*) - to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away; to press on: figuratively of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal; to **pursue**. "Mad dog in a meat market!"

"**Toward the goal**" (14) (σκοπὸν, *skopos*) - an observer, a watchman; the distant mark looked at, the goal or end one has in view; not running blind; also occurs only here in the NT. The apostle has already told us the goal in a previous verse:

Philippians 3:10 (ESV) That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

Christlikeness is the goal. Matthew 10:24-25a (ESV) "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master."

"A full conformity to the image of his Son in my heart and life." — Benson Commentary

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“**One thing I do**” (13) (εἷς, *heis*) - a cardinal numeral, one, only. Paul transitions from saying that he hasn't obtained all the things God has purposed in his life, but that he is doing one thing to seek this.

“**Forgetting**” (13) (ἐπιλανθανόμενος, *epilanthanomai*) (PMP) - to forget; neglecting, no longer caring for; forgotten, given over to oblivion, i.e. uncared for; participle - done continually

“**What lies behind**” (13) (ὀπίσω, *opisō*) - back, behind, after, afterwards; of place: things that are behind.

What are we leaving behind? That which encumbers us; sin, folly, wasted effort; but also past accomplishments. We are not to rest on our laurels - we are still in a race until Christ calls us home.

“Hence **past blessing** is but an earnest of the future; **past achievements** of good are stepping-stones to greater things; **past sins** are viewed in that true repentance which differs from remorse.” — Ellicott

“Looking back is sure to end in going back.” — Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

ARG: Paul goes even further by viewing his past as rubbish compared to pursuing God:

Philippians 3:8 (ESV) Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

Sometimes the past (good or bad) can be a weight that limits your progress, lay it aside:

Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV) “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, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

ILL: Jesus describes the importance of looking ahead and not looking back with a story:

Luke 9:62 (ESV) Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Maybe also how the Israelites couldn't leave Egypt behind:

Exodus 16:3 (ESV) The people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

APP: Do you struggle with forgetting what lies behind? Perhaps you are burdened with past sinful activity that God has already forgiven. God can use you, if you no longer dwell on it. Maybe you feel as if you have already done your part. As long as you are breathing, you are still in the race - don't stop running. “Make God your greatest treasure, and you will be empowered to let anything go to gain Christ. (Dr. Tamfu)”

2. Stretch towards what's ahead.

EXP: Paul then logically moves from leaving something behind to moving towards something else. Once we put the past behind us, it is important to have something to pursue, something to stretch towards. Paul is not running blindly but pushing towards a specific goal. “I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.” (1 Cor. 9:26)

“**Straining forward**” (13) (ἐπεκτεινόμενος, *epekteinomai*) (PMP) - to stretch out to or towards; occurs only here in the NT. participle - done continually

“**What lies ahead**” (13) (ἔμπροσθεν, *emprosthen*) - in front, before, **in the sight of**

“It was not enough that I had found God; I must keep finding him.” — A.W. Tozer

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"Prize" (14) (βραβεῖον, *brabeion*) - the award to the victor in the games, a prize

"It is not the will of the Lord that we should be like blocks of wood, or that we should keep our arms folded without doing anything; but that we should apply to use all the talents and advantages which [God] has conferred upon us." — John Calvin

"Upward call of God" (14) ("call" κλήσεως, *klēsis*) - a call, invitation; the divine invitation to embrace salvation of God

"In Christ Jesus" (14) - Paul's vision for his destination is specific, the call of God in/through Jesus Christ. He is not confused about his life's mission, he knows his purpose is the Gospel. Many of us struggle with the call God has for us. Most of that struggle deals with trying to learn a specific call on your life - who am I to marry? What job should I do? Where should I live? What ministry should I pursue? While these questions are valid, we need to realize that God has already given us a call to be like Jesus. Do that first, then worry about the smaller questions.

Jesus is our pacesetter or forerunner; our goal: Hebrews 6:20 (ESV) "Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

ARG: Paul says to the Corinthians to live this life in a way to actually obtain the prize:

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 (ESV) 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. ²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

He continues in his second letter to them to urge them to pursue eternal and not temporal things:

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (NASB) "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

ILL: Me and my dad; settling for less than my best. (In color, with feeling)

APP: Are you one of those who are doing their bare minimum in your Christian walk? Are you ready to stretch towards the calling God has on your life? Do you want to know the calling He has given you? For most of us, the simple act of being aware of the situations that the Holy Spirit has put you in is the first step. Be obedient to God's call for Christlikeness; speak truth and love into those situations He has set before you.

CONCLUSION: Church, the wait is over. Christ calls you into a life of pursuing Him and there is no greater pursuit on this earth. The apostle Paul plainly says that his whole life is focused on this one goal, to be like the Savior Jesus. Will you make this your life's goal? Pursue Jesus by:

- Forgetting what's behind
- Stretching towards what's ahead

Let's pray.