

Running To Win The Prize

Philippians 3:13-16

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Let's back up one verse. We're going to read all the way to the end of the chapter, verse 21, and focus then on verses 13-16. Paul says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation," or our citizenship, "is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body," or bodies of humiliation, "that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Paul the Apostle was one who loved to use analogies or illustrations to depict the Christian life. There are several, and one of them is the ministry of the military. He said, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." He used this military metaphor. He also used the metaphor of farming or agriculture. He said, "...for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," he talked about sowing and reaping. Perhaps Paul's favorite and most frequent used analogy is that of athletics. He said in 1 Corinthians 9:24, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." He used the imagery of athletics and running.

In my younger years I was a bit athletic. I played baseball, basketball, football, and still try my best at my age to do a little surfing. But when it comes to running, I don't do running. When someone says, "Let's exercise," I sit down until the thought goes away. Whenever I see someone running, I think, Why? We have cars. We have motorcycles. We have bicycles. We have airplanes. Why are you running? Paul liked to use the Greek Olympics, the Greek athletic games. The Olympics actually originated in Greece during this time, so Paul likens the Christian unto a runner running a race. In Hebrews he says, "...and let us run with patience the race that is set before us," so it's a long distance endurance race. We need to have the focus and attention we need to run the race, to complete the task, and finish the race that God has set before us.

The Christian life is pictured as a race in our text tonight. All Christians are in the race; all Christians can win the prize. The prize is not salvation. We're not running so that God will save us. We're not running to try to win our salvation. The prize is mentioned in verse 14. Look at it with me. Paul says, "I press toward the mark for the prize," again, that pressing toward the mark we're going to look at as a picture of a runner straining every muscle to reach the goal. What is the prize? "...the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Paul is not talking about our salvation, he's talking about our sanctification.

Remember last week I talked about those categories. The moment you are saved, you are in Christ, and Paul said, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ," so that's our positional righteousness or justification. Then Paul talked about, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death," that's sanctification. That is the subject that is carried on in this passage tonight. We go from salvation to sanctification.

I know I talk about that quite a bit, but it's so important for you to understand that you are saved the moment you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, you're born again or regenerated, and it starts a process. Positionally, you are justified; practically, you're being sanctified; and the third phase is future—one day, when we're with Jesus Christ—we'll be glorified. We'll be perfectly holy and righteous in His presence when we see Him, and the text also alludes to when we see the Lord face to face at the end of Philippians 3. The sad truth is, though, that many Christians are not running well and are not growing in their sanctification. They have salvation but are not growing in the holiness or likeness to Jesus Christ, and that is what this passage is about tonight. In Galatians 5:7, Paul writing to the believers in Galatia said, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you," so they were running the race and then got tired, discouraged, or distracted, and stopped.

What are the essentials that we need to run well, finish the race, and win the prize? I want to give you from our text tonight three things that we need to run well, finish the race, and win the prize. First, we need an honest admission. This is in the very first portion of verse 13. Look at it with me. He says, "Brethren," that phrase is used again in verse 17 indicating a transition to the conclusion of his subject. What started in the beginning of Philippians 3 with the false teachers, Paul's testimony, and being found in Christ by faith and then sanctification, he's now wrapping up by way of application. This is really a rubber meets the road, put it in shoe leather, kind of verse. He says, "Brethren," speaking to believers, "I count not myself to have apprehended," stop right there.

Remember Paul had already admitted that he had not attained three things. Go back with me to verse 12. He had not received everything, he had not become everything, and he had not done everything. We looked at that in great depth last Wednesday night. He says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." God saved him for a purpose, and he had not fully arrived or completed the purpose that God had for Paul's life.

However, as you move into verse 13, our text, there's a new emphasis. He's contrasting himself with others, and note the pronouns, I and myself, are in the Greek what's called emphatic. They stress that Paul had evaluated his own spiritual condition and had not accepted the opinions of others. Paul wasn't really comparing himself with others, he was emphasizing that, "For me, personally, my walk and relationship to God, the reason He apprehended or called me, I haven't arrived yet. I have not yet attained." Paul did not compare himself with others, but in his own heart and mind he realized that God had so much more for him. It could be that Paul is contrasting himself with verse 2, the false teachers who were the legalists. Notice in verse 2, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." Paul is saying, "I run the race. They are false teachers, they're legalists, they're enemies of the cross," he goes on to say at the end of this chapter, but Paul says, "I have not yet attained."

No matter how much we grow in our knowledge and likeness to Jesus, Paul had a been a believer for thirty years, there's always room for growth. That's the point that we need to make is for me to grow, I have to admit—honest admission—I have not yet attained. It's really kind of detrimental to our spiritual growth when we think we have arrived, when we think that we have read all we need to read, we know all we need to know, we've done everything we need to do, and we kind of go into spiritual neutral or cruise mode, that we haven't finished. If you're running a race and you haven't crossed the finish line, you need to keep running, right? Sometimes, even in a marathon, we applaud those who come in last because they at least finished the race, right? They don't give up or say, "Oh, man, there's an In-N-Out right there. I'm going to go get a hamburger right now," and just go off another direction. You actually keep running, keep focused, keep focused on the goal. God has placed you in the race. Keep your eyes on Jesus, keep running the race, and remember, as I said, it is a long distance race—a long, long, long distance race. The older you get, the longer it seems; but the shift takes place where you realize that you're closer to Heaven, and you have less time in front of you than you have now behind you.

I remember talking to my grandmother, which was a precious Christian. She loved the Lord so fervently. She said, "I have more friends in Heaven than I do on earth. I can't wait to get there." When you get toward the end of your journey, you're running the race, they're waiting for you at the finish line, and you want to hear the words, "Well, done, thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

The Bible warns us not to have a false estimate of our own spiritual condition. Jesus said to the church at Sardis in Revelation 3:1, "...I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." They had a reputation, but they did not have reality. The church at Laodicea boasted that it was rich, yet God said, "...that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." It's a very dangerous thing to think too highly of yourself, to think, I've arrived! I'm under the spout where the glory comes out. I'm dwelling in Canaan's land. I don't need to read my Bible or pray or seek the Lord or serve the Lord because I finally have arrived.

When it comes to self-evaluation, we can error in two directions when we're looking at ourselves. First, we can make ourselves better than we are, that's very dangerous, "Wherefore

let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Secondly, we can make ourselves worse than we really are and beat ourselves up. Spiritual progress is so important that we’re on us with where we’re at with God and we see our need for God and rely and depend upon God. Remember when Samson thought that he had strength from the Lord and said, “I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself,” and the Bible says, “And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.” So many times we think, Well, I can handle it. I can cope. I can deal with that temptation, but don’t really depend upon the Lord or realize that the Lord has forsaken him.

I don’t know if you’ve ever had the experience of maybe lying on an air mattress in a swimming pool in the summer on a warm day, and maybe you’re closing your eyes. You know that when you first started you were at the shallow end of the pool. Over time, as you lie there, you couldn’t really tell but you woke up and had drifted down to the other end of the pool but didn’t feel any movement at all. Have you ever had that experience? That’s the same way it is with the Christian life many times—we wake up when it’s too late and realize, “Look how far I’ve drifted from God,” because we become apathetic and complacent. We think we’ve arrived. We need to have an honest admission of I have not yet attained and apprehended. Remember in verse 12, Paul said, “...but I follow after,” I pursue, “if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus,” but I have not yet apprehended. We need a holy, holy, holy admission, “I am still needing to grow.”

Here’s the second thing we need for running the race, a holy ambition. We need an honest admission of our need to grow. There’s room for growth. We never ever stop growing, running the race. Secondly, we need to realize that we need to have an ambition and a desire. There is a part we play in putting forth an effort in the running of the race. Look at verses 13-14. Paul says, “...but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind,” you can’t run when you’re looking backwards, “and reaching forth,” I strain, I agonize, “unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

In verse 12, Paul said, “...but I follow after;” verse 13, “I count not myself to have apprehended;” and then says, “...and reaching forth,” verse 14, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” This is a famous, well-known verse that many people know and love, but it very powerfully and wonderfully describes what we need to do to work with the Holy Spirit and the Lord’s sanctifying process in our lives to bring about that sanctification as we walk with the Lord. Paul’s honest admission did not lead to discouragement or defeat. Often we allow Satan to beat us up, “You have not yet arrived. You’re not as spiritual as you should be.” Yes! I admit that, and I need to grow. We all need to grow. We never arrive, but we should have a new determination—not discouragement, but determination—to run the race that is set before us.

Paul’s life had one grand goal, verse 13, “...but this one thing I do.” Paul made life simple for himself. He had one passion, and that was the goal of running for Christ, serving the Lord, knowing the Lord, being all that God wanted him to be. Too many times we do too many things. We spread ourselves too thin. You hear people say all the time, “I’m just too busy. I’ve

got too much going on,” so we need to keep the main thing, the main thing. What are you focusing on in your walk with the Lord? Are you focused on living for Jesus, walking for Him, following Him, serving Him on the job, in the home, in your marriage, bringing Christ into every facet of your life? He actually reduced everything in his life to one thing—not six things, not five things, just this one thing.

I love it when Nehemiah was building the walls with the people of Israel in Jerusalem. He said, “We’re doing a great work. We cannot come down.” When Sanballat and Tobiah were tempting him to go to other things he said, “No, we’ve got a calling, we’ve got a job, we’ve got a ministry. We’re serving the Lord. We’ve gotta focus on that, this one thing.” Ask yourself tonight: Am I trying to do too many things and not really making the number one goal fixing my eyes on Jesus and running the race that is set before me?

Paul’s life was lived with the unity of purpose and such definiteness and of aim that nothing could distract or divert him from it. He did that from the beginning of his conversion on the Damascus Road, “What would You have me to do, Lord?” until the day he was executed in Rome and said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord...shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” We need to be like Paul.

Paul ends the chapter (that’s why I read to the end of the chapter) about following his example. He begins to talk about that in verses 15-16, so we want to be like Paul and say, “...but this one thing,” not many things, “I do.” What was Paul’s goal? How to reach that goal? Notice what he says. First of all, I must forget the past. He says, “...forgetting those things which are behind.” What does it mean to forget the things which are behind? Let me tell you what it does not mean. It does not mean that you have your mind erased and can’t remember, literally, the past. You don’t go through some shock therapy and forget the bad things that happened to you in your past. What it means very simply, it’s not that complicated, is that you do not allow the past to hinder your running the race for the present. You do not allow what’s happened to you and what’s going on in your past to carry over into your present and keep you—weigh you down, hinder you—from running the race that is set before you. Too many people are not really effectively growing in their walk with the Lord because of the guilt and the shame and the burdens or the hurts or the unforgiven things in the past. You need to forget the things which are behind. What does it mean to forget? It means not to allow it to influence your present.

When the Bible actually says that God forgets our sins and iniquities and remembers them no more, God is omniscient. You don’t think God doesn’t remember what you did? He knows what you did, but it means He treats you as though it never happened. He doesn’t allow the past to affect your present. It has no power or influence over you.

Years ago, and it still hasn’t died yet, Christianity was invaded by secular psychology. It was the psychologizing of the faith; and the Bible, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, pastor, minister, servant of the Lord, could only help you so far as that would go. If you really really had bad

hurts and pains of the past, you needed to see—and this is what happened in the church—a professional psychologist. I know this could offend and freak out some people, but in simple statement, what could a professional psychologist offer that God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the Bible can't help you with?

If the Bible isn't good for all things in life and godliness...now I understand that we might have some practical skills to be able to talk and deal, but they were getting people to regress into their past, "The reason why you have the problems you have is because of your parents and the way they spanked you, or treated you, or you were abused." I know that some of you have been abused in the past and you've had hurts, it's a real tragedy, but once you become a Christian, the Bible says, "...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," and you need to make sure that you don't allow the hurts of the past to keep you from loving Jesus right now, serving Jesus right now, enjoying forgiveness right now, enjoying the joy of the Lord right now, running the race that is set before you. The Bible says, "...According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

So many times the church departed from the Bible...and what it was, too, it was actually subtle, but people didn't realize it was an attack on the sufficiency of Scripture. "Well, the Bible is okay. It's good, but if you really have deep hurts, you need some professional help," in other words, the Bible needs somebody to help jumpstart and get you to God. The truth is, the Bible is sufficient for all things in life and godliness, and it can transform a life from the inside out. I've seen Him take people that were really messed up (I won't point at anyone right now here tonight) and just transform their lives by the power of the Spirit. So, "...forgetting those things which are behind," don't let the grudges, the hurts, the pains, and the things of the past keep you back from being efficiently running the race that is set before you. Someone said, "Break the power of the past by living for the present future." You can't change the past, but we can change the meaning of the past and the effect that it has upon our lives. There are things in Paul's past that could've been weighing him down or holding him back, but Paul would not allow that to happen.

There are two dangers about the past: 1) Letting the regrets, the failures, and the hurts of the past slow you down in the race and you become shackled by them and lose perspective on God; 2) the danger of letting the past success make you self-confident and complacent. Past successes and good things can also get in the way. One of the most dangerous times for us as Christians is not our failures or our problems but our successes because we lose a sense of need and dependence upon God. So many times God has to allow failures in our lives to keep us humble and dependent upon Him.

You talk about a person that got victory over their past, look at the man Joseph in the Old Testament. I've often thought, Can you imagine Joseph in a group therapy session? "So, what's your story, Joseph?" "Well, when I was little my brothers were all jealous of me. I had this really nice coat. Dad liked me more than them, so they sold me." "They sold you?" "Yeah, my brothers sold me as a slave." "Can you imagine that? My brothers sold me as a slave, and then I got purchased as a slave in Egypt and got a job for this Potiphar dude and his wife got

eyes for me and lied about me. I got thrown in jail and was there for years, and then the butler and the baker forgot me. I'm just mad at God right now." No. Joseph always kept his eyes on God. He always kept his eyes on the prize. Just about every time Joseph speaks on the pages of the story of his life in Genesis, he mentions God. When he came to the point where finally his brothers were kneeling before him and he could've taken vengeance on them, he said, "You meant it for evil, but God intended it for good to save many people alive." God had His hand on the whole thing.

Even your disappointments can be His appointments. Even your hurts can be God preparing you to be a blessing to others in serving the Lord. Some of the things that you have been through, I haven't been through. Sometimes when people come up to me for counseling after church, I'll see someone in the sanctuary that I know is better equipped than I to minister to them, "See that person over there? Go over and tell them your problem." That's not because I want to get rid of them, but I know that they have been through what they're going through. In 2 Corinthians it says that we go through suffering, "...that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." It may be that whatever you have gone through is so that you can turn around and minister to others how God can comfort them and help them through that situation. He's prepared you, He's equipped you. He's making and preparing you for the race that you're running; and if you're going to attain that for which He apprehended you, you have to keep running and keep looking unto Jesus. Again, the danger is also that your successes make you complacent, self-confident, and then you get put on the shelf.

You cannot run looking backwards. Again, I'm no expert on running because obviously I don't run. Have you ever seen anyone run the 100 meter dash looking backwards? Have you ever seen anyone run the 100 meter dash waving at mom in the grandstands? No. Or, even glancing back quickly just to see if anyone's approaching them and lose their stride and get overtaken in the race? They look at the goal, they don't turn their head, and they pour it on and give it everything they've got. That's the way we're to run that race that is set before you. It's so very important.

Not only are we to be forgetting the past, but here's the second thing, we are to be, "...reaching forth unto those things which are before." Forgetting the past, if you're taking notes, I've called the sanctified forgetting; and "...reaching forth unto those things which are before," verse 13, is the sanctified looking. Notice verse 13, "...forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." Someone said, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." I love that. Just tell yourself, even tonight, say, "Okay, the race starts right now. I haven't been running, but I'm going to run the race that's set before me. I'm going to seek the Lord. I'm going to use my gifts, my talent, my time, my treasure for the glory of God. I'm going to run the race that is set before me." A believer in Jesus has the best yet to come, it's before us, so we should be, "...reaching forth."

The verb "reaching" in verse 13 denotes an athlete who runs with all his might and strains his entire body to cross the finish line. Again, you see these athletes running the race, and when

they cross the line, they stick out their chest, they strain with their faces, they do everything they can to run that race. You see the agony, the agonizo, in their faces. Paul uses that word agonizo in the Bible for running that race. We agonize as we run the race that is set before us. We're reaching forward. When David Livingston came back from his missionary outreaches to Africa, someone asked him, "Where are you going to go now?" He said, "I'm ready to go anywhere, provided it's forward," as long as I'm going forward.

Notice, thirdly, "I press toward the mark," so we're forgetting what is behind, we're reaching for those things that are before, and now we're pressing, verse 14, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling," or the upward call, "of God in Christ Jesus," so pressing toward the mark. The word "press" describes a vigorous consecrated pursuit, so you don't become a winning athlete by listening to lectures or by watching others compete, you become a winning athlete by running in the race. This is one race that we cannot sit out. You can't just sit on the sidelines and observe, you must run the race.

What is this prize? Go back to verse 10, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death," verse 14 of our text, "...the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It's becoming like Jesus, living for His glory here, knowing Him in a deeper, more intimate way, and then one day seeing Him face to face when we arrive in Heaven.

Write down Hebrews 12:1-2. The writer of Hebrews says, "...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run," there it is, "with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Again, when it comes to the Greek athletics and the running the race, you know, when the guys go out to run track and field, they don't wear football uniforms. They don't have helmets or carry a boombox, they don't carry an umbrella or a briefcase, they wear those little silky shorts—that's why I don't run—and those little sissy shoes they have on. Do you know in the Greek Olympic games they ran with nothing on. You say, "Did you have to share that, Pastor John?" No, I didn't have to, but I did. The writer of Hebrews says, "Let's get rid of the weight and the sin which does beset us," or hinders us or holds us back. Did you ever notice in that Hebrews passage that he differentiates weight and sin, so it's a weight that is not sinful. It's a separate issue.

There might be things in your life—listen to me very carefully—that are not sinful but they're a weight—they're keeping you from maximum efficiency. You need to strip down, get down to the bare necessities, and run the race before you. Someone said, "If it's not a wing, it's a weight." Things in your life that are keeping you from maximum efficiency—keeping me from prayer, keeping me from the Word of God, keeping me from fellowship, keeping me from ministry or serving the Lord. What a sad and tragic thing to go through your whole life and never ask God to use you in serving and being a blessing to others. Whatever hinders you needs to be laid aside. It's a weight, and you need then to also look at the sins in your life. They need to be confessed and forsaken and run with patience what is set before you.

Again, there are two extremes to avoid. First of all, you feel that you must do it all. That's called

the activist. The second one is God must do it all, that's called the quietest. There's a balance in the middle. We don't do it all, but God doesn't do it all. It's yielding to Him, letting Him work in us and through us. Remember back in Philippians 2:12-13, Paul said, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." You work out what God has worked in, but it's God working in you so that God might work through you.

Remember the Greek athletic contestants did it for a corruptible crown, Paul says in Corinthians. Do you know what the prize was in the Greek Olympics? A pile of leaves on your head—literally, a laurel wreath crown. At least today you get a gold medal or a silver medal or bronze medal. They do have, when you competed in Athens, you can get free food, front seats at the Greek theater, and you got recognition, but all you had was a little thing of leaves on your head that would wither and wilt away. You couldn't even put your trophies on your mantel.

Some of you have trophies that used to be prominently there on the counter in your home, and now they're in boxes in the attic full of dust. We're laboring, we're running, we're serving the Lord for an incorruptible crown, Paul said, that fades not away, reserved for us in Heaven. We're running for eternal rewards.

Here's the third and last ingredient we need. So, we need to honestly admit we haven't arrived, verse 13; we need to have a holy ambition for getting, reaching, and pressing; and verses 15-16, we need to have an honor achieved by following Paul's pattern of the way he lived his life, having the same mind and the same walk and conduct. Look at verses 15-16. He says, "Let us therefore, as many," that little phrase, "as many," indicates there are some believers that are not pursuing the sanctified life—they're not following hard after God—but those who are, "as many as be perfect, be thus minded," be like me, "and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you," God will take care of it and speak to you.

Verse 16, "Nevertheless," here's his conclusion, "whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." It's the same phrase he was using in Philippians 2, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," so have the same attitude, same outlook, that I have. In verse 15, have the same mind; verse 16, have the same conduct or live your life the same as I do. "...let us," therefore, Paul is saying in light of our honest admission, our holy ambition, we have two aims, the same mind or attitude, and the same walk.

Notice in verse 15 Paul says, "...as many as be perfect." Go back to verse 12. This confuses people. He says, "Not as though I had already attained," or were already perfect. He says in verse 12, "I'm not perfect," then he says, "Those that are perfect be thus minded." It's two different concepts of perfect. In verse 12, that's sinlessly perfect, completely arrived, glorification. I'm not yet arrived. In verse 15, the "perfect" there means mature. He says, "Those who are mature for their age." As you grow physically in your age, you can be mature for a 5-year-old, but you're not the same as a 20-year-old; you can be mature as a 20-year-old, but you're not the same as a 40-year-old and thus; so be "perfect" in this sense means be where you should be in maturity—growing and maturing.

It's pretty sad when you've been a Christian for 40 years but you're still a spiritual baby. You're saved, you're going to Heaven, but you haven't grown at all. You're still a babe, you're still an infant. You have need of milk and not meat. You haven't grown. That's part of what we're talking about here, growing. It's running the race, it's pursuing after God, growing in your faith. So, have the same mind, the same walk, verse 16, "...let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Paul is talking about his life being a pattern and example for how they should live.

God has only one way of salvation, He has only one way of sanctification, and the way of salvation and sanctification is that we're saved by grace through faith, "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, let any man should boast." Salvation is by grace of God, it's through faith in Christ. I would not hesitate to say it's grace alone, it's faith alone, it's Christ alone. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us," and our sanctification is by trusting Him and yielding to His Spirit to work in us and through us.

In Ephesians, where we have that great passage about being saved by grace, we also have that great verse in Ephesians 2:10 where it says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." We're saved by grace alone through faith alone, but the faith that saves is not alone. It will produce fruit in our lives. It will evidence itself by the way we live—a holy passion, a holy pursuit. If you say that you're a Christian but you're not running the race, it's doubtful whether or not you're truly, truly a child of God.

Let me read verses 17-21 again and make some comments, which we're going to go into next week. He says, "Brethren," he opens in verse 13 with that same phrase, so he's still tying this together, "be followers together of me," in verses 15-16, he introduces his heart, his attitude, "Follow me. I'm your example." Then, verse 17, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." The contrast is in verse 18, "(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ," he's talking in verse 18 about false teachers, the ones he mentions in verse 2, "...they are the enemies of the cross," verse 19, "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" I love verses 20-21, he contrasts those who mind earthly things with the true believer, "For our conversation," this is old English for the way we live and our citizenship, so our citizenship, "is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

We move here to the third phase. We have justification, sanctification, and now glorification. I want you to see it in verse 21. When Christ comes, Who we're looking for, notice verse 21, "Who shall change our vile body," lowly, humble bodies, "That it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." The word "subdue" is a military word that means to rank in order, so Christ is going to come and put everything back in order.

There might have been some disappointments with the election yesterday. I was hoping for a red tsunami across the United States, but for me it was a reminder of how far from God our nation has drifted and that our hope is not in man or in elections. Amen? Our hope is in Jesus Christ. If you say, "Well, that's kind of an escapist attitude," I say, "You betcha it is because my citizenship is in Heaven." I'm proud to be an American, but I'm ready to go any time. If the Lord wants to come tonight, He doesn't have to wait for another election, He doesn't have to wait for the ballot box, He doesn't have to wait for them to count the votes, He'll come. Amen? And He will come! The Bible says He comes and He will not tarry.

Because our citizenship is in Heaven, that's our real home, that's where we need to get our focus gazed upon. We need to admit we haven't arrived, we need to have an ambition to follow after Christ, and then we need to follow Paul's example. Keep your focus on the prize. You are a citizen of Heaven. Christ is coming again, and when He comes...so we need an honest admission, which is dissatisfaction; we need a holy ambition, which is determination; and we need an honorable achievement, discipline to follow with the same mind, outlook, and attitude that Paul had. Let's pray.