

## Pressing On

## Philippians 3:12-14

November 26, 2023

Ashland Brethren in Christ Church

**Introduction:** Thank you for opportunity – My honor to be here...

We are in a unique Sunday in the church calendar year. Often, the Sunday after Thanksgiving is the first Sunday in Advent. However, Thanksgiving is as late as it possibly can be this year; thus the “extra week,” per se. (My goof with Keith – ha!) So on this Sunday after Thanksgiving, and looking forward to the season of Advent, how do we positively and proactively look ahead with joy and peace?

Even though I need to still work on the application of it, I do believe in the old maxim “if you are not moving forward then you are moving backward.” With that in mind...let’s look to God’s word...

**READ Philippians 3:12-14/PRAY** a bit of a challenge to jump into today’s scripture without having the context ... maybe start with V. 7?

Four Great Words from Warren Wiersbe<sup>1</sup> regarding today’s passage

### **Dissatisfaction (Phil. 3:12-13a)**

- Are we satisfied with mediocre, blasé Christian life and service or do we keep on seeking God’s voice and direction in our lives?
- Do we think we have “arrived”? Do we know it all?

### **Devotion (Phil. 3:13b)**

- “This one thing” – do we settle on to what God is really calling us to do?
- He may well call us to more than one ministry or task – but – are we “majoring on the majors/minoring on the minors” of what we are to be doing for Him?
- Personal – trying to “narrow down” my activities. Concentrate on a few...

### **Direction (Phil. 3:13c)** (“nitty gritty” of embrace the future, honor the past)

- “Forget” in Biblical terminology means to not concentrate on, does not mean to “not remember”
- God “forgets” our sins by forgiving them but still knows they happened
- Most of **Psalm 103:8-18** (*read earlier today*) removed, forgiven, not totally forgotten (Israel – we are in the same boat by being grafted in)
- Don’t stand on your successes nor be mired in your mistakes – move on
- And with this understanding “HONOR THE PAST” – give thanks for what God has done, the people he has set along your path, those who have come and gone before that have served with you and for you as they served God
- And this truly leads us to “**direction**”: “straining forward to what lies ahead...”

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, Warren *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2* (Wheaton: Victor, 1989) 88-90.

- And with this understanding we “EMBRACE THE FUTURE” – **SEVEN LAST WORDS OF THE CHURCH ARE** **“We’ve never done it that way before.”** OR: **“We’ve always done it that way before.”** I need to keep working on this one, for sure! “Went from the young renegade to the old fuddy duddy overnight...”

**Determination (Phil 3:14)**

We are to rely on God, but it takes determination to do so. The ultimate strength lies in Him, but we must commit ourselves to follow His lead. Whether it’s easy or it’s not. And often, it’s not...

**Illustration:** I’ve always gotten a smile out of quotes from the famous (or infamous?) baseball catcher Yogi Berra (He played 19 seasons in Major League Baseball (MLB) (1946–1963, 1965), all but the last for the New York Yankees. He was an 18-time All-Star and won 10 World Series championships as a player—more than any other player in MLB history).<sup>2</sup>

Yogi was famous for his malapropisms... the mistaken use of a word in place of a similar-sounding one, often with unintentionally amusing effect...<sup>3</sup>

**YOGI BERRA: DETERMINATION AND DIRECTION**

*"Nobody goes to that restaurant any more -- it's too crowded."*

*"If people don't want to come out to the ball park, nobody's going to stop them."*

*Someone asked Yogi what time it was; he said, "You mean now?"*

*Yogi was asked his philosophy of life: "When you get to a fork in the road, take it."*

*"I don't want to make the wrong mistake."*

*"You can see a lot by watching."*

*"If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up somewhere else."*

There's actually a lot of truth in some of those statements. Spiritually speaking, if we don't know where we're going, we truly will end up somewhere else! It's important to have a goal, and to keep our eyes set on that goal. If we just spend our lives drifting spiritually, "hoping" that we'll end up where we want to be, we're just deceiving ourselves. We need to determine Where we are going and Who we are following...

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>3</sup> ibid

**Illustration:** Notice the determination in Paul's voice: "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, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus....." (**Philippians 3:13-14**)<sup>4</sup>

On this earth, we have not reached our perfection (and won't here!)... I probably need to preach this sermon to myself more than any of you. For in the past 2 ½ years, I've had "several opportunities for spiritual growth...."<sup>5</sup> Visions of my own mortality have been greatly magnified, with the enemy gleefully celebrating each time they get in my head, and hamper me from joy...

- First and foremost, my wife Terri dying suddenly of pancreatic cancer at age 61
- Albeit secular, a few recording artists I really enjoy listening to have died
- My grandchildren getting older, growing up, changing...

But as I think on these things, I can countermand each and every one of these situations with the ability to Press On...

- Being blessed with my (newer) wife Julie, a Godly and wonderful person, who is bringing me joy once again
- There are still the recordings of music from those old guys who are no longer with us, and there are many other artists, older and younger, with us today
- Each stage of my grandchildren's growth brings joy as well as challenge, just as it was with my children

**Conclusion**...So, where do we go from here? We go to where the Lord leads us; we PRESS ON. And above and beyond going... *GOD IS NOT JUST CALLING US TO GO... HE'S ALSO CALLING US TO BE.* Ask God not only what task lies ahead, but how He is calling you to change.<sup>6</sup> What's that age-old adage... "THE ONLY THING THAT WON'T CHANGE IS THAT THERE WILL ALWAYS BE CHANGE..."??

We all need to focus on HIM to help us be who HE wants us to be. We all need to focus on HIM to help us go where HE wants us to go...

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/80121/yogi-berra-determination-and-direction-by-perry-greene> (modified)

<sup>5</sup> Mel Menker

<sup>6</sup> Moody "Today in the Word" November 10, 2023 – amended – us substituted for you