

PRESSING TO THE GOAL**Philippians 3:12-21****(Read Philippians 3:12-21)**

Intro: You know that I'm proud of my Philadelphia Eagles and their Super Bowl win. Well, I've been hearing a lot of complaining (I could call it whining but that wouldn't be nice) about the play the Eagles often use called the "Tush Push" or the "Brotherly Shove". This play is used in a situation where short yardage is needed. It goes like this: the quarterback keeps the ball in a type of a quarterback sneak as he follows his offensive line as it pushes into the opposing line, while he, in turn, is pushed from behind by his tailbacks and tight ends. It's very effective. In 2022 it attained a first down or a touchdown 92% of the time. It was successfully used again this year and in the Super Bowl. It's also very effective because it requires the united effort of the entire team to attain the goal.

Christ Followers need a team effort to attain *the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. Philippians 3:14b (KJV) and Paul is talking about just that as we finish out Philippians 3.

Last week we looked at how Paul recounted his spiritual pedigree and accomplishments and referred to them as worse than garbage compared to the infinitely greater worth of knowing Christ as his Lord.

Now he continues on that thought as he urges his good friends in Philippi to . . .

Press on!

- In his words, *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own*. Philippians 3:12. Paul's not perfect but he knows the best way. He is still marveling at the fact that after everything he did to destroy the work of Jesus and his followers, Jesus had still made him his own.
- I'll never forget the time in Prayer Meeting at Conoy Brethren in Christ Church where one of our ladies, who had recently come to Faith in Christ, was sharing her despair at the sin in her past, including an abortion, which she could not forgive herself for. After she was finished, Dan, who was one of our church leaders and the manager of a local Christian bookstore, and all-around wonderful person, said to her, "But Kimmi, you are now perfect now because Jesus saved you." Her response was gratefulness, but she made sure that she pointed out that she could never be as perfect as Dan was. His response was, "Oh you don't know how imperfect I am." Here was one of the most saintly persons I've ever known, and he was fully aware of how far short he was of the glory of God. And this was not because he didn't know he was saved, but because he knew how far he had to go. And he was always faithfully pressing on toward the high calling. Dan was a perfect example of F. B. Meyer's word that, *"The nearer the saint comes to the perfect life, the farther he feels from it."*
- Paul says that rather than allowing Satan to frustrate us with his discouraging words, we must keep on pressing on toward the goal. Meyer tells us that *"It is only when we have climbed the foothills that we realize how lofty the mountain summits are."* But as we climb with other saints at our side – we can make it. We **WILL** make it. Don't give up.
- And for goodness sake, don't let your past determine your future. Jesus changed your future when you made him Lord. Satan will try to throw your past in your face, but you know where to tell him to go with that kinda stinkin' thinkin'. Paul could have allowed his past life as a persecutor to take away his confidence and his mission – but his calling was sure – and he forgot what lay behind and forged ahead.
- Then Paul gives us some . . .

Good examples and bad examples

- Paul isn't bragging when he tells the Philippians to *join in imitating me*. Philippians 3:17. He is their teacher, after all, and he has modeled the way of Christ to them. It's not arrogance – it's just being a good example. He also tells them, in the same verse, to follow the example of others who walk consistently with the Lord. Practice what they preach. Watch what they do. Learn from them.
- Realize also that others are watching you. Don't be surprised that they are learning from you what it means to be Christ-like. This means all the time. I'm a pastor, so in a lot of ways I'm held to a higher standard. People expect a lot more from me than others, and well they should. I don't want to let Jesus down. I don't want to let you down! I want everyone to see Jesus in me, and be an example of what a Christ Follower is,

not just for you, but also for the world. But I've kind of painted myself into a corner with this. I have to watch what I post on Facebook or what I "Like" of other posts. Yes, I like being funny, but as I am doing that I must remember who's I am and whom I serve, and which Church I represent. I also have to be aware that my email address is pastorkat4@gmail.com. Pastor is in my email address for goodness sake! So if I send a scathing email to someone, what does that say about my witness of being a follower of the one who taught us "*Blessed are the meek*" Matthew 5:5a? Or perhaps I call in about something that's happening with my medical insurance or a University Hospitals bill AGAIN! or a mistake on my electric bill, or something that's been happening over and over again, and they're just not getting it right, and I'm getting frustrated with it. If I come unhinged at some poor customer service representative, whether she's in South Dakota, South Carolina, or South India, they will sooner or later find out that my address is pastorkat4@gmail.com, and what does that say about my Lord – or the church that I pastor? I've also painted myself into the corner with the fact that I have a license plate on the front of my truck that reads Pastor Papa. That means that horn swearing at people when they forget that they share the road with others is off the table. That means that tailgating someone so close that they can read Pastor Papa on my license plate is just not an option! You see, I'm an example. I must remember that. And do you know what, I'm an example to the ones who actually call me Papa! Duh!

- And just because you're not a pastor doesn't let you off the hook – you represent Jesus Christ too. They notice what you "Like" on Facebook. They question if you post a wonderful Christian quote and then in the next post use an expletive at something that happened in Washington or at Walmart. People are watching. We are examples – we represent Jesus Christ and his church.
- That's why Paul makes sure that he reminds the Philippians to beware of bad examples. F. B. Meyer writes, "*Those who leave the narrow track and still profess godliness are greater enemies of the Cross than avowed antagonists.*" Bad examples drive people away from Jesus. This week a friend sent me a couple videos of pastors who were preaching absolute heresy from their pulpits and it sickened me. They are preachers and they are preaching with great authority and their parishoners are soaking it up. Jesus said that such people were in danger of being fitted with a millstone and thrown into the sea for leading others astray. Paul also had tough words for these people. He writes, *For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.* Philippians 3:18-19. There is those who refuse to repent of this.
- Now perhaps you have someone in mind who fits this – maybe a liberal politician who campaigns to make abortion legal – and that IS terrible. But what about those who sweep people out of a job in the name of "draining the swamp" or some other slogan. The people effected by the changes in Washington over the past weeks have names and they have families, and Jesus loves them. We need to be instruments of God's mercy instead of supporters of sin. We need to be a conscience in a society that is forgetting what that means. We need to think about this.
- And this is because we must . . .

Never forget where home is

- God's call is upward. Listen, *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,* Philippians 3:20. This would have meant something significant to the Philippians. Remember, Philippi was a Roman city, filled with retired soldiers who had served Caesar and his Empire for their full 21 years and now they basked in their Romanness with a patriotic fervor that made being anything else other than a "good Roman citizen" a dangerous proposition. I've pointed it out before that if you didn't see Caesar as a god to be worshipped – you were considered an atheist. The Philippian church were atheists because they served the only true God and his Son, the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. They were citizens of heaven.
- Being a patriot who loves your country is great – unless it makes you forget where you true citizenship is. WE are citizens of heaven! And so our minds are not set on earthly things because we have a much higher calling. That doesn't make us better – but it does make us saved and because of that we are different –

very, very different. And we await his plan to transform us as he was transformed. He has the power and he will. Remember where your home is.

Conclusion: So keep pressing onward and upward. The goal is glory. Keep pressing to the goal and remember who's you are and whom you serve. Amen.