

MOVING FORWARD

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-13

Less than 10% of people will actually keep their New Year's Resolution. We are two weeks into the new year. If you made a resolution, how are you doing? It can be hard to change. [Self-control] Stopping a bad habit or starting a new routine can be tough. Self-discipline or is a great challenge. Having an accountability partner helps.

Even without resolutions, [Change pic] change is necessary. Actually, Jay Adams wrote that *"Everyone changes constantly; the question is, in what direction?"* (Adams, Jay, *How To Help People Change*, Zondervan, 1986) Concerning change he also wrote, *"All change toward God is good, and all change away from God is bad."*

I have come to believe that good changes are worth the effort. The end result is worth the discipline. Sometimes change is mandated. The doctor may say unless you stop this or start that you will not live long. When this happens you may feel you really have no choice.

One of the greatest things in our lives as Christians is our relationship with God. When something affects our relationship with God in a negative way, it is time to change.

I mentioned a year ago three things to consider in your relationship with God:

1. Your beliefs. What we believe about God, His Word, prayer... This really affects our daily relationship with God.

2. Your actions. How we act when we are away from Church gatherings, or what we do when no one is watching. This tells a lot about our relationship with God or maybe the lack of a relationship with Him.

3. Your location. How close are you to God in your life?

Here's a scripture example: In **Matthew 26** Jesus warned Peter he would deny Jesus three times before the cock crowed. Peter's response was, *"Even if I have to die for You, I will not deny You."* (35). They all went to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is betrayed by Judas and falsely arrested. While Jesus is being falsely accused, Peter is outside with non-followers of Jesus in the courtyard. Peter is afraid of what might happen to him if they connected him to Jesus. Three times he denies he knows Jesus. Then the cock crows three times. The Bible says Peter went out and wept bitterly.

While Peter was with Jesus, he took a stand and even tried to keep the soldiers from arresting Jesus. While away from Jesus' presence, Peter denies Him. **DO YOU THINK IT MADE A DIFFERENCE HOW CLOSE PETER WAS TO JESUS IN BOTH OF THESE EVENTS?** Yes. And it will make a difference in our lives how close we are to Jesus when temptations come our way.

In the verses of Philippians 3 that we read a few minutes ago, Paul speaks of continual needed change in his life. I want to briefly break it down for us this morning.

I. Paul was Honest

"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected" (12a)

"I do not count myself to have apprehended" (13a)

Paul is taking a spiritual inventory and he's being honest about it.

* We'll never go forward until we are honest about where we are right now.

* We can fool people but we can't fool God.

Paul knew he had to be honest with God.

Take time alone to consider where you are with God. Is it a vibrant relationship or very distant.

II. Paul had a Goal

“but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” (12b)

His goal was taking hold of God’s purpose for him.

Specifically, that was to be **Christlike – in actions, attitude, responses, motivations, etc.**

This is true for each of us. Can you imagine if our actions were more like Christ? Our goal should be to be more like Christ each day as we grow in Christian maturity. Don’t think it will happen all at once BUT we should continue toward that goal.

Let me go a little further with this scripture: Specifically, God had an individual purpose for Paul – that was to preach and teach the gospel. God has a purpose for you and I as well. It’s a great day and a great life when we come to understand what God wants to do through us in this life.

Impacting children, Senior Citizens, young adults, the unborn, and many others in this world for Christ. Helping to relieve suffering, provide basic necessities, share the good news of Jesus. We could go on and on. Some of it is through fulltime ministry but a lot of it is through volunteer ministry.

III. Paul was Focused

“but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead” (13b)

1. “Forgetting those things which are behind”

Quote: *“Looking back is sure to end in going back.” (JFB)*

Looking back at prior victories or at prior defeats keeps us from moving forward to what God wants next in our lives. BUT looking back sometimes means we are looking back into the world where we were before.

Luke 17:32 simply says, *“Remember Lot’s wife.” (Luke 17:32)* If Lot’s wife is remembered for anything it was for looking back into Sodom as God was bringing judgement on it. She and the others were told by the angels to not look back. When she did she became a pillar of salt. Here are a couple of quotes concerning Lot’s wife:

“She was destroyed on the very threshold of deliverance.” (MSB)

“She was out of Sodom but Sodom was not out of her.” (Believer’s Bible Commentary)

Be careful how far you look back. Some ponder their old life in the world and it becomes their downfall.

2. Paul’s focus was also on *“reaching forward to those things which are ahead.”*

The words *“reaching forward”* in the Gk mean *“strain toward or stretch out.”* It’s like a runner in his race leaning, stretching and straining to finish his race well.

I’ve run some races in competition. The worse thing you can do is to look back. It hinders your running and slows you down. The straighter you can run looking where you are going, gets you to your goal quicker.

Christian, don’t look back at things that will hinder you. Stretch it on out so you can finish well.

BRINGING IT HOME:

Do you know where you are in your relationship with God?

Think about it. **How close are you to God?**

BE honest like Paul was. IF you are like Paul and not satisfied with it, what are you going to do about it?

Are you going to stay right there OR reach forward like Paul?

* Reaching forward might mean a personal Bible devotion with God each day OR attending the lady's Bible study OR getting involved in our Wednesday/Sunday evening Bible study.

It might mean a commitment to prayer like never before in your personal life.

If any of these things are needed or something else God shows you, then the question is, **What are you going to do about it this year?**