

# Let's Win The Race

## Philippians 3:12-16

In Philippians 3, Paul is giving us his spiritual biography, his past (Phil. 3:1–11), his present (Phil. 3:12–16), and his future (Phil. 3:17–21). We have already met Paul “the accountant” who discovered new values when he met Jesus Christ. In this section we meet Paul “the athlete” with his spiritual vigor, pressing toward the finish line in the Christian race. All of us want to be “winning Christians” and fulfill the purposes for which we have been saved. What are the essentials for winning the race and one day receiving the reward that is promised?

### I. Dissatisfaction (3:12-13a)

“Not that I have already obtained it!” This is the statement of a great Christian who never permitted himself to be \_\_\_\_\_ with his spiritual achievements.

Self-evaluation can be a dangerous thing, because we can err in two directions: (1) making ourselves \_\_\_\_\_ than we are, or (2) making ourselves \_\_\_\_\_ than we really are. Paul had no illusions about himself; he still had to keep “pressing forward” in order to “lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold” of him.

### II. Devotion (3:13b)

“\_\_\_\_\_” is a phrase that is important to the Christian life. (Luke 10:42; John 9:25; Psalm 27:4)

*Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” (Mark 10:21)*

The believer must devote himself to “running the Christian race.” No athlete succeeds by doing everything; he succeeds by \_\_\_\_\_. (Nehemiah 6:3; James 1:8)

*So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?” (Nehemiah 6:3)*

*“being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” (James 1:8)*

### III. Direction (3:13c)

We are accustomed to saying “past, present, future,” but we should view time as flowing from the \_\_\_\_\_ into the \_\_\_\_\_ and then into the \_\_\_\_\_.

“Forgetting those things which are behind” does not suggest an impossible feat of mental and psychological \_\_\_\_\_ by which we try to erase the sins and mistakes of the past. It simply means that we break the power of the past by living for the future. We cannot change the past, but we can change the meaning of the past. (Genesis 45:1-15)

#### IV. Determination (3:14)

"I press!" This same verb is translated "I follow after" in Philippians 3:12, and it carries the idea of \_\_\_\_\_ endeavor. The Greeks used it to describe a hunter eagerly pursuing his prey.

Two extremes to avoid are: 1) "I must do it all" and 2) "God must do it all!" The Christian runner with the spiritual mind realizes that God must work *in* him if he is going to win the race (Phil. 2:12-13). "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). God works *in* us that He might work *through* us.

Toward what goal is the runner pressing with such spiritual \_\_\_\_\_?  
"The prize of the high [upward] calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

#### V. Discipline (3:15-16)

It is not enough to run hard and win the race; the runner must also obey the rules. In the Greek games, the judges were very strict about this. Any infringement of the rules \_\_\_\_\_ the athlete. In Philippians 3:15-16, Paul emphasizes the importance of the Christian remembering the "spiritual rules" laid down in the Word. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 2:5; Romans 14:10-12)

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)*

*Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. (2 Timothy 2:5)*

Bible history is filled with people who began the race with great success but failed at the end because they disregarded God's rules. They unfortunately lost their rewards (1 Cor. 3:15). It happened to Lot (Gen. 19), Samson (Judg. 16), Saul (1 Sam. 28; 31), and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). And it can happen to us!

Instead Let's finish the race setting our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2) and stand before the bema to receive our rewards!

#### What Now?

1. One of the key aspects of Paul's letter is seeing things from a heavenly point of view (having a spiritual mind) in other words looking at things on earth from God's point of view. What in your life is robbing you of your joy? Now filter them through God's point of view and determine the right way to approach these things.
2. Share the Gospel through your story with at least one person this week.