

REACHING OUT AND PRESSING ON  
Phil. 3:1-21

Intro: The end of one year and the beginning of a new year is generally taken as a special time when people evaluate — and re-evaluate their lives. This is also done in the business world.

We ask: What kind of a year has this been for me?  
What progress have I made?  
What am I doing that I want to change?  
What am I doing that I want to see strengthened?  
What have I failed to do that I need to do?

Obviously the questions have to be personal, but it is right at that point that we may be having our greatest problem. These are good questions, and they need to be asked. There are too many people today who aren't going anywhere and so they could care less about their lives. They take each day as it comes, but they have never taken the long look at their lives.

But to return . . . while these questions are personal and must be asked and answered by each person, all of us need wisdom that is greater than what we have to give the right answer and to follow the right way.

— Surely it does not need to be proven to those who are here this morning that the right answer is to be found only in the Bible, the Word of God!

Have you read your Bible through this year?

Do you expect to read it through in 1976?

What other books, Bible-related books, do you expect to read? Maybe one of your problems is that you are not reading the right things? The more you know of the Word, the more your other reading habits will change. It can make you really heartsick to see what many Christians are reading in these days. Perhaps I will make some suggestions this coming year as to books which you should be reading.

For this morning -- let us look at Philippians 3 and think about 1975 and 1976 as we do.

— I am speaking primarily to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. If you have not trusted Him, then this is the place for you to start. You cannot live until you have life, and you cannot have life until Christ is your Savior.

What answers does Paul give to the problems which we face today?

Let us look at two things in this chapter with respect to our lives as Christians:

- I. Some General Observations.
- II. Some Practical Suggestions.

## — I. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

(Give the background of this Epistle. It obviously had to be a time of re-evaluation for Paul.)

Our general observations have to do with the nature of the Christian life.

How would you describe it? What are you expecting as a Christian? Do you accept the present-day emphasis that it is a life of all joy and peace and pleasure -- with nothing else?

Let the Apostle Paul clear the air for us this morning as he has written under the direction of the Spirit of God.

### A. The Christian life is a life with a goal.

See verse 14. Other verses in the NT tell us the same thing.

### — B. This goal has been set by God.

It is not set by us. It is not set by our teachers. It is not set by the writers of books. It is not set by musicians. IT IS SET BY GOD. This is clear throughout the Scriptures.

### C. It is a goal which has to be won.

I am not talking just about getting to heaven. The Bible makes it clear that everyone who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior will some day be with the Lord. BUT all of the instructions of the NT (or, at least the majority of them) are directed at the lives of those of us who know the Lord.

It is possible to live for the Lord. It is equally possible NOT to live for the Lord. There are:

- 1) Obstacles in the way.
- 2) Enemies to be faced.
- 3) Trials to be endured and overcome.
- 4) Testings for our faith.

It is not all handed to us on a silver platter!

See vv. 8b, 10, 11.

D. It is a goal which we can be assured of attaining.

Note the tenor of vv. 12a, 14, 20, 21.

E. It is a goal which no Christian on earth has yet attained.

See v. 12. If the Apostle Paul had not attained it, how can we ever make such a claim? And yet many people do.

F. Therefore, each one of us has the need to be reaching out and pressing on.

Read vv. 13, 14.

G. The goal?

It is not:

- 1) Just in what I have.
- 2) Nor in how I feel.
- 3) Nor in how things work out for me.

It has to do with WHAT I AM -- "perfect." See vv. 12-17, 20, 21.

And let it be understood at this point, and let any who are not Christians understand this, that the more God's goal becomes my goal, the more my life is going to be out-of-step with the world and its goals.

As far as I know, our Lord's words in John 15:18-21 have never been revoked.

Now let us consider from Philipians 3,

## II. SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

"Suggestions" is really too weak of a word. These are exhortations, commandments. As believers, we have no option. We are under orders. Our commander-in-chief is calling us into the battle. Victory is guaranteed. But there is nothing in the immediate future but spiritual warfare.

A. There must be a determination to accept the Bible as it is.

It is amazing how the Word of God sheds light upon the many things in every generation that are contrary to the will of God!

This is why I am urging you to read the Word this year.

The Word of God must speak so loudly to us that we are unable to hear the other voices that are trying to get our attention.

- B. There is going to have to be a forsaking of those things which previously were our goals.

See Paul's words in vv. 7a, 8a.

Your satisfaction or disappointment with the Lord is largely dependent upon what you are expecting from Him.

- C. The Lord Jesus Christ must be given the pre-eminent place in our lives.

Paul speaks of knowing Him,  
winning Him,  
being found in Him.

All that we need is in Him. All that God wants us to be, He is!

- D. Finally, we must be reaching out and pressing on.

Paul was not marking time as a Roman prisoner. Read this and his other prison epistles. Note the prayers, the zeal, the faith, always pressing the battle to the enemy -- refusing to give up because he was always sustained by the marvelous grace of God!

Concl: John Newton has given expression to our conflict and our hope in the following little-known words:

Why should I fear the darkest hour,  
Or tremble at the tempter's power?  
Jesus vouchsafes to be my tower.

Though hot the fight, why quit the field?  
Why must I either fly or yield,  
Since Jesus is my mighty shield?

When creature comforts fade and die,  
Worldlings may weep, but why should I?  
Jesus still lives, and still is nigh.

Though all the flocks and herds were dead,  
My soul a famine need not dread,  
For Jesus is my living bread.

I know not what may soon betide,  
Or how my wants shall be supplied;  
But Jesus knows, and will provide.

Though sin would fill me with distress,  
The throne of grace I dare address,  
For Jesus is my righteousness.

(Over)

Though faint my prayers and cold my love,  
My steadfast hope shall not remove,  
While Jesus intercedes above.

Against me earth ~~and~~ hell combine;  
But on my side is power divine;  
Jesus is all, and He is mine!

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