Pressing Forward into 2025

Philippians 3:12-14

As we stand at the threshold of a new year it is natural to reflect on 2024. The year behind us is filled with victories, defeats, and joys. We remember the sorrows, steps forward, and stumbles that took us backward. In this part of December, we find ourselves looking forward and backward. We wonder what this new year will bring. We do all we can to go into this new year with faith, hope, and purpose. The Apostle Paul's words in Philippians 3:12-14 offer us profound insight and encouragement as we chart our path forward:

"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. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

These words carry with them an urgency and passion and remind us that the Christian life is not a destination but a journey. This text speaks to us in three different ways. It tells us to have humility in the present. Next, it tells us to release the past. And finally, to focus on the future.

How does this text present humility in the present? Paul begins with an admission or confession. "Not that I have already obtained this or that I am already perfect." Begin by realizing there is a lot more growing that still needs to be done in our lives. Here Paul is saying, "I'm not perfect. I have not been all that I can be." Humility invites us to examine ourselves. Admit where we have fallen short of God's call on our lives. What areas of my life do I still need to surrender to the Lord? This is meant to help us realize that God's grace is sufficient to grow us and that His work has not been completed in us. So, we press on because we belong to a loving and caring God.

The next thing Paul says, "But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead." Don't get this confused. Forgetting the past does not mean denying or erasing it. It can never be erased. It does mean your past does not define you.

Whether your past is filled with successes or failures God does not want us to live in them. Either one of them. We are to become more than we are at this present moment. We must press forward beyond our failures or successes. To press forward we must let go.

Is there anything we need to leave behind in 2024? Is there guilt or shame over things you have done? Are there some things that you are resting on that prevent you from becoming a better version of yourself? Understand whatever it is. Be it a success or a failure, you cannot carry it into tomorrow if you want to be all God has called you to be. Letting go is trusting in the power of God to accomplish for you what you are unable to accomplish for yourself.

Paul makes clear his focus, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” This image is of a runner, straining with every ounce of energy in his body. His eyes are focused on the finish line. This image shows a runner who is not distracted by anything around him. He is locked in the future. That future is a life lived in the fullness of Christ.

As we move forward into the new year where is your focus? Do the demands of life consume you, distract you, or even discourage you? Paul says to fix our eyes on Jesus; He is the prize. He is the author and finisher of our faith.

Let this be our New Year’s Resolution: I press on, not because I am perfect, but because I am His. I press on, not clinging to the past, but trusting in His grace. I press on, not for earthly gain, but for the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. May this be the year that you run with perseverance, trusting that He who called us is faithful.

Blessings, and Happy New Year,

Pastor Gool