

Pressing on in Christian Maturity

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[0 : 0 0] We're in Philippians chapter 3, so if you're not there yet, go ahead and turn there. Today we're going to be talking about growing as a Christian, growing in spiritual maturity,¹ And holiness. Holiness is not a word necessarily that we hear a lot in our regular conversation, but a word that is found plenty of times in the Bible. Just a quick recap of where we are here in Philippians. Paul's writing this letter to a church in Philippi that he established, and he's writing it from not a jail cell necessarily, but from house arrest. He is under arrest there in Rome. Most people assume it was some kind of a house arrest. But as he writes to the Philippians, he's excited about his opportunities to preach Christ there in Rome, and about building up, continuing to build up the churches that he has established up to this time.

And he's excited about these opportunities despite the trouble that he's in. When we got to Philippians chapter 3, there was this emphasis that Paul puts on this concept, this idea of rejoicing in the Lord. I'll read it here. He says, Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same thing to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. And he contrasts this idea of rejoicing in the Lord as believers with a contrasting idea, with a different idea, what he calls putting your confidence in the flesh.

And so in verse 3, he says, well, I'll read verse 2, Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation. He said there is this way of living in the Christian life that is rejoicing in the Lord. And then there's another way that people will try to tempt you or seduce you to live the Christian life. He calls those people evil workers, dogs, and he calls them the mutilation. Verse 3 says, For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and we have no confidence in the flesh.

And so he warns about this method, this way of living the Christian life in which you put your confidence and your boasting in the things that you do and the accomplishments that you've made and the credentials that you have. But then he goes on to say, you know what? All of that is nothing.

In fact, he calls it garbage. All of that is garbage. And he says, you know what? Not just that, but he said basically everything in life. I just count as loss for the excellency of this one most important thing in all of life, and that is knowing Christ, knowing him as our Savior, having our life in him, he says, and being counted as righteous because of what he has done.

[3 : 2 2] That one thing makes all of the privileges and comforts and rewards that we might find in this life completely worthless in comparison to that one great and important thing.

And you know what? The reason why, and we finished with this the last time we were in Philippians, the reason why this one thing is so important, this righteousness that we have as a gift through the cross of Christ is because it guarantees us this most important thing. And he mentions it in verse 11. He says, if by any means, he describes what Christ did and he says, so that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. Through Christ, we have been given a salvation in which we are guaranteed that we will one day rise with him, rise like him, to have new bodies, to rise to an eternal life.

You know, in a way, it's like getting a free ticket to heaven. And some people have put it in those terms, simply by trusting in Christ. But here's the question. Is that all there is to the Christian life?

We've got our golden ticket, right, that God gives to us as a free gift just because we trust in him. And that's it. We're done. Our Christian life is complete. Our Christian life is finished.

At least in this life, right? And for now, we're just waiting, sitting in the sidelines, waiting until we are promoted into glory. And this is what Paul is going to address today.

[5 : 34] Let's read here in Philippians chapter 3. We're going to look at verse 12 through 16. Here's what Paul says. If in anything, if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule. Let us be of the same mind.

In this passage, Paul uses language from a race, from a competition. You know, during that time, there was something that was quite popular in the Greek and Roman world that is still popular today, something that we do every four years.

They have this global competition. We call it the Olympic Games. And it harkens all the way back to the time of Greece and Rome. And Paul is using language from these games in which there would be races, competitions, where people would compete for a prize.

And so he uses language, for example, that word perfect. He talks about not already being perfect. That word is a word based on a Greek word called teleos, which has to do with a finish line.

[7 : 23] It was a word used to describe a finish line. A goal that was to be reached for. He uses a term to press on, which means to hotly pursue or to run after something.

He uses the term goal, which is just a mark that you look at. When you're in a race, you have your eyes on that finish line, that mark that you're trying to get to. And then he uses a word prize.

That word prize is actually the word that they would use in these games to describe that trophy we would call it today. You would be awarded the gold medal for that person who won the race.

And so Paul here is talking about a race that we are in, this race of the Christian life. But notice that as he describes this race, it is not a race that he has just finished, not a race that he has already completed, but a race that he is in the thick of right now, that he is running hard to win right now.

You see, even though we have won a prize, we have won through the gift of Jesus Christ a wonderful salvation where we get that ticket to heaven and we have so many benefits that he's given to us.

[8 : 57] A position in heavenly places, a perfect righteousness that is not our own, that he identifies us with, he accounts us as righteous. And we gain that without any effort, without any running, just by putting our trust in him.

But we need to know this, that our salvation that God gave us is not the finish line of the Christian life. In fact, our salvation is the starting line of a race that God has called us to complete.

As we look at this passage, Paul says this, he says, not that I have already attained or am already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold of something.

Later on, he calls it a prize. So the first question I think we need to ask is, what is the prize that Paul is talking about here? You know, as some read this, they look back at the previous verse, verse 11.

Let's look at that. What does verse 11 say? If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. And they would surmise that, well, he's talking about running to receive this prize of the resurrection of the dead.

[10 : 26] But that doesn't really make any sense because here he's saying, hey guys, I haven't actually gotten the prize yet. And that would be kind of a little bit too obvious, right? Yeah, that's one of those prizes is you have to die first, right?

In order to receive that resurrection from the dead. So I don't think he's talking about that resurrection from the dead as the prize that he is seeking, that he is hotly pursuing.

But I do think that the resurrection that he just spoke of, that eternal life that he has, that will be completed when our mortal bodies are resurrected, does relate, it is related to the prize that he is talking about.

You see, we were given for free based on our faith alone, a gift of eternal life. It's something that belongs to us as Christians, as believers, now.

We have it. It belongs to us. But that eternal life, that life, is something that we ought to live out.

[11 : 35] not wait until heaven, not wait until we pass into eternity before we live out that eternal life.

We want to live it out right now. And here in verse 12, he puts it this way, I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Jesus Christ has also laid hold of me.

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy chapter 6. Because Paul uses similar language. Timothy is just a few books over in your Bible.

1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 11. Paul also talks about laying hold of something. Here's what he says.

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue, and he's talking about sin, by the way, things to flee, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

[12 : 56] Fight the good fight, excuse me, fight the good fight of faith. lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

So just like in Philippians, where he talks about, I want to lay hold of that thing which Christ has laid hold of me, Paul says the same thing to Timothy.

But in this passage, he talks about exactly what he wants Timothy to lay hold of, and that is eternal life. Why does he say you need to lay hold of it? Doesn't Timothy, isn't he already a believer, doesn't he already have eternal life?

He has it, but he needs to lay hold of it. He needs to live out that eternal life that was given to him.

And here, he references it, he says, to which you were also called. It's a calling. Remember what Paul says in Philippians about the prize?

[14 : 04] There is an upward call, that prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus. In Ephesians chapter 4, if you would turn there, Ephesians chapter 4, you go back, Ephesians is right before Philippians.

Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 1, Paul says, I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.

And then he describes what it looks like to walk worthy of the calling. And he says, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love and endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

You see, God has given us eternal life and called us to live that eternal life out. And that is our calling. It's the eternal life that we have received for free.

We need to lay hold of. We need to walk worthy of that calling. Back just a page or two in the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul talks about a similar thing.

[15 : 28] Ephesians chapter 1, verse 4. Ephesians 1, 4. This is kind of mid-sentence, but he says, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

And why did he choose us? Why did he choose to give us, Gentiles, salvation and offer it to us? And he says why?

That we should be holy and without blame before him in love. God gave us the salvation. One of the things that he wants us to do with this salvation is to walk before him in holiness and in love.

Again, Ephesians, this is a big theme. Turn to Ephesians chapter 2, verse 8. Just probably one page over. And this is a famous passage, especially one that is popular here in our church.

Ephesians 2, 8. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. We have this salvation that is a free gift.

[16 : 42] God doesn't want anybody to be able to boast about earning their salvation. But then it continues with this. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

He saved us by his grace, and he wants for us that we ought to live a good life with good works, because we are his workmanship.

Another one that speaks to this, 2 Corinthians 5, 15. 2 Corinthians 5, 15. That's a couple of books back. 2 Corinthians 5, 15.

Once we get through these passages, because I really want to establish what this prize is. This is the most important part as far as the context of understanding this before we continue on.

2 Corinthians 5, 15. And he died for all. That's what it says. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.

[17 : 54] He made an atonement that was available to all. And then he goes on to say why. So that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again.

We have been given a great salvation. Not that we should just sit in it, sit on the sidelines and do nothing, just waiting to be taken up into heaven, whether it's through the rapture or whatever it might be.

And we do look forward to that. In fact, the Bible speaks to us the importance of yearning for heaven and being with the Lord.

But we don't sit idly by. Jesus died for us that we who live should no longer live for ourselves, but live for him who died for us and rose again.

The last passage I'll read is in Titus 2, verse 11. Titus 2. If you go back to Timothy, right after 2 Timothy is Titus.

[19 : 21] Titus 2.11 says this, He says this, that it teaches us, the grace of God teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in the present age, right?

Not waiting for the future age, but right here and right now. looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works.

And so here's my assertion in what Paul is talking about because he uses, he doesn't use very explicit language, he uses general terms, but he's talking about this thing that he is going after, laying hold of, and this prize of the upward call that he is running after.

I think this is what he's talking about. The prize that we're going after is a life of godliness, of holiness, of uprightness, of good works.

A godly night, a godly life. The prize is growing in holiness and love and really becoming becoming more like our Savior.

[20 : 54] And so, what that means is that we have some growing up to do. Back to Philippians chapter 3.

We'll continue on in verse 12. Philippians 3.12. Hopefully you kept your finger there. He says this, not that I have already attained or am already perfected.

You see, Paul was very aware that there was still some work to be done in his life. That that goal of being like Christ, he had not reached that goal yet.

He has some growing to do. Now let me ask this question. If Paul had some growing to do, do you think maybe we have some growing to do? We still have some race to run towards that goal of the upward call of being like our Lord without a doubt.

You know, I think this statement though that Paul makes so important because, you know, you will never pursue something that you believe, one, that you already have, right, or two, that you believe you could never attain.

[22 : 24] You will never pursue something that, one, you think you don't need, and two, that you think you would never be able to achieve in any way, shape, or form.

And so, I think we need to recognize these two things, that one, God has called us to live a holy life, a life of love, a life of goodness.

He's called us to that. And the other thing is to recognize that we aren't there yet, that we still have quite a ways to go. God. I think there are two aspects that those two kind of ideas speak to, and these are two important things that we kind of have to start with.

One is wisdom. We need the wisdom to know what a mature, upright, godly, Christian life looks like.

And when we get a few verses, Paul actually talks about that. We need to know what that kind of life looks like. And then two, we have to have the humility to realize all the different areas where we have not achieved that, to where we are not living like Christ.

[23 : 44] Along these lines, I think there are two ditches that we can come into as we live the Christian life and look at this topic of holiness or growing in Christian maturity.

One is the ditch of thinking that at some point in our Christian life, we will arrive. That we will be there. That we will have arrived at a state of Christian holiness that is perfect in some kind of way.

That we will have gotten there. And you know, as I've lived my Christian life, I've met people who, it seems to me, and maybe they don't say this out loud, but that's what they think. I've made it. I've arrived. But then the other ditch is to have this attitude or this mind in you that, well, in living the Christian life, I just expect that I'm barely going to get off the starting line.

That I'm going to stumble and fall as soon as I start running. That I'm going to barely make any progress at all. And both of those, I think, are wrong attitudes and perspectives to have.

In Christian history, there has been a movement or an idea that is called Christian perfection. There are some who teach that Christians can or should reach a state of some kind of perfection in this life.

[25 : 09] And a lot of times, the Bible uses the term about being perfect. perfect. And usually, people will make the case or talk about that word.

When we use the word perfect, we typically think about no errors. But the biblical word that is translated as perfect is usually about maturity, growth, coming to a state of completion.

And there are a spectrum of views on this, but today we have Wesleyan movements, holiness movements, there are Pentecostal groups. I think of John Wesley who was a great preacher, evangelist, and reformer.

There was a great awakening it was called in this country and in England back before we became a nation back in the 1700s. And he was a big part of that great awakening.

And he was somebody who was passionate about holiness, about living a holy life. Him and a buddy of his went to school, I forget where it was, somewhere in England, it was either Cambridge or Harvard or one of those big name old schools in England.

[26 : 25] And he was buddies with a guy named George Whitefield. And they started this group, they were really wanting to live holy Christian lives. From what I understand, barely understood salvation at that point anyway.

And so they started a club. You know what they called it? The Holy Club. The Holy Club. And they didn't get a lot of members joining their Holy Club.

You can imagine if you go to college and you start a club called the Holy Club, are you going to get a lot of people joining? No. It's not any different today than it was back then.

But a big part of his life and his ministry was bringing people to faith and then teaching them to live a holy life. And there's a lot of fruit from that.

But he wrote a book or a pamphlet, I can't remember it, called a, what did he call it? A Plain Account of Christian Perfection. And really taught this idea that Christians need to try to achieve this goal, this prize, where they actually arrive at this place where they can consider themselves in some way entirely sanctified or reaching that place of Christian perfection.

[27 : 46] And while that pursuit is good, I think the idea of people who have, and there's actually some, and I don't know if Wesley taught this, but I have a quote here from the Church of the Nazarene.

They are kind of, they came out of that movement, they came from the ministry of Wesley, but this is one of their articles of faith.

It says that entire sanctification, which is another term for this idea of Christian perfection, is that act of God's grace by which the believer's heart is cleansed from all sin and filled with the pure love of God.

Now doesn't that sound awesome? It does. Now in the Bible it actually does teach that we are cleansed from all of our sins, right? Through forgiveness, right? But this is actually a reference not just to forgiveness, but actually having sin completely removed from the Christian life in some kind of way.

And that this is a goal for us to achieve. Now I totally agree with that. That is a goal that we should pursue. But here's the danger. I don't think we should really totally expect that we are going to arrive at that place.

[29 : 01] There is always room for us to grow. And we need to continue to grow and make progress. But I think there's a ditch on the other side.

For those who have somewhat of a low expectation for Christians, and this I think is the more common ditch today, even among Christians, who think, well, I'm a Christian, and yeah, there's certain ways that Christians should live, but, well, I mean, who can really live up to those kinds of standards, right?

I mean, the bar is like super high. And so, you know what? I'm not really going to put in much effort. I mean, God has forgiven all of my sins, right?

And, you know, when I die and get to heaven, then the flesh will be gone and I won't have to worry about those things anymore. That's actually quite a common view, even if not stated.

There's another teaching from hundreds of years ago. There's a catechism put out by the Presbyterians or the Puritans called the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

[30 : 09] A catechism is just a way of teaching people, sometimes it was for children or adults, through questions and answers, try to teach them certain spiritual truths.

This is question 82 from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. It says this, Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God? That's an interesting question, right? Is any man able to perfectly keep the commandments of God?

Here's the answer. No mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God. Now, right there, I kind of resonate with that.

I'm not sure that I could find a scripture to totally support that, but as far as my experience and what I've seen throughout my life, that seems to be accurate. But then they finish off with this.

But, so again, let me repeat it. No mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.

[31 : 13] Now, I find that to be somewhat of a low expectation. That as Christians, what they're teaching here is that we ought to expect in our Christian life, that every single day we will sin against the Lord and our neighbor in our thoughts, in our words, and in our deeds.

And I don't think it's healthy for us as Christians to have that kind of a low expectation. I think we should have higher expectations than that.

And so, here's what I think the balanced view is. You know what? Sin is bad. Christians should never sin in their life ever. Does that apply just to Christians? Nobody should sin ever, right?

We should pursue righteousness and love in our life. We should realize and understand our never-ending need to grow in Christ, but also, we should expect progress in our life.

That each and every day we become a little bit more like Jesus Christ, like our Savior. We can look back ten years ago and look at ourselves today and how we're living the Christian life and see progress.

[32 : 40] Back to Philippians chapter 3. Again, talking in terms of a race. He says in verse 13, brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. He's saying, listen, I am pressing on to that goal of being more like my Savior, of living an upright and a godly life.

That word or that phrase to press on is to run after or to follow after. And he's saying, hey, I am reaching for the prize.

Yes, I may never actually have that prize in my hand. I may never actually get there, but you know what? I am going to run as if that's the most important, as the prize that I am trying to attain.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 9 24, you don't have to go there. Paul uses similar language. He says, do you not know that those who run in a race, they all run, but only one receives the prize.

[34 : 06] Run in such a way that you may obtain it. So our race, our pursuit of holiness, of godly living, is not something that we just kind of meander, just walk, maybe I'll make some progress, maybe I'll work on that bad habit next year.

No, we run away, so we pursue hotly after it, as if we want to win that gold medal. And then he gives some instruction here on how to approach this race.

And he says this, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press on. He's saying, hey, when you run a race, when you run a race and you're looking behind you, can you run very fast?

No, you're probably going to trip and fall. Has anybody ever seen that before? I think about when they hand the batons, right? And you kind of have to look behind you. And I've seen people fall because they're waiting, there's some kind of faltering, they're looking behind, and maybe you run into somebody.

You have to look forward, you have to look at the goal, you cannot look behind you. You have to look forward. forward. And so, it's important to forget, like Paul says, to forget what is behind and focus on what is ahead.

[35 : 45] And I don't think he means to completely forget. We don't have to forget where we were, we don't have to forget all the things, but it's just more of a figure of speech, like, hey, we can't focus on the past.

We need to focus on the future, on where we want to go. You know, and to kind of continue on with the sports metaphors or illustrations, I think about football, right? That's the sport most of us, I think, are probably familiar with here in this country.

If you want to be, if you want your team to be an NFL champion, if you want to try to win that Super Bowl this year, you can't spend all your time just reliving the glory days of the last time you won the Super Bowl, right?

Even though that's fun and nice and you can watch the videos and remember how good it felt to win that game.

No, you have a new season to conquer, new opponents and new strategies. And not only that, you can't depend on your conditioning from previous years, all the work that you did to condition yourself, the training that you completed.

[36 : 56] You have to continue to condition and practice this year if you want to win that prize this time. And then on the opposite side, you know what, in the past you failed, you've never won a Super Bowl.

Your team has just been losers for years and years. And so you could just resign, our team is just a losing team. You can dwell on all of your failures.

But instead, no, if you want to win, if you want to go after that prize, if you want to win that Super Bowl, you have to forget all those past failures. You have to focus on the here and now. You can learn from your mistakes, but then you need to stand up on your feet and keep running, keep moving on.

And it's the same way in our spiritual lives. We can focus on past victories and let those prevent us from running the race how we ought to. and we can focus on past failures.

You know, did you overcome? Did you have a great victory over alcoholism back in 1982? What a tremendous victory to overcome something like alcoholism.

[38 : 11] That is a great victory. What about the other bad habits in your life? that you need to overcome in 2025?

Did you avoid a divorce 10 years ago? That's great. But how has the love for your spouse grown in the last year?

Were you bold to lead people to Christ when you were a new believer? What about now? Are you serving the Lord with the same fervor? We cannot dwell on the great things that were accomplished in the past.

We have to continue to look forward to the future, to continue to grow. The same way with failures. I think about young people. You know, have you bickered and fought with your brother since you were 10 years old?

Maybe think, well, I'm never going to have a good relationship with my brother because we just can't get along. You know what? Maybe now, today, is the time to figure out how you're going to get along.

[39 : 23] What about this? Have you been feeding a pornography habit for the last 20 years? Well, what's another year? Right? It's been 20 years. I failed at this. What's one more year?

Or will you decide that now is the time to break free from that addiction and that habit once and for all?

Has your marriage been kind of lackluster and cold for the last 10 years? Well, I guess this is kind of how marriage is for some people.

You know, and it takes two, right? But will you do what it takes this year, right now, to have a marriage, as far as you're concerned anyway, that abounds in sacrificial love?

You know what? We've all stumbled. We've all failed and faltered in many ways in this race that we're talking about. For some people, they barely made it off the starting line.

[40 : 25] For others, we made good progress for a while and then kind of stumbled again. We need to get back up and continue that race. But we can't look back.

We have to get up on our feet and we have to start running. And as the popular phrase that we all know goes, that today is the first day of the rest of your life.

We don't look back. We can start our race again right now and get back on track. We'll finish up with these last two verses, Philippians 3 and verse 15.

Paul gives a little bit more instruction in this regard. Therefore, let us, as many as are mature, have this mind. And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule. Let us be of the same mind. This is, the language is a little awkward, I think, at least to us today.

[41 : 33] But I think this is what he was saying. Hey, if you have enough maturity in your Christian life, you're going to know that what I'm telling you is the truth. It's a fact. Hey, we all need to grow. And in fact, there are specific ways that people who are mature know that I need to grow and they know the specifics.

These are the things that I need to grow in or grow out of. So there are people who are already pursuing spiritual growth. Then he's saying, hey, if you disagree with me, if you don't have this in your mind, if in anything you think otherwise, you know what?

God will reveal it to you. Now, I think there's a caveat there. If you're humble, if you're willing to listen, I think humility is the key to Christian growth.

you know, as I get older and I know that this is true for many people, you really become more aware of the things you don't know, right? I think about when it comes to knowledge, who was it?

Mark Twain talked about, oh, I'm going to get it wrong. But he says, when I was 14 years old, I didn't write this one down.

[42 : 50] He said, when I was 14 years old, I knew way more than my father. And he says, by the time I was 21, I was surprised at just how much, you know, my father had learned in those few years. And why is that the case, right?

It's not because his father had grown, right? It was because he had grown. He had thought, he knew all these things, and he realized later on, you know, he still had a lot to learn. And this is maybe a paradox even in the Christian life.

The more we grow in spiritual maturity and holiness, I think the more aware we are of our lack, of how much more we need to pursue growing in Christ and being more like him.

It's like climbing a mountain. The higher up you go, the more you realize just how big this mountain is and how far it is to the top. He finishes up with this, nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by that same rule.

Let us be of the same mind. He said regardless, regardless of whether you know that you need to grow or you don't, you haven't figured it out yet, with whatever wisdom we have attained up to this point, we need to walk according to it.

[44 : 02] To the extent that we know how to live the Christian life, we need to live it out. You know, there are lots of people, they don't know that this is wrong or that they should be pursuing a you know, this other thing.

You just don't know. And so we need to grow. We need to grow in our knowledge and in our wisdom. But to the knowledge and the wisdom that we have attained, we need to walk it out. We need to get to work.

And just to wrap this up, I think as an application, what can we do with this? Let's just take an inventory, an account of our own lives.

Have we been perfected? Is there anybody here that thinks that they've arrived, they've made it to that place of completion, of being like Christ?

Or do we recognize a need for ourselves to continue to grow in Christ? Are we pressing in to that? And if we look back, just take an inventory, we look at our Christian life, if we look back at the beginning of our Christian life until now, do we see a change?

[45 : 07] Do we see a difference? Is it a little difference or a big difference? Does our life look different? Do we act and look more like Christ? And not just at the beginning of our Christian life, which may be 20 years from now, but even in the more recent past, from a year ago.

If we look back at our life a year ago and our life now, have we grown? Have we become more like our Savior? Or have we kind of plateaued?

There was some point in our Christian life where we were progressing and then we just kind of evened off, leveled off. Now we've plateaued in the Christian life. Maybe we've just become satisfied with our current state of maturity and growth.

But we have to continue to press on and look to grow further, to be more like our Savior. And when we find areas, when we find areas of our lives that need work, what will we do?

Are we going to just wallow in guilt and condemnation? Ah, man, I haven't been able to, this habit has had a hold of me for years and years. Oh well, I'm just a dirty rotten sinner.

[46 : 24] Is that what we're going to do? Will we resign ourselves to a lackluster Christian life? Or maybe what we'll do is we're going to say, hey, I'm going to target that and I'm going to really impress the Lord with, you know, getting this thing resolved.

Is that what we're going to do? Or, instead, what we ought to do, this gets back to the theme of Philippians, is based on our, what God has done in us, with a spirit of joy and confidence, rejoicing in the Lord.

We'll just put our hands to the plow, knowing that despite our immaturity and even sometimes epic failures to live the Christian life as we should, that regardless of all that, we remain God's children.

We remain in His hands. We remain the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. We remain seated with Him in heavenly places. We can rejoice in Him and our salvation, but at the same time, ask the Lord for His help, because He is our Father who likes to give us good gifts.

And it is Him who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. So it's right and good for us to go to Him and ask Him, can you make me more like you, Father, in this area?

[47 : 52] I know I need to work on this. Would you work in me? And you know what will happen? He'll do it. In one year, in two years, in three years, in ten years, you'll look back and you realize, you know what?

I grew to be more like Christ in this area, in that area, in this other area, in this area over here. And that's what God, that's what His desire is for us.

Let's close in a word of prayer and ask God to do that work in us right now. And by the way, as I pray, you know, there might be specific things that you might consider in your own life that you will pray and ask for God's help on.

Father, we love You. Thank You for what You've done for us, that You have saved us, that You have given us eternal life. That You have given us a gift of righteousness, that we are righteous despite all of our falterings and failings.

But we do. We want to be more like our Savior. And we ask You to help us to continue to grow, to continue to run that race towards that prize. Run it as if to receive that prize.

[49 : 06] And we ask You to work in us, that we might be more like You each and every day. We thank You for these things. In Jesus' name, amen.