

Phil.3:12-15

We continue this morning to speak on the subject of: Pressing Toward the Mark in 2010. We opened this thought last week as I sought to challenge you and to charge you as an encouragement as we look to the New Year in 2010. May God give you the grace and strength and ability to fulfill those things needful for our Christian walk! These are practical things that should equal our doctrinal position. In other words, doctrine without practice is dangerous; our doctrine should complement our practice. The book of Ephesians is set forth like this, the first 3 chapters are doctrinal and the last 3 are practical. Paul does this in lot of his epistles. Look at the beginning of chapter 4 our Ephesians verses 1-7. We must not only teach doctrine, but we must also emphasize the importance of holiness and sanctification in our walk. I say this because there are many who profess to be Christians who only talk the talk but fail to walk their talk. There were 5 things that I shared with you last week and we only had time for the first 2.

- I. Paul's Confession**
- II. Paul's Conviction**
- III. Paul's Contemplation**
- IV. Paul's Compensation**
- V. Paul's Consummation**

The first thing we saw last week was Paul's Confession, wherein he confessed that he had not attained and that he was not perfect. I believe we see Paul's humility and honesty as he confesses his inability of having arrived or of obtaining perfection. Paul is showing us that he was human like all of us and that his feet were also made of clay, he knew that he was what he was only because of the grace of God. Not only did we see Paul's confession, but also saw Paul's conviction. Paul had great conviction, he had a great desire to serve and live for his Lord and Savior. He tells us in the middle of verse 12, "...*BUT I FOLLOW AFTER...*" In verse 13 he tells us, "...*REACHING FORTH...*" In verse 14 he informs us, "*I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK...*" This is nothing short of conviction.

We ended last week's message in challenging you to have conviction in 2010 for the things of God. We challenge you last week to give yourselves to Him in 2010 to be use as vessels of honor for His glory. If we name the name of Christ, let us then be willing

to: ***"be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."***

- Let us seek to have total commitment to Christ in 2010.
- Let us seek to have total consecration to Christ in 2010. Let us seek to walk in holiness before Him 2010. He gave His life for us, let us give our lives for Him. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* Romans 12:1 & 2. Notice its not in your strength and power but in His mercies, that we seek to consecrate our lives to Him. 1 Chron. 29:5 says, *"...And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?"*
- Let us seek to have total conviction for Christ 2010. Take a stand for Christ and don't be ashamed of being a Christian. Let us have some passion and fervor for Christ. Don't be ashamed of saying, "my heart belongs to HIM!" Serve Him with a passionate heart like Joshua and say, **"as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."**
- Let us seek to have total conformity to Christ in 2010. I want to be like CHRIST! I want to be like my redeemer: loving, caring, compassionate, forgiving, tender, considerate and generous. I want to do as it says in the second Psalm and verse 12, *"Kiss the Son..."* I want to follow Him in 2010, I want to learn of Him in 2010, I want to serve Him in 2010 and I want to be conformed to Him in 2010! I want to love Him with all my heart, with all my strength, with all my soul and with all my mind! Let us have a deep and willing conviction for our God.

This brings us to our 3<sup>rd</sup> point:

### **III. Paul's Contemplation.**

Paul says in verse 14, *"I press toward the mark..."* Paul is looking ahead with anticipation. Paul has a goal in mind and he is contemplating that goal. Paul is considering that prize, he is contemplating with readiness of mind seasoned with prudence and caution. He already confessed his inability and therefore knows that if he wins that prize it is because of the grace of God. He makes sure that the grace of God guides him and not his own wisdom and strength. Paul knows that there are no short cuts to spiritual maturity; therefore it is his responsibility to press toward that mark. God preserves us, but we must persevere amidst all the struggles, whether they are temptations, trials, sins, shortcomings, the world, the devil, our flesh, etc. Paul's mind is made up, how about yours? Is your mind made up to follow Christ, to press towards that imperishable mark or prize? Do you ever contemplate this? Can we say like Peter,

when others decided to walk no more with the Lord, *"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."* Again, Paul knew the importance of pressing after the mark. Paul is pursuing with all his might the glorious mark set before him. What is this mark? Some believe it is a crown of some sort, perhaps of a reward in heaven. Most commentaries believe it is heaven. I may not be right and you don't have to agree with me, but I believe Paul is speaking of Jesus Christ our Lord! Look at verse 12 and then 8 – 11 in Phil. 3. Remember he has already told us what was really in his heart in chapter 1, please turn there and look at verses 21 – 24. I believe Paul is running after Christ, hoping and trusting that he will one day be conformed into the image of Christ. Romans 8:29, *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."* Paul is seeking to lay hold of His prize knowing with great assurance and *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* Phil.1:6. Paul wants to seize upon and take possession of Christ. If Christ is not your goal, then be assured that there is something wrong. Paul had his eyes fixed on one object, one target, one mark and one prize so that he pressed hard with all his heart. Paul sought eagerly to promote the glory and honor of God in whatever he did. This also included the race he was in, he pressed forward, he followed hard, he pursued after the mark, namely Jesus Christ the LORD! This brings us to our 4<sup>th</sup> point:

#### **IV. Paul's Compensation.**

In verse 14 Paul says, *"...for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* Paul was looking forward not only for the mark, but for the prize set before him. I believe that the mark is Christ and the prize is a crown of righteousness. The Greek word for prize is *'brabeion.'* (bra-ba-on) This word basically refers to the reward of having won the competition. Paul could be referring to the wreath or garland that is given to those who were victorious in their contests. In our day it would be call the trophy from a sports competition. Interesting that the verb form of this word, *'brabeuo,'* means to umpire or referee, to decide and determine, to rule, this word only occurs once in Col.3:15, *"And let the peace of God **rule** in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."* Again, the word prize, brabeion, speaks of the gift received for being the champion. Albert Barnes says this about Phil.3:14, *"The prize of the racer was a crown or garland of olive, laurel, pine, or apple. The prize of the Christian is the crown that is incorruptible in heaven."* John MacArthur has this to say about this verse, *"To be made like Christ...What's going to happen when that upward call comes? You're going to be like...Christ. The goal is the **prize**, the **prize** is the goal. So Paul says, "Look, the goal of my life is to be like Christ and that's also the reward of my race"...some day I will be like Christ, that's the **prize** that God gives to the one who runs the race. The goal is to be like Christ, perfection in Christ. The **prize** is to be like Christ, perfection in Christ. Some day we'll be like Him for we shall see Him as He is."* John Eadie says, *"The prize is to be found only at the goal and to that goal the racer ever strives. If he moves away from the course prescribed, he*

*misses the mark, and loses the garland: for racing is not recreation, where one may turn aside as fancy leads him; the path is chalked out, the law of the course must be observed...and the aim and effort must always be **kata skopon**. While this phrase marks the aim of the race, the words **epi to brabeion** express the final object, the coveted crown. "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown." The prize is certainly eternal perfection and blessedness -- "an incorruptible crown." It is to be enjoyed only at the termination of the course. And surely it is sufficient to stimulate ardor, and sustain energy, since it is the realization of man's highest destiny -- the woe and sin of the fall not merely neutralized, but a higher glory conferred than the first man of our race originally enjoyed; not the first Adam, but the second Adam being the type as well as the author of the new life with its glory. For the prize is that of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Thus, the idea here is that the runner still has his eyes focus on the finish line. This is what keeps him motivated. This is why we must keep our eyes set upon Christ. As one has said, "If you aim at nothing, you are sure to hit it." Therefore, do you have the prize set before you this morning? This should be the goal of every Christian; the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus! What joy and excitement awaits us on that day of being crowned. This is again what we said last week from 2 Tim.4:8, "Henceforth there is laid up **for me** a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, **shall give me** at that day: and **not to me only**, but **unto all them** also that love his appearing."*

Remember Paul has said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This is Paul's compensation, the mark the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He says, I press, that is, I am in pursue in a life long commitment, that is gripped with conviction and seasoned with patience to overcome all obstacles in the way, sin, the devil, the world, trials and tribulations, because there is a prize in the end. Reminds me of what he said in Romans 8, please turn there. Let's look at verses 14 – 25. Paul tells us that we definitely have something to look forward to. The phraseology of verse 18 is powerful in the hope of anticipation of that future glory. He says, for I reckon or for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Paul is saying we are going to suffer as Christians, no question about that, it will happen. But regardless of the severity in suffering it is nothing compared to the glory that one day shall be revealed in us. As one person has said, "Gold is tested by fire, but man is tested by adversity. God has to sometimes put us on our backs in order to make us look up." One day we will look back and understand that it was nothing compare to what we will have in glory. From the Precept Austin webpage, "**Glory...revealed to us** - The Amplified rendering expands the meaning of the preposition **to** (eis = motion into, toward or upon)...the glory that is about to be revealed **to us** and **in us** and **for us** and **conferred on us!**"

Listen to what Matthew Henry says here, "The sufferings of the saints strike no deeper than the things of time, last no longer than the present time, are light afflictions, and but for a moment. How vastly different are the sentence of the word and the sentiment of the world, concerning the sufferings of this present time! Indeed the whole creation seems to wait with earnest expectation for the period when the children of God shall be manifested in the glory

*prepared for them. There is an impurity, deformity, and infirmity, which has come upon the creation by the fall of man. There is an enmity of one creature to another. And they are used, or abused rather, by men as instruments of sin. Yet this deplorable state of the creation is in hope. God will deliver it from thus being held in bondage to man's depravity. The miseries of the human race, through their own and each other's wickedness, declare that the world is not always to continue as it is. Our having received the first-fruits of the Spirit, quickens our desires, encourages our hopes, and raises our expectations. SIN has been, and is, the guilty cause of all the suffering that exists in the creation of God. It has brought on the woes of earth; it has kindled the flames of hell. As to man, not a tear has been shed, not a groan has been uttered, not a pang has been felt, in body or mind, that has not come from SIN. This is not all; SIN is to be looked at as it affects the glory of God. Of this how fearfully regardless are the bulk of mankind! Believers have been brought into a state of safety; but their comfort consists rather in hope than in enjoyment. From this hope they cannot be turned by the vain expectation of finding satisfaction in the things of time and sense. We need patience, our way is rough and long; but He that shall come, will come, though He seems to tarry."*

Again, one day we will look back and understand that it was nothing compare to what we will have in glory. Now, the world has a different outlook regarding glory. The world seeks after a fleshly glory that is impressed by outward appearances. The world looks at power, prestige, wealth, fame and thinks that this is glory, to be admired by all. IT IS FERVENTLY AND EAGERLY SOUGHT, regardless how it is to be gotten! People will do anything to have fame and worldly glory, Matt.4:8, Phil.3:17-21. The Christian has a different mindset; his seeking is the glory of God. 1 Cor.10:31, "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*" The Bible is centered on the GLORY of GOD and not the things of men. Remember Moses in Exodus 33 after the debacle of the golden calf while he was in the holy mountain receiving the 10 commandments. Ex.33:12-23. Moses was concern with the glory of God not the glory of men. Ps.63:1 & 2. Ps.96:3, 7, 8, & 9. Romans 5:1-3. Philippians 4:20, "*Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*" Colossians 3:4, "*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*" 1 Peter 4:13, "*But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*" 1 Peter 5:4, "*And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*" Jude 1:24 & 25, "*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.* Revelation 21:23, "*And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*" A Christian is one who is concern with the glory of God. Romans 18:18 again, this glory shall be revealed in us and given to us in heaven when we are with Christ. Whether it's at death or in the resurrection, it is something indescribable. The glory shall be revealed in us. It is also the manifestation (the anxious longing, earnest looking, outstretched with eagerness and desire, the concentrating with intense hope) of the sons of God in verse 19. It's the glorious deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Sin shall be no more and we will finally love God with an un-

sinning heart! Then we have the blessed redemption of our body in verse 23. This is what Paul meant in Titus 2:13, *"Looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior."* This is also why Peter instructs us in 1 Peter 1:13 to, *"Gird up the loins of our minds, and be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ."* WOW, what a blessed hope awaits us and a glorious inheritance of indescribable greatness and glory! This again my beloved brethren is Paul's compensation. This is what awaited him and he knew this, therefore he shares it with us, that we, with great encouragement may run the race with him with such a burning desire in our hearts, run, yea: run to win! Are you sold out to Christ? Do you have a passionate pursuit of Him? Has the person of Christ gripped your heart? Are you sold out to Christ? Let us be like Paul, run, press, follow after seek and pursue, that we ourselves will also be compensated with a recompense of reward (Hebrews 10:35-39, chapter 11 those who died in faith, then in chapter 12:1 & 2, running the race)! Paul says again, *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* Spurgeon says this about this text and in particular the phrase, *"...this one thing I do..."* *"This one thing I do,"* as if he had given up all else, and addicted himself to one sole object — to aim to be like Jesus Christ. There were many other things Paul might have attempted, but he says, *"this one thing I do."* ...he had more than enough to do, but all these were a part of his pursuit of the one thing, he was laboring perfectly to serve his Master, and to render himself up as a whole burnt-offering unto God. I invite every soul that has been saved by the precious blood of Christ, to gather up all its strength for this one thing, to cultivate a passion for grace, and an intense longing after holiness. Ah, if we could but serve God as God should be served, and be such manner of people as we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness, we should see a new era in the church. The greatest want of the church at this day is holiness...

*Moreover, the apostle saw his crown, the crown of life that fadeth not away, hanging bright before his eyes. What, said he, shall tempt me from that path of which yon crown is the end? Let the golden apples be thrown in my way; I cannot even look at them, nor stay to spurn them with my feet. Let the sirens sing on either side, and seek to charm me with their evil beauty, to leave the holy road; but I must not, and I will not. Heaven! Heaven! Heaven! is not this enough to make a man dash forward in the road thither? The end is glorious, what if the running be laborious? When there is such a prize to be had, who will grudge a struggle? Paul pressed forward towards the mark for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. He felt he was a saved man, and he meant through the same grace to be a holy man. He longed to grasp the crown, and hear the "Well done, good and faithful servant," which his Master would award him at the end of his course. Brethren and sisters, I wish I could stir myself and stir you to a passionate longing after a gracious, consistent, godly life, yea, for an eminently, solidly, thoroughly devoted and consecrated life. You will grieve the Spirit if you walk inconsistently; you will dishonor the Lord that bought you; you will weaken the church; you will bring shame upon yourself. Even though you be "saved so as by fire," it will be an evil and a bitter thing to have in any measure departed from God. But to be always going onward, to be never self-satisfied, to be always laboring to be better Christians, to be aiming at the rarest sanctity, this shall be your honored the church's comfort, and*

*the glory of God. May the Lord help you to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Amen."* This brings to our last point:

## **V. Paul's Consummation.**

We have seen Paul's Confession, Paul's Conviction, Paul's Contemplation and Paul's Compensation let us now end with Paul's Consummation (perfect ending, completely finish). Phil.3:15, "*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*" Notice the call to all who name the name of Christ, Paul says, "LET US!" That is, you, me anyone else who calls themselves a Christian, "LET US!" Let us what, let us be mature or full grown and have this conviction and attitude. Talk about a call for unity, a unity in spiritual maturity. I like the way it reads in the Amplified Version, "*So let those [of us] who are spiritually mature and full-grown have this mind and hold these convictions; and if in any respect you have a different attitude of mind, God will make that clear to you also.*" One thing I said last week was that there are too many Christians who lack conviction in their Christian lives. No conviction for the truth, no conviction for holiness, no conviction for the things of God, no conviction for the church, I mean if I go church I go if I don't go I don't go; you see I can always have church at home. Have this same attitude about work and see what happens to your job. What is the definition of the church, the ekklesia? It is a called out assembly gather together for a special purpose. Coming out of our work places, our homes and be gathered together for the preaching of the word of God, gather together to worship the living and true God. Hebrews 10:25. "*So let those [of us] who are spiritually mature and full-grown have this mind and hold these convictions...*" Be thus minded, be like minded, let us as it were stretch forward to be perfect, to be mature. Remember the Apostle John wrote his epistle and said there were, babes, little children, young men and fathers. This is a growth in spiritual maturity. Let us be perfect, this means relative perfection not absolute perfection. Absolute perfection was already dealt with in verse 12, but thought Paul tells us he has not attained perfection yet he strives for he seeks for it. How about you? How about me? Or perhaps you are one of those who say, "What's the use we will never be perfect." Well, let consider the last five thoughts as we conclude:

- (1) We are commanded to be perfect. "*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect...*" 2 Cor.13:11, (imperative.) Col.1:28 with 4:12, 2 Tim.3:16 & 17; Heb.13:20 & 21 and our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to be perfect as the Father, Matt.5:48 (God's perfection is absolute and man's is relative). It means to be complete, mature. It is spiritual maturity where there is room for growth. Having integrity and virtue that stands above the rest. Being a full grown spiritual adult.

- (2) It is also our duty and reasonable service to be perfect. Romans 12:1 & 2. Ephesians 4:13, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." 1 Peter 5:10, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Remember when we were preaching through Revelation 3, the church of Sardis. What was one of the reasons why the Lord was upset with that church? Revelation 3:2, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works **perfect** before God." Remember we are not talking about sinlessness, but of completeness, being a well rounded Christian with Christian character and conviction.
- (3) Christ prayed that we would be perfect. John 17:23. Christ prayed to the Father. I believe the Father will hear and answer Him. I believe the Father will fulfill His Son's desire. (Remember not absolute perfection [only in heaven] but relative perfection, regardless we must strive and pursue after perfection) Let me ask this question, how then is the love of God perfected in your lives? Let us join the promise keepers? NO! Let us observe the 40 days of purpose? NO! Let us turn our worship into a rock show? NO! Let's add some entertainment or drama, perhaps even some interpretive dancing to our services? NO! The answer lies in the Scriptures: 1 John 2:5, our love for God is perfected, by KEEPING HIS WORD! "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."
- (4) Regarding being perfect, is this only a New Testament concept or NT teaching only? Genesis 17:1, "*And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, **and be thou perfect.***" Deuteronomy 18:13, "*Thou shalt **be perfect** with the LORD thy God.*" 1 Kings 8:61, "*Let your **heart therefore be perfect** with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.*" Regardless of the amount of light given to an individual, the aspect of being perfect is commanded!
- (5) Can this be obtained? Genesis 6:9, "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and **perfect** in his generations, and Noah walked with God." He was not perfect in the absolute sense, but as living in faith he was justified. The



just shall live by faith, he was mature and spiritual. 2 Kings 20:3. "I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore." Job 1:1. Job 1:8, "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" Job 2:3, "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." Not absolute perfection but relative perfection. 2 Chronicles 15:17, "But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days." 2 Chronicles 16:9, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." Psalms 101:6, "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me." Therefore, so we can be perfect before God!

This was Paul's consummation (perfect ending), his perfection he was spiritually mature and he was a father in the faith and not a babe in Christ. So sad to see some Christians who professed to be Christians for 20 years or so and are still babes! No, my dear brethren we must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Peter 3:18. Paul was a spiritually mature Christian. He sought to attain this, he sought to achieve this perfection, this was his goal and this was his mark and prize. Paul's consummation was his performance, notice again the end of his life, 2 Tim.4:7 & 8, "***I have*** fought a good fight, ***I have*** finished my course, ***I have*** kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up ***for me*** a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, ***shall give me*** at that day: and ***not to me only***, but ***unto all them*** also that love his appearing."

Oh may we be motivated, compelled and moved to run the race, to reach forth the mark, to stretch forth the prize in 2010. Let us give ourselves to serve our Great God in 2010 with an intense and inflamed heart.

Oh, my dear brethren let us KEEP THE FIRE BURNING IN 2010.