

## Pressing On

Can you believe it? Day one of a new year is upon us. Resolutions are forming in the mind. The ever popular, “I need to work out and lose a few pounds” has probably begrudgingly strolled into view after a holiday season of feasting (I would say run through your mind but running usually comes after the resolution is made). For most of us, there will be at least one thing that we will strive to do to improve our lives.

There are many good things we as Christians might resolve to do in the new year. Exercise or adding some self-control to our eating habits could be on the list. Perhaps you will consider praying more. Maybe this is the year you will join a small group. Or like my nephew, you may plan to read the Bible from cover to cover. All of these and many others are excellent ways by which our God may, ***“fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the Grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thes 1:11-12)***. Paul and Timothy prayed for this to be true because their desire for the Thessalonians was that they be worthy of His calling.

Though much could be said about any individual worthy pursuit, I thought it might be helpful to consider what Paul in Philippians 3:14 calls the “one thing” he did while pressing to make Christ the very center of his being (Eph 3:7-13).

***“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.” (Phil 3:13b-14)***

Paul presses on toward this prize of the upward goal of God in Jesus Christ. What does this mean? To the best of my understanding from the surrounding context, it is nothing short of perfection in Christ! Wow, now there is a lofty goal!

Here is the crazy thing though. Paul wasn’t discouraged by the goal; it actually seemed to energize him. He wasn’t looking backward toward shortcomings or successes of the past. He knew he wasn’t perfect (3:12) but he also knew that one day, on the final day of consummation, he would be (3:20), and any step toward Christ was one step closer to the prize. Paul, just like a runner with the finish line in view, was pursuing Christ with every ounce of his being, attempting to tune every aching muscle a bit more closely to the image of the one he was running toward – the author and finisher of his faith.

Paul may not have had a complete understanding of what the prize looked like in all of its splendor and glory, but as he ran the race set before him with his eyes set upon Jesus his, “earthly scene with all its strivings, sufferings and sacrifices is suffused with heavenly glory. One scriptural picture after another fills and elevates the mind: the Lord’s own ‘Well done!’; ‘the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day’; ‘the unfading crown of glory’, gift of the chief Shepherd; the privilege (above all) that his servants should worship him, see his face and have his name written on their foreheads; the blood-cleansed robes and the unending presence of the Lord. All this and, in addition, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’. That is the goal and the prize!” (Motyer, J. A., *The Message of Philippians* p. 177)

So as you resolve for good this year remember the goal...the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Any resolution you make should conform to this. And as you run, I will be praying that just like Eric Liddell in *The Chariots of Fire* you too will be able to say, “When I run, I feel His pleasure!”

Pastor Brad