

Ending Your Life Well

“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, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 3:13-14

Introduction:

1. The closer you are to death, that is, the older you are, the more you should follow Paul’s rule.
2. However, Paul’s rule applies to all, even if young and if your prior life has been exemplary.
3. By God’s grace I shall not cloud this lesson and rule with too many details or great length.
4. Today is the last day of your life so far and the first day of the rest of your life. Consecrate it!
5. My job, my life’s work, this sermon, is to press you to prepare to meet the God of all flesh.

The Text

- A. Paul was not content or slothful in spite of great labors for Christ (Phil 3:12-14).
- B. He continued to be a driven man out of love for Christ and desire for His glory.
- C. Jesus Christ apprehended Paul in full sense of the word for the gospel ministry.
- D. Paul lived with all his might and zeal to apprehend Jesus Christ’s goal for him.
- E. The things Paul forgot were not sins or Jewish works but his Christian labors.
- F. He did not rest on his laurels, though he had laurels to rest on. He pressed on!
- G. When Paul took an accounting of his life, he did not value past achievements.
- H. You have been saved not to be content or relax with the past, but to press ahead.
- I. In a race it does not matter how well you began ... it might even be detrimental.

The Examples

- A. **Paul** was a man with a 180-degree turn in life and no restraint of effort until death; he was highly motivated by the years he had wasted persecuting Christ; his great efforts and achievements in the gospel did not calm his zeal for Christ.
 1. No matter what we or anyone else thinks of our lives so far, let us do more!
 2. This burden to effort is not to obtain eternal life but rather the evidence of it.
 3. This desire to do more should be internal purity and external service to God.
 4. We must despise complacency or compromise in any aspect or any degree.
 5. We want less sin and more holiness than ever in thoughts, words, and deeds.
 6. We want to be like Paul and not like the following examples of backsliding.
 7. Paul pressed ... like a runner ... straining to finish ... demanding first place.
 8. The kingdom of heaven takes violent pressing into it, even Paul (Lu 16:16).
 9. Paul taught and lived that only one wins the prize in a race (I Cor 9:24-27).
- B. **David** was like Paul in that he spent the rest of his life in great diligence to God; he was highly motivated due to the sins he committed in the middle of his life; though unable to build the temple and getting old, it did not slow him at all.
 1. Sins in the middle of your life need not wreck your life, as David shows us.

2. Confession, even if consequences remain, allow any man to start over today.
 3. David, even in repentance, was looking to greater usefulness (Psalm 51:13).
 4. David knew a broken and contrite heart would restore him (Psalm 51:14-19).
- C. **Gideon** destroyed Baal for a name change and won a great victory over Midian, but he fell to superstition and polygamy and caused Israel to sin (Jdgs 8:27,30).
 - D. **Saul**, Israel's first king, was gifted, honored, helped many ways by God and Samuel, but he did not rule his spirit; he became a castaway (I Sam 13:13-14).
 - E. **Solomon**, gifted by God very greatly in his early years and with the temple to his credit, fell into polygamy and idolatry by pagan women (I Kings 11:1-8).
 - F. **Jehu**, known for great zeal, used it to wonderfully judge Ahab and Jezebel for their sins, but he backslid to the golden calves of Jeroboam (II Kings 10:29-31).
 - G. **Asa**, blessed by God, defeated one million Ethiopians and brought revival a second time, but he backslid by Baasha's war and foot disease (II Chr 16:7-12).
 - H. **Mark**, a companion of Paul on his first preaching trip, deserted him, but later in life Paul commended him to Timothy as profitable (Acts 13:13; II Tim 4:11).

The Application

- A. Disciples indeed continue in Christ's word (John 8:31), but we want to increase.
- B. Where do you stand loving others? Read how Paul pressed men (I Thes 4:9-10).
- C. You either progress or backslide. Do not deceive yourself. Choose His growth!
- D. We want to be forward-pressing, not backsliding, or status-quo-talent-burial.
- E. What have you let slide in recent months, years, or decades you should change?
 1. Have you compromised with your *television* so that you are dull spiritually?
 2. Are you bitter through *unforgiveness* to others, which will destroy your life?
 3. Have you lost your *thankful spirit full of praise* that once made you great?
 4. Is your *holiness* what it should be to meet Christ (I Thess 4:1-8; Rev 22:11)?
 5. Have you lost your *first love* or are you *lukewarm* to Christ (Rev 2:4; 3:16)?
 6. Consider also child training, giving, respect of authority, marital love, daily Bible reading, sexual purity, work ethic, entertaining strangers, humble spirit, gracious speech, honoring parents, serving the church, personal financial integrity, daily prayer, delight in the Lord, hospitality, confession of sin, soul winning, modesty, moderate use of food and wine, etc., etc., etc.
- F. Godliness is not a process. It is a decision based on repentance and dedication.
- G. The Revelation 2:5 sequence is perfect: *remember, repent, and do first works*.
- H. Why settle for what you were? Instead, press into new territory for your King.
- I. Growth and increase are truly possible (Pr 4:18; Luke 17:5; II Cor 9:10; Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:9-11; I Thess 3:12; 4:1; II Thess 1:3-4; I Pet 2:2; II Pet 3:18).
- J. Your life? *He loved God above all others; he was a tree of life to all others ... can only be had by living today, and tomorrow, and the rest of your life right.*

Conclusion:

1. Examine yourself and see where you have fallen in devotion and zeal, starting in your heart.
2. The Lord often restores us with trials and temptations. Repent before He afflicts your life.
3. The only way to live life well or end life well for the Lord's sake is to live today for Him.
4. Never look back! Only look forward! What would God have me do today in Jesus Christ?

For Further Study:

1. Sermon outline, "A Man's Heart," about King Saul's failures ... www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/manly-heart.pdf.
2. Sermon outline, "Backsliding," covering various aspects of it ... www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/backsliding.pdf.
3. Proverb commentary, "Proverbs 14:14," about backsliding ... www.letgodbetruerue.com/proverbs/commentaries/14_14.php.
4. Sermon outline, "Sins of the Heart," about sins starting their ... www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/sins-of-the-heart.pdf.
5. Power Point slides, "Grow Up," about Christian maturity ... www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/christian-maturity.pdf.
6. Sermon outline, "Growing Up in Christ," about grace ... www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/growing-up-in-christ.pdf.
7. Power Point slides, "Men Maturing," about growth ... www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/growing-up-maturity-curve.pdf.
8. Bible study outline, "A Mighty Man's Life," for components ... www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/a-mighty-man.pdf.
9. Sermon outline, "Things Becoming Sound Doctrine," ... www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/things-becoming-sound-doctrine.pdf.
10. Proverb commentary, "Proverbs 4:18," about growing ... www.letgodbetruerue.com/proverbs/commentaries/04_18.php.