

Launching Into 2012

Text : Philippians 3: 1-16 (Esp. Vs. 12-14)

INTRODUCTION :

A. Happy New Year

1. Unusual that both Christmas and New Year fall on a Sunday.
2. I'll have to keep the sermon moving because many did not get usual sleep.

B. Many use the beginning of each new year as a time to gauge their progress in life.

1. We tend to look backward to gauge our progress toward our life-goals.
 - a. More of us have dreams and expectations of ourselves, than have actual goals.
 - b. Goals are formulated with measurable steps to lead to their accomplishment.
2. With or without defined goals, each year is a mixture of successes and failures.
 - a. Few are honest with themselves in their assessments.
 - b. But, a great number resolve to do better in certain areas.
* *A resolution is a promise to one's self to improve or correct his deficiencies.*
3. Basically, most folks want a do-over and view New Years as a time to get it.

C. In our text the Lord's Apostle teaches the view God wants us to have toward life.

1. **Leave the past behind us. (continually)**
2. **Take full advantage of our present.**
3. **Launch out into the future with expectation.**

I. We must leave the past behind.

A. We are all products of our past.

1. You are the sum total of your life experiences.
 - a. This is why it is so important that we do our best to avoid sin.
 - b. Once an act is conceived and committed it becomes a permanent part of us.
2. Every person on earth has done things they would not do over.
 - a. Once an act is done, we can never undo it so we learn from it and move on.
 - b. Life is like learning to walk ... the more practice we have the less we fall.
* *When our children fell off their bicycle, we put the right back on them.*

B. Living in the past is living in defeat.

1. If we remembered every time we fell, we'd never learn how to walk or ride.
2. We can only progress by trial and error.
 - a. EITHER ... *"We've never done it before."*
 - b. OR ... *"We already tried that."*
3. Famous Quotes :
 - a. *The man who does things makes many mistakes, but he never makes the biggest mistake of all -- doing nothing.*
-- Ben Franklin
 - b. *"I am only one, but I am one.
I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do."*
-- Edward Everett Hale

C. Every act changes us so even our failures make us more capable of success.

1. Dwelling on past failures unnecessarily limits us.
 - * *A hug elephant is conditioned not to try to escape by chaining him to a large tree when he is young. Though only chained to a small stake, circus elephants must be saved from fire, because they are conditioned to think escape is impossible so they don't try.*
2. At one time, everything was impossible for us.
3. The devil makes sure we never forget our failures.
 - When the devil reminds us of our past, we should respond by reminding him of his future.*

D. Our text instructs us to put our past behind us. (Be it great or disastrous)

1. Vs. 13 - **But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, (ESV)**
2. Today we are starting off with a clean sheet of paper for 2012.
3. If you are a Christian, Jesus has forgiven all your sins and wants you to walk with Him. **I John 1: 6-9**

II. We must take full advantage of our present.

Vs. 16 – ... let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

A. It is called our “present” because it is a gift.

1. It is a gift because it is given to us by God.
 - a. **Act 17: 28 - For in Him we live and move and exist ...**

- b. **Psa. 118: 24** ... It is time provided by God. (*Will not live beyond God's plan*)
- 2. It is our opportunity to serve God and to bring glory to Him by doing so.
 - a. **Col. 4: 5** - **Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.** (ESV)
 - b. **Hebrews 3: 13** - **But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**
 - c. Notice the urgency placed on making the best use of our present opportunities.

B. The present is the only thing under our direct control.

- 1. We can neither redeem nor change the past.
- 2. Only God controls the future.
- 3. We are given today to serve the Lord. (*It is an opportunity.*)

C. There is no promise of tomorrow.

- 1. All judgment is spoken of as impending and unexpected.
 - a. It is spoken of as coming like a thief in the night. (**I Thes. 5: 2**)
 - b. The parables taught preparedness. (**Rich man .. Luke 16, 10 virgin .. Mat 25**)
- 2. We will all be judged upon what we actually produced for God.
 - a. Non-production is not tolerated ... Fig tree.. **Mt 21**, Talents.. **Mt 25**, Vine .. **Jn 15**
 - b. Judged by actual deeds ... not doctrine ... not abstinence
 - c. **Rom 2: 5b-6** **revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to each person according to his deeds:** (cf **Jas 2:18**)
- 3. When the Christ returns, everyone will meet Him in one of two ways.
 - a. Confidently laying a life of service at His feet
 - b. Or wishing he had done more.
 - c. **Every knee** will bow before Him. (**Phil. 2: 10**)

D. We must never allow ourselves to settle into that comfortable rut and drift.

Vs. 16 – ... **let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.**

III. We must launch out into the future.

Vs. 13b-14 ... **forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in C.J.**

A. No living thing can remain static; when growth stops, the death process begins.

- 1. *It's like throwing a ball up into the air; as soon as it stops going up it descends.*

2. As soon as we stop growing in our Christian life, we begin to die.

B. Just as we expect our children to grow, God also expects His children to grow.

1. When we are “**born again**” into the kingdom we are babies in the faith.
2. In order to survive, spiritual babies must have the instinct to feed.
I Pet. 2: 2- like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word,
so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, (*Survival instructions*)
3. Spiritual dwarfism is an abnormal and unhealthy condition. (*Is a normal course*)
Heb. 5: 11-14 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.
13 For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. **14** But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.
3. Spiritual dwarfism prevents a congregation from functioning properly.
I Cor. 3: 1-4 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. **2** I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to *receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, **3** for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? **4** For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not *mere* men? (*deeds are revealing*)

C. When we act like people of the world it is because we have not grown spiritually.

1. Milk will only take us so far.
2. Normal children (physical or spiritual) naturally come to desire solid food.
3. Strength comes only with “practice.”
4. Can’t just wait for it to happen. (*A child raised in isolation learns nothing.*)

D. Those who succeed plan for success and then work to apply their plan.

1. Vs. **13** - **But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,** (ESV)
 - a. Literally means to exerting great effort to advance.
 - b. One gets no cardiovascular benefit from reading a book about running.
 - c. The benefit comes when he puts what he read into practice.
2. The spiritual benefit does not come from just reading the scriptures, it comes when one actually applies what he has read to his daily life.

CONCLUSION :

A. Christianity is a goal oriented life.

1. The Christian's goal is to have a close fellowship with Christ. (**God**)

Vs. 8 - ... I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, ...

2. The Christian's goal is for an eternal fellowship with Christ.

Vs. 10-11 ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death **11** in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- a. Attaining to that resurrection guarantees to us a new body that will never again grow old or hurt. **Vs-21**
- b. Attaining to that resurrection guarantees to us eternal fellowship with our beloved Lord and Savior in His Heaven. **Vs-20**

B. During this year I challenge us to follow the example of the Lord's Apostle :

Phil 3: 12-14 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus **13** Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

C. Let us set goals that will challenge us to step out of our comfort zones.

1. Nothing new is achieved without effort.
2. Most new things are uncomfortable when we first attempt them.

D. God is glorified by our efforts.

1. Even when we don't succeed, God is glorified by our effort.
2. God and all in the spiritual know the motive that caused us to try.

E. Yesterday is gone ... we can't rest on our laurels or past glory.

Tomorrow may never come.

Today is the day to serve God with all our heart, soul and mind.

INVITATION :

Lesson Text :**Philippians 3: 1-16**

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things *again* is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; **3** for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, **4** although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: **5** circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; **6** as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. **7** But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8** More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, **9** and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, **10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; **11** in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. **13** Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **15** Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; **16** however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.