

Looking Ahead Phil. 3:12-14

Thesis: To help us look toward our home in heaven.

Introduction:

I. We must know that as of yet, we have attained nothing (3:12-13).

A. Notice the things that Paul had done for Christ.

1. Paul was very faithful to Christ.
 - a. He began to preach Jesus as the Christ as soon as he was baptized.
 - 1) Acts 9:20 - Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.
 - 2) Acts 9:26ff – Paul meets with the apostles and begins to work with them.
 - b. When he was selected by God to go to preach, he obeyed.
 - 1) Acts 13:2 - As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."
 - 2) From this time forward, Paul was faithful to God and preached that Jesus is the Son of God.
2. Paul had even suffered greatly for the sake of Christ.
 - a. II Cor. 11:22-28 - Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. {23} Are they ministers of Christ?-- I speak as a fool-- I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. {24} From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. {25} Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; {26} in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; {27} in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—{28} besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.
 - b. Paul was persecuted greatly for the sake of Christ.

B. We must understand that no matter what our position is in life, we have not yet attained a home in heaven.

1. Even if we are currently faithful to God, we have not yet obtained our home in heaven; there is still work to be done.

2. **Rev. 2:10** - Remember, Jesus says that if we are “faithful until death, [He] will give [us] the crown of life.”

II. Paul says that he forgot those things which were behind (3:13).

A. Notice the situation that Paul was in.

1. He had persecuted the church.
 - a. He was in favor of the death of Stephen.
 - 1) **Acts 7:58b** - And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.
 - 2) **Acts 8:1a** - Now Saul was consenting to his death.
 - b. After the death of Stephen, Paul continued to persecute the church.
 - 1) **Acts 8:3** - As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.
 - 2) **Acts 9:1-2** - Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest {2} and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
 - c. Paul even admitted that he persecuted the church.
 - 1) **I Tim. 1:12-13** - And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, {13} although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.
 - 2) **Phil. 3:6** - Concerning zeal, persecuting the church.
2. If he dwelt in the past, he could never have been effective in the kingdom of God.

B. Today, we must forget those things which are behind.

1. We know that we have sinned.
2. We have all done things that we are ashamed of.
3. If we continue to dwell in the past, we will not be effective in the kingdom of God.
4. **Heb. 12:1-2** - Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, {2} looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

III. As we forget those things which are behind, we must look forward to those things which are ahead (3:13-14).

A. We must “press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

1. We must reach “forward to those things which are ahead” (3:13).
 - a. The idea of “reaching forward” is that of stretching out to accomplish a task.
 - b. We must constantly “press toward the goal for the prize.”
 - c. Our work on this earth is never done.
2. That goal that we are reaching for is heaven.
 - a. Christ has paid the price of eternal life with His blood.
 - b. It is up to us to continually reach for that home.

B. In order to obtain this goal, we must constantly reach for it.

1. It can sometimes be difficult to be faithful to God.
2. We must constantly work to obtain this goal.
3. Lk. 13:24 - Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.
4. I Cor. 9:24-27 - Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. {25} And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. {26} Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. {27} But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Conclusion: