**Lesson 10: On Your Mark, Get Set, Go!**

Text: Philippians 3:12-16

**Introduction**

At the beginning of a race, we often hear these words, “On your mark, get set, go!” This calls runners to get in their lanes, assume their starting positions and to take off! This section of Philippians is God’s call for you to take your place in the race for Christlikeness. Unlike the false teachers, Paul didn’t claim to have arrived spiritually. He was in constant pursuit. He viewed the Christian life as a marathon, not a sprint. In this lesson, we will see Paul’s new goal in life and how he pursued it. I pray you will be challenged to run for Christlikeness with greater enthusiasm and stamina.

1. Receiving the righteousness of Christ by faith changed Paul’s goal life.
   1. He discovered that self-righteousness was a pointless pursuit. (v. 3-9)
      1. Being born to a godly family is pointless if you have not been born again!
      2. Increased religious activity is pointless if you have not trusted the finished work of Christ.
   2. Once he received the gift of righteousness, knowing and serving Jesus became the goal of His life. (v. 10-11)
      1. He longed to know the Person of Christ, not just the work of Christ. (v. 10a)
      2. He yearned to live in the power of His resurrection, not self-effort. (v. 10b)
      3. He was willing to suffer that others might hear the gospel. (v. 10c)
      4. He wanted to live out what it meant to have new life in Christ. (v. 10d-11)
   3. In one word, his new goal in life was *Christlikeness*. (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18)
2. To reach this new goal in life, Paul recognized his constant need for spiritual growth. (v. 12)
   1. “Though Paul was a spiritual giant in the eyes of the Philippian saints, he wanted them to know that he had not yet attained the goals stated in verse 10.” (Lightner)
      1. He had been saved approximately 30 years prior to writing this letter and had experienced spiritual growth.
      2. Yet, Paul knew he had not arrived!
   2. Paul accepted the fact that spiritual growth is a lifelong process.
      1. Paul did not claim to be *perfect* (complete, finished). (v. 12a)
      2. He was still in pursuit of spiritual maturity. The word *follow* means to run swiftly in order to reach a goal. (v. 12b)
      3. He wanted to seize that for which he was seized. (v. 12c)
   3. You need to view your life as a process of spiritual growth.
      1. If Paul said that he needed to grow spiritually, doesn’t that indicate that we need to grow spiritually?
      2. “A sanctified dissatisfaction is the first essential to progress in the Christian race.” (Wiersbe)
3. To reach Christlikeness, Paul had to be in vigorous pursuit of that goal. (v. 13-16)
   1. Paul used an analogy of a race to illustrate spiritual progress. Notice these similarities:
      1. Every person who ran in the Greek games was already a citizen. We don’t run to qualify as citizens of Heaven, but because we are.
      2. Every runner had a lane in which to run. You have a place to grow and serve.
      3. To receive the award, they must run to please the judge. (2 Cor. 5:10)
      4. A violation of the rules did not change their status as citizens, but it did result in a loss of reward. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)
   2. Paul was focused on *one thing*. (v. 13a) “Too many Christians are too involved in *many things* when the secret of progress is to concentrate on *one thing*.” (Wiersbe)
   3. Focusing on the one thing meant he had to forget that which was behind him.(v. 13b)
      1. This doesn’t suggest that had to somehow erase it from his memory. It means that he was no longer under the influence or power of his past.
      2. “We break the power of the past by living for the future.” (Wiersbe).
      3. Instead of being held back by the past, he could allow his past to motivate him to serve in the present and future.
      4. Yesterday does not define your future.
      5. God wants you to move past your past.
   4. Leaving the past behind, he vigorously pursued the goal of Christlikeness. (v. 13c-14)
      1. *Reaching forth* means to strain or stretch out toward a goal.
      2. The verb *press* indicates that he was striving for the goal.
      3. “A man does not become a winning athlete by listening to lectures, watching movies, reading books or cheering at the games. He becomes a winning athlete by getting into the game and determining to win!” (Wiersbe)
      4. He was going for the *high calling*. He was living for the day he would stand before the Lord.
   5. This should characterize the lives of all believers. (v. 15-16)
      1. It is the mindset of those who are following Christ. (v. 15a)
      2. If a believer is not on track, God will let them know. (v. 15b)
      3. Start with where you are and take off! (v. 16)
4. Central Idea: Paul pursued Christlikeness by recognizing his constant need for spiritual growth and made it the single focus of his life.
5. Application: Pursue the goal of Christlikeness by recognizing your constant need for spiritual growth and make it the single focus of your life.
   1. Do you have a “sanctified dissatisfaction” with where you are? Take time to sing the hymn “Higher Ground” and apply it to your life.
   2. Does your past keep you from making progress? Ask God to help you move past your past. Remember that it does not define who you are today.
   3. Are you focused on the “one thing” or many things?
   4. It makes a difference to run with someone for encouragement and accountability. Paul helped others in their Christian race. Sunday school and church provides an opportunity for us to encourage each other in the journey. We can push each other to greater levels of Christlikeness. Remain faithful in your attendance and take time to encourage another runner!

**Conclusion**

Paul’s race was finished the day he crossed the line into eternity. The fact that we are still here means that our race is not finished. There are still levels of spiritual growth needed in your life. Don’t stop now! Keep running! It will be worth it all when we see Christ! Discover the joy that comes in pursuing Christlikeness. On your mark! Get set! Go!