

PHILIPPIANS

Rejoice In
The Lord!

Keep
Pressing On

Lesson Thirty-Five

Philippians

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Lesson Goal: To encourage students to continue to press on in Christian service.

Scriptures: Philippians 3:13, 14

For Memory: “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:14

Keep Pressing On

In the last lesson we said that Paul knew that he had to press on. (Remember, he was in prison at the time.) Since God had called him, it was his responsibility to do what God had called him to do. Paul didn't want to disappoint Jesus and not live up to the dream that Jesus had planted in his heart.

A few lessons back we reviewed Paul's qualifications and found him to be very well qualified to do his ministry. In our lesson today, we hear Paul say that he is forgetting everything in the past and focusing his work on the future. He is saying that all the things that he had accomplished, all the things that he could brag about, and all the things that might seem important to other people, he was leaving behind. Rather than taking it easy, because he had already accomplished a lot, he was ignoring all that and moving on. And, he was straining toward what was ahead.

Paul gives us a great word picture here. He is pressing on like an athlete who is approaching the finish line. The tape is stretched along that line and the athlete has his eyes fixed on the tape. All she can think about is breaking the tape. Every ounce of energy, every thought in his mind, every muscle in her body is going toward the tape. You can almost see the runner leaning forward, arms outstretched toward the tape. He is going *flat out* for the finish line. There is no thought for the distance already covered, only the distance between the runner and the tape.

There was a group, in Paul's day, who were trying to convince other Christians that it didn't make any difference how they behaved. Since God was a forgiving God, they could do just about anything, or not do anything, and God would not only forgive them, but would also refuse to punish them for misbehavior.

Paul attacks this belief saying that Christians were responsible to press on... to strain with all their energy and knowledge toward what God called them to do. The very same is true today. Christians, all Christians, are called to be workers in God's Kingdom. We each have jobs to do. Each of us is called to the opportunity of sharing the Gospel with everyone. Paul was not forgetting all that God had done for him, he was using all that to make a difference in the present...in his service to God.

Now some would have us believe that when Paul says that he is straining forward to

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the prize, he is talking about winning Heaven. Well, we don't *win* Heaven. Jesus has already paid the price for us to be the children of God. We join Him in Heaven when we die.

What Paul is talking about here is following the call of God to each new accomplishment or goal, to win the prize of God's blessing as Paul advances "Heavenward." Paul saw challenges ahead. He wasn't thinking about only what had happened in the past, he was looking forward to new opportunities to be more like Jesus. Christians often miss out on God's call when we look only at the past, or look forward only to the end of life and Heaven. We should, with Paul, be straining forward to each new task. We should awaken each morning and pray, "Father, give me strength and your grace to accomplish in this day all that you have for me to do...all the "goals" you are setting for me, and lead me to accomplish, to "win the prize," as you guide me "Heavenward."

One more thing: When Paul talked about striving, or "straining toward," the goal, he was warning the Philippians that it was going to take determination, discipline, and concentration to "win the prize." Satan is going to try to defeat us before we can accomplish even the smallest task. If you want an easy Christian life, just don't try to do anything for God. Paul had no use for that kind of Christian living.

*Underlined statements in this Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.



Teaching Tips:

1. What a great challenge we have in these verses. It would be good if you, the teacher, could share a personal experience of God at work in your life as you serve Him. Maybe even the joy you have in teaching His word each week.
2. There is much more in these two verses than your writer could put on these two pages. A study beyond these comments might yield something that you will find more challenging to teach.
3. Last lesson we likened the 'pressing on' idea to a runner stretching to pass the baton in a relay race. You might do some (careful) demonstration of today's illustration.
4. Songs that emphasize life in Christ, commitment, perseverance, giving our all to Jesus, and serving others as we please God are appropriate.
5. Pray with your students: Ask God to help us forget the things that are behind us and to look forward to what is next in His will for our lives and our Kingdom service.
6. David Livingston, the great missionary to Africa, was back home in England for a visit. He was asked where he was going next. His reply, "I am ready to go anywhere, provided it is forward."

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Student Worksheet

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For Memory: "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14

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=Paul didn't want to disappoint _____ and not live up to the _____ that Jesus had planted in his _____.

=Rather than taking it easy, because he had already accomplished a _____, he was ignoring all that and moving on. And, he was _____ toward what was ahead.

=Christians are responsible to press on... to strain with all their _____ and _____ toward what God called them to do.

=What Paul is talking about here is following the _____ of God to each new accomplishment or _____, to win the prize of God's blessing as Paul advances "Heavenward."

=We should awaken each morning and pray, "Father, give me _____ and your grace to accomplish in this day all that you have for me to do...all the " _____ " you are setting for me, and _____ me to accomplish, to " _____," as you _____ me "Heavenward."

=When Paul talked about striving, or "straining toward," the _____, he was warning the Philippians that it was going to take _____, _____, and _____ to "win the prize."

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that there is a God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God's Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus' name. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.

Fifth, believe that He has answered your prayer, and be determined to live for him all the rest of your life.