

## A COMMITMENT TO CHRISTLIKENESS

**Phil. 3:12-14**  
**January 1, 2012**

**INTRODUCTION:** In this passage Paul moves from accountant to athlete. He desires to run the race of life with diligence and devotion. He realizes that the race toward Christlikeness begins with a sense of honesty and sanctified dissatisfaction. In this text Paul uses the analogy of a runner to describe the Christian spiritual growth. Paul acknowledges that he had not yet arrived at his final goal, not yet accomplished all in his life that He was going to accomplish.

However, regardless of the failures of the past, Paul sees today as the first day of the rest of his life. It is as though he is reminding us that we can get “**past our past**” and we can “**shake off the dust**” and go on.

Charles Spurgeon said, “*we have misjudged our God-given capacity.*”

In this race, note Paul’s commitment:

### **I. THE PROCESS OF CHRISTLIKENESS. 12**

One writer referred to. v.12 as the **start** of the race, v.13 **course** of the race, and v.14 the **end** of the race.

#### **A. ATTAINING. 12a**

**This is the statement of a great Christian who never**  
permitted himself to be satisfied with his spiritual attainments.

#### **B. MATURING. 12b**

**“perfected”** – one mark of maturity is the knowledge that he is not perfect; honest evaluation of his spiritual condition. Paul was reminding the church that in his life there was room for further development.

#### **C. PURSUING. 12c**

**“I press on”** – Greek word was used of a sprinter and refers to aggressive, energetic action. Paul pursued sanctification with all his might, straining every spiritual muscle to win the prize.

**Heb 12:1, “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.”**

**NOTE: I Cor. 9:24-27**

## D. APPREHENDING. 12d

**“that I may lay hold of”** – make one’s own possession; to pull down; remember the start of the race (Damascus Road). Jesus is the starter and judge

**Heb 12:2, “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.”**

## E. DESIRING.

**“For which”** – speaks of purpose; pictures a football player who runs someone down from behind and tackles him.

Apprehend means to capture.

Jesus Christ chose Paul for the ultimate purpose of conforming Paul to His glorious image and that is the goal Paul pursued to attain.

**Rom 8:29, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”**

## II. THE PAST AND CHRISTLIKENESS. 13

### A. FAMILIAR WITH HIS CALLING. 13a

**“I count not myself to have apprehended”**

Spirit of honesty, humility; Paul was longing to apprehend all that God purposed in apprehending him.

### B. FOCUS ON CHRISTLIKENESS. 13b

**“this one thing”** – concentration; specializing; priorities; living for what matters most; Christlikeness.

Paul reduced the whole of sanctification to the single and clear goal of doing **“one thing.”**

### C. FORGET WHAT HAS CONTROLLED YOU.

Don’t be paralyzed by your past  
Don’t be held in bondage by your past  
Don’t be a victim of your past  
Don’t be crippled by your past

We may allow our failures to teach us but not to terrorize us.

You can be distracted by the past and your past can debilitate one's efforts in the present.

To forget means to no longer be influenced by or affected by.

**The Past** – What's back there?

1. **Accomplishments** – can make us proud or indifferent
2. **Defeats/Failures** – can make us feel guilty and shame

You can't rely on past victories/virtues  
You can't resist because of sins/failures

**ILLUSTRATE:**

**Joseph** - before the years of famine, he and his wife had 2 children. Remember: Pit, Poti-Pherah's, Prison

**(Gen. 41:50-51)**

**Manasseh**- **“It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.”**

The facts were not erased from his memory, but God took the sting out, so there was no bitterness. The temptation of a mean spirit was conquered.

People lie in bed at night watching old videos on the inner screen of their hearts.

**Ephraim – (Gen. 41:52) – “It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.”**

God taught Joseph that if you put your life in His hands, the worst damage can be turned to good.

God's people have found that the most precious fruit often grows in the midst of overwhelming difficulties. Faith grows best on cloudy days.

Bondage to the past will hold you back from God's best for your life.

## **D. FOLLOW WHAT WE ARE COMMITTED TO.**

### **“reaching forward to those things which are ahead”**

Denotes an athlete who runs without swerving off course, straining every nerve and muscle as he keeps on running with all his might.

Vince Lombardi’s words about discipline seem appropriate:

“I’ve never known a man worth his salt who in the long run, deep down in his heart, didn’t appreciate the grind, the discipline. There is something in good men that really yearns for discipline. I firmly believe that any man’s finest hour – his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear – is that moment when he has worked his heart out...and lies exhausted on the field of battle – victorious.”

## **III. OUR POTENTIAL WITH CHRISTLIKENESS. 14**

### **A. THE GOAL. 14a**

Christlikeness here and now; not attained yet; still running.

### **B. THE PRIZE. 14b**

Christlikeness in heaven

**I Jn 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”**

### **D. THE UPWARD CALL. 14c**

Bema – reviewing stand