



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Philippians 3: 12-16

2013

"Onward And Upward"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Mark, and good morning. We're continuing our studies in the Book of Philippians. We're in chapter 3. We're going to look at verses 12 through 16. Paul has spoken of his great ambition in life, which is to know Christ. Not just to know about Him, but to know Him personally, to experience Him—and to ultimately experience the resurrection when he's made whole and perfect. He looks forward to that. And now he writes,

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.

Philippians 3: 12-16

May the LORD bless this reading of the Scriptures, and our time of studying it together. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we do pray for that. We thank You for the great privilege it is to do what we've done and read the Scriptures, to possess this book, which is not just a book, but many books. It's really a library of books, written over a large span of time. And yet, from beginning to end, it's all consistent. It all holds together. It's not a book that contradicts. It's a book that has harmony and themes developed throughout that are consistent. And the great theme of it all is Your sovereignty and Your salvation, and the grace that we have received through Your Son.

We see that from the very beginning to the very end. And we're reminded of it in our passage this morning and what a motivation Your saving grace was to the apostle; and how it set him on a course that he ran diligently; he marched in diligently; he pursued relentlessly—pursuit of the goal of reaching the end and gaining Christ fully and completely.

We are impressed as we read—and then as we consider in some detail the earnestness of the apostle. And yet, what we should remember, LORD, is this is not just an apostolic life that's being described, it's the Christian life. This is the kind of life that we're to live.

And yet, honestly, we really won't live it earnestly if we don't really believe it. If Christ isn't foremost in our hearts, then we won't pursue Him as Paul did. He pursued Christ because he loved Christ. May we have that kind of love for Him and that kind of diligence in seeking to know Him and serve Him faithfully at every moment—to the very end. So LORD, bless us to that end. Give us an understanding of Paul's mind, his heart, and that which drove him—and may it be true of us as well.

Bless us spiritually, bless us materially. We have many needs. We have a list of prayer requests for those who need Your physical ministry to them, and certainly Your spiritual ministry as well. But there are some who are in grave circumstances. We pray for them. We have an opportunity, LORD, to serve others and serve one another—and

certainly being able to encourage in the midst of trials is one; and praying for them is one. There's many ways we can minister, LORD; but ultimately, You're the one that gives the healing and the encouragement, and so we pray for that.

We pray that You'd bless us now, this morning, as we study Your Word. Sanctify us in that way. Build us up in the faith. May we go out of here well equipped for the day, the week that's ahead of us, that we would serve You faithfully. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) People have always enjoyed adventure stories. One of the oldest is Xenophon's *Anabasis*; 'Ascension', 'going up', a story about 10,000 Greek mercenaries returning home from war in Persia. The war they fought was lost. Their officers were dead, they were without supplies, and they chose Xenophon to lead them back. He encouraged them to do the hard thing, and march north toward the Black Sea.

Greeks were people of the sea and they knew if they could get to the sea, they could get home. So they made a daring march over deserts and snowy mountains, fighting off hostile tribes, until one day those in the rear of the column heard some noise, and then heard the words, "thalassa, thalassa!", "The sea, the sea!" And from there they followed the shoreline back to their homeland.

I don't know if Paul ever read Xenophon, but I can imagine that the soldiers who were guarding him there in that Roman jail knew it, knew it well, and talked about the heroics of it. It was a classic in his day, and a book that's, well, kind of like a *Band of Brothers* story.

The experience of the Christian life, Paul describes in our text this morning, Philippians 3, verses 12 through 16, sounds a lot like it. It sounds a great deal like an adventure story: He describes it as a journey, or a race, with all of the action of soldiers and athletes. What it shows is the Christian life is not inert. That is, it's not sedentary; it's

not a life of sitting and contemplating. There's some of that, of course, but what we see here is that side of the Christian life that is active.

And that is the Christian life: Paul speaks of "pressing on", of "laying hold", of 'marching'. It's all about effort—which also shows some of the tensions in the Christian life. We're saved by grace, not works. And yet, the Christian life is filled with works. Salvation is received, it's not achieved; and yet, we strive earnestly to serve the Lord and reach the end. We are spiritual athletes fighting for the prize. We are Christian soldiers pressing on toward the goal. We are pilgrims in a foreign land, traveling home—and home is heaven.

That's how Paul describes himself. And while it might seem to be, maybe, trivializing the Christian life to call it "an adventure", I don't think a person has lived whose life was more of an adventure than Paul. It took him all over the world, through storms at sea, before kings, into prisons, all because of a single minded effort to *know* and *serve* Christ—and in serving Him to know Him better. That was the goal of his life and to reach that 'age and that day of perfection and resurrection'. That's what he said earlier. He'd made that clear in the previous text, particularly in verse 10 that his great ambition was 'to know Christ.'

Now he tells us he hasn't yet reached it; the goal is still out there. Verse 12, "Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect..." How could he be? Christ is too great to obtain with complete knowledge. He's beyond us. He is infinite. There's always more there, more of Him than we can possibly grasp in this life—really, ever fully, completely grasp. He's infinite. He's eternal. And we will spend all eternity grasping Christ, learning more about Him, learning more about our Triune God.

And, Paul certainly wasn't perfect. There's no perfection in this life, no perfection this side of heaven. We are always, in this life, 'in the process'. We are never 'the final product'. But he was saved to someday be perfect—and saved to know Christ personally. And while he knew Him, he didn't know Him completely, (as he didn't know Him *fully*).

He was justified; he was being sanctified; he was in the process of being conformed to the image of Christ, being transformed. He was in that process, but it wasn't finished, it wasn't complete. So in the present time, Paul tells us he strives to obtain that—at least obtain a measure of that in this life. This wasn't works; it was all grace. It was a hunger; he had a God given desire to be on the road to holiness and get to the end.

Have you ever picked up a book you so enjoyed that it's just hard to put it down? You have to put it down at some point: You got to go to bed; you got to go to work. But when you get back you have those other things you like to do, like read the newspaper, watch news, but you put all that aside so you can get back to that book, because you are so enthralled with the plot, and you want to get into the details of it, you enjoy that—and you want to get to the end of it because you want to have the whole story.

That's Paul with Jesus and perfection. This isn't works, this is pleasure. This is desire. 'I'm not there yet', he is saying, 'but I want to be.' So "I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." (vs12).

"Laid hold of". Paul just breathed sovereign grace. It was such a part of his understanding that he continually mentions it. The 'turns of phrases' that he used reflect that. He couldn't help himself. He didn't save himself—he was saved. He "was laid hold of". He was 'apprehended.' He was 'conscripted' into Christ's service. Some have put it, 'arrested there on the Damascus road.'

Christ laid hold of Paul. And only because Christ laid hold of Paul, did Paul lay hold of Christ. And that's true of every one of us, every single one of us. When we were lost, the Lord found us. Just like that shepherd who goes out and finds the lost sheep and takes hold of that sheep and puts it on his shoulders and rejoicing takes him home, so too the Lord found us, as it were, put us on His shoulders, rejoicing, and brought us home.

Paul's experience of that was maybe a little more spectacular than ours: He was saved in a blinding light when he was on his way to kill Christians. That's when Jesus stopped him, dead in his tracks. That's when He 'arrested him', so to speak, He "laid hold

of him", laid hold of him for salvation and glory—and a relationship. And Paul was amazed by that. And so now Paul wanted to lay hold of Christ; he wanted to lay hold of Him more completely, more fully.

So he says, he "pressed on" toward that; which suggests a very active, earnest life. This is a word that was used of running a foot race, or hunting an animal. And it has the idea of *pursuing*. It also means to *persecute*. In fact, this is the word that Paul used back in verse 6 of his effort to persecute the church, "...as to zeal, a persecutor of the church." It's the same word. Of course it has a different sense, a different meaning—but still the same sense of 'going after something with serious resolve.'

That's the Christian life—and that's how Paul lived it. He went forward in pursuit of perfection. He was chasing Christ in an effort to overtake Him, 'to capture Him', so to speak. To have more of Him by an increasing understanding, an increasing knowledge of Him; being conformed to His image; developing in His relationship. That was Paul's goal—he was chasing that. He was pursuing that. People today are always pursuing something; all of us are pursuing something. But we live in a day where people are in hot pursuit of something: money, position, pursuit of pleasure—that's the world. But Paul pursued Christ.

Paul could have pursued the world. Paul could have had the world. Paul was brilliant. Paul was disciplined. Paul was full of determination and energy. He could have been a wealthy man. He could have been a powerful man. He could have had all that the world had to offer. But what he directed all of his mind and energy toward was this: It was towards Christ. It was toward the goal of knowing Him, conforming to His image, serving Him, and pleasing Him.

Again, he didn't claim to have obtained it. He adds that disclaimer in verse 13, "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it..." —but he was absolutely determined to do it. The fact that he hadn't reached that goal didn't frustrate him. In fact, he was incentivized all the more to do it. "...one thing *I do*:" he says, "forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on..."

Now what does Paul mean here when he uses this word, “forget”? What did he forget? You say, ‘Well, he forgot his sin.’ No, he didn't forget his sin. When Paul looked back on his life, he didn't say, ‘I can't not remember what I was doing as a Pharisee. I draw a blank when I start thinking about my past.’

He knew quite well about his past, and he knew about his sin. In fact, he tells Timothy, in one of the last letters that he wrote in 1 Timothy 1, verse 15, that he is ‘the chief of sinners.’ He had to know about his sin to say that. In fact, he just told us in the 6th verse of this chapter, that he was “a persecutor”. He killed Christians; he didn't forget that. In fact, that was really the backdrop in his mind for grace.

But Paul didn't allow the shame of his past, or the regret of those deeds to control him. He put it in the perspective of God's forgiveness, His acceptance, and the perspective of his imputed righteousness: That he was forgiven, that he was justified, and his sin, seen in the light of that, only highlighted the grace of God. So he did not allow himself to descend into the vortex of introspection and self-incrimination. That kind of experience hinders a person in his Christian development, or her Christian development, and the pursuit of that which is right.

We could begin to languish in it—and of course, that's what the devil would like to do for us; he'd like to put us in that snare. The devil tries to put us there all the time. He's the “accuser” of the brethren. But we must rest in God's grace. We must reckon sin paid for and our guilt removed—but never forget who we are. Never stop reminding ourselves that we are, as Augustus Toplady put it in his hymn, “a debtor to mercy alone.”

Paul did that. He was always amazed that God would love him, that the Lord God from eternity past would choose him unconditionally, an enemy of the Gospel, a persecutor of the church, and that Jesus Christ would actually die to save him and claim him.

Now I don't believe Paul dwelt on all of that. I don't believe he dwelt on his sin. What he meant when he said he ‘forgot what lay behind’, was that he didn't let the past

overshadow the present with his miseries—or his triumphs. And Paul certainly had triumphs in the past, as well as failures. He'd accomplished a great deal in Judaism. He reminded us of that not long ago in verses 4 through 6, when he gives that autobiographical sketch of his life. He was a rising star in Judaism.

In the midst of his trials..., [And Paul had rough trials. You read 2 Corinthians and you see all the trials that Paul went through. Read the Book of Acts and you read just some of them. He had a difficult life as an apostle. The life of an apostle was a hard life.] ...he could have, in the midst of all of that, looked back on his life in the past, wistfully, and thought about those 'good old days' as a rabbi—and life when the nation loved Paul, looked up to Paul, and showered Paul with honors. It's very easy in the times of difficulty to look back on the past and think, 'You know, it was better back then.'

Israel did that. When they were out in the desert, hiking through the wilderness with the heat and the difficulties; they looked back, longingly, to Egypt. And they wanted to return to Egypt, the 'wonderful life in Egypt'. 'Wasn't it wonderful back then? We didn't know how good we had it, making bricks all day and eating onions.' *[Laughter]* That's what they longed for. Well we laugh, it's foolish—but we do the same thing.

They showed their weakness and their failure of faith there. The best was ahead: Canaan and real freedom was ahead, not behind. We have a way of thinking like that, of making the past so pleasant, as I said, speaking of 'the good old days', when they really weren't.

Paul could have done that. He didn't do that. He remembered it, but he didn't long for it. He didn't rest in his accomplishments as an apostle, even though he did more work and accomplished more than all of the apostles. (He says that in 1 Corinthians 15:10). Paul knew that, but he didn't rest in that.

To carry on the analogy of sports that I think is fitting with this passage, you can imagine a young man today winning the Masters—and it's an amazing feat; whoever wins it, it's an amazing thing. But you watch those tournaments and you're amazed that so often it comes down to the last green, and the last putt—and the man wins it with his

skill of concentration and control of his nerves. And he's got all these eyes on him: The audience is there; the cameras are on him. He knows millions of people are watching, and yet he makes that putt and wins the game.

That's great. But if he lives the rest of his career in that moment, he'll never win another tournament. He has to enjoy the win for the moment—and then forget it, put it behind him, and move on to the next one.

That's how Paul lived. He accomplished a lot, but he didn't rest on his laurels and become complacent. No victor does. When Napoleon was asked why he continually made wars he said, "I am the child of war. Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." The Christian is the child of spiritual war. We only live and grow as we fight. We only mature as we advance. There's no place in the Christian life for a self-congratulatory spirit.

So Paul didn't have one. Paul didn't look back. He didn't reminisce. He didn't live in the past or long for the good old days. He knew God had more for him; he knew that the best was still ahead.

So he was always reaching forward, always striving forward. Again, it's the picture of an athlete. It's the picture of a runner racing toward the finish line. We've all seen the pictures of the finish line and of the runner pressing forward into the tape to win that race at the last second. All the way to the end—that's Paul and the Christian life.

He was very much aware that life, like a race, has an end, has a finish line. It is a process of growing, it is a process of serving, it's a process of learning—and the time and the opportunity to do that is short, doesn't last. The Lord may come or death may happen—but the end is coming—and Paul knew that. And Paul knew that the end may be coming soon, and he wanted to end triumphantly; he wanted to break the tape. He sensed the urgency of life and he gave it his utmost. Not because he had to, but because he wanted to.

No runner runs down that lane saying, 'I've got to take another step. I got to do it.' No, he wants to do it—he's driven to do it. And that's the apostle Paul; so he writes in verse 14, "I press on toward the goal..."

That reminds me of another adventure, that of Henry Morton Stanley, who went to Africa in 1871 in search of David Livingstone. Stanley was a journalist for the *New York Herald*, who was sent to find the famous missionary who had not been heard from in five years. And the world was wondering, 'Was he still alive?'

So Stanley went. It was a difficult journey. Some people in his party deserted. Others died. But Stanley pushed on. He wrote back to the paper, "Wherever he is, be sure I shall not give up the chase." And, of course, in time he reached his goal. He found the missionary and he uttered the famous words, "Dr. Livingstone I presume."

That's the resolve Paul expresses here. He would not give up the chase to reach his goal, the finish line, and gain the greatest prize—the prize of "the upward call of God." It is the call of God to come up on high. It is the call that leads us to God, Himself. It is the prize of heaven. It's the prize of glory to come. And more than that, it is the prize of Christ.

Paul does write of "crowns" and "rewards" that will be received for a faithful life. And that's a great incentive to live; and that's a great encouragement. There's nothing that you do in your life for Christ that won't be rewarded by the Lord. There's no sacrifice you can make in this life that the Lord won't more than make up for it—for all eternity. He told Timothy of "the crown of righteousness" that was laid up for him when he finished the course. (1 Tim 4:8).

Now of course, all of that is a product of the grace of God. We don't do anything that we haven't done by the grace of God. In fact, when Paul talks in 1 Corinthians 15:10 about how he labored more and accomplished more than all of the apostles, he said, "...yet not I, but the grace of God (*that's*) with me." Even all of his great achievements and even his running the race here is a product of the grace of God.

And you remember those servants in Luke chapter 17. They're rewarded for their service, and they're puzzled why? "We are unworthy slaves;" (we don't deserve it).

'We've only done what we ought to do.' (vs10). And really, when it comes down to it, if you and I could live an absolutely perfect life, we're only living what we ought to live. And yet, God rewards all of that.

Now all of that's true. That is a promise that we have and something to anticipate in the world to come. But the larger context of our passage says 'It's something else'—It's Christ. That's what Paul was looking forward to. That's the goal for Paul, ultimately. It's the anticipation of seeing Him. Everything he had gained in this world, he's told us, everything, all of his great accomplishments, he dismissed it all, everything, as pure "rubbish", compared with seeing and knowing Christ. And he knew that when he finished the course that his prize, Jesus Christ, would be waiting for him.

That's what energized him to be going forward. I probably don't need to emphasize this. I've done it before but I'll do it again: It's not works, it's grace. He wanted to do this: His eye was fixed on the prize and he was constantly at it, making progress toward the goal, toward the end of life where the prize was—because he loved the goal, he loved Jesus Christ. And that's the goal.

In the ancient games, runners ran toward a post or a pillar. That was the goal. They kept their eyes fixed on that. Paul had a goal. He didn't run aimlessly. He told the Corinthians, 'He didn't box aimlessly', (1 Cor 9:26). He didn't do anything aimlessly. He was active, but not active without order. He was disciplined in his spiritual running. His goal was finishing the spiritual race well.

But it's also true that all along the course of his spiritual life, each day Paul had other goals. He had what we might call minor goals, goals that kept his attention fixed on the greater goal, kept him in line. Each day was God's gift to Paul, just as it is to you and to me. And each day he lived for the Lord. His goal each day was to conform to the image of Jesus Christ. His goal each day was to live for the Lord: To live as unto Him, to live an honest life, to live a faithful life to others and to the Lord, to be a helpful person to those in need.

Everything that he did, he did to glorify God: Whether it was making tents, he did it as best he could, or teaching the Bible. All of it was to the glory of God. He lived a disciplined life, a careful life, daily. Each day living for the Lord on the way to the greater goal of finishing the course. That's how he stayed on course.

Now I said that the Christian life might be called 'an adventure'; and I think it is. I think that's true. But I would add a qualification. A man who had what most would call one of the greatest adventures of the 20th century, or at least the early 20th century was Roald Amundsen. He, along with his Norwegian team, discovered the South Pole. He said, "Adventure is just bad planning."

He planned carefully, and he made it to the pole and back in 99 days, which was 10 days earlier than scheduled. It was a treacherous journey, not only from the extreme cold, but unseen dangers. He wrote of crevasses hidden under deep snow, and hearing a hollow sound as they passed over them. Now that's scary.

But on their way to the pole, they built cairns, which are piles of snow. All along the way, at certain points, they'd build a pile of snow so that when they returned they had those markers to help guide them all the way back. All of those markers were goals. They reach one, they finished their goal. Reaching the other one was the next goal—all the way to the end. Those helped them get back to base camp, and from there, back home to Norway.

We have goals, too. Being faithful each day with the tasks that are ours to do. Doing them as unto the Lord. That requires knowledge, that requires discipline, that requires devotion, daily. But the great goal is not here. It's there. It's at the end of life. It is finishing well, because that's where the prize is, the rest from our labors—eternal glory and fellowship with Christ.

That inspired Paul every day to keep pressing on toward that goal, continually. And that's the sense of this: It's a present tense; and the significance of it, the force is, it's constant, it's continual. He was relentless. He would not 'give up the chase', so to

speaking. —Nor should we. "Onward and upward," Spurgeon said, "is the Christian's motto."

That's the motto Paul wants the Philippians to adopt. He says so in verse 15, where he instructs them to do that—to "have this attitude". He writes that to those who he calls "perfect"; "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude;" What does that mean? In verse 12 he said he wasn't 'perfect'. So he's not perfect, the apostle, but these Philippians, some of them are perfect?

Well some have thought that what Paul is doing here is he's using irony and not being serious. He's using irony, and that's a possibility, because Paul does do that. You see that in the Book of 1 Corinthians, for example. He spoke to them in a kind of ironic way, and it may be that some in Philippi had this false idea of sinless perfection.

That's always been an issue in Christian circles, where there's this notion of perfection. It's been taught that we can reach a state in the Christian life where we don't sin; or we don't have bad motives. John Wesley had a similar idea. That's false, of course. Again, we will never be perfect in thought or deed in this life. We will struggle with sin, the sin that's in us, the sin that's around us, we'll struggle with that until our last day. And some of us will simply stumble over the finish line.

So Paul may be saying something like that, 'You think you've arrived; those of you who are perfect? You're not really perfect, and you need to disabuse yourself of that and have this attitude in you that you haven't arrived, and you've got a long way to go. So press on.' That's possible.

But as I read this, I don't see anything in the letter to the Philippians that suggests that they had this problem in Philippi. It seems, instead, that Paul meant what he wrote, and that he was using the word "*perfect*" in the sense of *mature*. And he does use that word in that sense in other places. For example in Ephesians chapter 4, in verse 13, he used it of attaining "to a *mature* man." Same word, but there it means maturity, 'attaining to maturity'—a complete person in knowledge and action. I think that's his meaning here.

So what he's telling the Philippians is that, 'This attitude of *pressing on* is the sign of maturity.' It's what the mature Christian has. He or she is not so attracted by the world that he or she neglects this call of God. A mature person is motivated to live diligently by the thought of Christ—and is willing to sacrifice temporal things, temporal pleasures, temporal goals for the eternal goal. Willing to sacrifice personal pleasures to please Christ, to serve others.

Paul wasn't requiring anything of them that he didn't require of himself. Paul also knew that the upward call of God was very demanding. This was a demanding call and it wasn't easy. Paul was a great teacher; and one of the characteristics of a person who's a good teacher is he or she is patient with those he or she teaches; patient with a class, patient with a congregation, patient with his or her children at home.

Paul was patient—a patient teacher. He urges them to adopt this attitude of *pressing on*—but he doesn't try to force it on them or browbeat them, or shame them into doing it. He says, "...and if in anything you have a different attitude...", (in other words, 'If you don't have the attitude I've got here'), "...God will reveal that to you also." (vs15b).

Paul understood that neither he nor any person can make another person know the truth. We can't force people to understand. We can't force people to accept what we know to be the truth, or adopt our attitude. Ultimately, that's the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Paul could state the matter plainly; he could give the proper incentive; he could live an exemplary life, but he couldn't make people understand, he couldn't make them act rightly. The Holy Spirit does that.

But Paul did know that if they studied the Scriptures, if they had an open mind, if they were open to the Spirit's instruction, if they sought to know the mind of God, God would reveal that to them—and change them.

So he tells them in verse 16, "Let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained." In other words, 'You may not adopt my values here, my attitude, my goals, but live up to the knowledge that you do have—live up to that.'

Literally the verse is more like, "Only as far as we have attained, by the same, let us walk." That word translated "*live by*", (or I think the *New International Version* has "*live up to*"), is the word for "*walk*" or "*march*". And it means '*walk in a line*', or '*march in file*'—like 'soldiers marching in strict order to battle'. They stayed in line to reach their goal. And that's what we're to do: Stay in line, live according to the truth that we have, live according to the knowledge we have. Keep walking in line, in that truth, seeking to know God's Word. Don't neglect it. Be earnest and diligent in that and in the knowledge and the understanding that you have to this point.

And as we do that, as we live for Christ and live faithfully with the things that we do understand, we will become more knowledgeable about other things. The things we have will become clearer; our mind will become clearer. The Lord will teach us and we'll become more mature. And we will adopt Paul's attitude—which is the right attitude; it is the single minded attitude of 'onward and upward'. That's our call. And following it requires diligence and faithfulness, marching in line like disciplined soldiers.

So in that sense, the Christian walk should not be an adventure. It calls for planning and realism. It can be a rough life with pitfalls—hidden pitfalls. There are lots of crevasses out there covered with deep snow. We don't hear the hollow sound beneath us. We don't notice the dangers, but they're there. In fact, every step we take we're on dangerous ground. There are pitfalls, and so we need to be disciplined and diligent and aware of that. But that's the best life.

That's the best life. That's the orderly life. That's the most fulfilling life. And I think if a person does live by faith, every day trusting in the Lord, it will be an adventurous life. And regardless of the hardships and setbacks, it is eternally rewarding. At the end of it all is the prize, the eternal prize: Eternal life and glory!—And best of all, fellowship with Christ.

We know that from Scripture. We know that by faith. You could ask me, 'How do you know that's true? Have you ever been there? Have you seen it?' No. Amundsen knew Norway. He came from Norway. And he was going back. But I've never been to heaven. I'm very skeptical of those who say they have. I don't need those kind of testimonies, and I don't need to have been there, because the Word of God tells me everything I need to know, and it tells me that that's the future for the child of God.

That's the goal. That's what the Bible teaches. We don't see it, we don't know it by experience. We hear the call of God in the Gospel, and we follow it. The world tells us to live by sight. The Word tells us to live by faith—and that's what the Christian does. We walk by faith. We walk with a certain hope. And so, without seeing the future, but believing in it, we press on like the 10,000 who kept pressing on in the hope of reaching the sea. And we too, are "pressing on" to the 'glassy sea', where the throne of God is, in heaven. (Rev 4:6).

Now that's what Paul did. He didn't live for time, he lived for eternity. And we're not just talking about the life of an apostle. We could say, 'Well yeah, that's Paul. He was the apostle—the great apostle. I'm a school teacher. I sell insurance. I'm a housewife. I'm a broker in real estate. I have all these other duties—and I do what I can.' But this is the Christian life. This is just not the life of the apostle—and not the life of the Christian. No, this is the life of the Christian—which Paul, fundamentally, was. It's our life, it's a demanding life, a disciplined life.

And it's all a gift, of course. Again, I repeat that and emphasize that. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It's all of Him, not of works. We are saved to "good works", though, so that "we would walk in them" as Paul told the Ephesians in chapter 2, verse 10; and also added, 'Those works are given to us by God.' They're 'predestined' that "we walk in them." So, we have them—and that's incentive to

"walk in them." That's part of this Christian life. That's part of this march to heaven. But it's all of grace, ultimately.

Now will we stumble along the way? Of course we will; we do. There's no perfection this side of heaven, but we will continue the march in the truth toward the goal and for the prize. The child of God wants to please God, wants to please Christ—not so much to gain but to give, to repay Him for all that He's given to us.

And what's He given to us? He's given us everything: Life everlasting. This brief life will be over in a moment, and all eternity, endless existence in glory is before us; so that someday, what is promised will be possessed, what is believed will be seen.

Earlier I mentioned David Livingstone. When he was back in England he was asked, "Well, Dr. Livingstone, where are you ready to go now?" Livingstone answered, "I'm ready to go anywhere, provided it be forward." May God give us that attitude, Paul's attitude, that the way forward is the way home. It's the way to heaven.

If you've not believed in Christ, you may have realized your goals, a lot of your goals, or you're in the process of realizing goals you have. But you also should realize all those goals are temporal—they're not permanent. Whatever you gain in this life can't be kept. It'll be lost. In order to have eternity you need Christ. So come to Him. Believe in Him. He receives all who do. And then He sets you on a life of faith that, if lived by faith, really is an adventure. Let's pray.

LORD, we all have to make that confession, that our hearts are prone to wander; we're enamored of the world around us. Give us the attitude that was in Your apostle; give us the motto of *onward and upward*. Give us a resolve to live faithfully for You, and to realize that the best is before us and to pursue it, that what we have in this life is transient and we live for Christ—and live for eternity. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

(End of Audio)