

(Philippians 3:7-14, NIV84)

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do:

Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

It has become common for people nowadays to speak of their "bucket list."

Do you know what a bucket list is? It is a list of things you want to experience or accomplish before you die-before you "kick the bucket"-fun things, exciting things, daring things, outlandish things.

Do you have a bucket list? The Apostle Paul did. Listen to what was on Paul's bucket list: "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." Whoa! That doesn't sound like much fun. "Sharing in [Christ's] sufferings?" "Becoming like [Jesus] in his death"? That sounds like a whole lot of pain!

Paul did not enjoy pain, and neither did Jesus. There is a passage that describes how Jesus viewed the pain: "Jesus... who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus looked past the pain... to the goal-the joy of victory, the joy of having accomplished our salvation.

We can do the same-looking past the pain of this life, with all its trials and troubles and tribulations, to the goal of "kicking the bucket" (actually, to what awaits us AFTER we kick the bucket). The eternal life that awaits us is infinitely better than anything we can desire, or experience, or accomplish in this life. We attain it, not earning it by our own righteousness, but instead through the righteousness of Christ that is ours by faith in Jesus. Nothing matters more.

Press on, therefore, toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called you heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Focused with you on Christ,
Pastor Golm

June 25

Eyes Toward the Lord

Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord. Psalm 25:15

A group of boys were trying to see who could make the straightest track across a snowy field. Only one of them succeeded in making a path which was almost perfectly straight. When asked how he managed to do it, he said: "It was easy. I just kept my eyes fixed on the lightning rod on top of the barn at the end of the field-while the rest of you kept looking at your feet."

"Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord", says the child of God. In the workaday world in which we live, there may be heartaches and disappointments, irritations and vexations, trials and temptations; but, in the midst of it all, our eyes are ever toward our Lord. Our Lord and we share every trial; and in that very act of sharing, our burdens lose their weight, and our trials lose their sting.

How often throughout the day and in the dark hours of the night do our eyes meet the eyes of our Savior! In that mutual glance there is hope and strength. For "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles" (Psalm 34:15, 17).

Are we keeping our eyes "toward the Lord"? Or are we, like Peter on the Sea of Galilee, keeping our eyes on the stormy waves which would draw us down into despair? Let us press courageously forward, "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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

In the above passage, the Christian life is compared to a race. But notice how we are to run: "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith". In him we have not only our goal, but also our source of strength. Is our daily life thus focused? Are we always keeping our eyes "toward the Lord"?

Lord, in the midst of the world's distractions, grant that the eyes of my faith may always be directed toward You. Amen.