

I Want to Stay in the Race

Կ'ուզեմ Մնալ Մրցումին Մէջ

Philippians 3:12-16

There is a saying, “Start a job like an Armenian. Continue to the end like the British.” I guess we Armenians are enthusiastic in starting a job, but then, when the excitement is gone, resolutions become secondary or even forgotten.

Here I am on a running track. Look to these lines. Those lanes help the athlete to run in a right path focusing on the goal.

I was pretty young when I saw the movie *Chariots of Fire*. It inspired me how this British Christian athlete acted on his principles, even to the extent of losing a race because he would not run on any Sunday. On the other hand, during the 400-meter race, (440 yards) something exceptional happened. The athletes were bunched together as they came to the first bend, and **Eric Liddle**, our famous Christian runner, was pushed over and fell right off the track. Was this the end of the race for Eric? He quickly rose back on his feet, started to run and caught the other runners one by one and won the race. What I would do if I was Eric? Get angry, blame the athletes, blame the organizers...or simply give up. Please notice Just how Paul says it: **“I press on forward towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”** (14)

Paul explained his purpose in life. He dedicated his life to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world. He would do anything for the advancement of the Gospel. Whether he lives or dies, he will be witness for Jesus Christ.

Last week’s message he said he counted all his earthy credentials, his achievements, his heritage as rubbish in order to gain the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

“...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings...” (Philippians 3:10-11)

Today:

Furthermore: "... But **one thing** I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead..." (Philippians 3:13)

What is this one thing he wants? Let us dig in.

1. Obtain and Take Hold $\Phi\eta\lambda\iota\pi\pi\acute{o}\varsigma$ $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ $\Phi\eta\lambda\iota\pi\pi\acute{o}\varsigma$

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ **Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.** (Phil 3:12-13a NIV)

This verse marks the opening of a section in which Paul states the tension between his present attainment and his aspiration for the future. The key words are "*obtain*" and "*take hold*."¹

First, he recognized that Christ Jesus took hold of him. Where? On the road to Damascus. This is his conversion story. This is not the end of the story though. Like Paul, all believers of Christ, have their own story of how Christ took hold of them. It could be in Sunday School, Camp Arev, youth group, at home, etc.

The aim of the apostle is set out in his desire to *take hold of or to make his own possession*, the purpose for which the risen Christ appeared to him, and he frankly confesses that the goal of his endeavour has not yet been *taken hold of*. Hence his whole life is a pressing on to a future goal.²

Christ took hold of Paul. Why? What was the purpose of Christ in finding Paul or any of us?

Christ's main purpose on this earth was to save humanity from the damnation of sin and death, to reconcile them with God, to bring the righteousness of God: God-human, human-human relationships.

Now Paul says, "**Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own.**" (12)

He wants to make Christ's purpose his own. Paul takes this very seriously. For example, read Acts and you will find his three missionary journeys. Were people

welcoming? Was he not jailed, beaten, persecuted? -----You know the answer. During that time, God opened the opportunity for him to write letters. He wrote half of the New Testament. Why? He wanted to reach out to every person with the Gospel of the Good News of salvation.

2. I Am Not Already Perfect Ես Կատարեալ Չեմ

“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own.” (Philp 3:12 ESV)

I admire Paul’s humility. He is a Christian leader, and he reminds all of us that no one should say they have arrived, or they are perfect. Though Paul planted churches and was their chief shepherd, yet he reminded them that he needed to grow as well. We should stay humble learning that every day we can still grow in our faith. No graduation in the Christian faith.

N. T. Wright says:

“True maturity actually means knowing that you haven’t arrived, and that you must still keep pressing on forward towards the goal.”

There is no final perfection in the present experience. We are justified by grace though our sanctification is an ongoing process.

3. Don’t look back Ետեւ Մի Նայիր

All runners look towards the goal. You cannot run looking back.

Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead (Phil 3:13b NIV)

-I don’t know what looking behind means for you. Paul had to leave behind his “old life”. He persecuted Christians; he was a pure Hebrew, a Pharisee, from the tribe of Benjamin. He wanted to “forget”, “leave behind” everything that hindered him from running this race.

-He also left behind all the successes and the failures he had in his Christian life.

-What also hinders a runner from running his course. We read in Hebrews:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. (Hebrews 12:1 ESV)

Leave behind the shame and guilt. The Lord Jesus carries those for you. Those were nailed on the cross. Leave them behind...

4. The Prize Մրցանակը

¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:14 NIV)

Paul uses here the Greek word “dioko” for *press on*. It is used for foot racing. Press on, or run towards the prize. What is the prize?

Paul does not describe or identify exactly what he means by that. Yet, in other biblical passages the prize could mean:

- A. Jesus welcoming us and saying: “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:23),
- B. Receiving the Crown of righteousness which the righteous judge will give us on that day (2Timothy 4:8).
- C. Receiving the unfading Crown of glory (1 Peter 4:5).
- D. To be in the unending presence of the Lord Himself (Revelation 7:9-17).

We don't know which of those Paul meant, but the common denominator between all these is Christ. The prize is to be with Him who is my Savior my King.

Application:

Life is a race. Since we are in this race, it is good to finish it to the end. **“I want to finish what I started”**. Stay in the race.... Stay in the race... the race does not end. If you do not arrive to the end... stay on your course... Don't give up... look

towards the goal... Stay in the race... keep pressing...It is important to maintain the position you've reached. Leave behind all the things that hinder you from running. If you have some unconfessed sins, bring them to the Lord. If you have some dark areas that need light, bring them out to the Lord. If you are full of pride of your achievements and you are looking behind towards them and you cannot move forward, put those "achievements" in the box and lock them.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Hebrews 12:1,2 ESV)

The Word of God

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶Only let us hold true to what we have attained. (ESV)

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³Brothers and sisters, 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, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶Only let us live up to what we have already attained. (NIV)

Ոչ թէ ես արդէն առեր եմ, կամ արդէն կատարեալ եղեր եմ, հապա ետեւէն ինկած եմ որ բռնեմ մրցանակը, որուն համար ալ բռնուեցայ Քրիստոս Յիսուսէն: ¹³ Եղբայրներ, ես չեմ սեպեր թէ բռներ եմ: Բայց յիշեցնեմ թէ ետեւի եղածները մոռցած եմ ու առջեւի եղածներուն կը դիմեմ. ¹⁴ Նպատակը դիտելով՝ դէպի Քրիստոս Յիսուսով եղած Աստուծոյ վերին կոչումին մրցանակին կը վազեմ: ¹⁵ Ուստի մենք ամէնքս՝ որ կատարեալ ենք՝ ասիկա խորհինք եւ եթէ բան մը ուրիշ կերպով խորհելու ըլլաք, զայն ալ Աստուած ձեզի պիտի յայտնէ: ¹⁶ Միայն թէ ինչ աստիճանի որ հասեր ենք նոյն կանոնին համեմատ քալենք, նոյն խորհուրդը ունենանք: