

Together in the Race

Միասին Մրցումին Մէջ

Philippians 3:15-21

I hate jogging. I was not trained in Aleppo to run or jug. In my collage years, I had to take a course in Physical Education. Beside academic writing, an important part of grading was based on doing exercise, like running. In order to graduate, I had to take this course and run three miles. Nerses to run three miles? You know how I did this? Three of my friends who ran every morning, decided to run with me. They trained me by running alongside me, adding a little every day, until I arrived to the goal.

Last Sunday we were on a **running track**. Paul sometimes uses images from the sports arena. He has a goal and running towards that goal. He does not look back; in fact, he leaves things back (forgets them), and he looks forward towards the goal and continues his life (race) running towards the goal.

Last week I urged you to stay in the race... stay in the race. The race ends at the finish line. Keep going, sanctification, work OUT your salvation because God worked IN your life... There is no graduation in Christian life.

Today's passage encourages us to stay in the race **and run together**. That is title of my sermon: **together in the race**.

In these pandemic times I walk daily in my neighborhood. Lately kids of our neighbors are writing or drawing things on the sidewalk or on the street. I have lovely neighbors, one of the kids wrote on the road: **"We'll Get through this together"**

Stay in the race, and today I'll add: **"Together stay in the race."**

Let us dig in...

1. Christian growth (Maturity)

Let 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). *let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.* (NASB) (Phil 3:15-16)

By looking to the church of Philippi, not everyone in the church is in the same level of maturity in the Christian walk.

Also, not everyone's viewpoint agrees with Paul's teaching.

Paul is challenging them to think in a mature way.

What is that?

Each person has the responsibility to be in the process of growth. Growth does not happen overnight. God will reveal Himself to us through His Spirit. On the other side, we should be receptive to His Word.

How?

-Keep living by the same standard (NASB).

The words in Greek originally means to be **"drawn up in a line."**

We read in Galatians: **If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.** (Gal 5:25 ESV)

Like the verses before, the runner runs by being on the line to arrive to the finish line. In Hebrews the author wants his readers not to drift. How dangerous when you don't have a line to follow. Why did people draw lines on the road, or on tracks? Let us run this race together in the Standard of God's Spirit.

2. Those Who Walk with You

¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. (Phil 3:17 ESV)

Paul trusts that God will reveal himself to the church of Philippi in their walk with Him.

He also believes in teaching to the church not just by words **by life and by being example to them.** Here he uses the word "us". I believe he is talking about beside himself, Timothy and Epaphroditus.

If you think he is being selfish to ask them to follow his example, just watch out. In 1 Corinthians 11:1 he says: **'Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ,'** or 'as I belong to Christ'.

Who are your role models who helped you to follow Christ?

Who influenced your growth?

Who are those who will walk with you?

Do you have heroes of faith that help you walk, run, stop, relax, walk, run...all according to the standards of God.

3. Dangerous Cravings and Desires

¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. (Phil 3:18-19 ESV)

Who are those who are enemies of the cross of Christ? Their god is their belly, their mind is on earthly things?

It could be the **Judaizers** who wanted Christ plus laws and regulations; others say those who **abuse their liberty in Christ, making it open license to every sort of indulgence...** We don't know which group, and interestingly don't we have these ideas until today around us, and sometimes in the church?

-Their god is their belly, their god is their appetite. What cravings does one have? What desires drive you to do things?

How sad is to find satisfactions in so many earthy things that can drift you from Christ. Eventually, you become the enemy of the cross, and the end is bad, it is destruction.

Please notice Paul's attitude towards them. **In tears** he tells about them. How sad is Paul about this people? How sad is our God when He sees His creation lost their focus and found new 'gods'.

4. We Live Under the Tent

²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious

body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.
(Phil 3:20-21 ESV)

Let me remind you about the **city of Philippi**. This was an important city and colony of Rome. Rome had many soldiers who fought for Roman Empire. Eventually Roman government gave lands to these soldiers who were around Philippi to settle there and not come to Rome. So there was strong Roman cultural influence and high motivation to become Roman citizens. Instead of going to Rome, Rome came to Philippi.

What is Paul saying? Hey Roman culture and citizens, our real citizenship is in heaven. And this citizenship is not just future life. No, it does start from here as we wait for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus, Christ will transform our lives.

Lately I have been doing many funerals. In one of the sermons I was preparing it reminded me again Paul:

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, (2 Cor 5:1-2)

How fragile is earthly home?

How fragile are our earthly bodies?

How fragile and temporary are our lives?

In the Lord's Prayer we ask:

Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as in the heaven.

We ask God to send us His kingdom and His will in us.

As I am on this fragile earth, I am in the Kingdom of God, citizen of heaven, with citizen of the US or any nation, I walk daily urging him to run together with you towards the goal to be Christ centered person, maturing every day, learning every day to walk in His steps towards Him.

This is my prayer for you...

Let us approach to the table....

Prayer