



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, October 2-8 (A) – Philippians 3:4b-14

Focus: *Press on Because of Christ*

word of life

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:14 (NRSV)

Read Philippians 3:4b-14

Paul’s credentials are impressive. He is a Pharisee, born of the tribe of Benjamin of the house of Israel. He was circumcised on the eighth day. His zeal led him to persecute Christians—that was until he had his conversion experience on the road to Damascus. (See Acts 9.) The transformation from Saul the persecutor to Paul the missionary is well-known.

1. *What else do you know about Paul?*
2. *What would you love to ask Paul?*

But all those credentials mean nothing to Paul compared to knowing Christ Jesus.

3. *What does it mean to “know Christ”?*
4. *How do the credentials of Paul enhance his witness about Christ?*

Paul is willing to suffer the loss of everything—including his own life—on behalf of Christ. Paul writes, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death.” (Philippians 3:10 NRSV) These are not empty words. Paul has already suffered persecution, imprisonment, and threats on his life. Yet, his earnest desire to know Christ and power of the resurrection persists.

5. *Have you ever met anyone with the passion of Paul?*
6. *What would it be like for Paul to stop by for a visit? Describe that scene.*

It can be exhausting reading Paul and his intense pursuit of Christ. It may be surprising to read that Paul does not feel he has reached his destination. He does not see himself as a finished product of God. The goal is not yet achieved.

Christ has claimed Paul, but Paul still has room to claim Christ fully. Like a runner in a marathon or an athlete involved in a lengthy competition, Paul presses toward the goal. This is not the time to quit or become complacent. This is not the time to rely on credentials or successes of the past. Instead, Paul presses forward.

These words are surprising coming from someone who has invested such immense personal energy in spreading the word about Jesus Christ. Of all people, it seems Paul could rest on his laurels and retire. Keep in mind Paul is writing this letter from prison. People would understand if he requested a leave of absence. But instead, Paul presses forward.

7. *What do you think compels Paul to continue his fervent missionary work?*
8. *What does it mean for you as a disciple of Christ “to press forward”?*

word *among us*

Bob loved to run, especially home from elementary school. His mother would be waiting for him with a hug and smile. In high school, he ran on the track team, but it wasn't quite as much fun. Bob realized during the track meets how much he hated competition.

He also began to notice loneliness creep into his life. Bob found he didn't have the words to explain the sadness on his heart. Nothing could console him. His mom tried everything to reach him, but Bob just slipped away into a deep depression. Nothing brought joy.

Then, his mother got very sick. Bob wasn't able to be much help; and so out of anger, Bob began to run again. Faster and faster, Bob ran. His mother urged him to continue running. She could see him coming alive. One cold night while running under the stars, Bob burst into laughter and tears. He wasn't sure if the tears were joy or sorrow; but on that night, for the first time, Bob knew he was alive. And it felt very good.

In many ways, Bob was running for his life. He pressed on, not wanting to slip back into the abyss of depression.

1. *When has someone encouraged you to "press on"?*
2. *What positive things can Christians learn from athletes who set a goal of excellence and strive to reach that bar?*

When Paul encourages the Philippians to press on, he is encouraging more than sustaining an athletic feat. Paul is talking about the goal of Christ Jesus. Despite the many people who converted to following Christ after meeting and listening to Paul, he is not satisfied. Paul understands his life is incomplete. As much as Christ had claimed Paul, there were ways Paul still needed to claim Christ.

3. *What do you think Paul meant by making Christ his own?*
4. *What areas of your life might be claimed by Christ?*
5. *Why can Paul not rest?*

faith practice *in daily life*

Strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

This Philippians text contains wonderful words of blessing and encouragement for those who strive for justice and peace. On many days, it sounds like injustice and strife are winning the day. It is easy to become discouraged about the status of our world. The work of peacemakers is ongoing.

Paul reminds us, "Press on." Make Christ our goal.

6. *How does it feel to know Christ has made you his own?*
7. *What does it mean for you to have someone like Paul still "pressing on"?*
8. *What will this week look like for you if you truly "press on" towards Christ?*

Prayer

Creator of all, give me energy and enthusiasm to press on towards Christ. Amen

last word

Each day, look for an opportunity to "*press on*" towards the goal and prize of Christ.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.