

## Pressing On

### *Philippians 3:12-16*

#### Sermon Outline

- I. Pushing or Pulling?
  - A. Pushing is *to press forward energetically against opposition*.
  - B. Pulling is *applied force to get an object to move a desired destination*.
    1. The true Christian is one who is “pulled” through life, captivated by the glory, value and treasure that Jesus Christ is.
  - C. The example of the apostle Paul.
    1. Paul was “pushing” himself through life to achieve becoming a “good person” (3:1-11).
    2. Paul meets Jesus on the road to Damascus and “reprioritizes” all of his life now being “pulled” toward being more and more like Christ.
    3. Though Paul received great things by coming to Christ— *The knowledge of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the power of Christ, the fellowship of Christ and the glory of Christ*, he knew he had not yet become like Christ.
      - a. To become like Christ is what is pulling Paul.
- II. Salvation and Sanctification.
  - A. **Salvation**—One is placed in Christ through *imputation*— Christ’s righteousness placed upon the person.
    1. This is by faith through grace, a free gift. In the eyes of God, a righteous person (imputation of Christ’s perfect righteousness).
  - B. **Sanctification**—One is in process of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ (perfect) through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### ***Perfection in this life is a goal, not an achievement***

- III. Six necessary elements to grow spiritually into the person of Jesus Christ.
  - A. Dissatisfaction with the self (Verse 12).
    1. Never be content with:
      - a. Your natural self.
      - b. Any state that dishonors God or compromises your purity.
      - c. Our knowledge of Christ.
  - B. **A maximum effort to pursue your goal of perfection.**

1. My “pressing on” is caused by Jesus Christ’s having “pressed” on me.
  - a. You can’t live a “nominal” Christian life.
  - b. The Christian life is trying to get a hold of what got a hold of you (God).

C. **A single mindedness** (Verse 13).

1. “The ONE thing I do...”
  - a. Forget the past:
    - Past sins and “stupid” Acts.
    - Past sorrows.
    - Past successes.
  - b. “Reaching forward to what lies ahead...”
    - “Stretching you muscles to the limit.”

D. **Have an absorbing desire, a spiritual motivation** (Verse 14).

1. To become completely sanctified—like Christ.

E. **Recognize divine resources** (Verse 15).

1. (Verse 1:6) *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ.*

F. **Consistency** (Verse 16).

*“The essential thing ‘in heaven and earth’ is ... that there should be a long obedience in the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living.”* -- Friedrich Nietzsche

## Pressing On

### *Philippians 3:12-16*

#### Sermon Notes

Did you have a hard time pushing yourself out of bed this morning?...how about every morning?... I think the key word there was “push”...did you have a hard time “**pushing**” yourself out of bed this morning?

To push is to muster up the desire, the motivation... the ability to go against what’s keeping you down.....**to press forward energetically against opposition**... you don’t want to get out of bed.... But you know you should get out of bed... so it takes everything in you to push you out of bed...

Let’s extend this idea of pushing further that just pushing yourself out of bed...many of you feel that you have to push yourself in all of life... ..you have push yourself to go to work in the morning...push yourself through work once you’re there... You have to push yourself to take care of the mundane things in life.... filing taxes... paying bills... running the kids all over the planet...

The idea of pushing yourself is a description of how you feel as you go through your 24 hours a day...some of you even have to “push” yourselves to sleep at night...anyone relate to this?...Most people I talk to feel as though they have to push through their spiritual life as well...

Push themselves to read the Bible...it doesn’t come naturally... reading the Bible is hard... push themselves to pray... push themselves to come to church... this morning we are going to be challenged to change this dynamic... to change our mindset... our motivation....specifically in our spiritual lives....however your spiritual life affects all of life... to quit “pushing” ourselves to something far more effective.

The passage we’ve come to in Philippians chapter three is perhaps the best known passage in Philippians... it is a motivating passage... in fact... the apostle Paul uses a metaphor most of us can relate to... a metaphor he uses many places in his writings... an athletic metaphor...specifically the metaphor of running a race...or competing in a an event where there is a goal to win a prize...

He uses athletics.... The race... boxing... to show us that **there is a human responsibility in our spiritual lives...** there is a human effort that we are to exert ourselves with... Our Christian walk is far more than just “*let go and let God...*”

We cannot work for our salvation... there is nothing that we can do to gain the approval of God for our eternal life... there is nothing that we can do to satisfy God’s requirement of righteousness in ourselves.... But once we have our salvation... there is much that we are to do... we have a vital role in our spiritual lives....

We like this passage because it is like a motivational speech... as I was preparing for this message... I found gazillions of illustrations of competition, athletics, endurance, success...that have been used to describe this text... I’m sure guys like Tony Robbins and Eckhart Tolle and every other motivational guru has stolen from the apostle Paul.... Surely out of context though.

Let’s read the passage then I will give you a metaphor...a picture illustrating Paul’s message.

**Read Philippians 3:12-16**

In 2013 at the commencement speech at MIT...Drew Houston, the founder of “Dropbox” said this to the graduating class... “*When I think about it, the happiest and most successful people I know don’t just love what they do, they’re obsessed with solving an important problem...something that matters to them.*”

*They remind me of a dog chasing a tennis ball... Their eyes get a little crazy... the leash snaps...there they go taking off... through whatever gets in their way... so it is not about pushing yourself... it’s about finding your tennis ball... **THE THING THAT PULLS YOU.***

(every day in our parking lot...)

In other words... it is better being “**pulled through life**”...captivated by a worthy goal...than to be pushed through life by simple necessity or having a herd mentality... (I’ve got the language of today!)

By definition “pulled” means *meat that is cooked until the meat can easily be pulled off the bone, as in pulled pork.* ...sorry wrong definition... “**pulled is an applied force to get an object to move a desired destination.**”

Is it not true that a true follower of Jesus Christ is someone who is being pulled through life... not pushed?...they’ve been captivated by the glory... value and treasure that Jesus Christ is... that’s what **pulls** them through life... it may sound sacrilegious but Jesus is the tennis ball... and our passion... motivation... effort... is to grab onto it...HIM.

Paul want us to know he is pulled through life in hope that on one day he will finally arrive grabbing ahold of Jesus....

If you remember two weeks ago as we looked at the first eleven verses... Paul in a sense is giving us insight into his own evaluation of his life... the way he *was*... then the way he *became*... the way he was, was a life PUSHING himself to achieve,... pushing himself to obtain.... Pushing himself to arrive at a self-driven... self-motivated effort to live a good life....

And after being knocked around a little on the road to Damascus by Jesus Christ Himself...He reprioritizes his life to where he no longer is being *pushed* through life.... but is *pulled* through life by the person of Jesus Christ!

All things were lost... Jesus Christ is gain... he anticipates growing more and more in the likeness of Christ.... He is being pulled....if you remember... five things Paul gained when he accepted Christ... **he gained the knowledge of Christ... the righteousness of Christ... the power of Christ.... The fellowship of Christ and the glory of Christ....** Huge benefits being found in Christ!

Now hearing that... someone might think... wow... Paul must now be “perfect”... now that he received Christ’s righteousness... His power, glory, fellowship and knowledge... Paul has reached spiritual perfection.

He’s arrived... he’s finished with the struggle... nothing more to become... he could stop looking...stop striving... stop seeking for answers.... He’s got it all now...Paul is now “perfect”.....there are those in the Christian church that embrace this.... That one can achieve spiritual perfection... sinlessness in this life...I don’t think so!

Anticipating these conclusions.... Paul launches into a total disclaimer regarding spiritual perfection.

**Read verse 12**

*I HAVEN'T OBTAINED IT YET... I have not become perfect yet... **I HAVE NOT BECOME perfectly LIKE CHRIST**....so since I haven't obtained that yet... I press on... I keep working at it...and it's PULLING ME FORWARD*

Becoming like Christ is what's pulling Paul.

What this is...is differentiating between salvation... and sanctification...at salvation.... Paul was placed IN CHRIST... through Christ's *imputed* righteousness... Imputed... to apply something to something else...Christ applied His righteousness to Paul...."*Not a righteousness of my own.... Nothing I did....Jesus imputed it to me.....*

So salvation is.... Paul was then accepted by God... gifted with all those tremendous things...the free gift of salvation.... By faith through grace.... And yet.... He was NOT perfect.... He still had not arrived.

So sanctification.... A word we are continuously running into in this book... becoming more and more Christlike....it mandates effort on our part... yes... totally empowered by God... but we have to intentionally... seek to become more and more Christ-like in our daily lives...

Because those great blessings given to us... Christ' righteousness... God's power through the Holy Spirit.... Fellowship and knowledge with and of Christ... we have them... but they are not playing out perfectly in our lives... due to our sin nature.... So we are to work at it...

Peter talked about this in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:18... **Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**.... That's a mandate... we are to do that.... It's a growing process....

WHY SHOULD I DO THAT?.... I mean... *if I have my salvation... why should I bother doing that if I'm already entitled to eternity in heaven... I already have those things guaranteed to me and I will someday enter the fullness of them in the presence of God... why should I desire to grow?...* here's just a few reasons.....

1. **There is a built in desire for you to want to grow** ...you're not going to be able to not want to want to... You won't be able to not want to!... that's a part of being a New Creation... but also:
2. **It glorifies God**... that is the overall purpose of the Christian's life... to glorify God... and striving to grow in your spiritual life glorifies God in your life.... He wants us to become like His Son.
3. **It is evidence of being regenerated**.... They know us through our "fruit".... It grants you assurance... the confidence that you are truly saved.
4. **It produces joy and usefulness in your life**... there's great satisfaction when effort yields a good outcome... and it
5. **enhances your witness to a lost world**... you become an example, a representative of Jesus Christ...and the more you grow in Him and become more like Him... that's what the world will see... There's a gazillion more reasons....

In this short passage are many principles...Let me point out at least six...six necessary elements necessary for us to grow spiritually...to get closer to the tennis ball.... Proceed in our "sanctification"... with the goal to

“*become perfect*”...that’s what Paul had not yet laid hold of... *what is perfection?*..... **to be like Christ**....His righteousness... His pattern for living is to be reproduced in our own lives..... that is perfection.

Before I go any further... write this down...

***Perfection in this life is a goal, not an achievement...*** it is something that you continually pursue but never fully achieve... it is the goal... and we can get closer and closer to the goal... but it will only be fully realized after we leave this life....so let’s look at the six:

**1. Dissatisfaction with the self...** “**I have not yet attained...**” *Holy discontentment*... Paul had been a Christian by this time maybe 20-30 years... and he is not content with his spiritual life... this is not a criticism... this is to be our model...this is a good thing!!

We are to be content in this life... Paul says in the next chapter that he has learned to be content in all of life’s situations...but we are never to be content with our spiritual condition... NEVER BE CONTENT WITH:

1. Your natural state (Adam)...pursue Christ!
2. Never be content being in a situation or state that dishonors God... never be content in being in a state of compromising your purity....
3. Never be content with little knowledge of Christ...

None of us in this room are completely where we *should* be... none of us have arrived at what we *can* be... today we are not where we *will be* in ten years if we continue to embrace the wisdom of this book...

***anybody who thinks they have reached spiritual perfection will be spending hours and hours arguing with their family and close friends who don’t believe it!***

**Not that I have already obtained it or have become perfect....** That’s where Paul starts in his own life... aware of not being where he needs to get to... he hasn’t arrived.... And that is something...

If the Apostle Paul was not where he ought to be... none of us in this room are where we ought to be!... so we start with an honest admission...And evaluation of where we really are in our spiritual life.... **And we should be dissatisfied with that evaluation!**!... *I have not reached God’s perfect standard... I’m not what I ought to be... I’m in process...because I don’t like being where I am...*

Are you in the same spot today spiritually as you were 1...5....10.....30.....years ago?...

It is very important to ***not be satisfied*** with where you are in your spiritual life...dissatisfaction with your spiritual growth is a part of God’s plan!.... F.B. Meyer wrote *Self-dissatisfaction lies at the root of our noblest achievements*....isn’t that true?... some of the greatest achievements done by man was the result of not being satisfied....

Speed records on sports are not broken if one is satisfied with their best time...world records would never be broken if the runners were satisfied with their last best times!... When you look at all the worldly progress...

“somebody got tired of behind on a horse that’s why we got automobiles... someone said “I’m tired of wearing these stinky scratchy animal skins... that’s why we got Cotton or silk shirts.....you get the point....

Dissatisfaction brings about change... brings about progress.

[George Westerman writing for the MIT Sloan Management Review Magazine.... Actually wrote an article about how to cultivate DISATISFACTION in your employees... if you're satisfied you're complacent... you won't innovate if you're complacent... ]

**2. A maximum effort to pursue your goal of perfection....** *There is no room for indolence in the Christian life...* indolence= laziness... idleness.... Sloth... willful inactivity....

We are all instructed here to pursue perfection... this isn't for apostles only... that's why Paul says in verse 15.... **Let us therefore, as many as are perfect** (perfect?...sarcastic? or mature) **have this attitude...** *not just me... but everyone who is mature in Christ.... Anyone who is a true Christian.... Do this!*

IT'S HARD!...it takes effort... There is a sign at the Navy Seal depot on Coronado Island down in San Diego... I think you read this sign AFTER you've enlisted into the program not ...it has become basically the Navy Seal mantra... it reads ... ***"The only easy day was yesterday"***

"Yesterday was your easiest day..."... every day forward is going to be more and more challenging... IF you are growing in Christ!

We don't have the option to say.... *I would love to pursue spiritual growth but I don't have the time!.... I would love to pursue holiness but I'm too busy... I have kids... I have soccer...* again in verse 12 Paul says *I'm not yet perfect... so... I press on...*

This is interesting... saw it for the first time this last week... that Greek word for "press on" is the same word used in verses 12, 14 and get this... verse 6.... *Dioko*... in verses 12 and 14 *dioko* is translated "**press on**"... BUT IN 6... it is translated as *persecuted*...Paul said... *I persecuted the church...*

Seems like different words... how can that one Greek word have two completely different meanings and use?...here's why.... literally the word means "**to pound**" or "**to beat**"...it's somewhat violent...very physical.

Before Paul was a Christian.... He was *pounding* and *beating* up the church.... after he became a Christian... he gathered his whole self up and pounded *himself*... beat *himself*... pushing it... forcefully intensely shoving his body towards a single goal.

It's the same picture Paul gives us in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9 **I buffet my body and make it my slave...** I forcefully maybe even painfully bring my body into submission....that's the true Christian life!...my body will NOT tell me what to do... I will tell my body!!!

***It's holy violence!***... spiritual aggressiveness... now... one more amazing thing in verse 12...so very important and yet... most miss it.... It truly is a summary statement of Christianity... **but I press on so that...** now get this...**I may lay hold of that for which I WAS LAID HOLD OF BY CHRIST JESUS.** That's a complex profound thought

First.... WE ARE TAKEN HOLD OF...that happens first.... WE ARE CAUSED... a Christian is caused... we are grabbed... .... And since WE were grabbed.... We grab!...we grab on to what has grabbed us!

My "**pressing on**" is caused by Jesus Christ's having **pressed on me**...past tense... I hold because Jesus took hold of me... get this... **CHRISTIANITY IS NOT SOMETHING YOU TAKE UP**.... Like taking up the piano or painting... CHRISTIANITY IS SOMETHING THAT TAKES YOU UP!

It doesn't begin with YOU!... you can't be a Christian by making yourself one... Jesus said in John 6:44 said **nobody can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...** and the church has been fighting over that verse for 2000 years!....

I don't now how all that works..... I don't know how God decides who and why He grabs...I'm really mystified why He grabbed me!!!... It is a mystery....BUT it begins with the Father.... Grabbing a hold of you!....

By the way.. that's what Romans 8:28 and following is all about... **and we know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God... to those who are called for His purpose....** Grabbed, laid hold of... **FOR WHOM HE FOREKNEW OR CHOSE...** all believers... true Christians...if you are a believer... you were grabbed by God.... **HE ALSO PREDESTINED TO BECOME CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON!**

That's what's pulling Paul!... Becoming conformed to the image of His Son...

2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:14 **we've been saved in order to gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ...**

The Christian life **is trying to get a hold of what got a hold of you!**... that's why you can't just say *I think I'll become a Christian* then live a "nominal" Christian life... it can't be *I'll be a Christian, and a husband and a father and a plumber and a little league coach...* as if Christianity is a part of your life alongside of many other parts....

If you were taken a hold of by God... you wouldn't... couldn't live as a nominal Christian..... it would be *in* you... you are driven by the fact that you've been grabbed by God!...you will never feel satisfied in your spiritual life if He's taken hold of you!

That's what Paul is saying here!.... ... you press on... you pound... you beat yourself forward.... because you want to grab on to what has grabbed you.

**3. A single mindedness**... not only maximum effort but a focused concentration... as I started with...Paul uses athletic metaphors... usually those who run in races... the foot runner.

### Read verse 13

If you ever participated in competitive running...you can catch the metaphor here... anyone who runs a race knows they **MUST** keep their eyes fixed straight ahead... toward the ribbon at the finish line... you can't watch your feet and run your fastest.... You can't watch the other runners or you will run off the track...

**YOU MUST** have a focused concentration to the goal in front of you... I keep my eyes in front of me..... straight ahead... to the future.... The place where I am headed for.... This made me read some short articles about some of the great runners of today.

Distant runner/Marine Erick Rheam wrote an article titled "*Never Look Back*"... he tells of a 10K race he was running in where he had a chance to be in the top 5 finishers... with just a mile to go... he was number 2... the guy in front had a sizable lead... but he kept looking back to see if Erick was catching up to him...

Erick noticed this runners form began to deteriorate...the more he looked back... the more confident Erick became that he could overtake the lead... he said "*as I closed the gap, every time he looked back at me I would*

wave and smile... he became so demoralized that he was easily taken over.... Moral?.... **Never look back**..... then Erick gives three reason not to look back while racing:

1. **It breaks up your momentum.** Extraneous movement drains energy, creates “drag” to your form.
2. **It puts you in the wrong mindset**... it distracts you from your goal resulting in a sub-par race... instead of being focused on running your best.... You are concerned about someone else’s running.
3. **It lets your competition know you are tired**... they will begin to perform above par!

That’s the Christian life!... looking back drags us down... drains our energy... distracts us from our goal... and tells Satan he’s got a chance!... specifically what is looking back?... (13) **the ONE thing I do... forgetting what lies behind...**

Forget the past...now obviously Paul isn’t saying put your history out of your mind.... He spent much of this chapter telling you about his past history!.... **we are to forget the things in the past that hinder our spiritual growth.** ...things that you become fixated on... makes it to where you don’t progress forward...

### 1. Past sins and Stupid Acts (will hold you back because of guilt)

The sin in our lives...so many people are stuck in their past sins..... sad for the Christian because their sins have all been forgiven and forgotten by God!....

*I know God forgave me but I can’t forgive myself*.... What you are more important than God?

Stupid decisions...stupid things you’ve said.... Stupid things you did in High School!... I’m so glad it is easier to become a pastor than a supreme court justice!... Christians are the one’s who don’t look back... you can have a past... you could have really blown it in your youth... and still become a pastor!

**2. Past sorrows (will hold you back because of bitterness)** Living in self-pity... why did this happen to me?...great disappointments of the past... someone disappointed you...hurt you...

**3. Past successes** (can hold you back because of pride) it could also be the really good things that you did in the past that is distracting your running.

Living on past achievements and victories.... Actually living in them so that you don’t move forward to new victories.... Anything that locks us into the past....

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There’s an interesting short blip in the Old testament book of Zechariah... the prophet.

In the beginning of chapter 2.. the first four verses... Zechariah has a vision.... Let me read it to you....

### Read Zechariah 2:1-3

*I’m going to go out and remeasure Jerusalem... I want to know how much room we have to rebuild what was once there*...he wants to rebuild what was once Jerusalem....so he wants to go out and measure the ruins....

### Read Zechariah 2:3-4

Don’t go and measure the ruins... and try to rebuild *old Jerusalem*... you are stuck in the past.... Stuck looking back at what WAS.... Look at what God is going to do with Jerusalem... it’s a NEW JERUSALEM....going to be so very big!.... no walls defining it... the future for Jerusalem is going to be amazing!.... don’t be stuck looking at what it was!

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there an event from your past... or an experience from your past... or some achievement that you are still living in?... PUT THE TROPHIES IN THE DRAWER.

**One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind....** That's the first part.... You don't just forget what's past.... And sit there eating Doritos on the couch the rest of your life... but...**reaching forward to what lies ahead.**

Literally... stretching your muscles to the limit... as a runner stretches every muscle to reach the goal in front of him... to get the prize.... Do you have that kind of concentration?... it's so easy to let even the very good things in your life distract you from concentrating on the goal.....

Paul's goal was not to build churches in Philippi, Colossae, Corinth... to build a huge ministry... His goal was the prize.... **To be like Christ.**

As a pastor... it could be tempting to make it my goal to succeed in the church... to build up the church.... But that isn't to be my point of intense concentration... it must be to become and be like Jesus.... Stressing every muscle in my body to become more and more like Him!

**One thing I do....** Single mindedness... The first prime minister of the Irish republic... Éamon de Valera...part of the IRA movement way back in the 1916 rebellion...the story goes that he was arrested for what the opposing party considered a political crime... they had had enough of his dissention... so they put him in detention for several months...they figured a few months in a cell will calm this hothead down...

After the months went by... Valera gets released... goes back to the very spot where he had been arrested ... a crowd gathered around him... and here's how he begins his speech... *"As I was saying... before I was interrupted..."*

That's a man of ONE THING!... We press on... single mindedly... with an absorbing desire to be more and like Christ... **ever moving forward**...faces to the finish line... I like what the athletic director at Clemson University back in the 1970's...

Frank Howard responded when someone suggested a new sport discipline for the school... they recommended they add rowing to the sports menu at Clemson... Howard thought about it then gave this classic reply... "No! We're not going to have any sport here at Clemson where you sit down and go backwards.... "

That's what Paul would have said... no sitting down... no going nowhere.. especially not going backwards!

"deal with your guilt... put your sins at the foot of the cross.....

Make peace with all your hurts....

Put your trophies in the drawer"

#### **4. Have an absorbing desire... a spiritual motivation...**

**Read verse 14**

Remember the goal.... To get the prize.... What is the prize?... to be made like Christ... to grab on to Christ who grabbed me...that's the prize... what then is **the upward call of God in Jesus Christ?....** that is our motivation... what is it then?

**There's going to be an "upward call"**...God is going to call each and every Christian... when that call comes you are going to be made like Christ... completed sanctification.... You will be sanctified....

The upward call is the time when God calls each believer up to heaven and in His presence... that is the moment of receiving the prize!... that unattainable goal in this life.... John tells us the same thing in 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:1-2

**3 See <sup>[a]</sup>how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.**

That's the prize!.... that's our motivation to press on... to reach forward to what lies ahead.... The prize.... So... pursuing this prize means having a correct self-estimate.... Knowing where you are in the race... giving it maximum effort... having a focused concentration and an absorbing desire/motivation....

**5. Recognize divine resources**...right next to all that we do is God doing what he does... thank God for God being involved in all this!... think back to what we looked at back in chapter 2:12... **Work out your salvation....** We are to do that... (13) **for it is God who is at work in you...** you're working, God's working.... We press on because God is enabling us to press on.

That's the thought in verse 15...

### Read verse 15

Paul is saying... this is how we are to run our spiritual race... if you are in Christ... This is the attitude you should have... evaluate yourself... give it your all... keep your mind focused on the prize... to be like Christ... that's the attitude you should have....

**BUT IF YOU DON'T HAVE THIS ATTITUDE....** Don't worry.... God is going to work you over until you do!.... **if you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you...**

If you are a Christian and you're stuck in the past...God's going to work on you about that... if you are a Christian and have become indolent... God's going to work you out on that... if you are a Christian and you're focused on all sorts of stuff... God's going to help you understand you need to refocus.....

I don't know for sure all the methods and techniques God will use to do this... if I read my Bible correctly I know He uses things like trials... suffering... chastening... things like that.... I guess it depends how stubborn you really are!.....

(Verse 1:6) *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ.*

finally...

### 6. Consistency...

None of the above happens by intermittent effort... If you're running a race and let up you will lose...

**Read verse 16**

In other words... keep following the same path that has brought you to where you already have progressed in your spiritual journey... **keep living**...literally... **it means to follow in line**... to line up... spiritually stay in line and keep moving from where you have arrived by the same standard that has gotten you to where you are.

Are you where you are in your spiritual life because you've begun to pray?... keep praying.... By reading the word?... keep reading... getting fed at church?... keep going to church...

Stay in line... whatever strength... energy... that got you to where you are... keep in line with that.... One of my all time favorite quotes that illustrates this so very well comes from a very prolific atheist from the past... Friedrich Nietzsche...

*"The essential thing 'in heaven and earth' is ... that there should be a long obedience in the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living."*

A runner stays in his lane... a penetrating focus on the goal ahead... exerting all the energy he can muster... expending every muscle in his body to push forward... not erratic but with determined consistency...

Are you pursuing the prize?... is that your goal?... are you growing in your spiritual life?... your holiness?... or are you stuck, standing in one spot going nowhere?... or are you going backwards!

Are you spending precious time trying to convince your friends that you have spiritually arrived?