

Pursuing the Prize

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Date: 27 May 2018

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[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 3 beginning in verse 12.

Because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Brothers, 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, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Let those of us who are mature think this way. And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? And let's pray. Lord God, again, we're so thankful for this privilege that we have to gather here in this place.

[1 : 12] And Lord, we're thankful for our country. And for the men and women who have fought bravely to protect the freedom that enables us to meet like we are and to worship Jesus Christ.

Without fear that there is going to be somebody who's going to bust through the doors and imprison us. Lord, we know that's not the case for all nations. And so, God, we pray for them too.

We pray for their freedom. God, we pray for those who are currently serving in our military. And we pray, God, that you would protect them and watch over them. We pray, Lord, that again, freedom would reach out into those countries, into those peoples who are not blessed with that freedom that we have.

That they too, Lord, might be able to meet and be able to gather together in the name of Jesus Christ and worship freely. Lord, we pray now that as we have had your word read, that you would apply its truth to our life.

We pray that the Holy Spirit, Lord, would open our hearts and our minds, our spirits to receive it and empower us to put its truth to work in our lives, in our church.

[2 : 25] We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You've probably heard the story this week. It's gotten a lot of publicity about a 30-year-old man who is living in upstate New York and was living with his parents.

And his parents sought help from the law, from the Supreme Court, actually, of New York State to kick their son out of their house.

Have you heard this story this week? It's a pretty interesting story for several reasons. But going back to this gentleman, he was living with his parents, 30 years old, no job, no desire to get one. He wasn't helping out with rent there. He wasn't doing any chores for them. And his parents gave him plenty of opportunity to move out. In fact, they gave him \$1,100 towards renting or buying a new place to live.

But he refused to take up their offer. And so this story became international news because it struck a chord with us because this is an extreme example of the phenomena that has been taking place in our country that demographers have been tracking for years, which is this growing trend of young adults, especially young men, living in their parents' homes even after they've graduated from college.

[3 : 56] According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2017, nearly one in five men, one in five men aged 25 to 34 still live with their parents in their home.

In raw number terms, there are 4.3 million men and 2.8 million women, again, ages 25 to 34, that are right now still living at home with their parents.

That's 7.1 million adult men and women who are currently living with their mommies and their daddies.

To put that into greater perspective for us, the population of Oklahoma in 2017 was 3.9 million. So that's almost double the population of Oklahoma of men and women who are refusing to grow up.

And now when we hear stories like this, we roll our eyes, we make jokes, we make light of this situation. But this does not bode well for our society, does it?

[5 : 11] This does not bode well for the future of our nation. People are refusing to grow up. They are refusing to take responsibility.

They are resisting maturity. And they are too afraid to leave the comforts of their past behind. They are content with their current station in life.

And so they have zero plans of growing up, of moving on. This is an attitude that you would not find within the Apostle Paul.

He had an intense desire to know Christ, as we talked about last week. And that pursuit caused him to always be looking forward. He was always looking forward.

He was always pursuing Christ-likeness. He was always chasing after that goal. It was a goal that both required spiritual maturity and produced spiritual maturity.

[6 : 14] The more he knew Christ, the more he wanted to know Christ. And as he followed Christ, he became less self-centered and more Christ-centered.

And so here he urges fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to do the same thing. He's urging the church in Philippi to pursue spiritual maturity.

And to do that, they can't be stagnant. And they couldn't live in the past. He encourages them that they must press on. They must keep moving forward.

Unfortunately, many Christians in many churches today don't share Paul's goal. I like to call them consumer Christians. They view the church as a business.

Or they view the church as a retail store. And they then view the staff of the church as the hired help. Who are there to give them exactly what they want.

[7 : 17] Who are there to listen to their complaints. Who are there to meet their every demand.

Because, right, after all, in a consumer society, we're being told that the customer is always right.

And so if that church, if that staff fails to deliver what they want, then they'll just take their business someplace else. As consumers are apt to do.

A lot of church leaders have even bought into this. I had a conversation not too long ago, within the past year or two, with a friend of mine.

He pastors a big church. And we were having lunch one day. And he asked me, how many giving units do you have in your church? Giving units? That's how he referred to his church members.

As giving units. How many people in your church is what he says? How many people in your church tithe? And he was calling them giving units. Is that how you think pastors should view their congregation? Not as individuals, right?

[8 : 22] Who are there to shepherd? But giving units? I don't think so. Treating Christians like consumers and the church like a business will draw a crowd.

But it typically results with Christians who are very spiritually shallow and very spiritually immature. I've noticed, and you probably have too, that a lot of the new church buildings that are being constructed, on the outside they look more and more like a Chuck E. Cheese, don't they?

They look like a store that you would go to to shop. They look like a mall. And they look like places where you would go to be entertained. They do that intentionally.

They do that because it appeals to the flesh. And these churches are good at doing that. At feeding the flesh what it craves.

But the heart, the mind, the spirit of those believers are starving for the word of God. They are spiritually malnourished.

[9 : 28] And as a result of that, they are spiritually weak people. Right now what our world needs most is the church to be the church that God's word calls it to be.

We are called to go. We're not called to be stagnant. We're not called to dwell on the glory days of the past either. The church needs to be engaging.

It needs to be enlightening. It needs to be encouraging. It needs to be equipping its members. Right? Spurring them onward toward the goal of becoming like Christ.

There is a much greater purpose for our gathering than to merely be entertained. There are a million places where a person can go to be entertained.

But the church is the only place where a person can go and learn how and what it means to become like Jesus. Jesus was not a consumer.

[10 : 33] Consumers take. Jesus gave. Consumers complain. Jesus encouraged.

Consumers compete with others. Jesus sacrificed for others. Consumers loved things. Jesus loved people.

Consumers loved people. And so here's the main idea for this morning's message. The goal and the pursuit of the Christian life is to become like Jesus.

And the church helps its members pursue that goal. Not here to entertain. But to help members pursue the goal of becoming like Jesus Christ.

And when we're talking about becoming like Jesus Christ, what we're referring to is spiritual maturity. Or spiritual growth. That's what we're talking about. That's what we are after.

[11 : 42] So now the question becomes, how do we do this? How do we become spiritually mature people? Well, the Apostle Paul shows us here in these verses how we do that. And he begins in verse 12 by revealing to us the motivation of spiritual maturity.

Let's look at verse 12 again. He says, Not that I have already obtained this. Again, speaking about Christ's likeness. Or I'm already perfect. But I press on to make it my own.

Because Christ Jesus has made me his own. And so here Paul is using a sports analogy. And he's using an illustration about how a Christian matures spiritually.

And he's comparing it to running a race. It's like running a race. The runner in a race presses on, runs forward towards the goal, towards the finish line.

We know from the previous verses that the goal that Paul had in mind here is again, It's the goal of becoming like Christ. But what motivates him to do that? What motivates him to pursue that goal?

[12 : 51] Well, he says it right there in verse 12. Paul's motivation was that Christ Jesus has made me his own. That's his motivation.

Christ has made me his own. And so he presses on towards the goal. That's the ESV translation of that verse. Different Bibles translate that verse in a little bit of different ways.

Look at the Christian Standard Bible. Some of you might have that. It says there, I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been laid hold of, been laid hold of, excuse me, by Christ Jesus.

The New American Standard Bible and the New King James Bible translate it similarly. They say, I may lay hold of that for which I was also laid hold of by Christ.

The NIV translates it in this way. I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. And then the King James Version is a little bit more physical.

[13 : 53] It says this, that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended by Christ Jesus.

And so what these translations are doing, they're translating this word in the Greek *katalambano*, which literally means to seize, to overtake, or to catch.

Paul uses this word on purpose, and he's using this word to describe his conversion. You remember Paul's conversion back in Acts chapter 9?

If you remember, he's on the road to Damascus, and he's on the road to Damascus because he's going, pursuing Christians, to arrest them, to throw them into jail, to put an end to the church.

That was his goal, to destroy the church. And then what happens on his way? Well, Jesus overtakes him. Jesus appears to him.

[14 : 53] Jesus seizes him. Jesus catches him. Jesus lays hold of him and makes him his own. We see that in the Apostle Paul's life.

He went from persecuting the church to being used by God to help lay the foundations of the church. This is an amazing transformation. And he says, I didn't choose to lay hold of Christ. It was Christ who chose to lay hold of me. He says, I was saved by him. And this is our story too, as followers of Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christian, it is because Christ has taken hold of you. How did this happen? Well, it happened by grace.

Why did this happen? Let's look at Romans 8, 29 through 30 together. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

[16 : 04] And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified.

God chose Paul, as he did all believers, to make them like Jesus Christ, to glorify sinners.

The purpose for which God saved us is also the purpose for which we now live. Let's look at 2 Thessalonians 2, 13 through 14.

There it says, But we are always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved of the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

To this he has called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we see that Paul's goal in life was to lay hold of Christ's goal for laying hold of him.

[17 : 12] Does that make sense? Paul's goal in life was to lay hold of Christ and the goal that Christ had for him. This humbled Paul, and it should likewise humble us as well.

The gospel has a humbling effect on people, on Christians, who understand the wretchedness of their sin and the amazing grace of God who would save them.

Look back at verse 6. We see that pre-conversion, Paul is boasting that when it came to the law, he was blameless, right? Before knowing Christ, he said that he thought he had arrived, Paul says.

I was at the finish line. I thought I had run the race. I thought I had arrived. Then after Jesus laying hold of him and saving him by grace, he realized the futility of his self-righteous efforts and achievements and he marveled over the gospel that saved a wretched man like him.

You know, church isn't a place where we should pretend to be perfect. Paul didn't claim to be perfect. He's motivated by Christ having saved him and that truth humbles him and he's urging his fellow Christian brothers and sisters to do the same.

[18 : 46] He's not in competition with them. He loves these people. He cares about these people. Spiritually mature people are like that.

They want others to come alongside them on the journey or they want to go alongside others on the journey of their becoming more like Christ.

And so they're not afraid to admit their imperfections because they realize that they're not perfect, that they're sinners, that they are in need of a perfect Savior.

And so they're not afraid to admit that. Spiritually mature people can do that. As I was thinking about this, I remembered a time where I was helping a youth group.

It was my youth group that I went to church growing up in. And some of you guys have heard my testimony. I was very much the prodigal son in high school and in college.

[19 : 46] It was like I lived a double life. When I went to church, when I went to youth group, I was this one person and everybody thought I was following Christ and growing up in all the right ways.

But then I'd go to school and I'd hang out with my buddies on the weekend. And let's just say that I wasn't following Christ or pursuing the Lord in any way when I was with that group of friends.

And that remained the case as I went to college to the point where I stopped going to church. And again, I'm kind of summarizing my testimony, but God got a hold of me again and he redirected me towards himself, forgave me of all of that, and I'd been called to ministry and I realized at this point in time, I'm in my early 20s, that it's time for me to completely follow the Lord's will for my life.

And so as part of that, I met with the current youth pastor and I explained to him what was going on in my life, that I had been called to ministry and I didn't know what step to take next.

And so he said, well, why don't you come and help us with the teens? I want you to help with our high school teenage boys because I think some of them sort of are going through what you're going through and they could benefit from you.

[20 : 58] And I want to put you with another guy and I want you two to kind of mentor our young high school men. And so I was thankful for that opportunity. And me and my friend, we would mentor these teenage guys.

We would meet with them during the week and just talk to them about life, talk to them about the Bible, encourage them to follow Christ. And we got to know them pretty well.

And I'll never forget this one time where they came to our meeting and they were just down. And we knew that something was going on.

And so they confessed to us, you know, we had a party this last weekend. One of our parents was out of town. We got into mom and dad's liquor cabinet.

We had people come over and I could tell that they were just crushed and remorseful. And it hurt them to confess this truth to us.

[21 : 58] And I remember one of those boys looked at us and he said, I just feel like I've let God down so much. and I don't think that he can forgive me. But you know, it would help me to know that somebody else has done the same.

It would help me to know that somebody else has struggled in this way that God forgave them. My buddy had never been involved with any of that stuff.

So he honestly told me, you know what, I haven't. I don't know. I had. But I didn't want people to know about it. I didn't want people to know about those past things that I had done.

Still spiritually immature. And so, instead of helping out a brother, I pretended as if I was better than that.

Man, I regret that I didn't put my arm over his shoulder and say, you know what, I've been there. I know the pain that you're feeling and I know how distant you feel from God right now, but let me tell you about our amazing Lord who forgives.

[23 : 06] Right? Let me tell you about the story of the prodigal son. Let me show you about the love of the father. But I was too afraid to do that. We can't come into church and pretend like we're perfect people.

We have struggles. We are constantly battling the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And we will be until we go to be with the Lord in glory. And part of the reason why we are together as a church, why the Lord has brought us together is so that we can bear one another's burdens.

So that you can come into church and say, I'm not a perfect person. I'm struggling with this right now. And then somebody within that body comes alongside of you and says, you know what?

I'm here for you. I'm going to pray for you. I'm going to encourage you through this. And I'm going to help you stay strong. That's what we need to do. We are all pursuing that same goal.

[24 : 09] Becoming like Jesus Christ. And we need to help each other do that. And spiritually mature people aren't afraid to admit their flaws because in doing so, we glorify our great and wonderful Lord and Savior.

We cannot save ourselves. We need Christ. And we need to be used by Christ to help others pursue Him. That's the motivation.

Because Christ has laid hold of us. Now here's the method of spiritual maturity. Verses 13 through 14. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do.

Forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

So again, what is the prize that Paul is pursuing? He's pursuing the prize of a fuller knowledge of Jesus that he will realize at the end of his life.

[25 : 09] He said this before in Philippians, he said it in 1 Corinthians 13, 12. There he says, for now we see in a mirror dimly, but then, speaking of that future day of glory, but then face to face, now I know in part, but then I will know fully even as I have been fully known.

Looking forward to that future day, Philippians 1, 21 through 24. There he says, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.

I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to part and be with Christ, for that is far better, but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. You see, this man was always looking forward to that glorious day when he would know Christ fully.

He wants to know Christ more and more. And until that day, he passionately pursues that goal of growing like Christ, becoming a spiritually mature man.

And so Paul's method for passionately pursuing Christ involved two things, forgetting and reaching. Forgetting and reaching are both essential for running a good race.

[26 : 34] Both are also essential for spiritual maturity. every good runner knows that if you look over your shoulder, you're going to get distracted.

And then you're going to stumble and you're going to lose momentum. So we run with our eyes looking forward or maybe this is a better analogy. How many of you are going to drive home and look out your back window all the way to your house, right?

None of you are going to do that. If you do that, we'll be having your funeral this week. Please don't do that. That's not how we run. That's not how we drive. We keep our eyes forward.

And maturing spiritually, becoming like Christ requires that you forget what happened back then. What exactly is Paul forgetting about here?

Well, he's alluded to it already. He won't let either the achievements of the past which God has caused or for that matter his failures as a Christian to prevent his gaze from being firmly fixed on the finish line.

[27 : 38] And so he says, while I run, I forget. What does he forget? He forgets failures. Every Christian has failed God at some point.

Just read your Bible and you'll come into contact with many men and women who failed God miserably and yet, as you look at Hebrews chapter 12, they are considered to be heroes of the faith.

Look at the guy who is writing this letter, the apostle Paul. He persecuted Christians to the death, Acts chapter 22 says. However, you don't find Paul ever using that as an excuse for why he should no longer be serving in the church.

He never looks back on his past failures and says, you know what, I'm disqualified. I shouldn't be doing this. I can't be ministering to you guys because look, I was an enemy of the Lord's.

I was an enemy of the church. There's only one person who has never failed. That's the Lord. So don't allow Satan to throw past sins in your face.

[28 : 53] Don't allow him to throw things in your face that God has already forgiven you of. The gospel is more powerful than your past failures. Understand that?

The gospel is more powerful than your past failures. Believe that. Cling to that and run. Forget failures.

Also forget past achievements. This one's hard. Successes can create an unhealthy tendency to cling to the glory days.

past. And many older established churches have an unhealthy infatuation with their past. And dwelling over the things that God used to do there.

Living in the past makes an idol of the past. And it creates an unprofitable future. If you're always looking to the past your future will be unprofitable.

[30 : 00] We can think about the past, right? That's not wrong. We can even praise God and should praise God for the things that he did back then. But don't fall into the trap of worshiping it.

In the NCAA basketball tournament when teams win and when they advance you often will hear the players and the coaches who are being interviewed afterwards. They'll say something like this.

Well we'll enjoy this victory for the moment. We'll enjoy it for now but we've got to get ready for the next game. They're not dwelling on the past.

They're looking forward to what lies ahead. Yesterday's victories do not guarantee a win tomorrow. So it is with the Christian life.

Every day as a follower of Christ brings new challenges and it also brings new opportunities to serve the Lord. And so we must strain forward forgetting our past failures and achievements straining forward to what lies ahead.

[31 : 09] And that word there in the Greek is used of a runner who strains and stretches every muscle in his body because he's giving maximum effort towards winning the race.

We've already noted the goal on which believers must focus right? It's being like Christ. It's also the goal of Paul's ministry to present every man complete in Christ.

And he expressed this goal also to the Ephesians right? Not only do I Paul say it not only do I want to become like Christ I want to help others do the same. I'm going to help them pursue the same goal that I'm pursuing.

Let's look at Ephesians 4 11 through 16. There he says and he gave the apostles the prophets the evangelists the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry for building up the body of Christ until we attain to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine by human cunning by craftiness and deceitful schemes rather speaking the truth in love we are to grow up grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Everybody in the church has a job to do. Everybody in the church has a job to do. We need everybody in our church to do their job.

[32 : 56] We need every person that we've got. All hands on deck if you will. Older generations we need you. We need your consistency.

For example, we need your consistency. You've walked with the Lord for a long time and so we need your wisdom.

Don't retire from serving in the church. We need you. Not only do we need you, we want you. We want you serving and active in this church.

You are so important to our future. Younger generations, we need you too. We need you to plug into what's going on here.

We need your energy. We need your excitement. We need your ideas. We need your creativity. We need you to become the next generation of leaders who will carry on the mission of this church into the future.

[34 : 08] We need you to show up. We need you. Children and youth. Church isn't the same without children and youth.

Church isn't boring but it gets a lot more boring when we don't have kids running around. We need to see you grow. We need to see God working in your lives.

We need to hear your laughter. We also need to hear our babies crying. That never bothers me to be interrupted in a sermon by a crying baby because if you don't hear crying babies in the church that means that the church is dying.

We need our children. They represent the future of the church. You guys are precious to the Lord and you're precious to the rest of us.

God isn't done using Highland Park Baptist Church. I know that he isn't done. God is faithful and he is faithful to those who forget what lies behind and who strain forward to what lies ahead.

[35 : 25] This church has a rich history and it also has an exciting future. Let's press onward towards that upward call of Christ for us.

Now I want to be clear about something. About this goal that we are pursuing. It's a goal that we never will attain in this life. We'll never attain this goal in our life.

life. So what should that tell us? That spiritual maturity is a lifelong pursuit. We never stop pursuing the Lord.

We never stop serving the Lord. We are always pursuing him with every last breath that we have. With every breath that he gives us.

And if you're still here, it's because God isn't finished with you yet. You're still running the race. Run it well.

[36 : 29] Run it hard. So that's our method. Forgetting the past, looking forward to the future. And so now we must maintain that.

Maintain the motivation and method of spiritual maturity. Verses 15 and 16. There he says, let those of us who are mature think this way and if anything, and if in anything, excuse me, you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Only let us hold true to what we have attained. There, think this way. What Paul is saying is continually think like this. Be totally focused. Give maximum effort to Jesus Christ always.

Paul was an experienced pastor. And he knew the people who were going to receive this letter. And he knew that some of them wouldn't heed its message. Yeah? Ah, Paul, I don't want to listen to that.

But here he expresses confidence in the Lord. He says, hey, if any of you guys think differently about what I'm telling you, guess what? God's going to set you straight. God's going to reveal this truth to you.

[37 : 33] And you would have to, in that case, learn it the hard way. God will correct you in your need to pursue the prize which is Christlikeness, which is spiritual maturity.

And so he urges them to hold true to what they have attained. The Greek word there refers to walking in a line. Paul's encouragement was for them to maintain their motivation, daily reminded of the fact that Christ had made them his own.

And that will motivate them to continue to run every day. Paul's encouragement was for them to maintain their method of pursuing the goal, forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead.

And God has provided believers with five resources to aid them in their pursuit of Christlikeness. How are we going to pursue this? Well, God's given us five resources to do that.

The first is he's given us one another. He's given you the person that you're sitting next to in the pew. Hebrews 10, 24 through 25 says, and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

[38 : 47] And all the more as you see the day drawing near. So you need to be here so that you can get that encouragement from your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

When we do things like engage, when we go to Sunfest, I know that these are new ideas for a lot of us. But together we're encouraged to go do this. Man, I know it's hard meeting new people and talking to strangers who you've never met before, but there's something about when you're standing shoulder to shoulder with somebody else from your church, it makes it a lot easier because they're feeling the same way, but you know that this is what God's called you to do.

So he's given us one another to bear one another's burdens. He's also given us his word, the word of God. 1 Peter 2.2, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word that by it you may grow up into salvation.

Be in the word of God. Study the word of God. Read it every day. Get a good study Bible that will help you explain some of those difficult passages of scripture.

Talk to me, talk to Dan, talk to one of our elders or deacons, Sunday school teachers. We've got a lot of people here who know the word of God and they'd love to be able to help you. Study the word of God.

[40 : 05] Going back again, how do I do this? Well, do the 10-20-30 method. That helps. 10 minutes in the morning, reading your Bible, 20 minutes at lunchtime, 30 minutes at night before you go to bed or whatever order you want to do it.

You'll spend an hour in the word of God every day and before you know it, you will have read through the Bible. Thirdly, prayer. Paul prayed that the Corinthians would be made complete. 2 Corinthians 13, 9. Pray. Pray that God would help you to become more like his son. Pray that God would help other people in your church pursue that same goal.

Fourthly, godly examples. Paul told the Corinthians to be imitators of me, to be imitators of himself. What other resources do we have? We have men and women in the church who have lived with the Lord for a long time.

They followed the Lord for a long time. You are great examples. Find one of those examples and seek to be mentored by them. seek to learn from them.

[41 : 13] And then fifthly, this one's hard, trials. Suffering. God often uses trials to mold us into the image of his son.

1 Peter 5, 10. After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you into his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

we grow in maturity by our suffering, by our trials. And again, we go back to the top where we need one another as we go through those things.

I want to conclude by reading Hebrews 12, 1 through 2 to you and then sharing a brief story. There it says, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, right?

Those who have come before us. Let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

[42 : 12] Looking to who? Looking 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.

At the foot of the Swiss Alps, there is a plaque. And that plaque honors a man who fell to his death while climbing those mountains.

And there on the marker, it gives a brief epitaph. And this is what it says. Three words. He died climbing. He died climbing.

Man, that should be the epitaph of every single Christian believer. That as we have life, we live it for the Lord. We're continually to pursue him.

Until that time when he calls us to be with him forever. We'll die climbing. Amen? Amen. Amen.

[43 : 19] Amen. Amen. Thank you.