

No, We're Not There Yet



By Ben Godwin

Benjamin Franklin said, “Be at war with your vices, be at peace with your neighbors, and let every New Year find you a better man.” In other words, keep growing and keep improving. We should resist the “I’ve arrived” mentality because, when there’s room for nothing else, there’s always room for improvement.

We took a trip to Orlando between Christmas and New Year’s Day for a family reunion. During the long, boring car ride, my nine year old son, Noah, repeatedly asked, “Are we there yet?” To his utter dismay, my answer was the same over and over, “No, we’re not there yet!” There is something satisfying about finally reaching a geographical location after a long journey, but there is a spiritual destination we are all still pursuing.

The Apostle Paul informed his readers that he was not there yet either, “*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on...Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:12-14).

What’s so remarkable about these words is that Paul wrote them approximately thirty years after his Damascus Road conversion as a seasoned veteran of the Faith. After preaching to and converting thousands of souls, establishing multiple churches, working numerous miracles, and writing several letters that would become books of the New Testament, Paul still didn’t feel like he had arrived yet. Neither should we. Like Paul, we should keep striving for the goal of becoming like Christ and meeting Him face to face at the finish line.

In this powerful passage, Paul gave us three important keys to spiritual success:

Key #1: Forget the past. Someone said, “The past is a guidepost, not a hitching post.” Another author wrote, “You cannot change the past, but the past can change you, either for better or for worse...The past can be a rudder that guides you or an anchor that hinders you. Leave your past mistakes with God and look to the future by faith.”

If we live in the past, we will forfeit our future. So it's helpful to forget both our former successes and failures. If we focus on our past failures, they will rob us of confidence that the future can be better. On the other hand, if we are consumed with our past successes, then we will become complacent and not attempt to do greater things. So leave the past where it belongs—in the rearview mirror.

Key #2: Reach forward to the future. No matter how long we've been serving God, He still has more in store for us down the road. So we must learn to face the future with faith instead of fear. Corrie Ten Boom, a Holocaust survivor and author of *The Hiding Place*, said, "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God." If we believe, as William Carey said, "The future is as bright as the promises of God," then we can embrace it with confidence. Don't be afraid of the future because God is already there!

Key #3: Keep pressing toward your goal. When we realize we've not arrived yet, it should motivate us to keep striving toward the finish line. Jesus said, "*He who endures to the end will be saved*" (Matthew 10:22). The Christian race is a marathon not a sprint. It's easy to get complacent, to reach a certain plateau and level off. Paul, thirty years after his conversion, was still pressing toward the ultimate prize. That should inspire us to keep reaching for the full potential God has in store for us. The old saying is true, "Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift from God." Use today to press closer to your goal.

After serving for forty years on the African mission field, Henry Morrison and his wife headed home to America. They were unaware that President Theodore Roosevelt was aboard the same vessel, returning from a hunting excursion. They wondered if anyone would remember them and turn out to welcome them home. When they docked in New York harbor, a band was playing, the crowd was cheering, and banners read, "Welcome Home!" Henry and his wife were delighted, but by the time they gathered their luggage and deboarded the ship, the crowd was gone. Then they realized that all the fanfare was for Teddy Roosevelt. Morrison felt dejected because not one person showed up to welcome them home. Henry's wife put her hand on his shoulder and spoke comforting words, "Henry, you have forgotten something, you're not home yet." Keep striving, friend. We've come a long way, but we're not there yet!

Ben Godwin pastors the Goodsprings Full Gospel Church and has authored three books. Note: This article was recently featured in Ben's column in the *Daily Mountain Eagle*, a newspaper in Jasper, Alabama. Take advantage of Ben's 3 book bundle for \$20.00 plus shipping, order now at bengodwin.org



