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I absolutely despise a shower that has a single handle to adjust the temperature. You guys know the type, right? You pull the handle back, you move it back and forth. I don't know what's wrong with having two different handles that you can adjust. See, apparently I lack the mental faculties to operate one of those correctly.

I think somebody, whoever invented those must have been a hateful person. And this is how this works at my house. I will set that to the exact point where it was perfect last time. And I'll feel the water, and it feels okay. You get in and then, okay, it's a little too cold.

So then I reach over and I touch this and move this the tiniest fraction of a degree. And all of a sudden I'm being boiled alive, right? I feel. And then I've got a real problem because the only way to turn it down is to go through the water. So I'm doing that, like that D thing.

And then you finally get to it, and you go just the tiniest bit in the other direction, and it feels like you're standing under melting snow. And this is what happens the entire time I'm in there. It's just this back and forth thing until eventually I get it absolutely perfect. And that's when the hot water runs out. All right, now what's happening is I'm overcorrecting.

And that's a tendency that we all have. We recognize that something's wrong, and in our efforts to right the ship, we go too far in the other direction. And you can see that in every area of life, and that absolutely includes how we live out our faith. It is very possible to recognize some theological error and to overcorrect and just replace one error with another. So think about what we were talking about last week.

We were talking about righteousness. And before coming to Christ, Paul had placed all of his confidence in his own religious accomplishments. And by any human standard, he had nailed it. But when he came to know Jesus, he realized that none of those things could make him right before God. So he counted them as a loss.

Because the righteousness he needed was something that he couldn't earn. It was something that he could only receive through faith in Jesus. Finished work. Now, that is one of the most fundamental truths of the Gospel. We can't do anything to make ourselves right before God.

It doesn't matter how many good things you do, how faithfully you attend church, how careful you are to obey God's commandments, it still can't make you right with God. That is an error that people have been making for thousands of years. And we often describe that as legalism. And that is this idea that somehow, if we clean ourselves up enough, if we do enough good, God will accept us. And when we do that, our relationship with God just becomes how good we can be.

But that isn't how it works. That's what we talked about last week. Now imagine that someone has spent their entire life believing that what they do makes them acceptable to God, and they finally come to realize that it's about grace. That isn't something they have to earn. Can you see how someone might take that truth and overcorrect?

See, what happens is people begin to reason that if works can't save me, if they don't impact my standing before God, then perhaps what I do doesn't really matter that much at all. After all, my salvation is purely by grace through faith. And so why should I worry about how I live? So picture the Christian life is a long, narrow road, and it has a ditch on either side. On one side is that belief that we earn God's favor by what we do, and we absolutely need to avoid that kind of thinking.

But on the other side of the road is the belief that because our works can't earn God's favor, they don't really matter. That is also an error we must avoid. People think that because our relationship with God is based on grace, that obedience somehow becomes optional. And the problem is that both of those ditches represent a serious misunderstanding of the Gospel. Now, very few Christians would come out and say that obedience doesn't matter.

We know better than that. We know that God commands us to live holy lives. But there is a difference between knowing that holiness matters and actually pursuing holiness. It is very easy to grow comfortable with. Wherever we are spiritually, we know we're saved.

We know our sins are forgiven. We know that our future is secure in Christ. And somewhere along the way, we. We begin to act as though there's really nothing left for us to do. We stop taking certain sins as seriously as we once did.

We stop examining our lives quite so carefully. We become satisfied with what we already know about God and what our relationship with God is. And oftentimes, I don't think we even recognize that there's necessarily anything wrong. After all, we're still going to church. We're still doing these things we've always done.

And so from the outside, everything looks fine. But the question is never if we're checking the boxes that people expect Christians to check. The question is whether we are actively pursuing our Savior. The question is, are we actively growing in holiness, or have we reached a point where we're content to stay exactly where we are? That is a danger that every single one of us needs to take seriously.

Because it doesn't matter how long you've been a Christian or how much you've grown in your faith. None of us have reached the point where we no longer need to grow. Look at what Paul says in 3:12. He says, not that I have already obtained this, or I'm already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. See, Paul hasn't reached the finish line.

And that's a remarkable thing for him to say, because think about who we're talking about here. This man had personally encountered the risen Christ. He had spent decades preaching the Gospel and planting churches and suffering for the sake of Jesus. God had used him to write half of the New Testament. And yet Paul looks at his own walk, his own Christian life, and he says, nope, I'm not there yet.

There is still something that I am chasing after. Okay, so what is it? What is it that Paul hasn't obtained? I mean, last week we spent all week talking about how he had received the righteousness of Christ through faith. So he's certainly not saying that he hasn't yet been made right with God.

Instead, if you look back to last week's text, you'll see that Paul said his desire was to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. And that's what Paul is talking about here. That is what he hasn't obtained. But what we need to notice is how Paul responds to that. He says, okay, this is what I need.

This is what I'm pursuing after. And then he says, I press on to make it my own. In other words, Paul is keeping his eye on that finish line. He is determined to keep pursuing God and seeking God and seeking obedience until he reaches the end. And I want you to notice that the reason Paul gives for this determination, he says, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

See, Paul isn't pressing forward and working hard and doing good things and hope that Jesus will accept him. No, he is pressing forward because Christ has already declared that he is his own. That is the lens that Paul views his life through. He belongs to Christ, and he knows that God has a purpose for him. Paul's life is going somewhere and he doesn't want to lose sight of that destination.

Romans 8:29 says, 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. This is talking about all of us. If you are a Christian, if you have repented of your sins and placed your faith in Christ, then this is your destiny. God has a purpose for those who belong to Him. He has a purpose for you.

And ultimately that purpose is to make us like Jesus. That brings us back to our question, do our works matter? Does what we do matter? And the answer is, absolutely. Our obedience doesn't make us right before God.

But God didn't save us so that we could remain exactly as we were. He saved us so that we could be made like His Son. So when you resist temptation, when you choose obedience, those things deeply matter because you're growing in the very likeness of the God, the very likeness that God saved you to bear. And Paul knows that he hasn't reached that destination yet, but he knows where he's headed. So he presses forward day after day, moment after moment.

And look at how he develops this thought. In verse 13 and 14 he says, 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. So St. Paul, he's using the picture of a runner in a race. And notice the expression he uses.

He says, but one thing I do. So there's this single mindedness to the way that Paul approaches his life. He knows his destination, he knows what he's working towards, and he's determined to not allow anything to distract him from it. The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. See, it's very, very easy to keep your focus on the finish line when you're only going a short distance.

But when, when it's so far away that you can't see it, it's really easy to become distracted and lose your way. In 1912, during the Olympic Games in Stockholm, Sweden, there was a runner from Japan named Shizu Kanakuri. It was a blistering hot day. Half of the runners who started that marathon did not finish. And there was one guy from Portugal, he collapsed and died because of the heat.

So it was a really hot day. And this guy Kanakuri was struggling with exhaustion, running 26 miles. And he ended up stopping at a house that was on the route to get some help. And he laid down and he fell asleep. And he didn't wake up until the next Day.

Okay. By then, the marathon was long over, and he was ashamed that he didn't finish. So he returned home to Japan, and he never officially withdrew from the race. See, what happened was he had lost focus, and he had some really, really good reasons to be distracted. Right?

He was exhausted and overheated, but. But he let that take his eyes off the finish line. And that isn't the end of the story. See, for years, Swedish officials had no idea what happened to him. And when they found out, they invited him to return and finish the race.

And in 1967, more than 50 years later, he crossed the finish line with an official time of 54 years, 8 months, 6 days, 35 hours, 32 minutes and 20.3 seconds. And I really love that story because it means I can run a marathon faster than Olympian. You know, not by much. But still, here's the point you need to hear. Every one of God's people will reach that finish line.

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion. Your future is secured in the work that Jesus did on the cross. Not what you're doing here, but how you run that race matters deeply. And that's what Paul is talking about. He's encouraging us not to lose focus, not to let the things of this life distract us from what we have been saved and.

And called and are supposed to do. And he tells us how we can pull that off. He says, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. So St. Paul, he's telling us that our past can take our focus off of what we're supposed to be doing. And there's at least two ways that can happen.

The first is that we can become too focused on. On past accomplishments. So think about Paul here. He's got this ridiculously impressive resume. He said everything that anyone could do, if there was anyone at any point in history, they can look at what they've done and say, look, I did my part.

It was Paul. But he didn't do that. He was not content to rest on. On what he'd already done. And we shouldn't be either.

And this is particularly important for those who have been Christian for a long time, because you have more history to look back on. We can remember the ministries that we served in, the people we helped, the sacrifices that we made, and those are wonderful things. But there is a danger in allowing yesterday's faithfulness to become a substitute for today's obedience. Your relationship with Christ isn't something you should think about primarily in the past tense. Yes, we celebrate what God has done.

We celebrate what he's allowed us to be a part of. But what about now? What are you accomplishing for the Lord today? Because there is still a race in front of every single one of us, and we need to keep that finish line in focus. No one retires from doing God's work.

I Love what Psalm 92 says. It says the righteous flourish like palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord. They flourish in the courts of our God. And then it says they still bear fruit in old age because they ever full of SAP and green.

Isn't that a beautiful picture? Even in old age, there is still fruit to bear, which means that none of us have an excuse. As long as you draw breath, you have the opportunity and the responsibility to seek God and to serve others. And so some people become distracted by their past accomplishments. Others get distracted by past failures.

And this is something a lot of Christians struggle with. They have things in their past that they deeply regret, sins that they've committed or people they've hurt, decisions that they made that they would do anything to go back and change. And even though they've repented of those sins and they've trusted in Christ, they just can't seem to move past them. They can't forgive themselves. And they have a hard time believing that God could really have forgiven them.

Now, we might not think that that's a big deal. I mean, after all, what's wrong with someone feeling terrible about the sins they've committed? Isn't that a good thing? Shouldn't we be grieved over our sin? Of course we should.

But there's something much more serious going on here. See, when we refuse to accept Christ's forgiveness that he is fully paid for our sins, that is a problem. We look at our sins and we think they're so terrible, so shameful, so unforgivable that even the sacrifice of the Son of God doesn't seem sufficient to deal with them. And when we feel that way, we are robbing our Savior of the glory that he deserves. See, what we're doing is we're giving this enormous view of our sin, and it's overshadowing the greatness of our God.

And we make him very small. But our God is not small. And what Jesus did on the cross, he is not small. We say that Jesus died for our sins, and of course that's true. But do we really understand what that means?

Every sin you've ever committed is an offense against a Perfectly holy God. And God, he never simply overlooks sin. His justice demands that it be punished. That's why forgiveness is such an extraordinary thing. God doesn't just set aside his justice to forgive us.

He satisfies his justice through the sacrifice of his son. Colossians 2 says, in you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. We had a debt we could not pay, and he paid a debt he did not owe. It says right there, our sin debt has been canceled because it was nailed to the cross.

And then it says, it says right here, he forgave all our trespasses. Not most of them, not all of them, except that one thing you did 20 years ago still haunts you. All of them. There isn't some little category of sins that the blood of Christ was not sufficient to cover. There is no outstanding balance that he leaves for you to pay.

When Jesus pays for your sins, when they are washed by his blood, they are completely covered. He paid for them all, and that's the key. The sufficiency of the cross has nothing to do with how terrible your sins were. It rests entirely on the infinite worth of the one who died for them. The cross is sufficient because Jesus was a worthy sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:14 says, for by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. If you belong to God, if you're a Christian, all of your sins are forgiven. All of your past sins and all of your future sins. Psalm 103 says, as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. If you travel far enough north, eventually you get to the North Pole.

It doesn't matter what direction you go, you're headed south again. But you can turn out here, start going east, and you could travel around the globe and. And you will never, ever reach west. That is how far your sins have been removed. That is how much you have been forgiven.

And that's why Paul is telling us we need to stop living in the past. We need to keep our eyes on the finish line. And Paul, he's been talking about how he hasn't made it yet, that he's still striving. And then he tells us that we need to do the same thing. Verse 15, it says, Let those of Us who are mature think this way.

And if in anything you think otherwise, God will review that also to you only let us hold true to what we have obtained. There's two things here. We hold to what we have obtained. We are saved, we are in, but we haven't made it to the end. See, one of the marks of spiritual maturity is recognizing that you still have room to grow.

That is true for every one of us. And Paul is saying that those who are mature need to think that way. So the closer you are to God, the more you recognize that you're not that close. The more you work and serve, the more your life becomes enveloped by loving God and obeying God, the more you realize just how far you are from doing that fully. And then Paul tells us that there's another danger that can take our eyes off the finish line.

So our past is one, but we can also become so consumed with the things of this world that we lose sight of where we're headed. So verse 18 says, for many of whom I have often told you and now tell you, even with tears, walk as enemies of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly. And they glory in their shame with mind set on earthly things.

Notice how Paul describes these people. He says their God is their belly. In other words, they are controlled and driven by their appetites. Their lives are driven by what they want in any given moment. And then he says they glory in their shame.

They become proud of the very things they ought to be ashamed of. And the point of all this is that last line. They have their minds set on temporary earthly things and they are living as though this world is all there is. And Paul says that their end is destruction. See, this is where all those warnings throughout the New Testament to persevere and keep the faith and stand firm are so important.

It is incredibly easy to become so preoccupied with our day to day lives that we lose sight of of what really matters. Our careers, our possessions, our plans, and even our everyday responsibilities can consume our attention. And almost without realizing it, we start living like this. Life is all that there is. Look at the contrast Paul offers in verse 20.

He says, but our citizenship is in heaven. And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. I want you to really appreciate the significance of what Paul is saying here. Our citizenship is in heaven. You know, Philippi was a Roman colony and the people who lived there took tremendous pride in their Roman citizenship.

It was an important part of their identity. And I think we are particularly well equipped to understand that, because that's how a lot of us feel about our country. We're proud to be Americans. We value our freedoms and privileges that come with our citizenship. We have a sense of belonging to something bigger than ourselves.

We love our country. That's how the Philippians felt about Rome. And Paul is reminding them and reminding us that we possess a citizenship that is infinitely greater than anything Rome or Washington could ever offer. Our citizenship is in heaven. And that means that our ultimate identity, our highest allegiance, and our greatest hope are not found in things of this world.

They are found in Jesus Christ. Now, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't love America. Don't mishear me. But it does mean that our earthly citizenship is temporary. Nations rise and nations fall.

Governments and parties and leaders, they come and they go. But the kingdom to which we belong will never pass away. And that's the kingdom that ought to determine how we live today. And notice what Paul says. He says.

He doesn't say that we are waiting to go to heaven. It says we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. See, our ultimate hope isn't that someday we get to leave this world and go to heaven. Our hope is that Jesus Christ is coming back. And when he comes, he is going to complete the work of redemption.

It says he will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious one. See, when God created mankind, he didn't create us as disembodied spirits. He created us as physical beings. And when sin entered the world, its consequences affected every part of creation. That absolutely includes us.

That's why our bodies become sick. It's why they grow weak. And it's why we eventually die. But God's plan isn't simply to save our souls and abandon our bodies. His plan is to redeem the entirety of of the person.

Romans 8:23 says, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons. The redemption of our bodies. That's what Paul is describing here. One day our bodies will be transformed and they will be made like Christ's glorious body. When Jesus rose from the dead, it wasn't just some spiritual resurrection.

He was rose bodily. But unlike Lazarus, who was raised only to die again, Jesus rose to eternal life. Death had been defeated. And Paul says that those who belong to him will share in that glorious resurrection. I wish we had time to explore the beauty and depth of our bodily resurrection.

It's so much more than just having bodies that don't ever wear out. We saw earlier that Paul's greatest desire was to know Christ and to be made like him. And that's exactly what God has promised. See, the work of sanctification that is taking place in us right now will one day be complete. We will no longer struggle with sin or temptation.

We won't merely be forgiven sinners who are still fighting against our sinful desires. We will be perfectly righteous and perfectly holy and completely conformed to the image of our Savior. That's the finish line. That is what we're working toward. That is the question before each of us this morning.

How are you running? Because if you're alive, then you're still in the race. Doesn't matter how long you've been a Christian. It doesn't matter how far you've come. You haven't crossed the finish line yet.

It's very easy to stop running. You can still be on the track. You still show up on Sunday mornings, do the things you've always done. But somewhere along the way, you stop striving after God. You stopped pursuing obedience.

You stopped pushing yourself, and you became content with where you were. And Paul calls us to press on. And I want you to think seriously about what that means for your life. Where is it that you have stopped striving? And just as important, why are you too focused on the past?

Do you look at what you used to be and let that define your relationship with God in either direction? Do you rest on how you used to serve him? Are you unable to move on from old sins? Or maybe you've just become too focused on today, where you live, where you work, and what you strive after. And you do those things with excellence, but not for God's glory.

You strive for things of the world. There is a finish line in front of each of us. Look to that. Keep your eyes on it. Look to the glorious future that is to come.

And let that be the guidepost that keeps you on track today. Don't waste the time that God has given you. Don't allow another year to pass where you remain exactly where you are spiritually today. Take your sin seriously. Pursue holiness.

Deliberately seek after God. And when you stumble, just get back up and keep going. The day is coming when we will all stand before the God who made us. But that day isn't here yet. The race isn't over.

So don't stop running. Please stand for our closing hymn. It's number 757 in the hymnal. It is soon and very soon.