

Philippians 3 – Don't Look Back

*"I'm pressing on the upward way, new heights I'm gaining every day.
Still praying as I onward bound: Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.
Lord, lift me up and let me stand by faith on heaven's tableland.
A higher plan than I have found; Lord plant my feet on higher ground."*

Johnson Oatman, Jr.

To us, this song represents the desire to move forward, never looking backward. It is a principle that Paul stated clearly to the Christians in Philippi when he said in **Philippians 3, verses 12-14**:

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Never looking back at his former life. He was dead to it. God had called him heavenward and he pressed on toward that goal. Sadly, there were many that Paul and the others preached to that were not pressing on. In fact, they were looking back to their old life and going back to it, not holding fast to the truth.

Jesus, after telling people to follow Him, said this in Luke **9:62**: ***"No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."*** Concentration on the goal is necessary. That's why there are so many sports analogies in the New Testament. They were easy to understand and apply. Throwing off the weights that hinder us from running with perseverance the race that is called life and keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus. (Hebrews 12:1-2) Pressing on, as Paul states in the passage above, straining as a runner would, toward the goal line. Moving forward, never going back.

Lot's wife looked back at the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and paid a terrible price. **(Genesis 19)** Abraham lived his life ***"looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God"*** and was rewarded. **(Hebrews 11:10)** The Galatians were warned about turning back to Judaism. **(Galatians 4:9)** The Hebrew writer warns about those who ***"shrink back and are destroyed"*** because of their lack of faith. **(Hebrews 10:38)** Peter condemns in the strongest terms those ***who "turn their back"*** on God. **(2 Peter 2:20-22)** Looking back has dire consequences. Looking forward and enduring produces success.

Put your hand to the plow. Take off all of those weights that slow you down. Move forward in faith that God will reward you. And don't look back.

---Johnny Stephens

