Pressing on in Assurance

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Well, open with me, if you would, to Philippians chapter 3.

As we continue in our study through this letter, looking this morning in verses 12 to 16, about how to press on in assurance.
We want to be faithful in both of these ways. We want to keep pursuing the Lord, keep following the Lord. But we do that as Christians in assurance, knowing that if we've been saved, that we have assurance of that salvation.
It was just a little more than a decade ago, April the 11th, 2015 to be exact, at a track meet in Eugene, Oregon, where the runners were completing the 3,000 meter steeplechase event.
One runner, his first name was Tanguy, who was from Oregon University, had been leading most all of the race. In fact, he's dominating the race.
[1:21] He gets to the last 100 meters and begins to see the finish line. And about 50 meters away, he begins to celebrate. In fact, you can watch this online if you find it.

He begins to turn to the audience and begin to wave his arms, trying to get the people that were there to yell and to cheer for him as he was approaching the finish line.
Unbeknownst to him, there was another runner, a man named Maren Simon, who was a runner for Washington University, who was running in desperation.
And while the runner named Tanguy was motioning the crowd to cheer, and he began to let up, Mr. Simon began to push forward.
And in the last second, he caught him. And he won the race by one-tenth of a second.
[2:22] And it was a lesson for the runner named Tanguy and for everybody else who would heed the warning that while the race is on, it's still time to run.

While the race is on, it's still time to run. That, of course, isn't the only example of it. July the 4th, 2015, at the AJC Peachtree Road Race in Atlanta.
You can see, again, the same thing happened. A runner named Ben Payne is running. This is a 10K race in Atlanta. After leading the whole way, he gets to the very end of the race.
He is just right outside the finish line and he raises his hand and finger to the sky only to, at the very last possible second, be passed by a runner named Scott Overall who beat him by nine one-hundredths of a second.
A second example of someone who had run hard and run well but missed the lesson that while the race is still on, it's still time to run.
[3:38] And I want that theme to be clear in your mind this morning as we transition from a physical race to the metaphorical race of our Christian life.

But think with me this morning of that truth that while the race is still on, it is still time to run. We don't coast in our Christian life.
We may retire from a job or a vocation, but we don't retire from pursuing the Lord. While the race is still on, it is still time to run.
And I want to, I hope, by the power of the Spirit through His Word this morning, show you scripturally where that truth comes from and why it is so important that while you are still running the race of your Christian life, that you would continue to run.
Philippians 3, verse 12. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own.
[4:53] 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

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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.
In this paragraph that reminds us of the importance of continuing to run the race, I want to show you three features of our life that we need to have if we're going to live the way we're called to live.
Number one, make note of persistent faith from verse 12. Persistent faith. He says, not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect.
Paul loves the Lord. He's pursuing the Lord. He's serving the Lord. He's being used greatly by the Lord, but he recognizes he hasn't arrived. He's not in heaven yet.
[6:15] And as long as he is on this earth, there is still work to be done. There is still a race to be run. We might say it this way, when you think theologically about what it means to be in Christ, we could say it this way, that our desire is to become in practice what we are in position.

So we would say theologically, biblically, that if you are a Christian, you have positional righteousness. It means you are accepted by God through the work of Christ.
So if you're a Christian today, you have positional righteousness. How does God see you? He sees you as a redeemed child of His, forgiven.
Your sin's been atoned, paid for by the work of Christ. You have positional righteousness. But our desire in life is to become in practice what we have in position.
God sees us as righteous because of the work of His Son, but our desire is to live in such a way that we are doing what we have been called to do.
[7:36] So we are to pursue obedience, to pursue maturity in Christ. It's what the Bible calls sanctification. It's that process of becoming like Christ.

It means that we never cease to grow. It means that we never stop reading our Bible. We never stop loving the things of God.
We never stop seeking to learn. We keep striving to pursue the Lord. We keep running after Jesus.
I feel like I say this often, but I think it bears repeating that one of the things that is God's sweet gift to our church here is that this is on purpose, a church for all ages.
We want it to be that way. We'll have 150 people in our preschool this morning. We'll have VBS in June with hundreds of kids here.
We've got a couple hundred teenagers who are here every Wednesday evening. At the same time, as you look around the sanctuary, you're going to see plenty of people in their 60s and 70s and 80s, 90s.
[9:03] And that's good because our church is a family. And you don't ever want to be a part of a family that tells you you're too old to belong.

It's important that a family has older members in it. That's true for our families, for grandparents and great-grandparents. It's certainly true for a church family.
And while we love young families and are grateful, the Lord is bringing us so many young families such a delight to our church, we value greatly the blessing of having people a part of our congregation who have been here a long, long time.
That's good because it's a physical, visible reminder to us that you never stop pursuing the Lord. that there's always more to learn and always more of who God is to be amazed by. He says, I've not already obtained this.
[10:10] I'm not already perfect. There's no one in our sanctuary this morning who's perfect. There's none of us who have attained all of what is there for us.

We are all continuing to learn and to run and to grow. So look what he says. But I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own.
Listen carefully here. The theology of this sentence is absolutely life-changing if you grasp it. Paul says, I'm going to continue to press on because I'm not a finished product yet.
there's more to learn, more to grow, more to gain. I'm going to keep pursuing Christ because Christ is so glorious, so loving, so gracious that there's more of Christ I long to learn.
But the reason He can do this is because Christ has made me His own. Now don't miss this. If you miss the order of this, your Christian life is going to be completely out of balance.
[11:24] If you're someone today who doesn't truly know Christ, you've never truly been saved by grace through faith, and you have this idea that I can pursue the things of God and just by sheer willpower, I go to church and I read my Bible and I listen to the preaching and I keep forcing myself

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to do these things, and if I try hard enough for a long enough time, maybe that will make me a Christian.

It's not what the text says. He says, I press on, I'm straining, I'm working, I'm running, I'm fighting because Christ Jesus has made me His own.
our pursuit of Christ, our works, our acts of obedience are never what makes us belong to Christ. It is always the result and response of what Christ has worked within us. Otherwise, you're going to spend your life working at something you'll never achieve.
but because Christ has made me His own, because I belong to Him, because I've been saved by grace through faith, because I have positional righteousness, now I long in practice to have what I own in position and I want to run my Christian race by pursuing the things of Christ.
[12:58] This is a persistent faith. This is not some emotional experience someone had as a teenager that wasn't real.

This isn't just saying there was one time in my life 20, 30, 40 years ago where I responded to something. No, no. This is the kind of faith that says when I came to know Christ, when I was saved by His grace, it was so real, it was so life-changing, I've never gotten over it.
And I've never been the same since. And so I'm going to continue day after day after day pressing on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own.
Because He's already made me His, now I run my race. Now I pursue Christ. not in an attempt of good works to be saved, but as a response of obedience to what He has already given to me.
Persistent faith. But the reason why so many people struggle to keep running well is this second category here in verses 13 and 14.
[14:26] Make note that there is a purposeful forgetfulness. There's a purposeful forgetfulness.

Look at verse 13. 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.
Paul again makes clear he's not a finished product yet. Brothers, I do not consider that I've made it my own. I'm not perfect yet. I'm not as mature as I long to be. I don't know as much of Christ as I long to know.
Paul says that what he knows about Christ is real and it's true, but I haven't learned everything yet.
In theology, we call this the doctrine of the inexhaustibility of God or the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God.
Same idea, incomprehensibility, inexhaustibility. It's the idea that we can, by the scripture, we can know God truly, but we don't know him fully.
[15:49] It's an important doctrine to understand. That we can have six, seven, eight-year-olds in this service right now, and they, if they're listening, they're learning from the Bible things that are true, yet we can have 88-year-olds in this room that are continuing to learn because while we know him truly, we don't know him fully.

There's always more to learn of who God is. And that doctrine of inexhaustibility or the incomprehensibility of God, that's what Paul is speaking of here in verse 13.
I don't consider that I've made it my own. I'm not there yet, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.
Forgetting what lies behind. He doesn't forget because he just can't remember.
This isn't a memory problem. This is a purposeful forgetfulness. This is choosing to on purpose not dwell on the past because of the goal that is still in front of him.
[17:11] I don't recommend you do this, but if you want to try this out, go out to a track or go out to a field somewhere, sprint as fast as you can while looking backwards the whole time.

You won't go very far, you won't go very fast, and you won't stand very long. Because when you sprint looking backwards, you do not go forward.
And Paul says, I am choosing, this is purposeful forgetfulness here, I'm forgetting what lies behind. I'm choosing to do that.
And there are some things in your life that you just need to forget. we learn lessons from the past, we are strengthened by what we've been through in the past, but there is a certain sense in which we ought to purposefully forget.
Now let me bring some balance to this biblically. In the Old Testament, Joshua 3 and 4, the people of God have been led through the Jordan River. Once they get to the other side of the Jordan River, they're instructed to go back into the river and to pick up stones from the riverbed to take them out

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and on the shore there to build what's called stones of remembrance.
[18:35] And they build these stones and stack them on top of each other and it says, why are we doing this? And the answer in Joshua 3 and 4 is so that when your children and your children's children ask, what are these stones for?

You can remind them of how the Lord your God has brought you through. That's the right way to think about the past. We are to remember the faithfulness of God.
We are to pass down the stories of the faithfulness of God. It's good to know that. It's good to remember that. That's the right way to remember the past.
But biblically there's a wrong way to remember the past. past. And there are two categories here I want you to think with me about.
We need to forget past successes when those successes cause us to be either prideful or lazy.
[19:41] when you think back on your past successes if that makes you feel prideful you need to forget about it because pride is a dangerous way for a believer to live.

Or if you look back on past successes and it makes you lazy because you're so busy talking about what you used to do that you're no longer faithful to do it today.
If you take an athlete and he goes to the gym to work out and that athlete looks around and says you know what the last six months I've been lifting weights hard I've been running hard I've been training hard I've made a lot of progress in the gym I don't need to work out today.
Comes back the next day trainers there you ready to go ready to push yourself and the athlete says you know what I I worked out hard last week I pushed myself to the limit last week I've made so much improvement I'm not going to do this today.
Well you stack up a few days like that then pretty soon that athlete's going to find themselves in trouble. If that athlete's looking back at past success in a way that makes them lazy today they need to forget their past success.
[21:11] If you look backwards at your success and it makes you prideful or lazy you need to forget about it on purpose purposeful forgetfulness.

But the antithesis of that's true as well. There are other people that it's not their past successes that make them stagnant it's past failures.
And there's some people that say you know what I tried to do ministry five years ago I tried to teach that Sunday school class I tried to sing in the choir I tried to be a greeter I tried to serve on the prayer team I tried to do evangelism it didn't go very well it didn't work I wasn't very good at it I didn't see the results I wanted to see and for the rest of their life instead of being faithful and obedient to what's happening today they keep looking back at what they perceive to be past failures and they can't get past it you need to forget those things do we learn lessons from it sure do we seek wisdom from it absolutely but you can't let your mind dwell on past failures that would prevent you from being obedient today if you're a part of a team and you lost last week and you show up this week and you say you know what we lost last week we're just going to forfeit this week and your fans are saying what are you talking about we're cheering you on this is another chance this is about today this is about this moment you say no because you know what our team lost a week ago what's the point of even trying today and there's so many people in their Christian life that just seem to live like that you tried to share the gospel three years ago and it didn't go well and so you're just silent the rest of your life you volunteered for ministry a decade ago and it didn't go well and so you're just sitting on the sidelines the rest of your life and I'm just begging you friends don't do that you need to forget those things learn from it be changed by it gain wisdom by it but purposely forget past failures when it makes you not respond to opportunities today so Paul says here's one thing I do
I forget what lies behind doesn't mean he can't remember it it means he's not going to let the past keep him from running well today that may be past successes that may be past failures but listen to me friends you need to look back in your life and be encouraged by the faithfulness of God but you need to let go of things in your life that are keeping you from being obedient today stop letting past success or past failures paralyze you from being obedient with what's in front of you today he says this one thing
I do forgetting what lies behind I press on this is this is strain I press on this is this is maximum effort I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus this is real effort this is not effort in order to become saved he's pressing on because God has already taken hold of him this isn't an attempt of salvation by works this is the response of a believer whose life has been changed by Christ and now longs to take hold of all the Lord has for him so look with me again here

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in verse 14 I press on toward the goal you need to know what your goal in life is you need to know what your goal is there are some people whose lives are just aimless because they are pursuing the wrong goal there are people whose lives are aimless because they're pursuing no goal you need to know what you're seeking in life and the ultimate goal for all of us whether you are a parent whether you are a single adult whether you are a widow or widower whether you are a college student whether you own your own business it doesn't matter what your profession is your singular goal in life needs to be the prize of the upward call of
[26:58] God in Christ Jesus the singular goal of your life needs to be pursuing Christ then if you get a paycheck as a school teacher or if you get a paycheck as a business owner or if you get a paycheck as an engineer have at it you do whatever God has gifted and wired you to do but you are to use your life and your time and your resources and your intellect and your profession and your hobbies everything you do ought to all be serving the greater goal that you would know Christ more and he thing I do I forget what's behind here's why because his goal is in front of him and what he is saying is I can't run forward if I'm always focused in the past now if your goal isn't to pursue

Christ moving forward if that's not your goal then you can afford to look back all you want you can be prideful you can be lazy you can be in despair if your goal is just to stay right where you are it's not going to hinder you but that's a really bad goal if your desire is to go forward and to pursue Christ verse 14 then you're going to have to stop living in the!
verse 13 college students you're going to have final exams coming up in about a month and if you did well in your midterms and you say I did so well in my midterms I don't need to study for my final you're going to make a tragic mistake if you're living in the past you're going to miss the challenge in front of you how true is that in our spiritual life I mean every day every day God puts in front of us open doors to teach to encourage to serve to evangelize to disciple every day those opportunities are there and if our goal is to move forward in them we're going to have to stop living in the past and be faithful today but if that's not our goal to be faithful today then ask and reminisce and talk about how great it was or how bad it was whichever way that's a bad way to live he says here's what I'm pressing on for verse 14 it's for the goal of the prize the word goal here scopone is the original word here I just say that because you can hear a little bit of the derivative from it scopone we get a couple of our words that deal with a scope scopone microscope telescope we get tracing back to that kind of a word it means to look upon to peer into to spy it's purposeful focused concentration I'm looking in this telescope to see something I'm looking in this microscope to see something I have a goal I'm looking I'm seeing the prize that I long to have verse 14 says there's a purposeful forgetfulness that we need to have remember God's faithfulness but you've got to move on from your past your past successes that make you prideful or lazy you've got to move on from those your past failures that keep you nervous or scared you've got to move on from that forget about that and press on toward the goal of the prize and then one third thing I want to show you here in verses 15 and 6 and the final thing here persevering focus this is what it takes to run well persevering focus verse 15 let those of us who are mature think this way and if in anything you think otherwise God will reveal that also to you this is very simple interpretation here to see the mark of maturity in verse 15 is how you think let those of us who are mature think this way the way he's described those who are mature will think like that they will forget what's behind because they're straining for what's ahead those who are mature he says think this way people who are spiritually mature think differently than others they see challenges differently they think of suffering differently they think of opportunities differently they think of everything in their life differently spiritually mature people think a certain way the biggest difference between the immature and the mature is how they think is your mind set on things above is your mind set on the things of
[32:51] Christ successful people mature people people that make an impact in the world they fill their minds with different things than the immature people fill their minds with let those of us who are mature think this way and if in anything you think otherwise God will reveal that to you also and then he says only let us hold true to what we have attained now at this point as you're reading this we have to stop and think now wait a minute we got to make some sense out of this in verse 11 he says my goal is to attain the resurrection from the dead that's his glorification

I want to be with the Lord verse 12 I've not already obtained this I'm not already perfect but Christ has made me his own and so I'm going to keep pushing forward verse 16 let us hold true to what we have attained so the question is there's something in verse 12 he has not obtained and something in verse 16 he has attained what is it as Christians that we have not obtained and what is

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it as Christians we have attained you need to see the logic of what he's arguing here I have not obtained perfection but I have attained I do possess salvation in Christ and a thought process that says there's nothing greater than knowing more of Christ so you put those two things together he has saved me
I have a knowledge of who he is there's nothing better than knowing him I want to know him even more and I'm not obtained all that I can learn and know from him this is what creates spiritual hunger in the life of a Christian we have Christ we know Christ we have salvation we have the Holy Spirit we long to know more of him and we've not learned everything there is to know about him so we keep reading and we keep worshiping and we keep pursuing and we keep praying and notice just grammatically here verses 15 and 16 this is in the plural 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 there's a plurality here this isn't just your calling this is our calling this isn't just about you individually forgetting what's behind and pursuing the
Lord this is about our entire church family living this way there's something really sweet about the entire family pursuing the things of God have you ever been at a birthday party maybe you had a three or four five year old you had a birthday party and parents were excited you decorated it grandparents are there aunts and uncles are there friends have come over everyone's excited you can't wait you got pictures you got gifts you got cake you got everything the only problem is there's only one kid with a bad attitude and that kid happens to be yours that's having the birthday party have you been there how's that party go it stinks that's how it goes even though nearly everybody's excited to be there when there's one who thinks differently it's a disaster you ever had your family on a vacation everybody's having fun everybody's doing well but one person in the family demands their own way or gets upset or gets frustrated or loses flexibility you ever been on that trip you can't wait to get home because for that family trip to go well you really need everybody with the same goal there's something really sweet when a family is all pursuing the same thing and there's a great hindrance with only one is not verse 15 and 16 is in the plural this isn't just about you this is about our whole church we need to forget what lies behind and press on toward the goal now we need to look backwards and remember
God's faithfulness but we look forward at what he has given to us and when we do that it's a sweet thing when all of us are saying how can I serve how can I give how can I pray how can I help how can I bear burdens how can I reach out when we do that not just one but all of us it's a really really sweet blessing so just look at the language in verses 12 to 16 I pursue I strain I'm pressing on these aren't just action verbs these are intense descriptions this is intense work if you were to pursue [39:38] Christ with all of your heart and all of your soul and all of your mind and if you were to lead your family to do the same and if all of our church were to do the same just imagine what God could do through us we haven't obtained perfection we're not there we haven't arrived this is a lifelong pursuit but please notice the intensity of the verbs with which Paul describes the Christian life this isn't coast this isn't rest this isn't relax he says pursue strain forward press on if that's not describing your Christian life let today be a wake up call to you that this is how we are to live if your Christian life is more like a picture of sitting around and drinking coffee looking in the rear view mirror at how all the things you used to do if that describes your Christian life more than the runner with his eyes in the prize straining with all he has but let today be a mind shift wake up call for you we're not called to relax we're not called to coast we're called to press to strain to run but please understand that the pressing and the straining and the running all of that is with the assurance that Christ has already taken hold of us we're not doing this to be saved we're doing this because we already belong to him and the greatest sign of rest is that you are actively holding on to what

Christ has given to you we have assurance and because we do we press forward and we pursue the Lord with all we have Bayless Benjamin McKinney not many know that name a couple in here might better known to some as B.B.
McKinney still not known to many but maybe to a few B.B. McKinney was credited with writing words and music to 149 different hymns most of his hymns you probably don't know but if you're older like me and raised in the church you may recognize a few of them Lord send a revival let others see Jesus in you have faith in God he's on his throne have faith in God he watches or his own he cannot fail he must prevail have faith in God have faith in God that's the words of B.B. McKinney blessed savior we adore thee we thy love and grace proclaim glorious as I matchless name some of you may remember that hymn it's the words of B.B.

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McKinney but my favorite hymn that B.B. McKinney wrote will be more familiar to some of you it's a hymn about sacrifice surrender and moving forward to follow Christ there's a good time to reflect on who God is and reflect on what God has done that's a good way to remember but we need songs that tell us about moving forward obeying him today B.B.
[43:56] McKinney wrote a hymn that many of you have sung at some point in your life the lyrics say take up your cross and follow me I heard my master say I gave my life to ransom thee surrender your all today you'll know the course wherever he leads I'll go wherever he leads I'll go I'll follow my Christ who loves me so wherever he leads I'll go this is about moving forward with Christ the last verse says my heart my life my all I bring to Christ who loves me so he is my master lord and king and wherever he leads I'll go it's a song of surrender and a song of obedience this isn't looking back and say

I used to do that I'm content to sit today or I tried to do that and I failed I'll sit this one out today no this is the hymn that says Lord whatever you have for me I'll go wherever he leads I'll go I'll follow my Christ who loves me so and wherever he leads I'll go let me end with where we began while the race is still on it's still time to run the two runners I described at the beginning of the message they ran so well and they ran so hard until the very end and they pulled back and they got passed
I'll tell you what's beautiful to me is to watch saints in our church who have been walking with the Lord for 50 60 70 years and they're running as they approach that finish line of their life they may not run as fast as they used to they may not see as well as they used to but they're given everything they've got because while the race is still on it is still time to run if Christ has taken hold of your life press on toward the goal of knowing Christ Jesus more and more day by day Lord your word comforts us as much as it corrects us we're convicted by areas of our sin we long to obey you instead we are encouraged and comforted to know that you hold us may we by your grace trust you and pursue you
Lord there are some in our church and their life looks pretty similar day to day and they may feel like their acts of obedience are small or unseen may you remind them that you see all and you are glorified in small acts of obedience others in our church are going through major life changes with major change awaiting them Lord may they be reminded that it is still about daily acts of surrender and daily acts of submission to your will and daily saying wherever he leads I'll go whether that may be in our own living rooms teaching our children whether that may mean going to the classroom to teach someone whether that may mean going to a new job whether that may mean moving to a new state whether that may mean going out of the country on a mission trip wherever you lead us wherever you lead us may we just do this one thing forgetting what lies behind may we press on toward the goal of the upward prize in
Christ Jesus not desiring for our name to be great but for the name of our Savior to be glorified through us may that be our greatest delight in the name of Christ we pray amen to the Lord to be to to to to to to to come of...
[49:32] go to just can will see have... have will go and will or get there go fathers know fathers but like what or what are going of they fathers know fathers they know fathers they know what they know fathers fathers know fathers say man how how if our day fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers none fathers fathers rid fathers fathers fathers fathers

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