**I** Press On Phil 3:4-21

New Years sermon 1/1/2023

It is New Years Day today. We are looking back and we are looking forward.

But first…

2 Cor 13:5 Let’s take a 2 Cor 13:5 moment and look back right now over 2022.

How did you do? Were you living “in the faith?” or, perhaps, did you largely fail the test.

Q: To get you started. How was 2022 for you? What did you accomplish in your life in general, and what did you do for God this past year? What are you proud of/happy about and what are you wanting to put behind you.

Would God say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant?”

Highlights? Victories?

Lowlights? Defeats?

Things you are proud of for God?
Things you wish you had not done or had not happened?

We are going to look at a time in Paul’s life when he was looking back—while he was in prison in Rome, but we will see, surprisingly, that, despite this situation, he is primarily looking forward.

Our passage this morning:

Phil 3:4-21 But for now Phil 3:4-11.

Now that you have done a bit of past reflection, we are going to move on from that!

As we head into 2023, let’s take stock of where we are right now and where we want to be Dec. 31, 2023.

Phil 3:4-7, 8b All of Paul’s religious achievements before Christ are garbage, refuse, dung, an actual loss!!!

My diploma, my great career, my religiosity. Refuse! Dung-heap.

v. 9 If you are a Christian, here is where you are at right now. You are In Christ!

You have righteousness that comes, not from yourself but “from God.” !!!!!!

You are righteous. You are in Christ. What a great and secure place from which to start your year.

Remember that we did a series of sermons this year on being In Christ.

You have salvation in Christ. Holy in Christ, redeemed in Christ, every spiritual blessing in Christ, secure love in Christ. You are good to go. You are secure. You possess eternal life right now!!!

But… Let me propose a New Year’s resolution for you right now:

Phil 3:8a 10 What matters in Christ? Knowing Christ!!!

Let’s plan in 2023 to know Christ.

Wait, Paul, don’t you already know him?

Sure, but this is already but not yet, right?

Q: What does Paul mean, “I want to know Christ.”

I want to be close to him.

I want to live like him.

I want to share in his sufferings (as this is how I get to really know him Coll 1:24)

I want to die like him.

Is that your attitude right now?

What will you do THIS YEAR to know Christ?

How will you suffer? What is your suffering plan?

How will you live a life like he lived? Are you prepared to die for him this year? I am not kidding!!!

Notice v. 11. … and so somehow.

Paul is not expressing doubt about his eventual resurrection.

He is saying this: I do not know exactly what is in store for me in 2023 (or AD 62, while he I in prison). All I know is this: At the end of the day, I will be raised from the dead.

I am good to go, so I can go for it spiritually in 2023. Q: Do you really believe this?

Look at his attitude in Phil 1:19-26! Live, die, live, die. I do not know.

Paul: All I am looking for is “fruitful labor” in 2023.

Q: What will be your “fruitful labor” this year?

But… back to the passage.

Phil 3:12-14

It is a new year, so let us “press on.”

You have not arrived yet.

Paul is pretty close to arriving, even as he writes these words.

His is looking back, but MOSTLY his is looking forward.

I am not done yet. They are not through with me yet. I have plenty left in the tank.

I am buying new tires for this old jalopy.

Paul, an old man (probably nearing 60) is making plans for 2023.

I am going to get in shape so I can use this body for God.

It is a new year. What will you do to press on to the goal?

What is your goal?

Get an A in physics. Do a remodel on my house. Clean out the garage. Plant a nice garden.

Is that what Paul is thinking about? No!

Planting churches, building up disciples, converting members of Caesar’s household.

(Remember Acts 20:22-24 Paul is in prison because that was his “plan” for sharing his faith in Rome)

We are talking about spiritual goals, folks.

Deeper Bible study. New sacrifices. People won to Christ. Things sold for mission work. New Bible group started.

Paul is doing this from a prison cell! We are doing this from a comfortable living room.

Two points so far:

1. My proposed New Year’s resolution: I want to know Christ.

Theme passage: “I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”

Do not live in the past. The past does not matter in Christ.

Phil 3:15-16 Well, what about this, and what about that… What about the problems in the church? What about the economy? What about my family situation? What about my children? What about my major and what about my job?

Paul: Two advices here for 2023.

1. I press on…

And 2. Let us live up to what all of us already know. The basics of Christianity.

What about the women’s role? What about issues related to BLM? What about the leadership structure in the church?...

Better… What about living up to what we have already attained.

Fine, but let us continue, in the meantime, to do the most basic things we already know to do for Christ, which is to live a holy life, put away sin, live sacrificially, share your faith…

Besides, we are talking about a new beginning. Folks, this is a new year. What will you do with this year?

2 Cor 5:16-18

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away and look, new things have come. Now everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that is, in Christ, God was reconciling to the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us. (2 Corinthians 5:17-19 HCSV)

It is a new year. God has made you a new creation. So, what are you going to do with your new opportunity.

Suggestion: Have a ministry of reconciliation. And share the message of reconciliation.

This could be an absolutely spectacular year for you. Someone you know or perhaps do not even know will be reconciled to God (and to their family, loved ones…)

Isaiah 43:18-19

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink. (Isaiah 43:18-19)

God has big plans for you this year. Forget the past. The past does not matter. God is preparing streams in the spiritual wasteland of Merced.

Let’s help people to drink from that stream.

Finish up back in Philippians 3:17-21

Let’s make a choice definitely not to make New Years plans as the world does. Why not?

v. 20 “Our citizenship is in heaven.”

Citizen Jeff, Citizen Zane, Citizen Ryan, Citizen Jan.

What are your New Year’s plans. What will you do this year to “press on to the goal.”

v. 21 Your ultimate future is already assured, which means you can make crazy, faithful goals. What is the worst the world can do to you.

Summary:

Our goal/resolution this year: To know Christ.

Our Plan: To press on.

Our Expectation: Fruitful labor

Our Approach: Live up to what we have already attained and

Live as a citizen of heaven.