

## ONE THING

Philippians 3:13-14 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this **one thing** I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

In 1991 a movie came out starring Billy Crystal and Jack Palance called City Slickers. Jack's character, Curly, was having a bit of a philosophical discussion with Crystal's character, Mitch. The conversation went like this:

**Curly:** Do you know what the secret of life is?

*[holds up one finger]*

**Curly:** This.

**Mitch:** Your finger?

**Curly:** One thing. Just one thing. You stick to that and the rest don't mean anything.

**Mitch:** But, what is the "one thing?"

**Curly:** *[smiles]* That's what \*you\* have to find out.

There are a number of "one things" in God's Word.

**Psalms 27:4** One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

**Mark 10:21** Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

**Luke 10:42** But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

**2 Peter 3:8** But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

**But today I'd like to focus on our Scripture from Phil 3. The one thing that the Apostle Paul thought was the most important in his life.**

**This One Thing I do** - Paul as a specialist! Just like an Olympic athlete, Paul specialized in one thing: reaching the goal. Notice that he left the past behind him and he reached for the future. A man excels when he is focused on the goal. If you want to know the secret of Paul's success, it is that Paul had a one track mind! Nothing was as important to him as was pleasing the Lord!

One of the problems with the modern Christian is that not many of us can say, "***This ONE thing I do.***" Most of us are pulled and tugged in a thousand different directions. Well, there is only one thing that will matter when this life is over and that is how well we ran for the Lord our God! I would challenge you to develop a one track mind when it comes to living your life. ***We could all use more simplicity in our lives!***

**Forgetting Those Things Which Are Behind** - Paul said, "***I refuse to look behind me at my past.***" The word ***forgetting*** means, "***To cease to be affected by.***" If you run with your eye on past successes, then you will have the tendency to **lay** back and rest on your accomplishments. If you run with your eye on your past failures, then you will tend to **stay** back for fear of failing again!

There is another thought that needs to be mentioned here. As you are running for the Lord stop looking at how others are doing in the race! There will always be those are able to outrun you and there will be others who will lag behind, or even drop out of the race. Don't worry about what others are doing, your duty is to run to please the Lord Jesus Christ! When we run, He should be the sole focus of our attention, **Hebrews 12:1-2 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

**Reaching Forth** - This phrase pictures the runner in a race as he nears the finish line. He can be seen to lean forward and strain for the goal. Paul tells us that he is "***reaching out with all he has***" to be sure that he wins his race!

Can we honestly say that we are straining to reach the goal? For most believers, the Christian life is a hit or miss proposition. That is, we just kind of take it as it comes. If we succeed for the Lord, then praise His name! If we happen to stumble

and fall, it's "*Oh well, I'll try and do better tomorrow!*" Not Paul! He wasn't content to sit around and wait for life to happen. No, he was busy making it happen! He was out there reaching for all he could become for Jesus. He was trying to reach his fullest potential for the glory of God. What a lesson for the children of God this morning!)

**I Press Toward The Mark** - The word Mark refers to the "goal that one has in view." In other words, Paul was oblivious to his surroundings; he was just heading for the goal. He wanted to finish well. Notice that when he did reach the end of his life, he was able to leave behind the testimony that he had indeed run well. "*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*" 2 Tim 4:6-7.

My friends, there is a great need for us to avoid the trap of becoming distracted by the events of this life. There is a mark, there is a goal and we should be striving for that goal in our lives! God help us to keep our eyes on the goal. Too many come out of the blocks primed and pumped to run the race, but after a few short months or years, they have become distracted and fallen out of the race. I like those people who are steady! They are not living for the moment, but they run with eternity in view at all times. They realize that God is honored by a race well run and a life well lived. They are not easily distracted, but they run with their eyes on the goal!

### **Paul's Expectations!**

Paul tells us in this verse that he is running for the "*prize*". This is the award presented to the victor in the race. Paul wanted to run a good race and he wanted to win the prize that God had for him!

Paul knew that the Lord called him for a reason. He called him to carry out his duty before the Lord. He also knew that successful completion of this goal would allow him to enjoy the rewards of the Lord. By the way, things are still the same! Jesus saved you to do a job for Him and for His kingdom! When we do what the Lord wants and we live our lives in pursuit of the prize, then we too will receive the rewards that come along with faithful service to the Lord, *1 Corinthians 3:8*  
*Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. Matthew 25:21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

Paul got what he was after, "*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*", 2 Tim. 4:8.

Will we? Yes, but only if we run for the prize!

Notice that Paul refers to the prize as a "*high calling*". I want you to know that God did not save us so that we could continue to live like the world! He saved us that we might follow after Him and strive to be like Him in every detail of life. Don't cheapen your salvation by running after the flesh, the world or the devil! Treat your relationship with the Lord like the precious thing it is, by striving to live up to a "*high calling*."

### **PAUL'S EXHORTATION**

A. In these verses Paul is simply telling us that this is the mature Christian attitude! Does this match your attitude of what the Christian life is supposed to be?

B. He then warns us that if we have a different opinion about how the Christian race should be run, then the Lord will deal with us in that matter. The only problem with that is that too many people are enjoying the race they are running and wouldn't listen if the Lord did call them to run differently!

**Conc:** If we are to succeed in the Christian life and honor God by the lives we live, then we are going to have to run the race His way. We will have to run with our eyes upon Him. We will have to learn to turn a blind eye to the allurements of the world and a deaf ear to the siren song of compromise. If we will attain the prize of Christlikeness, then we will have to pay the price of dedication and struggle. It will be a hard fought victory, but in the end, when we see His face, it will be worth it all!

How well are you running this morning? Are your eyes on Jesus alone? There is a song we sing from time to time that has a part that goes like this, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace." How true! Getting your focus solely on Jesus will give you the direction you need to successfully run the race for His glory and your eternal benefit as you run for the prize!

What is our "one thing"? Proverb 23:7 says that as we think in our heart, so are we. What are we thinking in our heart right now?

- When is he going to get through?

- How can I put this into practice in my life?

Is our “one thing” based on worldly goals? Is our “one thing” based on family goals? Maybe our “one thing” is based on our jobs, or our possessions.

So, as Christians, what should be our “one thing”? What is the secret of a “Christian Life?” When we stand before Jesus on that judgment day and give an account of our lives here on earth since we got saved, what will be that “one thing” that we are most proud of?

- Perfect Church attendance?
- Being baptized?
- Reading our Bible through for the 20<sup>th</sup> time?
- Helping the poor and needy?
- Being a good husband/wife/father?

One thing. What is your One Thing? For Christians, that “one thing”.. that “secret of life” must be the gaining of lost souls to the Glory of God. Through our working, through our giving and through our going. But the focus. The desires. The ONE THING... must be the winning of the lost to Christ. If that “One Thing” .. is our “One Thing”, all the other things I have talked about will be brought about.

If you are here today, and you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, your “One Thing” must be eternal life. That **MUST** be your focus, your goal, your one desire. For without it, your eternal home will be in a place the Bible calls Hell.