

Title: “Forgetting What Lies Behind”**Text: Philippians 3:2-14****Main Idea:** The follower of Christ is to actively forget their past spiritual achievements and put much effort into knowing Jesus Christ.**Introduction**

What a season! Who would've thought it would take 108 years for the Cubs to win the World Series again? Do you remember where you were for the final out? I was in the living room. I was texting with the manager of Moody's radio station in Cleveland. I don't know that either of us had much confidence in the Cubs to pull off a game 7 win. But they proved us wrong and I'm glad they did.

2016 was an incredible year for the Cubs. They finished with the best record in baseball, winning 103 games, the most wins for the franchise since 1903. Theo Epstein was named Executive of the Year. Kris Bryant was MVP. Gold Glove Awards went to Jason Heyward and Anthony Rizzo. Jake Arrieta and Anthony Rizzo took home Silver Slugger Awards. Javier Baez and Jon Lester were co-MVP's of the National League Championship Series and Ben Zobrist was the World Series MVP. 7 of the 25 guys on the roster were selected to the All-Star Game. It was a good year for the Cubs.

But here's the thing: Game 7 of the 2016 World Series was played on November 2. 151 days later, the baseball season reset. A new season began--and while the awards earned from 2016 are great and many, they don't carry over. It's a new season. 2016 is in the past. It's behind them. And it's time to focus on 2017 with laser like intensity to do the thing that 29 other teams are also trying to do...win the World Series.

This morning we're in Philippians 3:2-14, and we're looking at a text that is often used to encourage believers to forget about the past...past regrets...past mistakes... past sins and move forward toward the prize...the object that lies ahead.

For the past six weeks, we have been in a series called *Context*. We've been looking at different passages from the Bible that are frequently taken out of context and given different meanings...perhaps well-intentioned...but still different meanings.

The way to avoid that is to look at a passage and put it within the context of the verses that surround it. The often-misquoted text we're wrestling with today is Philippians 3:13. The second half of that verse-reads, "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."

The common application of that text is to say, "Forget about the past...past regrets...past mistakes... past sins and move forward toward the prize...the object that lies ahead." But what we're going to see is that Paul actually has a different idea in mind. In our text, he tells the Philippian church that he actively forgets his past spiritual achievements and he focuses in with laser like focus on obtaining the prize of knowing Jesus Christ. We're gonna bring clarity to this as we make our way through out text so let's dive into Philippians 3:2-14.

I. Look Out For... (3:2a)

As we dive into verse 2 we see Paul saying, "Look out for..." three different times. When you're studying Scripture, anytime you come across a word that is repeated like this means we have an important message. When you were growing up, did your parents have a word they used to get your attention? Like maybe your first name? And if it was serious they'd use your middle name too? I'm guessing that when they used that word there was almost always an instruction that followed.

In the Crosby home, I have a word that I use with my girls to get their attention. Are you ready for it? It's, *hey!* Now, just as important as the word, is the tone I use with it, because that

tone is going to help them discern how serious I am. If I say a quick, “Hey!” and clap my hands, they know they better run because Daddy’s about to chase and tickle. Then there’s the extended, yet stern, “Heeeeyyy. We do not throw toys at Momma’s face.”

My daughter, Madison, is 1 ½ years old and when we play outside I’ve had to use different versions of *Hey!* to get her attention. When we’re outside we are usually in the front of the house playing in the yard or the driveway and the girls like to blow bubbles, ride their big wheels, and play with the kick ball. We don’t live on a busy street but it’s still a street and Maddie, especially, doesn’t understand that when she gets to the end of the driveway she needs to stop.

It’s actually more than that, we don’t want either of them to go anywhere near the end of the driveway. Why? Because even though it’s not a busy street, it’s still a street with large vehicles that could come down at any time. The combination of a little girl in the street and a vehicle driving down the street presents a hazardous situation. The better option is for Maddie to “look out for” the traffic and obey when her parents tell her to stay away from the street.

When Paul says to the Philippian church, “Look out for…” he is warning them that these people are “hazardous.” He is saying, “Watch out for them like you would watch out for a fire!” They are no good. So, we know that we are to “look out for” someone but who, specifically, are we to look out for? Paul answers that question in verse 2.

II. Look Out for Dogs, Evildoers, and Mutilators of the Flesh (v. 3:2b)

“Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.” The group Paul is urging the Philippian church to “look out for” is called the *Judaizers*.

Who are the Judaizers? If you asked them they would say that they are Christian teachers. The reality is they were false teachers. They proclaimed salvation through ritual, ceremony and

legalism. They emphasized being Judaizers, and heaped scorn on anyone who was not a Judaizer by calling them *dogs* and *evildoers*.

They were violating the passage we studied last weekend, weren't they? Matthew 7:1-2, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgement you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you."

Paul is such a wordsmith. Do you see what he's doing here? He's taking the same scathing words the Judaizers hurled at non-Judaizers and throwing it right back at them. You see, dogs were not the loveable, huggable pets that they are today in American culture. Dogs were regarded "as the most despicable, insolent and miserable of creatures. Dogs were despised because they would eat anything, including dead animals, human corpses, and their own vomit."¹

But look at what Paul does with that term. He essentially says, "Are dogs unclean and filthy? So are the false teachers. Are dogs vicious and dangerous and to be avoided? So are the false teachers. So are all those who teach salvation by works."²

Paul also calls them *evildoers*. This is ironic since the Judaizers would not see themselves this way. They saw themselves as teachers of the law who did works of the law to earn their salvation. They saw themselves as servants of righteousness in contrast to the enemies of the people of God who did not obey the law, therefore, making them *evildoers*.

But Paul depicts the Judaizers as *evildoers* in two ways: First, because of their emphasis on the works of the law. This turns into a self-reliance that clouds people from seeing their need for salvation in Christ. Second, because their work to convert Gentile Christians to Judaism by

¹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 218.

² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Philippians* (Chicago: Moody, 2001), 217.

requiring circumcision and works of the law harms Christians by misleading them to supplement faith in Christ with works of the law.³

The last title he gives them is, “those who mutilate the flesh.” The Greek word used here that we translate as “mutilation” is a sarcastic twist on the significance of circumcision. Circumcision was incredibly important to the Jews. It was so important that the word was synonymous with Judaism. If you were a Jew then you were a member of the circumcision.

But circumcision was only meant to be an outward symbol of an inward reality. The same thing can be said of communion or baptism. That’s what you’ll see at the end of June during our next baptism. You will see an individual or individuals who are making an outward expression of something going on internally.

So, what is that? It’s this: Sin has so permeated man that it goes down to the deepest root of his being. What man needed was to be cleansed of that sin, and bloodshed was the only way for that cleansing to take place. Circumcision is a symbol. No ritual, not baptism, communion, or circumcision can transform the heart. So, Paul is saying, “Circumcision has no more value than mutilating yourself and hoping for salvation.” Circumcision and mutilation cannot replace faith in Christ as the basis for salvation.

III. What They Proclaim (vv. 3-6)

Paul has helped us to identify who they are and we’ve learned about circumcision which was one of the false messages they proclaimed. Now, I need you to jump down to verses 3 through 6 because Paul is going to show us in greater detail additional messages of these false teachers.

He begins in verse 3, “For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—⁴ though I myself have reason for

³ Hansen, 219.

confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”

Paul lists seven areas that he once put spiritual confidence in. These would all be areas that Judaizers would place high value on as it relates to salvation. This list is like his religious resume.

The first area is ritual. Circumcision was the major issue for the Judaizers. Paul says, “I was circumcised on the 8th day just like Genesis 17 and Leviticus 12 instruct.” At the proper time, he went through the ceremony that initiated him into the covenant people. He was a Jew by birth and followed the Jewish rituals from the beginning. He was not a Gentile convert to Judaism like some of the Judaizers were. But by listing circumcision, Paul is saying, “Salvation is not by ritual.”

The second area is race. Paul says in verse 5, “of the people of Israel.” Paul was a member of God’s chosen people and inherited all of the blessings of being part of the covenant nation. He was a physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—a heritage that the Jewish people relied on, along with circumcision, for salvation. But here, Paul is saying, “Salvation is not by race.”

The third area is rank. Again in verse 5 Paul writes, “of the tribe of Benjamin.” The tribe of Benjamin was one of the most prominent tribes in Israel with a rich history. Benjamin was the younger of the two sons born to Jacob’s favorite wife, Rachel. He was the only son of Jacob born in the Promised Land. When the Promised Land was divided up, the holy city of Jerusalem went

to the tribe of Benjamin. Mordecai, whom God used along with Esther to save the Jews from genocide, was a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

By Paul's day, many Jews no longer knew what tribe they belonged to, but Paul's family had remained pure Benjamites. This again put him above the Judaizers but here, Paul is saying, "Salvation is not by rank."

So, if we summarized these first three areas we would say they are all hereditary. Paul didn't earn them, his parents either chose those things for him or he was born into them. It's sort of like your last name. I was born a Crosby. I didn't choose that last name; it was given to me by my mom (I grew up in a single parent home) and she didn't choose it either. It was extended to her at her birth.

But now we transition. Parts of my bio are in the bulletin but I'm a graduate of the Arts & Communications Magnet Program at North Community High School where I won several awards for both television and radio production. In college, I was a double major graduating with a degree in Bible and a degree in Broadcasting and Electronic Media. In seminary, I was the first student at the seminary to graduate with a Master of Divinity in Expository Preaching.

None of those accomplishments happened because of my last name or strings my family pulled. They're my achievements and the result of me doing, academically, what those institutions required for a degree.

Paul transitions here from things handed to him because of his family and decisions his family made, to accomplishments of his own.

In verse 5 Paul writes, "a Hebrew of Hebrews." Hebrew of Hebrews is best understood that as he grew to Manhood he strictly maintained his family's traditional Jewish heritage. But Paul is saying here, "Salvation is not by tradition."

The next area is religion. Paul writes, “as to the law, a Pharisee.” If you were a Pharisee you reached the highest level in devout, legalistic Judaism. Pharisees were devoted to the Law and all of the traditions that were added to it. To be a Pharisee was to be a member of an elite, influential, and highly respected group of men who painstakingly lived to know, interpret, guard, and obey the Law. But Paul is saying here, “Salvation is not by religion.”

Now we turn to the area of sincerity. A common thing people say today is, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you’re sincere about it.” Well, Paul wasn’t just sincere. He was zealous. He writes in verse 6, “as to zeal, a persecutor of the church.” The Jews viewed zeal as the highest religious virtue. To be zealous was to love God and hate what offends him. I don’t know why but the Packers immediately come to mind. Paul’s zealous but misguided love for God caused him to hate and persecute Christianity. In the area of zeal, Paul was better than the Judaizers in that they only proselytized the church; he had persecuted it. But Paul is saying here, “Salvation is not by sincerity.”

The final area is legalistic righteousness. Paul writes in the remainder of verse 6, “as to righteousness under the law, blameless.” Anyone observing Paul’s life would find his behavior blameless. Not sinless...but blameless. By all outward appearances, Paul was like a model Jew who lived by Jewish law. But Paul is saying here, “Salvation is not by legalistic righteousness.”

IV. Knowing Christ (vv. 7-11)

Do you see what’s happening? Paul is poking holes in works-based righteousness. He is deflating the idea that a person’s salvation is found in their achievement or family history.

On December 10th and 11th, 2010, a severe winter storm arrived in the Twin Cities. The Minnesota Vikings were supposed to play the New York Giants at the Metrodome but that storm impacted the entire region and prevented the Giants from arriving on schedule. Because of the

conditions the NFL moved the game from afternoon to evening, giving people more time to get out from underneath all of the snow. To keep the game on schedule, crews were sent to the top of the Metrodome to clear the snow off of the roof. They were semi-successful but after 17-inches of snow and strong winds, the crews were brought back inside. As the workers were pulling back, the roof could already be seen sagging in the center. On December 12th at about 5:00am, unable to support the weight of the snow, three panels tore open sending large amounts of snow to the turf below. Three days later, with the roof mostly deflated, a fourth panel tore open sending more snow and ice into the Dome. The weight of all of that snow was too much for the roof of the Metrodome to handle.

Listen, when it comes to salvation, there are all kinds of theories that exist as to how it's obtained. But the reality is they all collapse. Paul is about to tell us what the only option is for salvation and this option doesn't collapse.

He writes in verses 7 through 11, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

A couple of years ago, Suzy and I purchased financial software called Quicken to help us manage our finances. We used to use a free service called Mint and it was fine – but Quicken

finally added some features to their software for Mac that I really wanted so we made the plunge and purchased Quicken for Mac.

As I was exploring what the new software could do, I happened to notice that as I imported our financial information there was a number on the bottom left hand side of the screen that kept changing. You know what that number was? Net Worth. Your net worth can be an encouraging number or a discouraging number. If you have assets like cash, a savings account with 3-6 months' worth of expenses in it, a retirement account, cars and a home that are completely paid off, things that would be considered a wise use of finances, having those things will result in a positive net worth.

But you know what hurts net worth? Liabilities. A mortgage, an auto loan, student loans, credit card debt. All of these things negatively affect your net worth. By the way, did you know that 1 in 7 U.S. households has a negative net worth because of student loans and credit cards? Overall, according to a report from the New York Fed, U.S. households have 12.3 trillion dollars in debt. That's a lot of money.

This isn't a message about finances but in verse 7 Paul uses financial terms to describe these areas of his past. He writes, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ." *Gain* carries the idea that Paul's heritage and accomplishments were assets that gave him a religious net worth far above any of the Judaizers. But, when he says, "I now count those gains as loss." What does he mean? He is saying that because of Jesus Christ, he has added up all of his perceived assets and now counts them as one huge liability. Those things actually give him a negative net worth.

But those things are in the past. What about the present or the future? Let's look at verse 8, "Indeed, I count everything as loss". Paul says that every work he counted on to earn God's

favor and anything he might do now or later are also losses compared to the immeasurable worth of knowing Christ. For Paul, the value of knowing Christ exceeds the value of anything else. When we place the value of knowing Christ on one side of the balance scales and everything else on the other side, everything else has no value whatsoever when compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus.

What about for you? What value does Jesus Christ have in your life when compared to the other items listed on your balance sheet?

Notice that he doesn't stop at, "I count everything as loss..." He continues to degrade these things. He says, "I count them as rubbish." So, here's our next awkward moment. The word *rubbish* is a fairly clean way of saying, "excrement, manure, garbage, kitchen scraps" and in some Greek contexts it refers specifically to "human excrement." Paul is saying in the strongest of terms his disdain for all the religious credits that he hoped would impress man and God. When compared to the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ, they are as worthless as a 1961 championship in a 2017 season.

Jump to verse 9, "not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith." Paul, like some of us here today, spent part of his adult life futilely trying to obtain righteousness by keeping the Law. That righteousness—one of self-effort, external morality, religious ritual, and moral works, all produced by the flesh—was a crushing, unbearable burden. Can you relate to that? Even on his best days, Paul fell far short of God's standard and we do too. Paul needed an exchange. He needed to exchange the burden of legalistic, self-righteousness for the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ.

What does he mean by *faith*? Let's define it. Faith is the confident, continuous confession of total dependence on and trust in Jesus Christ for the necessary requirements to enter God's kingdom. It involves more than mere intellectual assent to the truth of the gospel; saving faith includes trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and surrender to His lordship. It is on the basis of faith alone that righteousness comes from God to repentant sinners.

What about *righteousness*? What is *righteousness*? Righteousness is right standing with God and acceptance by Him.⁴

What's your standing with God? Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ? If you've never placed your faith in Christ and you're still trying to obtain salvation through works, we can settle this before you go home today. You don't have to bear the unbearable burden of self-righteousness any longer. You can have freedom in Jesus Christ before this message is over.

V. Forgetting What Lies Behind (vv. 12-14)

Let's take a look at the rest of our text. Paul writes in 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. ¹³Brothers, 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, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

One of the reasons Paul is writing to the church in Philippi is to encourage them in their faith. Paul is reminding them they need to keep moving forward. If you jump back to the last part of verse 9 you'll read, "but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his

⁴ MacArthur, 238.

sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”

What does all of that mean? Simply put, to know Christ through the power of his resurrection is to recognize first, that it is Christ’s resurrection power that saves the believer. In salvation, believers are identified with Christ in His death and resurrection. But second, and this is where the moving forward piece enters in, it is Christ’s resurrection power that sanctifies the believer to keep them moving forward in their walk with Jesus Christ, to defeat temptation and trials, to lead a holy life, and to boldly and fruitfully proclaim the gospel.

What about the fellowship of his sufferings? For Paul, Jesus isn’t just an acquaintance like most of our Facebook Friends and Twitter Followers. For Paul, knowing Jesus meant having a deep partnership and closeness with Christ in suffering. When you and I place our faith in Jesus Christ we have a companion who is with us in our suffering—One who has endured far more intense persecution and suffering than anyone else who ever lived.

When we tie it all together, faith in Christ comes with the opportunity to know Jesus Christ at an incredibly intimate level, a level that brings with it power to move forward as you strive to look more like Christ, and a power that allows you to endure (with His companionship) during the most difficult of circumstances, and at a level that doesn’t end with death.

Which leads us to verse 12, “Not that I have already obtained this.”

The Cubs haven’t won the 2017 World Series. They won the 2016 World Series. When the 2017 season started the Cubs couldn’t just sit still and expect to win (though sometimes they play that way). They have to keep playing if they want to win another championship.

A follower of Christ doesn’t just have a “Come to Jesus” moment and then they’re on stand-by for the rest of their lives. We keep moving. That’s why Paul writes, “Not that I have

already obtained this.” Paul hasn’t fully discovered all there is to know about Christ, about the power of his resurrection, about his sufferings, and, since he’s still alive, he hasn’t arrived at the resurrection from the dead. He’s still learning, he’s still growing. He is pressing on to look more like Christ. And what’s his motivation? Look at the end of verse 12, “because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” Ever since Paul was grasped and apprehended by Christ, he has desired to grasp and comprehend Christ. Not for a moment does Paul believe that he has comprehended everything there is to know about Jesus Christ, so he presses on, he continues growing because knowing Christ is far greater than anything else to him.

Notice next, not only does he know there’s more to learn about Christ, but he also knows he’s not perfect. He writes, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect...” There is a day coming where Paul will become perfect but not until he sees Christ face to face. Until then, he honestly admits his imperfection.

But notice, that imperfection doesn’t keep him from growing. Look at the rest of verse 12, “but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” He didn’t look in the mirror and say, “I’m never gonna be X so I might as well quit.” No, he pressed on. He was not satisfied with where he was at spiritually so he worked to change that. To press on means “to move rapidly and decisively toward an objective.”

Have you ever left the grocery store with your cart full of groceries and you get to the exit only to see that the floodgates of heaven have opened? And it doesn’t matter where your car is it’s not close enough that you’re going to make it to the car, get the groceries in, and return the cart without getting soaked. Now you could wait it out but that means dinner is going to be late (which is okay because the little children who are waiting for that dinner are always sympathetic and understanding). No! What do you do? You press on. You move rapidly and decisively

toward the car because dinner isn't going to make itself. Your mind is made up. You know the goal and that's exactly what Paul is saying here. I'm not content with where I am with Christ so I'm going to press on.

Look at verses 13 and 14, "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."

Here's where we take this verse out of context. We look at verse 13 and use it to say, "Forget about your past mistakes...Don't worry about previous sins...what happened in the past is in the past. It's time to let go and move forward." While those are all true statements, that's not what our text is saying...which is why we have to pay attention to the context.

Paul just told us that what he knows about Christ is a very long way from where he would like to be. With that in mind, he has only one goal: Forgetting what lies behind and strain toward what lies ahead. Paul's reference in this context to *what is behind* points to those things in his life as a believer in Christ. His point is that even though he believes in Christ he has not yet fully seized Christ. *What is behind* is everything that he has already achieved in his walk with Christ.

For at least twenty years, he has known Christ and served him. He could easily point back to a long list of achievements in his ministry as an apostle, to special revelations given to him by the Lord, and to major theological arguments developed in his messages and in his letters. He has already accomplished so much, taught so much, and walked in the Spirit so faithfully that he of all people could say he reached the goal, arrived at the apex, and fully apprehended all that he was called to attain.

But instead, Paul forgets what he has achieved so far. He did not let his mind dwell on past achievements; he did not keep returning in his mind the good old days before he was in

prison; he did not constantly remind himself of all his achievements nor continually recall those special high points of his intimate relationship with Christ. He forgets, continually and intentionally forgets, what is behind in order to press on. He is not distracted by all the trophies of the past. He is able to move enthusiastically into the future because he decisively throws away the burdens of the past. Forgetting, as Paul mentions here, is an active, continuous discipline of the mind and heart. Although he did not actually forget the past, he emphatically chose to disregard it. He forcefully rejected it. He openly declared a nonobservance of his past achievements.⁵

Why did he forget? So he could “strain forward to what lies ahead...” The Greek word here means “to stretch.” It’s the only time it’s used in the New Testament. It describes stretching a muscle to its limit, and pictures a runner straining every muscle to reach the finish line. Every thought and every emotion reaches out in eager anticipation of arriving at the goal...growth in Jesus Christ until we one day see him face to face.

Conclusion

So, what do we do with all of this? Well, there are several points of application that come to mind.

First, you need to settle exactly what your faith is in. Paul makes it clear that faith in rituals, faith in race, faith in rank, faith in tradition, faith in religion, faith in sincerity, and faith in legalistic righteousness is not saving faith. The only faith that will place us in right standing with God is faith in Jesus Christ.

⁵ Hansen, 253-54

Have you done that? If not, what's the obstacle? What's so important to you that the weight of hanging onto it is worth more than the freedom of knowing Jesus Christ? We can settle this in just a moment.

Second, if you are a believer, strive to know Jesus Christ better today than yesterday, and better tomorrow than today. Paul was not content with remaining where he was in his knowledge of Jesus Christ. He wanted to know Him more and more. He wanted to grasp Him. Is that your desire too? If not, what's competing?

As we look at the balance sheet of your life, what's the thing that still has value, still has worth, when compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ? Paul says that these things have a negative balance when compared to Jesus Christ. What would happen, in your life, if you believed him and strained with everything you have – to know Christ?

Third. Pastors, Deacons, Growth Group Leaders, Husbands, Wives, Dads, Moms, Grandparents, Present and Future Spiritual Leaders of Your Home, Church, or Ministry. We need to be on guard against false teaching. Paul is writing to a church that is, for the most part, healthy. So, when he writes, "Look out for dogs and evildoers," he's not writing against a group of people who have already penetrated the Philippian church and are now influencing them from the inside. No, he's writing from the vantage point that he has encountered these false teachers in other settings. Even though they aren't in Philippi or their ideas might not be popular yet in Philippi, they're coming. And it's going to be the job of the spiritual leaders in Philippi to expose them.

Listen, Christ wants us to know Him because there are people who proclaim to be Christians and will insist that their message is biblical when in fact it is a message that in no way represents the God of the Bible. The only way we'll be able to discern fact from fiction is by

knowing Jesus Christ through His Word. And there are people who God has entrusted to ~~you~~ us for their discipleship and it will be up to us to help them separate fact from fiction as well.

The church can help but [we are] the primary disciplers of our families (with the help of the Holy Spirit). But, we are not alone. Jesus hasn't hung us out to dry. He wants us to know Him. We have the most important tool for accomplishing that...the Bible.

Please take time to read it. We all need to read it...your family needs you to read it. 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

Closing Story

Well, just like this past World Series was one for the record books so was the Super Bowl. The game between the Atlanta Falcons and the New England Patriots was watched by 111.3 million viewers and ended up being closer than anyone ever would have thought. The Falcons went into halftime with a 21-3 lead and then increased that lead to 28-3 in the 3rd quarter after Matt Ryan's second touchdown pass. I remember thinking at that point, "The only people who don't think they're out of this game are the Patriots." New England would storm back to score 25 unanswered points and tie the game at 28 – and force the only overtime game in Super Bowl history. New England would open overtime with a 75-yard drive that ended with a touchdown that sealed their victory over the Falcons.

For the Patriots to win, they couldn't focus on the fact that they won their 500th game this season. They couldn't focus on the fact that they ended the season with their 8th straight division title, and with their star quarterback suspended for the first 4 games of the season. They couldn't

focus on the awards and accomplishments of the season. Instead they had to focus on the goal before them, overcoming a 25-point deficit and winning the Super Bowl.

I don't know what your past spiritual accomplishments are but I thank God for them. Lives have been changed, churches planted, gifts used for the furthering of His kingdom. Think about just the ministry impact of Edgewood, collectively as we gather, grow, give and go.

Accomplishments that include bringing people in, training them up, and then watching them "Go" to plant churches and lead ministries around the globe. Giving generously and supporting missionaries and ministries to the tune of 11% of our budget. Bringing families here throughout the year and teaching them about Christ through Awana and Super Saturday. Training up students and singles through different camps, conferences, and retreats. Seeing people freed from hurts, habits and hang-ups through Celebrate Recovery. Helping those in pain through GriefShare and DivorceCare. Helping people through Entrusted with a Child's Heart, Single and Parenting, and Financial Peace University.

I've just touched the surface. We would be here a long time if we listed Edgewood's spiritual accomplishments over our 110-year history. And we're not through. While we appreciate what has happened here in the past, there is more to be done. There are more families, students, co-workers, neighbors, friends and family members, who need us to be growing closer to Jesus Christ because it's the very thing that they need too.

It's going to take all of us taking part in BLESS. Do you remember this from last weekend? Begin with prayer. Listen. Eat. Serve. And Share. It's going to take all of us taking part in BLESS. It's going to take all of us straining forward, encouraging one another, working together with all that we have and with Christ's power moving toward what lies ahead, the prize of knowing Jesus Christ our Lord. You and I...we have work to do. Let's pray.