

## Taking a mature view of life

The Olympic Games is the most prestigious athletics event in the world. Every four years the best of the countries athletes participate doing their best to get crowned with the gold medal. They have been training for years to get where they are and know what to expect. They have competed in national athletics meetings where they have beaten the other competitors to be selected for their national Olympic squad. However they are fully aware that they have not yet attained what they have gone to the Olympics for. Merely being at the Olympic Games was not their goal. They are still to run their race and focus on winning the gold – not only for themselves but for their country.

Philippians 3: 12 – 4: 1

### 1) Be realistic about your life

- Paul says that he has not already obtained what he has just been speaking about – the resurrection of the dead. He has not yet been glorified with Christ
- As much as Paul was highly respected and honoured amongst the churches.
  - He was fruitful in ministry by winning many people to Christ and planted churches that grew to be strong, wholesome churches that reached out and touched the lives of many others as well.
  - He trained others in the ministry who looked up to him as their spiritual father
- However with all this he did not consider that he had obtained the crown yet.
  - He was still looking ahead to what lay in store for him.
  - He was realistic about his life to say that it isn't time to stop now – He needs to keep going until He received his crown of glory
  - I have seen many athletes who are coming first in a race lose the race because they stopped before the finish line and the second person overtook them at the last moment.
- We need to be realistic about how our life is before God and whether we have stopped running the race for the finish line.
  - Some grow proud thinking that their life is perfect and sinless and that they don't have any more changing to happen in their life
  - Others feel totally overwhelmed by their sin and inadequacies that they lose perspective of the reality of who they are in Christ
  - Then there are those who have resigned themselves to their weaknesses and/or sin justifying themselves before God with words like “I asked God to take away my lust but he didn't so I committed adultery.”
  - What are our relationships like? Are we living with broken relationships?
  - Sometimes it's not about sin, weakness or brokenness relationship but hurts that are carried with us from the past.
- We need to stop and look at our lives through the eyes of God realistically
  - Admit that we haven't yet reached perfection and make mistakes
  - Admit your sense of being overwhelmed by your weaknesses and inadequacies
  - Realise that only God can justify us and that we need to confess sin and not justify it.
  - God can heal us from the hurts and brokenness of the past.

### 2) Leaving behind and reaching ahead

- God wants us to put the past behind us and take hold of what He has for us in the future
- Paul says in verse 13: “One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead.”

- In a long distance race there may have been some difficult stretches but the runner forgets about what he has been through and strains – stretches himself – towards what is ahead – the finish line, the goal.
- We cannot change the past but we can learn from it to shape our future.
  - If we don't let go of the past we will take all our past baggage with us into the future – and we'll pass it on to others.
- Our ultimate goal is the calling heavenward in Christ Jesus
  - However in this life we are also called to live by a higher calling than the world lives by.
  - We are called to be children of God and Jesus has already made us that.
  - Paul reminds us to live up to what we have already attained – adoption
- In order to live up to what we have already attained we need to put our sin, weakness, broken relationships and hurts of the past behind us and move on to wholeness and living a life in the purposes of God.
  - Hebrews 5: 12 – 14 “In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”

### 3) **Having the right focus on life**

- In order to forget what lies behind and strain to what lies ahead we need to focus our attention in the right place.
- Some will focus on the past – the good and the bad – and will never be free from it
- Others will continually focus on keeping the Law and rituals and in practice deny the cross of Christ putting emphasis on our works again rather than on the grace of God
  - Works of the Law will never set us free from our past bondages – only the grace of God can
- Many focus on their stomach – running after their own lusts and then glorying in them
- The focus of such is on the earthly – on themselves and what they can attain for themselves in life.
- If we focus on such things we will never be fruitful in the kingdom of God.
  - We will feed our bondages and never be free from them e.g. if we constantly talk negatively about someone who hurt us in the past it fuels our bitterness. This is why Jesus told us to bless our enemies and do good to them.
  - We will never be able to be a blessing to others
- Our focus ought to be on the fact that we are citizens of heaven and we set our sights on Jesus our king who is coming again to complete our salvation and make us as He is.
  - Hebrews 12: 2 – 3 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”
- When our focus is fixed on Him as our reward we will move on in life and continually move away from what lies behind to what lies ahead in life.
- God has a purpose for each of us and we will only move towards that purpose when our focus is on Him
- This is how we stand firm in the Lord (4: 1)