

I Press Toward the Mark

by Earl R. Clark

Earl R. Clark's sermon emphasizes the importance of striving for spiritual goals through discipline, faith, and understanding the eternal rewards of following Christ.

Duration: 48:01

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:7, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 12:1, James 4:2

Topics: "Calling"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that Christ is the ultimate goal and focus for believers. He encourages everyone to participate in the race towards this goal, emphasizing that all can reach it with the help of God. The speaker urges listeners to keep their eyes fixed on Christ and not be distracted by others. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God has a purpose for each individual and that it is their responsibility to use their time on earth to share the message of Christ with others.

Transcript

We'll begin reading with verse seven. We'll read the remainder of Philippians chapter three. Beginning with verse seven, the Apostle writes, But what things were gained to me, those I counted lost for Christ? Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but done, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, for getting 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.

Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded, and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk, so as ye have us for an example.

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our conversation, our manner of living, is in heaven. From whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, or who shall change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." I'm going to talk about a few things that Brother Willie should be telling you about instead of me, because they relate to the Greek language, in this case to New Testament Greek, or the current Greek language of that day, rather than of today.

But I don't know Greek. I can't read or translate Greek, and what few words I have picked up I've just gotten by reading the writings of men who were Greek scholars. And from them I learned that the Greeks had a word that means beauty and goodness, all in one word.

So we often say the Greeks had a word for it. Here the Greeks had a word for them, a word for them. And it comes from the Greek word kalos, which means beautiful, and the word kai, which means and, and the word agathos, which means good.

And agathos is good, and agathai is goodness. So kalokagathai means beauty and goodness, and this word stood for the Greek ideal. They thought that the pursuit of life should be the pursuit of beauty and goodness.

And of course, you can't argue with that in a way. The only thing is they didn't really know how to go about it, because beauty and goodness is found in the person of the Son of God, and they knew nothing about him until the revelation through Paul and the other preachers who came along with him. And so the Greeks were seeking beauty and goodness, and one of the ways, one of the very widespread ways of seeking it was through a life of sport.

They were great sportsmen, as we well know, and our Olympic games today were named after this great institution which was in vogue in the days of the Apostle Paul and of New Testament Christianity. In fact, sport was a state institution, and many Greek men and women, practiced it every day from the time they were seven years old right up into manhood. And the gymnasium as such was a Greek institution also.

They were airy, shady places. I don't know if they smelled as much like stale sweat and sneakers as some gymnasiums do today. These were outdoor gymnasiums with arrangements for games and races and for wrestling.

The palaestra was particularly a place for wrestling, and then they had the stadion which was a race course, and along with all of these things for physical sport, they also had the excedra which were rooms for philosophical discussion and for teaching. And of course, one of the most celebrated of those places was the Akademos of Plato, and then there was Aristotle's Lycaeton. Mr. Willie is probably shuddering at my pronunciation.

I don't know how to say these Greek words, but that's roughly the way they're spelled in English. And then there were, besides the Olympian games, there were also the Isthmian games. And you see, the Apostle Paul was well acquainted with all of this.

He had observed all this. He'd been brought up in the Greek knowledge and wisdom of the day, as well as the Jewish. He was a well educated man, a very highly educated man, and been exposed to all of this

knowledge and idealism of the Greeks.

And so, taking a figure of speech from the Greek races, he writes to us, to all the saints, all the followers of Christ in all the ages like this. He says, "Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run, that ye may attain. And every man that striveth in the games is temperate in all things." And we know how the athletes train today.

These young men who were out on the University of Florida football field yesterday in Trounce, North Carolina, I'm sure that they trained very severely. If they were not in training, they wouldn't have been on the field, for the coach would see to that. So he says, "Every man that striveth in the games is temperate in all things.

Now they do it to receive a corruptible wreath,' which, as you know, in those days was a wreath of olive leaves, a crown. They do it to receive a corruptible wreath because, of course, those leaves plucked from the tree wouldn't last very long, you know, and they'd wither and fade away. They do it to receive a corruptible wreath, but we an incorruptible." And so you see, he's saying to us that you and I as Christians are in a race.

We're in a competition in a sense, and in order to succeed in this endeavor, we must be temperate. We must be careful. We must devote ourselves to this and deny ourselves some things that may appeal to the flesh but which would interfere in our running a good race for Christ.

And he says, if they're willing to do that for a mere olive crown or for the mere applause of the multitudes who hail you as a hero today and forget your name tomorrow, how much better for us who do it for an incorruptible crown that fadeth not away that we will receive in heaven from our blessed Lord and Savior. And is not his well-done, now good and faithful servant much more to us than any plaudits that man could give could possibly be? Every Roman province had games. Besides the Greek International Olympic Games, there were local games in every Roman province, and the Olympian was the most important.

As a matter of fact, the Olympic Games were a Greek national shrine. They were held every four years, and so important was this to the Greeks that they called the four-year interval between Olympic Games by a special name. They called that period of four years an Olympiad.

And then at the entrance to the sacred circle in which the victor was crowned, at that entrance was the holy wild olive tree from which the victor's wreath was taken, and adjacent to it was a vast temple to the Olympian god Zeus. A sculptor of gold and ivory of this god by the celebrated Greek artist Phidias was the feature of that temple. So we see that the Greeks, seeking after beauty and goodness, had nothing more than gold and ivory as a representation of their god.

What a sad thing to realize that the Greeks, seeking after beauty, found it only in the works of man and not in the mighty works of God who made all things beautiful in his time. They found a source of inspiration in what human athletes could do. They knew nothing about what God could do.

They knew nothing about his mighty power. Paul spoke to them in Athens, and you remember well what he said to them. He said, You have, besides all these statues, this beautiful statue to Zeus in gold and ivory, and statues to the rest of the hierarchy of Greek mythological gods, in addition to all you have a statue to the unknown god.

The reason the Greeks had this, I understand, was because they were afraid that maybe they overlooked one. They didn't want to offend them, so they put up a temple to the unknown god, the one we might have forgotten about. Paul says to them, This unknown god is the one I have come to declare to you, because they knew nothing about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They knew nothing about the grace and the love of God until this New Testament revelation was brought to them through the preachers. Now in Rome they had the Circus Maximus and the Colosseum, and the Colosseum was said to have possibly as many as 150,000 seats. Now there were 62,000 some odd people at Florida Field yesterday, and I'm glad I wasn't there because that place must have been overflowing clear out halfway to Ocala, I think, yesterday.

But the Colosseum would have been only about half full with that crowd, if it did have as many seats as some think. The floor of the Colosseum was sand, and from this they get the word arena because that's the Latin word for sand. And then there was a place of honor, the podium, the place where the Institutor of the Games sat and watched them, and the Vestals, and the Senators who ruled over Rome.

Vestals were from the temples of the gods you know, and then the knights were above them, and then the soldiers, and then all around filling all the rest of the Colosseum were the people, all the people. Even the slaves came to the games because they were free, you know, they were provided by the emperor to amuse the people and sort of keep them in subjection so that they didn't object too much to some of the policies of the government. And these were great occasions, you know.

You know, this take me out to the ball game bit that we have today is a sort of a holiday occasion. Well, they had that sort of thing back in Roman days. They had awnings, and brightly colored carpets, and flags, and roses, and incense, and figs, and nuts, and dates, and cakes, and even roasted fowls and pheasants were passed around free among the people in the stands by the Roman emperor, by the government.

And they had lotteries. They bet on the outcome of the various games, and they laughed, and they joked, and they ate, and they drank, and they bet on the contests, and pleasure and happiness ruled. Worldly pursuits were the order of the day.

In the Colosseum, in the arena, they had foot racing, and wrestling, and boxing, and horses, horse and chariot races. And then they had bloody battles where gladiators fought with animals, and they would have tremendous big spectacles in which sometimes as many as 300 horsemen would face another 300 horsemen in mock battle. Mock battle in the sense that they were not contending for anything except for the sake of battle, but they killed each other, and blood flowed in profusion on the sand of the Colosseum arena.

Sometimes they would have 500 and opposing another 500 footmen in a tremendous battle, and sometimes 20 elephants would be opposed against 20 other elephants. They had sea fights in special basins that were built for this particular occasion, and flotillas of thousands of people would contend before these vast crowds of people, killing and being killed, drowning and being drowned. In the midst of this arena, the emperor often arranged for the execution of criminals in very contrived fashions.

Sometimes they portrayed in their death some of the great dramas of the literature of the day. They would have, for instance, Hercules burnt. One of the condemned prisoners would play the part of Hercules and give his life as he was burnt, according to the story of Hercules.

They would have Sion broken on a wheel. One of the prisoners would portray this and be broken on a wheel and killed in that fashion. According to literature, Marcius was killed by having his skin stripped from him while he was alive, and they portrayed this in the Circus Maximus and in the Colosseum.

Or Dercy, who was killed by having her hair tied to the tail of a bull and being dragged around until she was bounced to death. Now, in the apostle Paul's time, these games were being held, and I'm sure that the apostle Paul was very familiar with the cry of the gladiator as he came into the arena, "Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant! Hail Caesar, we who are about to die salute you!" And the first blood was drawn, and after that the thirst for blood cried for more blood. Bodies were dragged away, and always as these games proceeded, the last contests were the bloodiest of all in order to please this bloodthirsty crowd.

And the apostle writes, knowing all of this, he writes about himself and the others who brought the message of Christ into Greece and into Rome, and into all the civilized world of that day. And he says this, he says, "For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last of all,' now remember that the last battles were the bloodiest, "I think that God has set forth us the apostles last of all as men doomed to death, for we are made a spectacle, a theatron, a performance unto the world and to angels and men.' Into this world the apostles came with a message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they preached to the bloodthirsty multitudes, "Jesus is Savior." What a contrast! Jesus is Savior. He'll save you from sin through faith.

He'll bring you into a new life, a life of victory, a life of hope, a life of eternal glory. They preached the power of God in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They preached a living union with the God and Father of Jesus Christ and the Creator of all the world and all the universe.

You see, the apostle preached a message that would link up with the Greek ideal, with the thought of the beauty of holiness, with the thought of the goodness of a godly walk, and he brought before the Greeks an answer to their ideal that they had never discovered for themselves and which would fulfill their ideal far better than any of the practices which were current in that day. He also brought before the Roman audience two thoughts that appealed to them. The Romans governed in strict righteousness.

A Roman citizen could not be condemned without a proper trial according to the law of Rome, a law upon which the English law and, in turn, the law of the United States of America is based, for Roman law is basically right and just. The Romans also believed in power, the power of their armies was what subdued all the lands round about them and made the Roman Empire the greatest in its day. And so the apostle Paul preached to the Romans the righteousness of God and the power of the resurrection like righteousness found only in God and power found also in him.

Now, if you were to visit the Flavian Amphitheater in Rome today, I understand that you would find a dead and crumbling structure, and I suppose we've all seen photographs of this. If you were to walk in there, according to some who have described it in the present day, you would still see the imperial box, you would still see the chambers which could hold two thousand wild beasts, you could still see the great arch of the door of the living through which the gladiators came, stood before Caesar and cried, Hail to thee, O Caesar! Those who are about to die greet thee." Thousands of times this statement was made as they walked through the door of the living to emerge from the amphitheater as dead bodies. You see also the door of the libertines through which the corpses were dragged.

How helpless, how feeble, how small the band of Christians in Rome must have looked to these tremendous crowds that filled that amphitheater back in those days. How small you and I would feel standing in that spot today and remembering the heroes of the Christian faith who laid down their lives in

defense of the treasure of the gospel of Christ, and thus, in a sense, laid down their lives for you and for me by defending the gospel that's so precious to us today, lest it be destroyed. For you know, the Apostle Paul in his latter days in Rome lived in a day of persecution of the Christians and of the Christian faith.

The great persecutions didn't start until after his death, but according to tradition, the Apostle Paul was beheaded in the year 68 A.D. And it was in 64 A.D. that the Emperor, during the reign of the Emperor Nero, that the city of Rome burned. Now, there were some who cast suspicion on the Emperor that he himself set the fire just for his pleasure, a sort of a pyromaniacal act. Whether this is true or not, we don't know, but because of this suspicion, Nero started a persecution of the Christians and tried to blame it all on them in order to allay suspicion.

And so, from 65 to 68 A.D., there was a great persecution of the Christians. In the year 67, according to tradition, the Apostle Peter was crucified, and in 68 Paul was beheaded. And so, you see, the Apostle Paul possibly writes out of considerable experience with persecution of the Christians in the arena in Rome.

But what do we see as we stand by imagination in the arena, as we look directly in front of the ruins of the royal box? Why, we see there a cross, a cross that was not there in the Apostle Paul's day, but was erected in 1300 A.D. in memory of the martyrs. This cross was destroyed, but again erected in 1927 by the Italian government, and on the base of this cross it says, Ave Crux, space Unica. Hail to thee, O cross, the only hope.

And thus, history testifies of that which endures. Neither the athletic games nor the intellectual exercises of the Greeks nor the bread and the games of the Romans are eternal, but Christ, Christ the crucified and risen one, is in his temple, the church, the royal house of the Eternal One, and that fact cannot be denied. And the cross, our only hope, stands there in the midst of this arena as the sign of victory, the sign of duty, the sign of promise, because Christ has triumphed over death and over hell and over all the forces of mankind and all the forces of Satan that would, if they could, destroy the truth of the gospel of Christ.

Now, I suppose that a good Jew, and I'm sure the Apostle Paul was a good Jew, it's very evident from the writings that he was one, and I suppose a good Jew would participate or attend these games, would not have participated at all in these games, and would attend them only casually. He wouldn't become involved in the worldliness of Greece or the worldliness of Rome, and a separated Jew such as John the Baptist would never go into one of these amphitheaters. Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul uses the language of the Greek and Roman games in order to get his point across to the people who were familiar with them, and you may remember that Paul wrote that he would become all things to all men, that by any means he might win some.

Now, the message of Philippians 3, which we read, is the message of the race. It's based on the race, and in verses 10 through 12 of that chapter where he writes that, "...I may know him, the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain." He's speaking of the race. He's speaking of the out-resurrection from among the dead, specifically.

He's not speaking of himself as complete or perfect, but he speaks of Christ as his goal, as the goal of his life. In verse 13, he speaks about the necessity for single-mindedness of striving, for getting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, "...I press with a unity of purpose toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling, the calling of high." More literally, the calling of heaven.

This is what was before the apostles' minds.

The present life might be likened to a race, a contest. It's striving. It's effort.

It's running out of breath. It's using your strength to the utmost and giving it all for the sake of winning the prize. Not an earthly prize, but the prize of the calling of heaven, that which lay before him, that which he would receive when the race on earth was over, and the judge of all would call him before the bema, the judgment seat of 1 Corinthians 3. Not to judge in the sense of condemnation, but to judge in the sense of reward that he'd receive.

The crown of righteousness calls for the utmost effort to win the prize, and he applies these truths to the Christian life. This is what we learn from the figures of speech that the apostle Paul uses in respect to the race. First of all, he would remind us that all can reach the goal.

Every one of us can reach the goal. This is not like a game of football where two teams are contending against each other and only one team ever gets to the goal. At least in yesterday's game it was mighty close to that.

No, everyone can reach the goal in a race. And you may say, well, I'm not a racer, I'm not a runner, my strength is feeble, I'm unequal to the contest. But in chapter 4 and verse 19, Paul says, My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus, and that which you lack you need only ask for.

We were talking about that just before the meeting began, weren't we, a few of us. We received not because we asked not. What we need, all we need to do is ask for it.

And the Lord Jesus says, Ask and you shall receive. And someone has likened this verse 19 of chapter 4 to writing a check on a bank. That's all we have to do.

We've got a blank check in our hands. All we need to do is fill in the amount. The banker is God.

My God shall supply all of your need. And you know on a check it says, Pay to the order. The order here is, He shall supply.

And then on a bank check you have the amount. What's the amount? All your need. What are the resources of this bank? His riches.

That's more than you and I need. And the bank itself is the bank of glory. My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory.

And then the check is already signed. The signature on the sign, on the check, is Christ Jesus. You think that signature would be honored if you pass in a check on the bank of heaven to supply your needs? All your needs? Not just your material needs, but your spiritual needs.

What you need in order to run this race and win to the glory of Christ, our God will supply if you'll ask. And everyone can reach the goal. You can reach the goal, and I can reach the goal.

All we need to do is run, and we'll get there. But we must run, and we must hasten, and we must concentrate on the goal, and we must allow no distractions. These are the conditions of the race.

Now the apostle Paul says, All run in the race, but not all receive the prize, because some do not run lawfully. You've got to follow the rules. You know, it's no good entering the race track halfway down the course.

You've got to start at the beginning, and you've got to run the course. Some people try to get to heaven by a shortcut. It won't work.

There's only one way into the race, and that is through the cross of Christ, through the blood-sprinkled way, through the way that he made and provided for us. You can't run this race until, first of all, you are a Christian. First of all, you must know Christ as your Savior, and then you may enter this race.

But you must persevere. That's one of the rules of the game, too. You must not yield to fatigue or to discouragement.

And try not to stumble, because you lose time in the race. And you say, Well, how can I avoid stumbling? Well, Christ can preserve us. We need to look to him for our strength.

We need to look to him for our skill in this race. We need to look to him for our inspiration. He's the goal.

He's the one that is set before us. Christ is everything to us, and then we must be determined. And if we follow these rules and run this race, we'll get the victor's prize when we get to heaven, along with the Apostle Paul.

Now, in verses 4 through 7 of Philippians 3, we have the calling and the strength of the racer given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. And in verses 8 to 14, we have the ideal and the objective living only for Christ. And in verses 20 through 21, we have the blessed hope to be forever in the glory with Christ.

These are the things that are set before us. Now, the big point that the Apostle Paul makes is to keep your eye upon the goal, to keep your eye upon Christ. Not to be looking at what the other fellow is doing or not doing, not to be guided by that as to what you will do, but to have your heart set only on Christ, your mind centered upon Him, your eye single and filled with Him, and so to run the race.

Now, at breakfast this morning, Mrs. Willie was telling us about the choice gleanings for yesterday, and I asked her after supper if she could bring to my memory the details, because this is exactly the point of the Apostle Paul's message. And here's the story from choice gleanings for yesterday. It says, Roger Bannister was the first man to run a mile in four minutes.

He was an Englishman, I understand, and this was the first four-minute mile. Three months later, a man named John Landy topped Bannister's record by running the race 1.4 seconds shorter than four minutes. 1.4 seconds shorter.

Not in competition with Bannister, but on a separate occasion where his run of a mile was timed. But three months later, Bannister and Landy were both entered in the same race, were running against each other, and as they moved into the last lap, these two runners were way out ahead of all the rest of the contestants, and Landy was just slightly ahead of Bannister. But as the crowd looked sure that Landy was going to win, they saw that Landy looked around.

He was haunted by the question, where is Bannister? And he didn't know, and he took just an instant to look around, and in that instant he lost the race. And Bannister came up and passed him, and as Landy

reviewed the races for a London Times reporter, Landy said, If I hadn't looked back, I would have run the race. I guess it doesn't pay to look back.

I guess we'd better be looking ahead. I think we'd better have our eyes focused upon Christ, not just for the first half of the race, not just for all except the last lap, but right up to the very last moment. Now, we had a man at Kodak who retired.

He worked in our division, was the head of our FBI division, our microscopy laboratory that traced down problems by the use of microscope techniques, and his wife was the head of the Child Placement Bureau in the county in which the city of Rochester is located. She was the executive secretary of that organization, and she retired just a few months ahead of her husband, and the two of them moved down to Jamaica. We have seen the location of their home in Jamaica on the North Shore, a beautiful spot.

Bob talked with me before he retired, and he told me how much they were looking forward to going down to Jamaica and sitting there on the beach and soaking up the sunshine and resting and just having a glorious time after their retirement. Well, in a few months, Bob was back in Rochester. He'd been down in Jamaica, and he still has his home there, but he'd gotten tired of just sitting in the sun, and he'd had an offer from the Pearl Buck Foundation, he and his wife both, to join their work in Philadelphia of placing Korean orphan children, I think it is, in the United States in homes, something of that sort, and Bob found a new life in that.

Now, as far as I know, neither of these people are born-again Christians. They're people who are interested in social work as a good work. This man couldn't sit out on the beach and soak up the sun when there was work to be done that would benefit humanity.

Much more to the point, perhaps. Some of you may know our sister Nora Patterson. Some of you may have known Bill Patterson, who was a missionary in the West Indies, a very, very capable man and a fine preacher and a lovely brother.

The Lord called Brother Bill home a few years ago. We heard him preach in Padgett Chapel in Bermuda before he set out on his last missionary trip into the West Indies. The next time we got to Bermuda, our sister Nora was in the audience on the Lord's Day morning, and the brethren asked me to speak.

As I stepped down from the platform, Mrs. Patterson, now a widow, came up to me and my wife, and she said, You must be the clerks who have been in St. Thomas, down in the U.S. Virgin Islands. I said, Yes, we've been there two or three times. How did you know? She says, Well, I've been corresponding with Mrs. June Miller down there, and she's told me about your visits there.

She said, I wonder if you could spend a little time today to talk with me about St. Thomas. I said, Well, surely we'll be glad to come over this afternoon and visit you, and we did so. The reason she wanted to talk with us was because dear Nora had an exercise about going down to St. Thomas as a missionary and taking up a whole new life without her husband on her own.

She wasn't ready to sit in the sun when there was work to be done for Christ. Nora is down in St. Thomas now. She's been down there for several years quite on her own without formal backing from such places as the fields in New York because she's a Bermudian.

She was born and raised in Bermuda, and her family still lives there. But Nora is down there looking to the Lord for her support and doing the work. She's doing a wonderful work among young people down there in

Bermuda as well as among the Christians in the lovely little assembly there.

Well, I find that in business life today that top management is not as eager to retire people as they once thought they were going to be. Less than ten years ago there was a good deal of sort of rumor, we thought inspired rumor, that is inspired by management, that retirement ages were going to be lowered a few years hence from 65 to 60. Instead of that today, we find that we who are approaching 60 are being encouraged by management to think about staying on until we are 65 and not to retire early.

Now this encouragement is being given in many subtle ways as well as by some direct suggestion. They're trying to make it pleasant for us to stay. They're providing us with prettier offices, better furniture.

They're providing us with better working conditions in every way that they can think of that might appeal to us. It's easier to get company trips for the older men now than it used to be if you liked that sort of thing. And in every way they can think of, management is trying to appeal to us to persuade us to stay on in our jobs.

And they're giving us a little more help from younger men. Well, you know, I don't believe that God wants something less than what the businessmen want. I think he wants more.

And I think of our brother Harold Harper. I'm sure that some of you people knew Harold Harper and his dear wife Margarita. Harold is with the Lord now.

He started out his ministry in our city of Rochester. But when Harold was well up into his seventies, sick with diabetes and pretty well worn out from a strenuous life of more or less pioneer work among the assemblies, Harold told us in Rochester, not publicly, but in private conversation, that it was his intention, his full intention before God, to die with his boots on, to die in the service of the Lord. He was never going to let up as long as there was one ounce of strength left in his body to preach Christ and the word of God.

And that's exactly what Brother Harper did. And now his wife is carrying on the work as best she can, limited also by poor health in Florence, North Carolina. Dear Peg Harper, she's going to do what her husband did.

She's going to die with her boots on. She's going to die in the service of the Lord that she loves. Well, I suppose that those of us who have been around for a few years can say it's nice to have been young once.

And there are a few young people here tonight, and of course I'm not speaking to you at this particular moment, but to some of the rest of us here. Yes, we can say it's nice to have been young once, but only once, because there are many, many things that we can do as older folks that we can't ask our young people to do, because they have other responsibilities of preparing for a career, of raising young families, and of entering into life. They have things to learn that you and I have learned from experience.

We need the young people. Without the young people, we'd likely get into ruts. But the young people need the older folks, too.

They need the wisdom, the experience, the background, the fuller knowledge of the scriptures that you and I can bring, who have been studying the scriptures for years, as against possibly a few months or a year on the part of some of the younger men and the younger women as well. We need them, and they need us, and God needs us all, because God has not left any of us here on earth for no purpose. Our

sister, Mrs. Manns, was expressing this very thought.

Having been delivered of God from a serious illness, she made the remark which I will pass on as my closing remark, God has a work for me. God has a work for you. As long as he leaves us here upon this earth, he has a purpose in so doing, and that purpose is that we might run the race until we reach the goal to run it to the uttermost, that Christ might be pleased with us, that we might use every moment that he gives us here upon this earth to proclaim the message that Peter and Paul and thousands of others laid down their lives for hundreds of years ago so that that message might come down through the generations to you and to me, and it's in our hands, in our mouths right now to take that message to others who are dying because they do not have Christ.

Shall we sing just a couple of verses of number 408?

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/9/SID9879.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/earl-r-clark/i-press-toward-the-mark/>

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