

Reach Towards the Goal

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of focusing on our spiritual goals while learning from the past without being hindered by it.

Duration: 46:27

Scripture: Proverbs 29:18, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:18, 1 Corinthians 9:24, 2 Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 3:13, Hebrews 12:1-2

Topics: "Goal"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells a story about a young man who is running a race to win the hand of a princess. Along the way, he gets distracted by a shoe made of pure gold and spends a long time pondering over it. Eventually, he remembers his goal and continues running, but arrives 15 minutes late. The king tells him that he will never get the princess unless he completes the course on time. The preacher uses this story to illustrate the importance of staying focused on our goals and not getting sidetracked by worldly distractions. He encourages Christians to have a clear goal in their faith and to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus.

Transcript

Now, that we celebrate the 1st of January to be New Year's Day, I'd like to tell you something of the history of that. In Rome, there was a certain heroic soldier, a great warrior. He lived in the period 100 B.C. His name was Julius Caesar, and he is the originator of the New Year which we now celebrate.

Now, their celebration of New Year in Rome was called Kalents. And I wonder whether our word Kalents comes from that original root. Now, in Rome, there were many idols, for it was full of idol worship there in Rome.

And our friends from the East could tell us that there are millions of gods or idols worshipped there in the Far East. Now, in Rome, there was a certain god. Now, listen carefully.

One wishes that one could hold an exam after this to hear whether you're really listening. And maybe I'll hold you back that you don't go home so that you really listen and hear more. Now, there was a god called Janus.

Janus was a certain idol worshipped by the Romans. Janus was a carved sculpture, but he had two faces. One face looked to the front, the other backwards.

Now, Julius Caesar was the very first emperor of Rome. And he declared that the celebration of New Year would be at that particular time, which is the date which we still celebrate today. He then built up a calendar system.

And the first month he named after that idol Janus, which is now called January. That is why we call this month January, named originally after that idol which had two faces, one looking forwards and one backwards. And I'd like to preach about that today.

This is the sermon. Not that you should be double and be schizophrenic like a sick person. And one needs to notice that fact of a person like Janus looking forwards and backwards.

Let's read our text. In Philippians chapter 3, verse 13, let's start halfway. Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

So Paul says, I forget, leave behind the things that are behind, and I look forwards. This is of crucial importance in the life of a Christian. We Christians have to have a goal.

The Bible says that the nation which does not have a vision perishes. And so too the Christian who is without a goal will perish. If you are not pressing forward, looking forward, walking straight into the future, forwards, you will be like a snake, sliding in different directions, not knowing where you're going.

And you will not be on the way to the goal. You won't reach the target either, for you have lost your goal. You Christian have to have a goal.

Without a goal, you will go astray like lost people. Paul had his goal, which was before his eyes and never left his vision. And that's why he could say, all that which I counted as important before, I now count as loss.

That which was gain, I consider done. I consider all that as done, even my traditions and my history, all that I put to one side because of the greatness of knowing Jesus Christ. He doesn't say, so that I might achieve some learning and some education about Christ, but so that I may know Christ Himself.

He was pressing forward towards the goal, seeing heaven before him, that prize that was there, that was his goal. If we would remind ourselves of our goal, morning and night, you would not be like the foolish virgins, but rather be those wise virgins. I'm going to give you an illustration.

In the olden days, it is said that there used to be a king with a daughter. A very beautiful girl, a very attractive princess she was. And suitors, there were many coming to ask for her hand.

And the king said, well what will I do about this, that there are so many young men asking for my daughter. I don't want my daughter just to marry anybody. I want her to be married to somebody who is upright.

Get married to a real man. And decided he is going to test these young men. And this is what he then did.

He decided to create a race. And he said, I am setting a race course, so that any young man who asks for my daughter's hand will have to run this course in a certain time period, at that point, at that point, and must be back by a decided time. And he created a long course, which took hours.

He didn't want a young man to take his daughter who would be one who would just give up along the way, or complain of this ache, or this problem, and then just give up. He said, that's not the man. Like a person who has ants in their pants.

You know what they are like. They are the type who will take a job, and three months later they've got the itch to carry on and look for another job. And then another one.

They'll come and ask for a job, and then they'll say, no, after three months, I want to go to Durban. Then they'll say, no, I want to go to Johannesburg. Such people have ants in their pants.

The king said, I don't want a man like that, a son-in-law. I want a son-in-law who is like one who can put his hand to the plough, and continue the whole field right to the end. One who can persevere.

Now, along this race course, there was a plain. And ahead, there was a little hill. And this king took a golden slipper.

And he put this golden shoe right next to the course on which they had to run. And he put this golden slipper right next to the course on which they had to run. He said then to the first suitor, look young man, I have this race course that is set out, and let's say it was maybe three hours and five minutes that he had to be back.

He said, if you make it within that time, fine. If not, three hours and six minutes will not do. Do you really want the hand of my daughter, the princess? Do you know what it really means? It means that you will be the son-in-law of the royal family.

He said, I understand. He said, do you think that you will be able to complete the course and return on time? He said, indeed. And he said, surely I will do it, without doubt.

Then he said to his captains, I want you to make sure that this happens properly. And he put them along the course. And then he had the one to say, ready, steady, go.

And oof, the young man was like a buck. Like a deer. And he said, because I really want this princess.

He had been chatting to his pals beforehand and said, I want to be the son-in-law of the royal family. When he got to the part which had that plain, in the distance he noticed something glittering. The sun was shining, and this gold was glistening in the sunlight.

And he thought to himself, what could this be that glitters so, and that sparkles and blinds me almost. And he ran kilometers as he was approaching the glittering object. That was bright like a star.

Like the morning star. And he was in a struggle about this thing and was pondering upon it as he was running and getting close to it. Then he said to himself, let me just go aside just a little, just to see what it is.

And when he got close to it, he said, a shoe. What type of shoe is this, young man? Of gold. Not leather.

Not rubber. But real gold. He lifted it up.

He said to himself, I have never, ever seen a shoe of pure gold. I have seen a gold ring before, but never a shoe. He said to himself, just look how, feel how heavy it is too.

It is so weighty, I wonder who put it along the way. I wonder who put it here, or who lost it. And for a long time he was distracted by the shoe.

And then he said to himself, but then he remembered, I am on a race course. I am running to win the hand of the princess. I better leave it.

And he left with a divided heart. He left the shoe with a heavy heart. And he continued with the course.

He ran. And then he He then arrived 15 minutes late. There was the king at the end of the course.

And the king said, I am sorry, but you will never get the hand of my daughter till you die. He lost sight of the goal, of the prize. And I guarantee you that the same will happen to you.

That you lose because of taking your eyes off and getting sidetracked. And looking at other things instead of the goal. Janus had a face that looked forward.

And a face which looked behind. Behind Paul there was also a history. There was the persecution of the Christians.

He had stood by looking after the clothes of the men as they stoned the martyr Stephen to death. You see every one of us has a history of evil and of things of which we are ashamed. And there are some though that have such an overwhelming sense of shame.

They say, I will never be able to go out. I will never stand up again. I will never be able to achieve anything again.

And as Paul considered those things, those evil things of his past. He said, I forget what lies behind. For when God forgives, He forgets.

So you too forget those things. There are some Christians who make no progress forward. They are just in one place because they are always looking behind.

Maybe remembering their failures. Perhaps remembering somebody else's bad action towards them. And they still hold a grudge towards a person who once spoke ill of them.

And they still hold on to those things of the past. If you still cling to the things of the past, you will be just abnormal in the faith. You will be grotesque.

You will never make advances. You will never progress. Perhaps a person is obsessed with the fact that they grew up as an orphan.

They had no father and mother. And night and day they still keep on thinking about it. That sense of loss.

Or they remember that they were abused, perhaps raped in the past. And so they sit obsessed with the past and they can make no advance forward. And they experience a rotteness.

And a spoiling of their lives. It's like a car that is parked that can not get out of the parking again. If things have gone wrong in the past, then admit those things.

Confess those sins. Receive forgiveness. And then look forward.

Now there's also another thing. I'm just highlighting a few points. King David, when he was soon to die, he called Solomon and said, Come here, my son, I want to speak to you.

He said, I'm about to die and go to my God. You will continue in my position. He said, son, take note of this person and that person and that one.

Those who had sought to kill me, to destroy me. He opened his eyes to the past. And he said, just as they sought to destroy my life, take note of them, for they may do that to you too.

And even though they might come to you in a flirtatious way, but their real motive is to destroy you. So there are the things that we need to forget and leave behind. But then there are things, though, that we need to take note of.

Not everything of the past is necessarily evil. There are things that you can learn from. There are things from the past that can assist you today in going forward.

If you don't take note of those things from the past, you might get messed up in your future. Paul said, Even though he said, I forget the things that lie behind, he didn't forget completely that he had once persecuted the Christians. For when Satan would stand up and resist him, he would remind himself from whence he had been taken out of.

Pride is an awful thing. That peacock-like attitude of haughtiness. You have no future then.

God will resist you, for he resists the proud. And God will change to become your enemy. And if Christian, you are tempted to become haughty and proud, just think of where you've come from.

And you'll be so ashamed that you'll be like a dog with its tail between its legs. Then, pride should be no problem to you. Remember how you have fallen in the past, how you have failed, and how evil you have sinned.

That should cure you for the rest of your life. You should be ashamed of yourself. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Yes, if Satan is tempting you and is prodding you, then yes, remind yourself from where you've come out of. Then you have the right to look at your past. Then you are helped by looking.

So look forward. So, while looking forward, you look at some things of the past, and you look at yourself. And then, look at the prize, at the goal.

Look at the goal. God clearly describes in the Bible, in His Word, His standard for you. Your calling.

Your calling, and the greatness and the excellence of your calling in Christ Jesus. And then, ask yourself, in this past year of 2002, have I lived according to those promises I had between myself and the Lord? According to the upward calling, that excellent calling of Christ Jesus? Have I lived according to that excellent calling? Also, ask ourselves, as a church, have we as a church been living according to that excellent calling? Have we, according to the Word of God, been living in that way that He describes so clearly in His Word? So that you remain on target. That you ask yourself, have I lived according to what God has clearly described and called me to in His Word? According to what I do, my actions, also my words.

As a preacher, have I been doing it according to God's Word? Before the Lord, and he dealt with, and he sent revival. He sent revival. Before the Lord, and he dealt with, and he sent revival.

Instead of looking forward towards the goal, in Christ Jesus, towards heaven, you've been looking at the world, and the fashions of the world, being distracted by that, and trying to gain from that. You are losing out on heaven. You are losing out on heaven.

You are on the way to hell. Then you need to, when you realize that, you need to repent in dust and ashes. Then you need to, when you realize that, you need to repent in dust and ashes.

So that you would know the Lord Jesus. So that you would know the Lord Jesus. Paul said, I want to know him in his righteousness, And I don't know whether this year of 2003 will be such a year to you.

And we don't know whether we will finish this year. Some who were with us in the beginning of 2002 are no longer with us now. I wonder whether you will be with us in January 2004.

But when death knocks at your door, let it not be because you've been looking back and it finds you looking back and you're full of regrets. But instead that you welcome the Lord and say, Lord, I rejoice in your coming to fetch me to be with you. And if you reach the end of your life and you should glance back, that you won't be sorry that you've lived the life you did live.

And that you cry and say, oh, I've wasted many years. If I could only live my life over again. And so we are in January, at the beginning of this new year.

And like Janus, with your face set in front, that you forget the things that are harmful and that pull you back and hold you back and press you down from the past. But remembering nevertheless those things from the past which will help you and will assist you as you look forward. That you will have the strength to grab hold, to grasp hold of that for which Jesus got hold of you.

Let's stand to our feet as we pray. Yanti Saki Mincha Wako Di Chuli Senkosi Otan Dweni Wako Yanti Saki Mincha Wako Di Chuli Senkosi We've started this year of 2003. And we've heard how January started, where it came from.

And Lord, may this year be able to come to an end without us having lost sight of the goal, that we keep our sights on the goal. That that golden shoe will not distract us to take our eyes off you. Losing out on the heavenly crown.

That which we must forget, Lord, may we forget. That which we must remember, that we would remember it. And that we would press forward in the right way.

Till we reach you and arrive with you, Lord. Knowing you, here in this world and in the world to come. That we would reach that goal for which you have got hold of us.

For Lord, you have gotten hold of us and you've done it for a purpose. So that we would earn that crown and that prize. And we ask you now, Lord Jesus, that your grace would be with us all.

And the love of the Father, may it overflow in our hearts. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us always. And right through this year, to the finish of it.

Till the end of the year, if you keep us till that time. Amen.

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