

REACHING OUR GOALS

September 1, 2013

“The snow covered the ground, and three young boys were playing in it. A man said to them, “Would you like to try to race, with the promise of a prize for the winner?” The boys agreed, and the man told them that his race was to be different. “I will go to the other side of the field,” he said, “and when I give you the signal, you will start to run. The one whose footsteps are the straightest in the snow will be the winner.” As the race commenced, the first boy began looking at his feet to see if his steps were straight. The second lad kept looking at his companions to see what they were doing; but the third boy just ran on with his eyes fixed on the man on the other side of the field. The third boy was the winner, for his footsteps were straight in the snow. He had kept his eyes on the goal ahead of him” (Author unknown).

In the long ago, another man, using similar words, taught this same principle. It was Paul who said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phi. 3:13-14).

In any endeavor, we must have a goal for which we reach. It may be the case that we want to receive a promotion at work, to spend more time with our families, desire that our children do well in life, or any number of other goals. If there is no goal for which to reach, then no goal will be accomplished. It is no different in our spiritual lives. Like Paul, our goal must be to know Christ (Phil. 3:10). In order to know Christ, and be more like the Saviour, we must first Identify, Simplify, and then Glorify.

As I come to know Christ, I must identify with His life, His death, and His resurrection. His life is the example I am to follow in learning how to live righteously. The only way I can come to the knowledge of Christ is to study His life intently. Our spiritual desires should be at least as strong as our physical ones; He said, “**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled**” (Mt. 5:6). The examples of hunger and thirst He used in the Sermon on the Mount are the most basic of human desires; we cannot go very many days without food and an even shorter period of time without water. Spiritually, we need Christ more than we need food physically because, without Him, we cannot stand before God justified and righteous (Rom. 3:4). His death is the heart of the gospel because by it He showed the great love He has for mankind (Jn. 15:13). We see the power in His resurrection and it is His coming forth from the grave that separates Christianity from any other religion in the world. Through Him we both die and live (2 Tim. 2:11).

As I come to know Christ, I must simplify. We must remove the clutter from our lives and get rid of anything that would hinder us from serving God faithfully. Paul said there is simplicity in Christ if we put aside earthly desires and concentrate on living our lives in the way Jesus wants. The fair question is, “How do I do that?” As with any goal, we must first order our priorities. It is often the case that we have to put others before ourselves and give the benefit of the doubt to our brethren, at times. We cannot allow the fun things of life to stand between us and God; He should never have to take a back seat to any event. Christ said, “**But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you**” (Mt. 6:33).

As I come to know Christ I must glorify. I must glorify Him in my actions and attitude. I have to live life like I am a follower of the Lord. If someone I know or a complete stranger sees me in public, they

should be able to notice that I am different from the world. Christ said we were to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt. 5:13-14). The purpose of the Christian is to bring glory and honor to the Father in heaven and, like Paul, I can never be satisfied with my performance. I must be striving continually for better. My attitude can never be, "I have done enough, so it is now time for someone else to get busy."

Paul said he was going to forget everything in the past and strive for the future. He didn't mean only the things he had done that were against Christ, but his great accomplishments, as well. In other words, he was not going to rest on his laurels; instead he was going to stay busy doing the work of the Lord. The church that meets here at Cordova has accomplished many great things over its more than thirty years of service to the Lord, but there is much still to be done. We are at a pivotal point in the history of this congregation and it is going to take all of us working together to accomplish the goals we have set. There is no doubt we can do just that! Nicole, the girls, and I are overjoyed to be a part of this family again and look forward to the work ahead. Join with the elders, deacons, teachers, and me and let us all watch the great things that are about to happen!