



THIS ONE THING I DO

"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" (Phil. 3:13,14).

Paul is here letting us into the secret of his own life and telling us what made him the kind of Christian he was. He tells us how his life was lived in relation to the past, the future and the present. As to the past there was wise forgetfulness, as to the future there was wise anticipation, and in the present there was strenuous concentration, and these are the things that make for success in any field of human endeavor.

There are two distinct but parallel truths that every Christian needs to be established in.

The one is the sovereignty of God including His eternal purpose in grace; the other is human responsibility of man involving faith and good works. The denial of either of these will inevitably lead to spiritual paralysis. Hardshellism, the denial of human responsibility in repentance and faith and good works, has resulted in missionary paralysis and the death of churches; Arminianism, the denial of divine sovereignty in grace and salvation will produce the same results unless interest is kept up through fear or love of human praise.



Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right Briar Hill Road.

- Sunday School 9:45 a
- Worship Service 11:00 a
- Evening Service 7:00 p
- Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p

Air-Conditioned Nursery Provided

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A brother visited his people in Georgia during the holidays, and out in the country the people had lost all interest in religious matters and their churches had ceased to function. He had to drive 25

miles into Bainbridge to find a place to worship. I venture the assertion that Arminianism has prevailed in that section for many years past.

If you want interest in spiritual things that will survive the test of time and will not be dependent on human rewards and slavish fear then find a people who have conviction on the truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Paul certainly had such convictions and his convictions explained his humility before God and his untiring labors for human salvation.

It needs to be remembered that men become good Christians in the same way they become good doctors, good mechanics, or ripe scholars, namely, by a strenuous concentration to the task of their professions. But the misery is that, though people know well enough that they cannot be good carpenters, or doctors, or musicians without certain habits and practices; they seem to fancy that they can be good Christians without any effort, and without any sense of responsibility. Our text suggests appropriate thoughts for the New Year on how I may become a good Christian.

I. Make God's aim your aim. God had an aim or purpose in your conversion. Discover that aim and make it your aim. That aim was perfection... a God-like and a God-pleasing character. Is that your aim? Is that what you want to be? Is that what you are striving to be? Notice Paul distinguishes between the "mark" and the "prize". "I press toward the mark for the prize." The mark or goal of his life was perfection, and the prize was the result of that effort. The aim or goal towards which Paul strained was the aim which Christ had in view in his conversion. "I labor if that I may lay hold of that for which also I have been laid hold of by Jesus Christ." Paul took God's purpose in calling, and Christ's purpose in redeeming him as being the great object of his life. God's aims and Paul's were identical. Can you say as much; if not why claim to be a Christian.

God's providence in our lives is for the accomplishing of His purpose, the perfection of character. For this all the discipline of life is set in motion. For this sorrows and joys are experienced. For this hopes and fears and loves are kindled. For this we have been redeemed. For this Jesus Christ lived and suffered and died. God means to make us like Himself, that is to bring us into conformity to His will as manifested in His Son, and so all His dealings with us are to bring about this end.

To see and accept this will give nobleness and blessedness to our lives as nothing else will. How different all our estimates of the meaning and nature of events would be, if we kept clearly before us that their intention was not merely to make us happy and glad, or to make us sorrowful, but to make us Christ-like. If we looked beyond our sorrows to the end for which they come, we would not so often be saying to ourselves, "Why has this trouble come upon me?" Some plants need frost to bring out their savour, and so Christians need sorrow to develop in them the Christian graces and virtues.

Paul pressed forward in his struggle for perfection. What are you striving for? Plenty of us say, "I press on," but for what? Some press on in a record of crime

before men and ungodliness before God...Wealth, fame, position, health, education. Suppose you make a fortune, what then?

There is one mark, and every arrow that does not hit that target is wasted and spent in vain.

II. Concentration of all effort on this one aim. This one thing I do, I press on toward the mark. All legitimate occupations in life are consistent with this one aim. If you are engaged in any kind of business inconsistent with the struggle for holiness, better give it up!

It isn't easy to make progress in the Christian life. There must be concentration of all our powers to this one end. If you want to bore a hole you take a sharp point, not a blunt one. Concentration of effort toward holiness will give point to our lives. The conquering word is "This one thing I do."

The difference between the amateur and the professional is that the amateur pursues a thing at intervals --he takes time off from other occupations to do it, while the professional makes it his life business. I fear most of us are amateur Christians. We pursue the Christian life by spurts and starts. We need professionals in the business of Christianity. "Whether I eat or drink or whatsoever I do, I will do all to the glory of God." This is the Christian ideal and the sum of human responsibility.

III. Pursue this end with a wise forgetfulness. "Forgetting the things that are behind." Paul is thinking of the runner who has no time to cast his eye over his shoulder to mark the steps already taken. Paul does not mean that we are to forget God's mercies and so fail to render Him thanks; he does not mean that we are to forget our failures so as not to profit by them. Paul means that we must forget the past so that we may concentrate on the present. He means that we are to forget our failures in so far as they might make us feel that future success is impossible. If you are ever tempted to say to yourselves, "I have tried it so often, and so often failed that it is no use trying it anymore. I am beaten and I throw up the sponge," remember Paul's wise exhortation, and forgetting the things that are behind...press toward the mark. A wise forgetfulness is to forget past sorrows, past failures, past joys, past achievements, in so far as these might act as a weight in running the Christian race and pressing on towards perfection.

IV. Pursue the aim with wise, eager reaching forward. The word for reaching forth is a very graphic word. It means "reaching out over," and gives us the picture of the runner with his whole body thrown forward, his hand extended, and his eye reaching even further than his hand, in his eagerness for the mark and the prize.

Suppose we made the effort to please God that we do to please our loved ones. Suppose we gave the same thought and time and strength to the perfection of a godly life that we give to making money or seeking pleasure or achieving fame. What a difference there would be in our lives!

Here is the path to holy living: forget everything in the past that would discour-

age or make us satisfied with present attainments, consecrate all your powers in an effort toward holiness and press on with your eye on the goal and the prize.

— By the late C. D. Cole