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## LIVING UP TO YOUR POTENTIAL

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Good day to you, and welcome to Week Seven! We started looking last week at living up to our potential in becoming spiritually mature. It's a process though, isn't it? It requires setting aside our old sin nature by applying the mind of Christ (God's Word) in our life, and living under the control of His sweet Spirit in a minute to minute submission. It is only as we do that, that we will truly be able to experience the peace and joy of Christ in our day to day living. Paul longed for these Philippian believers to have that joy. God wants you to have that joy, too, and the way He chose to help that happen is that when Christ went to heaven He did not leave us as orphans but provided His Spirit to abide with us.

Our text today is Philippians 3:13-14 (nasb),

"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;  
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,  
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

"Forgetting what lies behind." How hard is that for you to do? Some of us can't remember what we had for breakfast, but others struggle with holding on to the past to the detriment of the present. Do you find yourself hanging on to your past sins, or mistakes? Past battles? Past habits? What about those past hurts? Is there unforgiveness that has taken root in your heart, gnawing away at your joy and peace? We have to understand that those three things- unforgiveness, joy and peace - cannot abide together.

Paul makes this statement, "forgetting what lies behind...I press on". Think about Paul, he, more than most, had things he could regret. He was, after all, solely responsible for the persecution and death of those who would become his own brothers and sisters in the Lord. He was a zealot on the wrong platform, and yet, he says, "forgetting what lies behind", he reaches forward to what lies

ahead. Paul understood that God had made him new. The old things were passed away. He knew that in Christ the potential to live righteously was now a possibility. Not the self-righteousness he had before, no, this was the ability to have true and holy righteousness.

The definition of righteousness is "living according to the specifications of the blue print". You see, God has drawn up a blueprint for each of our lives; plans, works that He ordained for each one specifically. Yours are different than mine.

**Read Ephesians 2:10 and fill in the blanks.**

**"For we are His \_\_\_\_\_,  
created in Christ Jesus \_\_\_\_\_,  
which God \_\_\_\_\_  
beforehand so that we would \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup>.**

Ever looked at a blueprint? They are pretty detailed. In order to live righteously we have to be living by the Spirit to not only see what the plan is but to also have the power to accomplish it. Setting aside our sinful nature is paramount. Submitting to the Spirit is our act of participation.

As we have seen, Paul understands that he is no longer a slave to the old nature, but rather, he has become a bond slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only power that his "old self" has over him is whatever power he now grants it. That would be the same for us, also. We have choices! But, wouldn't you admit that we are often our own worst enemy, giving in to our sinful nature because for some reason we are convinced it will be better than submitting to the Spirit's will?

In Christ we have the potential to live with His resurrection power. Think about that. The same power that resurrected Christ from the dead resides within us, so our potential to handle any situation is exponentially empowered to respond correctly, to respond in His righteousness, or what we like to call "the right way."

**If spiritual maturity is the goal, then we need to be honest enough to address those issues in our life that we need to utilize His power. Write it down, and take a moment to ask Him to help in that:**

Paul was saying that his goal was to reach a point of spiritual maturity that would compare to the resurrection of the dead - now that's powerful living! Paul realized that at the resurrection of the dead we will no longer have an Old Sin Nature as this corruptible puts on incorruption and this mortal puts on immortality, so his desire was to live sinless now.

**Re-read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58. What does verse 58 say we are to be?**

If we are ever going to live up to our potential of His righteousness we must set aside our natural response in our sinful nature and reach forward to our full potential in Christ Jesus. The only way that happens is to be so controlled by the Spirit that we are not reacting, but rather He is responding within us. This is going to require being steadfast and immovable.

Paul was the first to admit that he hadn't attained it. The potential is there, but the reality is not.

**Read Romans 7:14-25.**

Ever feel that way? The things you want to do, you don't, and the things you don't, you do. That's the law of our sinful nature waging war with the Spirit of God within us. Although the authority of the sinful nature was destroyed at Calvary, with our free will we often choose to allow the old nature to still be in control. Wretched ones that we are, who can set us free?

Praise God, There is coming a day when our sinful nature will be removed and we will at last be free - "...If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed!...."

Friend, while we are positionally perfected in Christ and are given the righteousness of God at the moment of our salvation, we are still experientially spiritually immature. We are so trained to live by the world's guidelines that we must retrain our very thinking, being transformed by the renewing of our minds. "Reaching forward" - The terminology here is of a sprinter running full out after the win. Reaching out, stretching for the goal. We can't accomplish that if we are holding on to the past things, or the things of this world. At some point we have to put down any baggage of the past that we are trying to carry along with us.

God has supplied ALL we need to run the race, so when we try to bring along the past, hold on to old hurts, old sins, old lifestyles, we hinder the power He has supplied to run unfettered. We have to decide that we are going to go fully after God, and when we do, it must be in full surrender to the race set before us. If you have baggage holding you back from reaching forward, dear one, set it down before the Lord.

This reaching forward leaves no room for looking back, its full-out, sold-out, to the One who empowers you to run in a way that's worthy. And if I may make another point - God has put a race before you that is specifically mapped out to bring the greatest reward at the end of the race! He's promised it, and you can count on His word to be true.

You might wonder how we can run full bore 24/7. It becomes understandable when we look at the concepts of "Faith-rest" and having a "Relaxed Mental Attitude." Briefly, it means that we understand, believe and apply the promises, principles and doctrines of God's word to our experiences and circumstances, knowing that Christ has provided all we need to be saved, and His Spirit provides all we need to live. The result is that the believer is able to rest in her faith because she understands God's grace is sufficient.

And, as a result of understanding the depth of God's grace in our own life, it makes it easier to then extend that same grace to others. It certainly affects our expectations of others when we have an attitude of grace toward them. In fact, if our expectation is that having a relationship with them will require treating them in grace, we diminish any hurt feelings by their lack of meeting our

human expectations of what the relationship should be. We can "grace" them instead of taking it personal or being upset by them.

Putting those two aspects into practice in our walk with God changes everything. In faith, we can relax and not worry about the things of our day. The fruit of that is we are able to extend His grace to others.

So we run, empowered by Him, fully engaged in the race set before us. His direction, His purpose, His strength. We simply participate by submitting to His doing it through us.

**List some of the promises of His grace working in your life. (If you can, put the verse's reference. Hint: Concordances are helpful):**

**Now for the tougher question, is there someone to whom you need to extend His grace to?**

We have all experienced hurt, or have had unmet expectations, but Paul says, there's a better way. We have the potential to turn that hurt into grace. It happens as we give the situation, person, etc... to God and allow His Spirit to produce the love in us toward that person that is required to extend His grace to them. It's a level of spiritual maturity that we should all try to attain. Pray about it and see if He won't give you the ability to grace others.

He has laid hold of us to give us His righteousness, let's live by it. Fully involved, pressing on!

REVIEW

- ~ We must put off the Old Sin Nature and all that lies behind.
- ~ We must choose to live righteously: Ephesians 2:10.
- ~ Someday we will live to our full potential: 1 Corinthians 15:50-57
- ~ In the meantime, we must understand the warfare within us: Romans 7:14-25
- ~ A mark of spiritual maturity is that we accept and extend His grace to others.
- ~ Our position in Christ makes us righteous. Let's match our experience to it. Press On!