

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 4th June 2023 10 am

Pressing on to the goal

Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture and prayer

Hymn MP 426 Look ye saint

Scripture Isaiah 35 (page 719)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk Joshua

Chorus MP 685 Therefore the redeemed of the Lord

Notices Picnic lunch, no crus, I will be here at 6pm to pray?

Prayer and share time

Communion preparation explain changes afoot

Communion

Reading 1 Peter 1:3-9 (page 1217)

Philippians 3:10-4:1 (Page 1180)

Hymn MP 499 O happy Day

Sermon *Pressing on to the goal*

Hymn MP 51 Be thou my vision

Closing Prayer

MP1024 All my days I will sing this song of gladness

MP 799 All I once held dear - Knowing you.

Prayer and Exordium

Have you every climbed a mountain? The mountaineer and the Christian have much in common – We are both heading up to the peak, for the mountaineer it is the top of the mountain, for us as Christians it is heaven.

Our goal is Heaven, we live the way we do as Christians because we are heading somewhere! Today we have four 'H's, the first being: Heaven.

As the mountaineer is very realistic about the difficulties ahead so we too as Christians have our Hindrances. The mountaineer has massed together much equipment to ensure his success so we as Christians have Helps to make sure we get there – and we have the sure Hope of one day being with the Lord with a new perfect body. Heaven, Hindrances, Helps, Hope *see bulletin*

Heaven is the goal

14... **the goal ... for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.**

But first, let's recap. How did Paul arrive at this point? He had been through a crisis, a crisis of realisation that all he was and had, - and his life was very impressive – meant nothing to God. He had trusted in it. Then the moment came when he suddenly saw how vain and Godless his life was. Paul was bowled over, and now expresses in the strongest of terms the **surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus**. Can you say that? This is what it is to be converted, this is what it is to be born again by the Spirit of God. – Those of you who publicly declared yourself to be in the body of Christ by taking of the bread and cup this morning – could you come up, if I asked you to, and say the same as Paul and every other true convert?

Paul's life – as with every true believer - was now set in a new direction! !!

The work of the Spirit is to bring the dead to life, to grab the rudder and turn a life around. Paul now nails his colours to the mast saying **10 I want to know Christ. Yes 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.**

The **resurrection** being the future hope of every Christian.

But sandwiched in the middle is what is required now, that is suffering x2.

"One hindrance is suffering"

Jesus said **"In this world you will have trouble"** John 16:33. Sufferings and trouble can be debilitating and many don't make any progress because of it.

That is why the passage we read is full of imperatives to **'press on'** through it.

- We go through the dentist's chair because we have our eyes on the end result. So too with a painful operation. And they used to be very painful!
- We will lose a toe from frostbite, or a leg with gangrene so as to save the body.

✚ So the suffering we go through is part of achieving the goal of Glory

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Cor 4:17 there is a purpose in them, that is to mould our character to the perfect character of Christ and so fit us for heaven.

Peter says to the suffering Christians **though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.** 1 Peter 1:6,7.

- Listen to the conversation between believers here, and much, - perhaps even most - is about my ailments, my bad leg, what the doctor said...

The Christians Peter was writing to were not just 'under the doctor' but 'under the sword' being persecuted to death - and yet Peter started that sentence I just read with the words "in this you greatly rejoice". You can only say that if your eyes are very clearly fixed on the Glory of Heaven to come!

- ✚ Think of what the Lord is doing through your problems, think how it helps you - and then you will see things differently and be able to say the same.

To know Him means we understand His ways, and that is not only to know great hope and Joy, but also to know trouble and suffering. Remember Paul was writing this while in prison, every Christian will suffer in some way.

- ✚ The apostle was as keen on being sanctified - as he was of being justified.

He knew the journey to heaven would not be easy.

You're on a plane and there's serious turbulence, you fear for your life - Salvation is a parachute - it is not a cushion - a P that is what you need.

Let us rejoice that we have it, let us praise the Lord for the wonderful gift of Salvation, fix our eyes on heaven, let our happiness be there. Everyone of His people will make it "Because I know Him" I say "and because he lives I too will live - I will be with Him" **and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.** 3:11.

"Another hindrance is myself"

A Christian's goal is Heaven. But it is easy to take our eyes off the goal, it is easy to forget we are heading somewhere.

The mountaineer needs real resolve for the great hindrance is his own weakness. He is not yet at the top, so Paul says as we say 12 **Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect,**

Picture that climber who is flagging, every step is an effort so Paul says **but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.** he needs to be encouraged along that narrow way, across the ridge, it's a difficult way.

13 **Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.** He hasn't yet planted the flag at the top, he's not yet reached it, or **taken hold** of the summit.

So what does he do? Can you see in the text v12 is **press on** v14 is **press on**, v13 is **straining towards what is ahead.** You can just imagine the base camp briefing the team are told in no uncertain terms "you need to preserve and not give up, it is worth it, don't look down, and don't look back".

Paul says: '**But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead,**' That sounds like two things, yet they are one thing for we can only look in one direction at a time. Either backwards - or forwards? Which way are you looking? **I hope you realise the devil loves to bring up the past.**

Lying in bed, decided to burn my diaries, search the loft couldn't find them

Don't look back, it will hinder you, those going up do not look down - or back

Christians who look back don't grow and therefore do not have Godly character in increasing measure - **if anyone does not have them,** Says Peter like a doctor doing his diagnosis he is **short-sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.** 2 Peter 1:9

- Athletes are not short sighted! They are focused on the prize ahead
- So too mountaineers have their sights on the peak ahead

So Paul is determined to look ahead 14 **I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.**

A Christian's calling is a high calling: it is from heaven, and it is to heaven!

I press on .. to win the prize. The Prize - Isn't that true for every sportsman?

- Stayed in a B&B on the edge of Scarborough, the man was a sidecar champion in the 1970's and as we walked down to breakfast we went through a corridors full of old pictures and glass cases of trophies.
- The pictures were decidedly dated and the trophies mostly not silver I would say. Now in older middle age I could just about make him out in the pictures

Paul says athletes try so hard **Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training.** but what do they end up with, a picture on the wall, a piece of chrome plated steel? **They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever.** 1 Cor 9:25

Yes we have **an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade— kept in heaven for you,** 1 Peter 1:4 and **the crown of glory that will never fade away.** 1 Peter 5:4

No wonder Paul says: **I beat my body and make it my slave so that ... I will not be disqualified for the prize.** 1 Cor 9:27

That requires a determined will and a real confidence in the truth of Christ.

■ Fact - Faith - Feelings

Let's not stumble but progress towards that great prize, the glories of heaven

We are told there will be the hindrance of others

18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, x2 many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Every book in the NT book contains a warning about those we are to beware of and avoid! They throw things across your path to trip you up.

Not a few **many** Paul says **live as enemies of the cross of Christ.** They do not submit to Christ, they do not seek His righteousness. They are those around you who are going in a different direction, the opposite direction to you. Don't be put off by them. Yes even here in this room are those going the other way.

19 **Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach,** Gluttons and drunkards make a god of their belly, and all their care is to please it and make provision for it. How many spend their time thinking about their next meal.

The word stomach could mean any inner organ. Or it could mean their 'inner being'? Themselves, their god is themselves. Despite their outward profession they have no love for God. They do love Him - they love their sin, their independence, their way, **their glory is in their shame** Sin is the sinner's shame, especially when it is gloried in, that is to live as an enemy of Christ. **'He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.** Mat 12:30, Lk 11:23

The **Pilgrim on his way up to the celestial city** always has in mind that he needs to be on the move and making progress. So too for us.

The hindrances the **pilgrim** faced were from those in the world who said: **'come aside for a while, do not haste, linger'**. That message has not changed, it appeals to our love of ease, beckoning us to enjoy where we are here and now.

3a

✚ **But we need to be up and off and on our way!**

■ **The worldly man or woman love it here, they try to make the most of it here. He has no thought of eternity, his heart and mind is on now, making the most of now.**

A Christian must never fall for it. Sadly there is little preaching on Christ's return and the End to come. **While those on the Titanic were enjoying the moment, John Hooper was giving the warning** to prepare for trouble ahead.

Their mind is on earthly things. Listen in and you will hear it, the subject of their conversation is: food, clothing, the house, other people, themselves, money etc, they love worldly things. They have no desire for the things which are spiritual and heavenly. They are interested in the things of this world; they love them, they dote upon them, and have a confidence and an ease in them. That is to live contrary to the cross of Christ.

■ **Listen in to the conversation of the mountaineers, on the way, in the evening in their tents when the camp they will talk of nothing else, it is all about reaching to goal.**

■ **Roald Amundsen the Norwegian explorer of the polar regions gave up everything for it, and tried to persuade everyone he could to join in with the endeavour.**

We have had hindrances against us – but there are helps for us - Paul said: 17 **Join with others in following my example, brothers** see v15-17

"Helps - The example of Paul"

15 **All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.**

I had an eye test last week, I was prompted to! The first one since 2014, One things you can be sure as you get older your eyes do not get better!

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. For a Christian it is the other way round a mature Christian's view or vision becomes better with every passing year! Wonderful We should see more clearly than before – The call of God on our lives – **heavenward**

✚ ***Be thou my vision:***

4. Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise;

thou mine inheritance, now and always.

Thou and thou only, first in my heart,

High king of heaven, my treasure thou art.

For us the cross of Christ is to crucify the world to us - and us to the world;

3b

Let us keep the main thing the main things. It is normal for us to differ on some smaller matters but not the main thing. **And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.** Don't worry about it, whatever it is God will in time give you a better understanding. In the mean time... 16 **let us live up to what we have already attained.**

God has called you to Glory, if you belong to Him he has declared you righteous so let us live up to it. **let us live up to what we have already attained.**

■ Being married into royalty you have to live up to your new position.
With the privileges comes the obligations

17 **and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.**

If I can go back to my well worn simili; those on the mountain climbing team are definitely a recognised group, you know who is in and who is not.

That is one reason for membership to note those who are going with you and those what are not. Other going with us should join, while Members who are not, having been visited and warned are to be removed, says our constitution.

"Helps – the example and power of Jesus"

Jesus for the Joy set before him endured the cross. Here is the One who has gone ahead, he is at the top and he now takes hold of us pulls us up to himself.

I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

- **took hold of me.** Your hand is in His hand - because he has hold of you!

Laying hold of Christ can only be once he has first laid hold of you! **We love him because he first loved us,** 1Jo 4:19. Not our keeping hold of Him, but his keeping hold of me – that is my security. We are **kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation,** 1Pe 1:5.

Have you professed faith in Jesus? Have you turned to him as we preach here? The real question is – and this is what I look for in a person – has Christ taken hold of you? x2 Has he? When Jesus takes hold of a man or women, boy or girl, all can see.

When Christ takes hold of a person it is to bring us to heaven; we can be sure!

■ Have a passport? Which country, anyone here with two? X have two

20 **our citizenship is in heaven.** One is temporary, like a short term visa or 'a remain to stay' as long as we are needed here, but the main one is for heaven.

And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, Our suffering servant - will return in Glory.

4a

He went to heaven clothed with a body, that he might take up our humanity. Jesus is not only the *first-born from the dead,* but the *first-born of the children of the resurrection.*

21 **who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control,** And we will know that power for he **will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.**" In the twinkling of an eye we will be made new for ever and ever.

"That is our Hope – the perfected body"

We can be sure – just as the mountaineer who has now the peak in his sight is spurred on through the difficult terrain that is before him takes hold of the summit.

Such a clear vision means we who follow Jesus can look at the difficulties here and say all is worth it for what is to come.

Mountaineers, like athletes travel light, they take just the right equipment they only take what they need, nothing more for it will hinder them. Blinkered, they have narrow vision, there is only one thing in their sights the goal, the target, that absorbs them, it fills their heart, it fills their mind, that is all that matters.

✚ Let us be so heavenly minded – we are very earthly good!

Finally Phil 4:1 **Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!**

Stand firm / stand fast – those on the mountain with an unsure footing will be riveted to the spot and move nowhere lest they fall. - **Stand firm** in other words have a firm footing so you can keep moving, and make it to the top.

We are to **stand fast in the Lord** x2 even and steady in our walk with him, and close and constant unto the end. **To stand fast in the Lord** is to stand fast in his strength and by his grace; not trusting in ourselves, then we can be **strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,** Eph 6:10

■ Warwick Goulding has recently moved on to Glory, So George Verwer, as did Minnie and every follower servant of Jesus

For them the short life here is over and perfection has come they have reached the peak and can sing with the last verse:

*5 High King of heaven, after victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heav'n's Sun! Heart of my heart,
so we who are still here say:
whatever befall, still be my vision, O Ruler of all.* _____END

4b