

**PHILIPPIANS— Week 7**  
**The Christian's Present: Sanctification (Philippians 3:12-16)**

The phrase Paul uses in Philippians 3:13 is a solid description of Sanctification... “forget what lies behind (our past) and to strain forward to what lies ahead (i.e., our life in Christ)”. And even though Paul was a spiritual giant to some, he knew that he had not yet attained. Once we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, sanctification starts immediately. What does that process look like? The word sanctified means to be set apart. When we are saved, we are purified and made holy by God’s grace. That is what sets us apart and separates us from our sinful past and from the world’s way of life.

Grace is amazing. One of the most powerful hymns ever written is Amazing Grace by John Newton. God’s grace is unfathomable. It is salvation’s tool; it relieves our fears, keeps us safe, secures our hope, and will lead us to our heavenly home.

We want our lives to be pleasing to God, but sanctification is not an overnight process. Day by day we learn more and more about what it means to be separated unto God and to understand that we are only visitors in this world. It is a process of becoming holy even as God is holy. We are not perfect. We will make mistakes—we can be sure of that—but by God’s grace we will be forgiven and cleansed daily. We actually become God-like. What a privilege. And only because God so loves us.

Let us not live with one foot in the world and one in heaven. We all stumble. And let us not surrender to condemnation or feel less worthy because of our past sins. We must keep our eyes on Christ and not on our own mistakes and failures. Let us press on to win the prize of the high calling in Christ. And at the same time, know that we will all stumble but God is right there to help us get up and keep going, eagerly awaiting and longing for Christ’s return.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 teaches us that we are running a race, pressing forward to reach the high prize in Christ Jesus. We can’t do this if we have one foot in the world and one foot in God’s kingdom. Through sanctification we have been prepared spirit, soul and body to pass the finish line. Let’s let go of the past and embrace the race. Look to Christ, pursue Christlikeness, and learn from the examples of our brothers and sisters. Let us strive to keep our mind set on heavenly things, not easily distracted and not following others who walk as enemies of the cross.

Think of those who have gone on before us—that great cloud of witnesses cheering us on. Trust God when you feel you are slipping or about to trip and fall on the racetrack because of weariness and exhaustion. Reach out to others who are running the same race. And if you fall, with the help of fellow runners get back up and keep running. Remember to read and study the Bible for nourishment. Let’s keep our focus on Christ as we walk this walk, step by step becoming more and more like Him.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) What are some of our greatest distractions in running our spiritual race?
- 2) Why is it hard for us to accept a gift without paying for it or without doing something in return for the giver? And how does this relate to works versus grace?
- 3) When we trip or fall in this spiritual race, what is our response?