

# **“Reaching Our Goals!”**

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***First Presbyterian Church  
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I Corinthians 9:24-27  
Philippians 3:12-16***

It's graduation time. High Schools, Colleges, Universities, Trade Schools are graduating students. These students have attained, reached a major goal in their lives.

I can remember my college graduation day, at Grove City College. Shawn was with me, as well as other family and friends. A goal accomplished. Years later, I stood outside the Princeton Chapel with Shawn, family and friends – again celebrating a graduation, another goal. Sometime later, again at Princeton Chapel, this time celebrating Shawn's graduation; a goal fulfilled.

We all have our stories – our celebrations, our goals. Young and old(er) alike have their hopes, aspirations – goals. We need them! They are important. They are fundamental in being human, in being one who is created in the image of God! Live up to that creation! Set goals, and work to reach them! If one fails, don't despair. Instead, set your sights on another goal! Expect, excel, and execute your goals! Don't be discouraged.

I'm reminded of an story. Two young men who had just graduated from the university climbed into a taxi wearing their graduation gowns. “Are you graduates from the City University?” asked the cab driver. “Yes, sir,” they announced proudly. “Class of 2011!” The cabbie extended his hand. “Class of '78.”

Ouch! Push on!

Our nation's high school graduation percentage is only 70%! We, as a society, as communities, as parents need to encourage our youth, and help them see this as an important goal for their lives! The youth need to understand that study, work, commitment, vision are necessary parts of living a fulfilled life.

Setting and reaching goals takes that inner potential, and brings to realization who and what we are to become. You are created in the image of God! Live up to that pedigree!

In my vast research for this sermon, I came across online “Today's most popular goals.” I must confess, we could in general aim much higher. But, here goes...(the top 10)

1. Lose weight
2. Stop procrastinating
3. Fall in love
4. Get a tattoo
5. Go on a road trip with no predetermined destination
6. Get a job
7. Learn Spanish
8. Learn French
9. Read more
10. Save money

No cancer cures, new low cost energy development, writing the Great American novel, discovering a new species, or eradicating world hunger?

May be too high? But still, let's aim a bit higher than "get a tattoo." Not that there's anything wrong with tattoos!

Here are some other popular life goals.

- Ride an elephant
- Ride a camel (did that!)
- Watch my children graduate from high school, college (did that)
- Learn to knit
- Get married (there, that's a very good one! Done that)
- Celebrate my 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary (did that)
- Celebrate my 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary (Hope to do that!)
- Read the Bible from cover to cover (Did that)
- Compete in an "Iron Man" competition (Did that! What are you laughing about?)

Some okay goals, but let's try and push ourselves, challenge ourselves.

Paul the Apostle, back two thousand years ago, knew about goals. He knew about human nature, its capacity for both greatness and degradation. In the letter to the Corinthian church the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter, Paul introduces some of the wondrous exhilarating capacities that we all possess. He is speaking to the best of possibilities for his friends in Corinth, and to all of us. Paul asks them, he asks us – considering our lives, "Don't you realize that all runners in a race are competing?" (That's obvious.) "But only one wins the prize! The goal."

And what is Paul's pronouncement upon knowing this? "Well, ah friends - since only one can win, take it easy, do not exert yourselves, don't break a sweat. After all - only one can win, and my goodness - each of you is good enough, and we'll just relax. There is no benefit - just run around a bit, visit, exchange e-mail addresses and go home. Lower your sights! Lessen your goals"

Is that what Paul says? By no means!

Only one wins?! Then run the race to win! Give it your best! By implication - if you are not going to go for the gold - step down!

Quitters need not apply!

Mediocrity – go home!

Athletes - work at it. They are disciplined! And all they get is a wreath, a medal. Paul has in mind something of much more importance. What will not perish. A way of life that goes on and on and on. You are competing with yourself! You have a goal to reach!

Do not run half heartedly, as though you do not know where the goal is. Have a goal and go for it!

Do not box into the air, make your jabs count.

Paul continues this thought in Philippians. Paul declares, he has not finished the race as of yet. No - he is pressing on. He is racing toward his goal. Nothing will stop him! He is committed!

I love this.

"I'm forgetting what is behind me. I will not allow those defeats, those stumbles, those falls stop me from my goal.

Yes indeed, I've made mistakes, I've dropped the ball, I've done this, that and the other thing wrong. But by God - I am not giving up! "The goal is up ahead and that is where I'm going!"

Paul is committed to gaining the goal, the gold, the prize. If you know anything about Paul, it is that he is not shy, not wishy-washy. Set the goal and run, run hard to attain it!

By the fact of being alive - you are in this race. You need to focus on your goal(s). There are those quick sprints that you run, those goals of studies, professions, relationships, etc. There is the ultimate goal that gives guidance and purpose to all our other goals.

*Sadly* - many have tired and moved off to the sidelines, defeated by life - bitter and aimless - watching the rest of life pass them by. You see, they cannot, will not allow themselves to *forget*; to put aside those weights of hurt, pain, anger, and remorse.

No - they carry these defeats with them weighing them down, always looking back: faltering, aimless - oblivious to their goal. They don't even care that they finish the race at all. Too many live this way! If you can call it living.

But Paul knows, we were not created for the sidelines! There is a goal! You need to discover that goal! You need to take responsibility for training, and focusing on that goal.

Press on!

Press on!

Don't give up on life!

On yourself!

On others!

On God!

Reach the goal!

The prize, the gold, the goal!

Paul phrased it this way: "I pressed on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Strain forward, give life your all! A life filled with the values of giving, of excellence, of caring, of loving, these and more make up the prize, the goal of life.

Do not be left behind,

Get back in the race,

And run to win!

It's the difference between emptiness and fulfillment - the Goal! The game is on!

Amen.