

One Small Step Part 3

Are We There Yet?

Colossians 1:9-10

Memory Verses: Psalm 40:2

MANUSCRIPT

Series Recap: We don't like small steps... or at least we didn't before this series. Why don't we like small steps? Because one small step doesn't get us to our destination. We celebrate arriving at the destination... not one of the thousand steps that we took to get there. I have a few friends that love to run. And when I say they love to run, I mean they love to run.... like everyday. And they run these stupid things called marathons which is 26.2 miles. Now I can't for the life of me even begin to understand why someone would like doing that. The only thing that can get me to run is a bear and I don't have to beat the bear I just have to beat you... remember that. Regardless... when my friends run these marathons they all start at the starting line all bunched up in a mob and then you hear the gun go off and everyone starts running. Now, let's say that after my friend starts running and he takes his first step across the starting line he starts jumping up and down and celebrating like he'd just crossed the finish line? That would be silly and he'd look like an idiot. Why? Because no one celebrates the first step, or any of the one small steps along the way... we celebrate the last step. It feels good to cross that finish line.

But life isn't filled with final steps. Life is filled with millions and millions of small tiny steps. We need to learn to celebrate the small steps. Look at our passage for this series... **Psalm 37:23-24**; God celebrates the small steps. And, if God celebrates our them, then we need to learn to be content with that one small step. One small step leads to another and before you know it.... you've taken so many that you've completed a marathon or two and you didn't even know it.

The Set Up:

I remember it like it was yesterday. I was a youth pastor at a very large church and I was personally discipling around a dozen students along with some parents and a team of small group leaders. And I was frustrated. I wanted to see these teens, parents, and leaders become mature disciples of Christ who would reach the lost in our community and grow the kingdom of God... and I wanted it all to happen now, and it wasn't. I remember feeling like a failure and being disappointed at myself and those I was leading. So I met my pastor, Joel, at a local coffee shop, and I told him about my frustrations. He told me that he had noticed that I was frustrated and proceeded to tell me something that would change my

life forever. He pointed out the coffee shop window to the main street about a thousand feet away. He said that road is where you want everyone to get... and until they get there you will be dissatisfied. The longer it takes people to get to the road the more frustrated and even mad you will get. I nodded in agreement. He said, there's two major problems with your way of thinking. One, no one will ever get to the road... you're not even at the road. We will always be flawed and struggling individuals who fall short of God's glory and our expectations will always fall short as long as our expectations are perfection. Two, he said, do you see that bush about 10 feet away? I nodded. He said, you are so focused on people making it to the road that you are missing the fact that they have made it to the bush. Isn't the fact that some of these people have moved from here to there worth celebrating? Any step towards God is worth celebrating, any movement towards spiritual maturity is a miracle. You may not have anyone who has made it to the road yet, but you've got plenty that have made it to the bush and that is awesome.

That talk changed my life. From that point forward I started seeing the small growth in people as a win and my attitude changed from frustration to celebration, from pouring on the guilt to pouring out God's grace.

The Struggle: Don't we all get frustrated and impatient at times? Aren't we all, at times, just like kids in the car on the trip to the beach who keep saying, "are we there yet." But there is joy in the journey isn't there? There's something worth celebrating about each step of the journey. I think it's important this morning that we **"Don't Miss The Journey For The Destination"**

Today my hope is that we would learn to enjoy each small step as we grow in spiritual maturity. That we wouldn't grow frustrated or impatient with ourselves or others as they make small steps towards Christ, towards the road. Rather, we would learn to celebrate making it to the bush.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

So... the first thing I want us to see this morning is... **Our Ultimate Goal: A Glorified Perfection**. The road is perfection. **Matthew 5:48** says that we are to be perfect as God is perfect. The ultimate goal is that we would shed our sinful lust and desires and be completely like Christ. But we aren't there yet. Not by a long shot. Look at **Philippians 3:12-15**. Even though we haven't obtained perfection we still press on towards full maturity in our spiritual walk. **Galatians 5:5** tells us that our hope is for the day of righteousness. This is our goal.

Why do we press on? Simple, look at **vs12**. It is because Christ has made us his own. Christ has saved us from the penalty of our sin, now we must make every effort to rid ourselves of that sin. How do we rid ourselves

of that sinfulness and move towards perfection? Look at **vs13**. As we saw last week... we move past our past. We must forget what lies behind. Our past sorrows and our past mistakes. They don't define who we are or who we are going to be. And next in **vs13** we see that we must strain forward to what lies ahead. Two weeks ago we learned that our destiny is determined by day to day decisions. Every single day we need to determine to move forward in our walk with Christ. And then look at **vs15**. We learn here that maturing Christians don't take their eyes off of this goal. The more you move forward towards full spiritual maturity the more you will desire to reach this goal. Once you start moving forward it gets easier to move forward.

So that's the ultimate goal isn't it. But here's the plot twist. We will never reach this goal in this lifetime. It is impossible to be perfected in this life. Just spend a little bit of time in **Romans 5 & 6** and it will be made clear to you that as long as we are a part of this world we will continue to struggle with the flesh and we will fall into sin. So we press on as we anxiously await the day of our perfection in the next life. Look with me at **1 Corinthians 13:9-12**. Now we are perfected in part but when he who is perfect, Jesus Christ, comes again and takes us into eternity, we will be fully perfected. We call this process of being made perfect in Christ, glorification. There is coming a day after this life when we will be glorified as he is glorified. Then we will receive immortal bodies and morally perfect souls.

What great news we have to look forward to, huh? But of course someone is going to ask the inevitable questions; "If I can't reach the goal of perfection in this life... and it will suddenly be given to me in the next... why even strive after it in this life at all?" **Colossians 3:23-24** gives us the answer. We work for Christ. We strive for perfection in this world because it is a way of serving Christ. What other response could we have to the love he has given us? And if we press on in this life we are promised that we will receive the inheritance of glorification in the next. So it stands to reason that those who don't desire to move towards Christ in this life are clearly not saved and will not reach the ultimate goal of perfection. **Only those who strive to reach the goal will eventually be allowed to obtain it.**

So why did God set it up like this? That we would be saved, but then toil through the struggle of sin, striving for perfection, but never being able to reach it until we are glorified in eternity? Well, I would contend that there is something glorious about our gradual transformation. We would obviously be missing something if we were saved and then instantly made perfect. We wouldn't know the struggle and therefore we wouldn't appreciate the prize. Our small steps towards perfection are what makes the eventual reward all that more glorious. Those who are in Christ have an uncontrollable desire to step closer to

him and they find joy in taking that next step. There is joy in the journey. Which means we are experiencing a partial reward with every step closer to Him. God doesn't want us to miss the journey for the destination so don't.

Don't Miss the Journey For the Destination

So now we know what is at the road. But in order to start our journey there... we need to take **Our First Step: A Faithful Repentance**. Look with me at **2 Corinthians 5:17-18**. The road to glorification begins with new life in Christ. In **vs18** we see that we receive this new life through the act of Christ reconciling himself to us. This means that he has given us a faith to believe in him. Our faith is not our own. What I mean is that when we place our faith in Christ, we don't do it because we logically come to the conclusion that Christ and his resurrection must be true, rather our faith is given to us by the grace of Christ so that we can believe in something we would never have believed on our own.

So first Christ gives us the faith to believe in him and then he gives us the ministry of reconciliation. This means that we can be reconciled to God, but not just through faith in our minds, but through a faith that responds in an act of reconciliation. That act is called repentance. **Luke 5:32** says that Christ came to call sinners to repent. **Luke 13:3** says that unless you repent you will perish. You can't be saved unless you believe and repent.

Repentance is simply the first step of a Christian, who turns from their sinful desires to follow in Christ's steps.

You remember that party that God and the angels and all of heaven are having over one small step? What step are they celebrating exactly? **Luke 15:7** tells us that all of heaven parties over one sinner who repents. There's a celebration to be had when we enter into heaven... no doubt, but there is a celebration to be had when the journey begins too. We can't just celebrate the destination... we must celebrate the journey. **Don't Miss the Journey For the Destination.**

So what's the next step after salvation through repentance? **Every Step After: A Daily Walk Worthy of Christ**. Look at **Colossians 1:9-10**. Our next step after repentance is to walk everyday after Christ. Simple, but not as easy as you think. That is why in **vs9** you see that the church is praying for you, cheering you on to keep walking... to keep taking small steps forward. You see our **step ladder** is back. You've taken that first small step of repentance and that brings you into a relationship with Christ. But that next step can be a doozy. So here we all are to cheer each other on as we try to make that next step. We don't get discouraged if you only take a few small steps over a lengthy time... we rejoice that you have made it to the bush... we are pumped when you have any forward movement. And when you take a step back we give mercy and grace rather than guilt, because we all make mistakes, right?

So we are cheering you to take that next small step in your walk with Christ, but what does that daily walk look like? Well, just as we have already discussed over the past two weeks, it looks like growing in godly wisdom and knowledge through daily prayer and daily Bible reading. It also means bearing fruit and doing good works such as worshipping, serving, giving, witnessing, etc... I mean the good works you can do in the name of Jesus are really endless.

But, so many people get stuck at repentance. They think, as long as I don't do bad things then I'm all good as a Christian. They think that repentance and religion are all that they need... and it's not. Look at **Matthew 3:8** where it says, bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Repentance doesn't just mean not doing the bad stuff... it means moving forward in doing the good stuff too. Look at **Hebrews 6:1**; leave the elementary doctrine of repentance. Meaning, yes we celebrated that step... but we can't just be satisfied to stay there. **While we celebrate repentance, we can't be satisfied to stay there.** We have to move beyond to the next step.

How do we move forward? We don't make these steps by ourselves... we can't. We need the church to cheer us on and help us up. And, we also need otherworldly strength from God. Look at **Psalms 40:2** – it was God who took me out of the pit and it is God who will put me on solid ground and help my steps be secure. **Psalms 119:133** says that God keeps my steps in alignment with his promises and doesn't let any sin retake me. Listen, if it weren't for God keeping our steps on the path we would all fall off, fall down, fall away. Yes, every single day it is a grind to take one more step towards Christ. Somedays we take two steps, somedays we take a step backwards... but we keep moving forward for Christ and with Christ. **There is joy and pain in moving forward, but one day we will be glad to have walked every single step.** Yes, glorification awaits, but enjoy the walk. **Don't Miss the Journey For the Destination.**

Application

So, we know the destination... we know that we are called to perfection... and even though we can't achieve it in this lifetime, we keep pressing on as though we must. We press on towards perfection because Christ has saved us and loved us and now we want to love him through the way we live this life. We repent of our sin and turn to walk after him. And everyday we walk, step by step, closer to Him and what he wants for us. Everyday we strive after a greater spiritual maturity. And it's hard, and sometimes we mess up, and sometimes we move slower than others. But we know that there is grace and mercy with our God who is patient with us. And if he is patient with us, we can also be patient. Rather than throw our arms up and give up, rather than think that we are

failures at this whole Christian thing, we recognize that we have made it to the bush. We aren't there yet.. but we aren't where we were either. And so we proclaim... **I may not be where I want to be, but thank God I'm not where I used to be.** We have made some movement and that is worth celebrating. Every single step forward is a step worth celebrating... the journey may be hard, and long, but it's all a part of God's plan to get you to glory... so **Don't Miss the Journey For the Destination.**

Conclusion

So what step are you on? Have you even begun the journey? Have you been granted faith in Christ and repented and started following him? If not, let's begin the journey today!

Have you stopped on the first step thinking that as long as I don't sin, don't cuss, don't cheat on my wife, don't watch certain shows, don't drink then I'm all good? If that's the case then today needs to be the day where we take the next step towards following Christ daily.

Have you started walking the worthy walk? Which step of the walk are you on? Do you have a daily time of prayer and time in the word? If not that's the next step. Do you have a plan to give regularly to the church and to those in need? If not then perhaps that's the next step. Have you shared your testimony and the Gospel with someone who is lost and need of Christ? Then perhaps that's the next step. Do you pray with and over your kids and wife? Does your workplace have a Bible study? Are you in a small group? What step are you on and what is the next step?

Regardless... we are cheering you on and so is God... so no rush... but lets take that next step. Not to the road... but let's just make it to the bush. And enjoy the journey. **Don't Miss the Journey For the Destination**