

## INTRODUCTION.

The WAC Motto: Character, Wisdom,  
Achievement.

Usually we think of the achievement of a goal. And there is nothing wrong with this. This is a good thing, if we can be sure about what our goal is or ought to be.

Once a twelve-and-under church basketball team was behind two points at the half. The parents were excited, the coaches were enthusiastic, and the little players who hadn't won a game through half the season were excited about the chance to win a game.

The second half started. The tip went to Little Danny, and he quickly dribbled and put the ball up and through the basket. But instead of tying the score, he put his team two points farther behind.

He had good intentions, but he forgot that the goals changed at the half. He put the ball through the wrong basket. The coach consoled little Danny. What happened to Danny happens to many of us in the game of life. We get so busy that we forget what our goal is and what it ought to be.

Achievement in itself can be a worthy goal of life.

I. This is true when the achievement saves us from being a quitter.

People don't like quitters.

And I don't think God likes quitters, either. Jesus wasn't a quitter, and the great characters of the Bible weren't quitters either.

~~Xjrxrxsdxsxdxpxkxmxxyjrxzpxx~~

There is a story in the Old Testament, in the Book of Genesis, about a man named Terah. This Old patriarch took his family with him to go from the City of Ur of the Chaldees into the land of Canaan. But he never reached it. He stopped short at Haran and died there.

No one knows why Terah didn't go on to the land of Canaan. Many have tried to excuse him for not going. He made a good start, but he stopped short of the achievement of his goal. It remained for his son Abram to go on into the land of Canaan and achieve the goal; otherwise God may have made of Terah the Father of a great nation, and he may have blessed him and made his name great as He did Abram. But Terah stopped short. He quit. And we know of no excuse for his doing this. Partial achievements may not be completely wasted efforts, but neither are they complete victories.  
Dont be a quitter!  
Be an achiever!

One man who was an achiever was Lt. Clebe McClary, United States Marine Corps. Once he stood before a crowd of 54,000 and held his New Testament between the steel clamps of his artificial left arm and scanned the quiet audience with his one good eye as he told of a strict South Carolina upbringing.  
"My dad said, "Clebe, you go to church," "And Clebe went to church," he said. Then he described the night battle in Vietnam when he and his troops came under enemy attack. Only a few were lifted out alive by helicopter. The 16 surgical operations he had sustained had helped to restore his physical powers. But now he spoke of the spiritual power he had received since returning home, upon believing in Christ.  
The cool evening wind picked up Lt. McClary's words; "I won several awards in Vietnam, but what meant more to me than anything else was the plaque that my men got together and sent me in the hospital in Philadelphia.  
It says, 'In this world of give and take, there are not enough people willing to give what it takes.' Young people, all it takes is believing and accepting Jesus Christ."  
When he stepped down from the podium, the crowd rose and applauded enthusiastically for several minutes, many people with tears in their eyes.

You know, Jesus never promised that it would be easy to follow him. 3  
He once looked around him at his would-be disciples who wanted to jump on his band wagon, and he asked, "Can you stand to be baptized with the baptism of suffering which I am about to be baptized with?"

Are you willing not to have a home or a place to lay your head if you follow me? If you start out and then look longingly and regretfully back, you are no longer worthy to be my disciple."

Paul said that those who really want to live the Christian life are bound to suffer persecution as their Lord did.

The writer to the Hebrews told us about laying aside every weight and besetting sin and running with patience the Christian race faithfully following the pace set by Jesus who is our pacesetter.

And the pace is a tough one.

There is a popular song which goes,

"I never promised you a rose garden."

So Jesus never promised Christians rose gardens in this life.

Jesus demands tough discipline.

Ray Floyd, who is leading the Masters Golf Tournament now with 15 under par after 54 holes said, "I think if I had applied myself early in my career I would have won a lot more tournaments than I have. I do wish that when I was younger, that I'd had the good sense and the knowledge to train and discipline myself."

A good athletic coach is very demanding in his training discipline, but he inspires such loyalty in his players that there is nothing they wouldn't try to do for him.

So Jesus Christ is the coach of our Christian

Team, and although his demands of discipleship are high, his spiritual grace is more than adequate for every need. Whatever he tells us to do he also ENABLES us to do. Such is the marvelous, wonderful grace of our Master.

That's why when he says "Jump!" the Christian says only "How high?" and "which direction?"

It never enters our minds to say, "Lord, I can't." The two words, "Yes, Lord" go together; the two words "No, Lord" never go together. Because he is our Lord, therefore we know that by his grace we can do anything He wants us to do.

Being an achiever for Jesus saves us from being a quitter in the game of life.

II. In the next place, achievement is a worthy goal when it is evidence of maturity. Our text in Philippians speaks of being MATURE in Christ.

This word maturity is better than the old King James translation of "perfection."

Paul was writing to some who believed in achieving perfection in this life. And Paul said that he had not achieved perfection, but he did encourage pursuing maturity and implied that that this could be achieved.

Paul could speak only of himself, and he knew that he was not yet a perfect Christian and that he still had a long way to go.

But he felt encouraged to press on toward this achievement because of the marvelous grace of his Savior.

Some fishermen in the highlands of Scotland gathered in a little inn for tea and swapped stories. As one of them was describing the day's exploits, a waitress set down a cup of tea. The fisherman's hand flew out and hit the teacup, knocking its contents against the whitewashed wall. An ugly brown stain appeared, marring the beautiful wall.

One of the other guests rose to his feet and said, "Never mind." Taking from his pocket a crayon, he began to sketch around the stain.

There emerged a magnificent, royal stag with antlers spread. The man was Sir Edwin Landseer, England's foremost painter of animals.

If an artist can do that with an ugly stain, what cannot God do with ~~my~~ past mistakes if only ~~we~~ turn them over to him!

vrq.11

No, we have not yet attained perfection, but we can press on toward achievement because Jesus Christ has made us his own. This one thing we can do, we can forget what lies behind, and we can strain forward as an athlete in the race toward what lies ahead, and press on toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

We Christians have before us an endless field of endeavor, and we can never assume, while we live on earth, that our task is finished.

All that talk of "perfection" must be meaningless, for it belongs to the nature of a true spiritual religion that there is always a height which has not yet been attained.

Tennyson revives and retells the story of Merlin and the gleam which illumines this idea. Merlin was an old man about to die. All his life he had been following the gleam with its accompanying music.

He followed it through his fantasies, and over the farmland, and he saw the gleam on the rough and ruddy faces of the farmers. ■ It moved into the valley and transformed it with its radiance.

Merlin, though old and weary, and unable to keep up, tried to follow it.

He went to the limit of his ability.

Now he was ready to die rejoicing, for through the power of his Master who taught him since childhood, he was granted the vision of the mysterious gleam on the horizon. What was Merlin's gleam?

Tennyson does not tell us.

Like any great poet he left room for our imagination to work. But the gleam was certainly not just an ordinary or natural gleam of light. He says,

"Not of the sunlight, Not of the moonlight, Not of the starlight!"

It is clearly some supernatural light of faith and achievement. As Merlin dies he calls for the present younger generation to go down to the port and launch their ships and follow

the gleam before it vanishes over the horizon:  
"After it, follow it: Follow the Gleam!" 6  
This is an unding quest.

When we have a graduation or commencement  
we see it soon not as a final achievement  
but as a beginning or challenging opening  
to other and greater achievements.

We have not finally achieved,  
yet we keep on pursuing the goal of achievement.  
And this is what keeps life exciting!

### III AND WE CAN THINK OF THE GOAL OF ACHIEVEMENT AS A WORTHY GOAL

NOT ONLY WHEN IT SAVES US FROM BEING A QUITTER,  
AND WHEN IT IS EVIDENCE OF MATURITY & GROWTH,  
BUT WHEN IT BRINGS US A WORTHY SENSE OF  
SATISFACTION AND FULFILLMENT.

And this satisfaction may not be measured in  
the same worldly, mundane, material, economic,  
social, and status symbols which mark so many  
of our judgments.

We can have a wonderful feeling of satisfac-  
tion and fulfillment when many other people  
may think we have failed.

Many thought Jesus Christ had failed when He  
died on the cross, but this was his greatest  
achievement.

You see, achievement can sometimes be measured  
in suffering and sacrifice as well as in  
promotion, advancement, and popular acclaim.  
The sixth word of Christ from the cross was  
his victory cry of achievement,

"IT IS FINISHED!"

He was saying, "The achievement of redemption  
for mankind is finished."

"The work of salvation is accomplished."

"The cure for sin has been found and is now  
available for all the world."

"Father, I have done what you sent me into the  
world to do."

When God determined to help mankind overcome  
the problem of sin, he didn't send technical  
assistance, or negotiate the export of surpluses  
or arrange to send us food or the cast-off  
garments of angels;

(over) ↓

Instead, He came himself to be stripped on the Cross. Hungering with us, he became our bread, Suffering for us, He became our joy. And that is why He is worthy of our worship and thanksgiving and complete surrender.

In like manner the old veteran missionary the Apostle Paul was probably considered a dismal failure as he walked toward the Roman Emperor's execution procedure, but that is not the way Paul himself viewed his life.

He said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.

I am ready to depart and be with Christ." He had no regrets about the way he had lived his life and about the achievements he had set as his priorities during his walk with his Master.

We detect in those words the note of victory, of personal satisfaction and fulfillment, for he had been the person God wanted him to be.

The Apostle Paul never had an identity problem. He knew who he was and what his life's achievement was supposed to be.

What a pity it is that not every Christian has this confidence.

This reminds me of James Aggrey's "Parable of the Eagle" which I recently came across in some of my reading.

It tells us that once upon a time, while walking through the forest, a certain man found a young eagle. He took it home and put it in his barnyard where it soon learned to eat chicken feed and to behave as chickens behave.

One day, a naturalist who was passing by inquired of the owner why it was that an eagle, the king of all birds, should be confined to live in the barnyard with the chickens.

"Since I have given it chicken feed and trained it to be a chicken, it has never learned to fly," replied the owner. It behaves as chickens behave, so it is no longer an eagle." "Still," insisted the naturalist, "it has the heart of an eagle and can surely be taught to fly

After talking it over, the two men agreed to find out whether this was possible. Gently the naturalist took the eagle in his arms and said, "You belong to the sky and not to the earth. Stretch forth your wings and fly."

The eagle, however, was confused; he did not know who he was, and, seeing the chickens eating their food, he jumped down to be with them again. Undismayed, the naturalist took the eagle on the following day, up on the roof of the house, and urged him again, saying, "You are an eagle. Stretch forth your wings and fly." But the eagle was afraid of his unknown self and world and jumped down once more for the chicken food.

On the third day the naturalist rose early and took the eagle out of the barnyard to a high mountain. There, he held the king of birds high above him and encouraged him again, saying, "You are an eagle. You belong to the sky as well as to the earth. Stretch forth your wings now, and fly."

The eagle looked around, back towards the barnyard and up to the sky. Still he did not fly. Then the naturalist lifted him straight towards the sun, and it happened that the eagle began to tremble, and slowly he stretched his wings. At last, with a triumphant cry, he soared away into the heavens.

It may be that the eagle still remembers the chickens with nostalgia; it may even be that he occasionally revisits the barnyard, But as far as anyone knows, he has never returned to lead the life of a chicken. He was an eagle though he had been kept and tamed as a chicken.

Even so, you are a child of God, and you were meant for high spiritual achievements.

Some of you think you are meant to live a lower life in the barnyard of this world, and you have learned to think of yourself as something which you aren't. An eagle can never find satisfaction and fulfillment in living the life of a chicken, and neither can a Child of



God be happy or content with the petty achievements of children of this world.  
So "Rise up O Child of God,  
Be done with lesser things,  
Give heart and mind and strength and soul  
to serve the King of Kings!"

And let us all go from this chapel today  
to be achievers rather than quitters.  
Let us press on toward the goal of spiritual  
maturity and sieze the prize of satisfaction  
and fulfillment which waits for us at the end  
of the Christian race.

On the third day the naturalist rose early  
and took the eagle out of the barnyard to a  
high mountain. There, he held the king of birds  
high above him and encouraged him again, saying,  
"You are an eagle. You belong to the sky as  
well as to the earth. Stratos for your  
wings now, and fly."  
The eagle looked around, back towards the barn-  
yard and up to the sky. Still he did not fly.  
Then the naturalist lifted his straight towards  
the sun, and it happened that the eagle began  
to tremble, and slowly he stretched his wings.  
At last, with a triumphant cry,  
he soared away into the heavens.  
It may be that the eagle still remembers the  
chicken with nostalgia;  
it may even be that he occasionally revisits the  
barnyard. But as far as anyone knows,  
he has never returned to lead the life of a  
chicken. He was an eagle though he had been  
kept and reared as a chicken.  
Even so, you are a child of God, and you were  
reared for high spiritual achievements.  
Some of you think you are meant to live a  
lower life in the barnyard of this world,  
and you have learned to think of yourselves as  
something when you stand in a stable and never  
find satisfaction and fulfillment in living the  
life of a chicken. And neither can a child of

WAC Chapel - Apr 76