

# Reaching for the Goal

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[ 0 : 00 ] This morning, reading is coming from Philippians chapter 3. I'll read from verse 12 through to verse 14. I'll read again.

Not that I have already obtained this or I am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal that lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ. Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord. Let us bow in a word of prayer. Father, we give thanks for the gift of your word.

Your word is true, and your word is living. And Lord, I pray as I stand before your people, your people whom you love, your people whom you send your son Jesus to die for, I pray that only your son will be glorified.

[ 1 : 58 ] I pray that you do this for us, not because we are deserving, not because we are entitled to any good thing, but because you're gracious and you're kind and you're loving. Lord, we pray that this hour, you will open our eyes, that we see wonderful things in your word, and that at the end of the day, your son's name will be glorified.

In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen. The book of Philippians is one of the most beautiful books or portion of scripture in the Bible.

Actually, the whole of the Bible is beautiful and is powerful, but there's something to be said about Philippians. The circumstances surrounding this very letter are interesting.

As I have mentioned before, Paul writes this letter to the Philippians, and he's writing to do a few things. He's writing to thank them for their gospel partnership.

He's writing to encourage them, and he's also writing to make Christ known to them. Paul writes this letter from prison.

[ 3 : 13 ] So he's in chains, he's in bondage, he's been imprisoned because of his faith, because of proclaiming Christ Jesus, and he has been thrown into prison, and from that place and from that context, you would think that he would be despondent, you would think that he would be bitter and resentful, you would think that he would be in a very terrible place, yet over and over again, he talks about joy.

If you do have time, I encourage you to read this letter. It's a brief letter. Only four chapters, and this letter, Paul exudes joy in the midst of his terrible circumstances.

Paul is primarily concerned with the prosperity of the gospel, even when he himself is not doing well.

In chapter one, Paul says, I do not care what happens. I know there are people out there who are proclaiming the gospel from false motives, and with so did gain, but I do not care as long as the gospel is being proclaimed.

Philippians is an interesting book. It's an interesting book because Paul is not bitter, in spite and despite of his circumstances.

[ 4 : 35 ] Actually, if you paid very close attention to the portion of scripture that I read just now, you'd see that even though Paul is in a terrible state, because of his circumstances, so to speak, it is well with his soul.

In Philippians chapter three, verse 12, we encounter Paul saying or teaching us something this morning that is even though things are not well, he still has one goal in life.

He uses language like, I strain and I push forward. He's pushing forward to accomplish something or for something to be a reality in his life, which is the prize.

In Philippians chapter three, Paul says that his goal is to know Christ, is to experience Christ, is to delight in Christ, and is to make the most of Christ.

And friends, this morning, I want to convince us, hopefully, of two things by the end of our time together. The first one is that there is power, and there is freedom, and there is joy in making Christ your greatest good.

[ 5 : 50 ] I'll repeat again, slightly different. The first point that I want to drive home and to drive it briefly is this, is that we stand to gain everything by making Christ our greatest goal and our ultimate goal in life.

The second thing I hope to do is to show us how we can do that, how we can attain this goal, which was Paul's goal, to know Christ and to enjoy him.

First point, there's power, and there's freedom in making Christ our greatest goal. Friends, as I have said, and bear with me, I'll repeat it again, even though Paul was in jail, even though Paul was not doing great, in some sense, he wasn't concerned about that.

You could write to those because we're outside of prison, and I say rejoice in the Lord, and I say rejoice always. Why? Because he had made Christ his greatest goal, and it didn't matter where he found himself in life.

Friends, part of our issues, part of our disappointments, part of why we're so miserable in life is because we have made secondary things, secondary goals, our ultimate goals in lives, and that only leads to enslavement.

[ 7 : 31 ] Poor in prison, poor in chains, he writes to those outside, and he says, friends, I say rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord.

He talks about joy, there's no resentment, there's no bitterness, there's nothing of that, so there's no envy. He is a free man, even though outwardly, doesn't look like, why?

Because he had set his hopes, and his side on Christ. Friends, there's so many goals, that we set for ourselves, goals, which are glorious goals, which are good goals.

Many of us are in the habit of setting goals, at the beginning of each year, we set resolutions, and we, we, focus our energies, our strength, our resources, on accomplishing this.

So, there are those, who are great at setting goals, and executing goals, and there are those of us, who are very great at setting goals, and that's all that we do.

[ 8 : 46 ] But that's not the point, today. The point is this, goals is part of life, but then, the problem is this, and scripture teaches us, not just here, elsewhere, it teaches us, that when we make secondary things, our primary things, we are setting ourselves up, for disappointment.

When we make the good gifts, that God provides us, that God grants us, gifts to be enjoyed, and gifts to direct us, to the giver, when we make them, our ultimate goals in life, will be utterly, disappointed.

When we make, work, when we make, even the things of the Lord, our ultimate goals in life, we are setting ourselves up, for failure.

And Paul here, we see him, he says, I've set my goals, on pursuing God, pursuing Christ, and if you read, verse 14, he says, I press on toward the goal, for the prize of the upward call, of God in Christ Jesus.

He has his mind, and his eyes, set on the things of God, set on Christ, set on the prize, that will be given, to all those, who run the race, successfully. And Paul gives us, the underlying factor, why he does so.

[ 10 : 18 ] Paul, he tells us, but I press on in verse, to make it my own. Why? Because Christ Jesus, has made me his own. Paul understood, that because Christ, had moved towards him, because Christ, had saved him, from his empty life, that had been handed down, to him by his forefathers, because Christ, had pursued him, and saved him, from his pursuits, and attempts, to get acceptance, through what he did, for the Lord, because Christ, had saved him, and had met him, on his road, to persecute his people.

Now, it was his duty, to press on the, towards the goal. Paul, rightly understood, that, the point of departure, is a recognition, that Christ, has set me free, because Christ, has done, this for me.

Is it therefore, too much to ask, that you make him, and his kingdom, your greatest goal? But Paul tells us, how he presses, how he pushes, how he reaches forward.

He tells us, how he runs the race, how he makes Christ, his greatest goal. And he tells us, that he does, a few things.

First thing, that he does, in verse 12, he tells us, that he, is very much, in touch with, reality.

[11:55] He's not afraid, of his shortcomings. He says, I haven't, arrived yet, I haven't received it, I haven't obtained it, I'm not perfect. So if you, want to make Christ, your greatest goal, if you want to, run in a way, that you receive the prize, there's certain things, that need to be in place, there's certain things, that we need to, account for.

And Paul tells us, that the first one, is that he recognizes, his shortcomings. In verse 12, he says, I haven't already, obtained this. I'm not perfect, but I press on.

Friends, allow me to, pause there, for a second. we have been, invited to run the race, we've been, invited to, make Christ, our greatest goal.

But part of how, we do that, is by recognizing, our imperfections. Is by recognizing, that we, haven't received yet. We haven't arrived yet.

We haven't, we are not, what we ought to be yet. And here, the great apostle, who, who did so many miracles, who proclaimed the gospel, throughout Asia, and who did, all sorts of things, who wrote the third, of the New Testament, he, he tells us, that he hasn't, arrived yet.

[13:20] He tells us, that he wasn't perfect. Friends, this is good news, for us. This is good news, for us, in a, in a world, that invites us, to what is impossible.

In a world, that sends, the message, that fake it, and you, make it, in a world, that, in a world, that drives us, to what is not attainable, which is perfection.

In a world, that is concerned, with covering up, imperfections, the gospel invites us, to stand tall, and to recognize, and to admit, that we are not perfect yet.

I don't know about you, but for me, this is good news, for my soul. For me, this is what I want to hear, this is what I want to believe, this is what I want to buy in.

Maybe you are here, this morning, and you're not a believer. Maybe you are here, and you're, checking out, this whole church thing, and, and you actually, are put off, by people, who claim, to be perfect.

[14:28] Maybe you're here, and you accuse Christians, of those, who are hypocrites. Well, you are right. The good news, of the Christian message, is this, is that, it admits, that we are not perfect.

Just after, after, after this sermon, we'll get into, a time of confession. That is our way, of admitting, that we are imperfect, and that is, good news. Are you, yeah, and you're, working yourself, to the ground, because you're, trying to be perfect.

You're, trying to be the perfect Christian. Here's the good news. Even the apostle, Paul himself, wasn't perfect. But the beauty, about this, is that our imperfections, point us, to a perfect God.

Because it is, in our weaknesses, that his, grace shines, through. We are weak, he is strong. In spite of, what we go through, no matter how much, you try, you, you know, how hard it is, to be perfect.

Except, if you're a baby, they're the closest, perfect, I know. During, certain times, of the day, by the way. And Paul here says, I'm not perfect.

[16:02] Part of how he, grows in his faith, part of how he, runs the race, part of how he, he keeps the goal, in front of him, is by recognizing, he's not perfect. That's not the only thing, he does here.

Paul carries on, and tells us, that he, I press on, to make it my own. I, I strain, and I reach, for this goal. In verse 13, he tells, brothers, I do not consider, that I've made it my own, but one thing I do, I forget, what lies, behind.

The secret, to making strides, in our Christian, faith, or in our walk, with God, are here. First, is admitting, and recognizing, that we're not perfect, and that should, drive us, to a perfect God, every day, every hour, every second.

But secondly, is, forgetting, what lies behind. Paul here says, he doesn't dwell, so much, on, on the past. Now, get me right, not to say, that the past, is not important, and that's not, what Paul is doing here.

He, he's mentioning, that he doesn't dwell, on what lies behind. Why? Why? Because, when you, are so fixated, on what happened yesterday, it's easy, to build monuments.

[17:28] It's building, it's easy, to sit, and just, think about, your accomplishments, and achievements, and, and not keep going. Paul says, he doesn't do that. Praise the Lord, that the Lord, used him, to do exploits yesterday, but, but that, doesn't stop him, from keep going.

He keeps going, every hour, every day. But, also, what, what he's getting to here, is that, he forgets what's behind.

He forgets his past life. He forgets his mistakes, his sins. He forgets his old way of life, and keeps going, because by, being fixated, on what's behind, you can't advance.

Maybe you're here, this morning. Maybe you're here, and, you know your life, you know your past life.

And Sunday, in Sunday, out you come here, you hear the good news, of how God, loves you, and how God, is committed to you, but you still, do not believe it.

[ 18 : 38 ] Why? Because, you know what you did, in the past. What you did, in the past, your past sins, your sins, of your youth, they keep you, from advancing.

Good news is this. For, as high as the heavens are, the Lord forgives. The Lord, remembers your sin, no more.

Bless the Lord, for his grace, and his kindness, and today, is the day, that the Lord, is inviting you, he's knocking at the door, of your heart, to rest not, on your accomplishment, to judge yourself, not, on account, of your past sins, but to embrace, his grace, and his love, for you.

Paul here says, he forgets, what lies behind, and he keeps, straining forward. Maybe you, also here, and you, you think to yourself, you're okay today, because, you used to walk, with the Lord. Your heart was, on fire, for the Lord, 10 years ago, and you, you draw comfort, from that, and that, thinking, thinking, has kept you, from keep going.

[ 19 : 59 ] I want to invite you, to consider this. Paul says, he keeps forward, he keeps going forward. Why? Because the prize, is ahead. Friends, this text, this morning, tells us, the dangers, or extremes, to be avoided.

The one, is to deem ourselves, as those, who have arrived already. To deem ourselves, as those, who are perfect. To deem, of ourselves, as those, who are, not in need, of grace.

That's an extreme, to be avoided. The other one, is to live, in the past. To live, in the past, to judge, ourselves, on account, of what happened, in the past.

The other one, is to give up, quickly. Now I like, what Paul says here, because if you read, slowly, you see that he, uses, in Jorian's language.

He says, I strain forward. I keep going. And what he's getting to there, is that, in the Christian journey, there will be, hardships, there will be disappointments.

[ 21 : 16 ] But because, of the nature, of the gospel, because of the beauty, of the gospel, because of what, Christ has done, he has made us, his own. It's worth it, to keep going.

It's worth it, to keep, pushing. And that is, what he's getting to here, and he's saying, there's an extreme, or there's a thing, to be avoided, which is to give up, quickly.

Friends, we live, in times, where, we long for, comfort, and convenience. And we, won things, instantly, all the time.

And in some sense, there's nothing wrong, with that. It is, a good thing that, that we have developed, and we have evolved, as a people.

But I think, with that, we can, think that, the same should happen, in our journey. Because the prize, is worth it. We need to keep, showing up.

[ 22 : 18 ] We need to, keep going, forward. We need to, strain forward. We need to, stumble forward. No matter, how many times, we fall, his mercy, is more.

His grace, is for you, and for me, this morning. And I want to, invite you to think, about these things. I want to invite you, to consider, that there is a prize, and there is, there is a, a sense in which, we, we've started enjoying, and receiving this prize, Christ, now in this life, but there is also, a future aspect, to our prize.

One day, when we're reunited, with him, we do not know, what we will be, but we shall be, like him. So there is a, now, and a future aspect, to this prize, and how we attain, this prize, is by, admitting our shortcomings, by forgetting, what lies, what lies behind, and by not giving up, too quickly.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you so much, for the gift, of your word.

Your word is true. And we thank you, that this portion, of scripture, does remind us, that we are not our own, in life and death, but we belong to Christ.

[ 23 : 47 ] That this portion, of scripture, reminded that, it is Christ, and him alone, who has made us, his own, when we're not seeking, when we're running, away from him. And today, we stand, guilt free.

We thank you so much, because, because one of the implications, of that, as we see, from the life of Paul, is that, now because we've been set free, now because we are his, we are empowered, to

live for him.

Lord, help us, to live for you, help us, to pursue you daily, and help us, Lord, to not be slothful. Help us, to not be lazy. Help us, to not give up quickly, when it comes to our faith, when it comes to our Christian, walk with you, but to cultivate it, and to grow it, through the power, that you provide daily.

But Lord, we also pray, that you help us, have a sober judgment, of ourselves, that we will not strive, for what is impossible, that we will not, think of ourselves, as those who are perfect, nor will aim, for perfection.

[ 24 : 58 ] Help us, to aim, for communion with you, to be with you. And Lord, we pray that you do, these things for us, through the wonderful name, of your son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.