



Philippians

Living in the Joy of Knowing Christ!

The Joy of Knowing God's Prize!

Philippians 3:12-16

Message #11 of 16 – S998

Sermon given on May 29, 2022



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The Joy of Knowing God's Prize!

Philippians 3:12-16

Opening Comments

- Turn to **Philippians 3**
- Today, we continue our series through the book of **Philippians – Living in the Joy of Knowing Christ!**
- The Bible teaches us clearly that joy is the fruit of having a relationship with God
- The better we know God and Christ, the more joy that is available to us
- There are things that rob us of our joy - A big one is our memory
- We remember the hurts done to us or that that we did to others – robs our joy
- We remember our mistakes, sins, and failures and it robs us of our joy
- We remember our past and project our past into the future and it produces fear, worry, anger, anxiety – robbing us of joy
- Not only does it rob us of joy, but it hinders our walk with Jesus
- It slows down our spiritual growth and keeps us from enjoying the exceedingly great and precious promises of God through faith in Christ
- Paul had lived a life that provided him a great many things that could get in the way of his faith
- In our text today he is going to tell us what he did to move past the hindrances of his memories and why he did it
- This section of the letter to the Philippians has the potential to change lives for the good
- If someone embraces what Paul is saying here, they can be delivered from a lifetime of bondage to their past
- It is also a challenge to all believers to run the race of life with great passion and purpose
- Let's pray and then look at a few verses
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **The Joy of Knowing God's Prize!**
 - Last time Paul dealt with some guys who had come to the church teaching that to be righteous the Christians had to be Jews and follow the Jewish rituals
 - Paul said, if anyone could have done it that way, it would have been him, and he couldn't
 - He then said that he considered all of the stuff of his life that others were looking at for righteousness as rubbish compared to knowing Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering
 - The Philippians loved and respected Paul, but Paul didn't want them to get the wrong idea about where he was spiritually
 - **Philippians 3:12a**
 - Knowing Christ perfectly was Paul's singular desire
 - But he wasn't there yet – he didn't know Christ perfectly and he wasn't perfect
 - **R. Kent Hughes** said something I discovered in my walk
“...the more we come to know Christ, the more we will come to sense our need to grow.”
 - The more my knowledge grows, the more I realize there is a lot more I don't know – enter room only to discover three more doors to rooms
 - Paul is humbly expressing a spiritual dissatisfaction.
 - He is getting to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.
 - And the more Paul does that, the more he realizes there is more to know.
 - Paul understands the purpose for knowing Christ perfectly **Matthew 5:48**
- Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.
- **Philippians 3:12b**
 - ‘I press on’ = ‘strive toward a goal’
 - God saved me to deliver me from the bondage of sin – the life of death.
 - And He saved me to be like His Son Jesus – the life of life.

- When we were saved, we became a new thing **2 Corinthians 5:17**
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.
- We ‘press on’ to be what we were made to be.
- There is a tension here – first, we must humbly confess that we have not attained to the perfection that God calls us to and that Christ models for us.
- But we must also confess with confidence that is our achievable goal.
- Christ has laid hold of you for a purpose, a good work **Ephesians 2:10**
For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
- We must exercise our free will and press on to lay hold of that for which we were laid hold for.
- God’s goal in our lives is the perfection of Christ
- Paul is saying, I am not there yet – no one is
- But that was his one desire – his one response comes next
- **Philippians 3:13-14**
- There is the imagery of a footrace in Paul’s words.
- All of life is encompassed in this verse – Present, ‘one thing I do’ – Past, ‘forgetting those things which are behind’ – Future – reaching forward to those things which are ahead’.
- Paul knew that to be successful, he had to keep his eyes forward.
- In a footrace it is risky to look back.
- It can break your stride and your opponent may overtake you.
- The finish line is ahead, keep your eyes on the prize.
- ‘those things which were behind’ included good things and bad things - his success as a religious Jew – his persecution of the church – his success as an apostle – his suffering for Christ.
- All of those things were part of what shaped Paul into the man he was, they were not the objects of his attention.
- He was focused on what was ahead – Jesus.
- This is connected to what Paul said earlier **Philippians 3:7-8**
But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

- It was Paul's attitude that anything that did not help him to know Christ better was rubbish
- That doesn't mean there weren't important things in his life
- At the end of chapter two Paul described two people who were important to him
- He did not consider his relationships with them as rubbish because they were helping him to get to know Christ better
- He didn't consider his role as a minister of the gospel as rubbish because it helped Paul get to know Christ better through the preaching of the gospel
- Paul has been using language that reminds us of a footrace
- If you have been around the church for a while, you may remember a message I taught where I was chained to a large trash can
- That trash can symbolized all the hurts that I have received from others
- It also contains all the wrong things, hurts, and sins I have done
- Unless I deal with those things, I drag that foul, disgusting, putrid can with me everywhere I go
- Now imagine a footrace where one of the runners is chained to a large trash can – how well will he run? Not very well
- Those things that are behind us have the power to hinder us in our race
- Good things can do that as easily as bad things
- Clinging to past successes or victories can hinder us as much as failures and defeats – behind you – forget them all
- Sins committed against us or sins we have committed against others like Paul persecuting the church or the Jews persecuting Paul – behind you – forgive them or repent of them all
- Maybe you have grown spiritually far beyond your peers like Paul did or maybe your faith has stalled – behind you – forget it
- Maybe life has not gone the way you wanted it to like Paul being arrested being chained to a Roman soldier – maybe things happened that disrupted your plan – behind you – forget it and look for God's plan
- Maybe your health has gotten in the way like Paul's thorn in the flesh – forget it and press on to the goal

- If Paul could say, ‘but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,’ then so can each of us
- Listen, our past may explain how we got to today, but with God today doesn’t have to be like yesterday – verse 14 again
- **Philippians 3:14**
- For Paul, every day was the starting line for his race to achieve the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus
- Paul didn’t let his past stand in the way of him striving for the perfection of Christ
- Every day can be a fresh start with God **Lamentations 3:22-23**
Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.
- Not everyone feels the freedom to run full out for the Lord.
- Some might be hampered by physical limitation – others by illness or injury – some by circumstance.
- Your life is the race God has set before you.
- Your circumstances are the lane God calls you to run in.
- ‘press forward’ with all you can muster.
- Our goal is perfection – the prize is to know Christ perfectly
- Every day, we start right where we are
- Paul closes this text with a word to mature believers
- **Philippians 3:15-16**
- Paul is saying that it is a sign of maturity if you agree with what he is saying
- Paul is not being arrogant – he knew his words were inspired by God and were therefore trustworthy
- Notice Paul says that ‘God will reveal even this to you’ if they did not agree with Paul.
- We don’t need to convince people that they are wrong.
- We need only tell them what is right – it is up to God to do the convincing.
- Once you have achieved some level of maturity in your faith, you cannot let up.

- Just as a runner can't stop in the middle of the race, we must continue pressing forward until we have laid hold of the prize – the perfection of Christ Jesus.
- This is a call to be faithful to the work that God has already completed in you.
- There are some who will say that we cannot be perfect – sin nature
- What we can or cannot be is irrelevant
- We are called by sovereign, holy, Almighty God to press on toward the goal of perfection to attain the prize of a perfect knowledge of Christ Jesus
- To do that I trust God with my whole life and do my best to forget what is behind with the help of God the Holy Spirit
- I am to set my eyes on the goal and treat anything that might keep me from that goal as rubbish
- Philippians teaches us that joy is the fruit of knowing Christ – better knowledge = more joy – perfect knowledge = perfect joy
- There are things in each of our lives that will attempt to rob us of joy
- Paul uses hyperbole to tell us to forget those things – to let the goal of knowing Christ better fill our vision of today and the future
- I talk with people on a very regular basis who are struggling to do that
- That tells me that it probably isn't something we can do on our own
- If you are having trouble forgetting what is behind – ask for help
- Joy is not something only the super-spiritual experience
- Joy, regardless of circumstances is one of the things that makes Christianity unique
- The key is Christ – get to know Him better and better
- The better you know Christ – through His Word – through prayer – through fellowship with his people – through serving Him – the more joy will radiate out of your life
- And regardless of what your life has been up to this moment – let this be the start of your race for the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus
- **Pray**