

Title ideas:  
The Joy of Knowing God's Prize!

## Philippians 3:12-16 - The Joy of Knowing God's Prize!

Scriptures:  
Philippians 3:10-11 - ...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Matthew 5:6 - Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

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.

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.

**12 Not that I have already attained, or**

2983 -

**am already perfected; but I press on, that**

5048 -

1377 – strive toward goal

**I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has**

2638 – acquire, obtain

thing (2 Cor. 5:17). 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 (Eph. 2:10). We must exercise our free will and press on to lay hold of that for which we were laid hold for.

**also laid hold of me.**

2638 -

Notes:

In the previous text Paul had stated his one overarching desire – to know Christ (Phil. 3:10-11). To facilitate that desire Paul reckoned everything else in his life as rubbish, not worthy to be compared to the surpassing knowledge of Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. Every day was about going deeper and reaching farther in his faith. Last time was Paul's singular desire, and this time it is his singular response to that desire.

Even though Paul's faith is huge – probably greater than anyone else alive at the time, he still wasn't perfect – far from it. If Paul isn't perfect, no one else is either.

"...the more we come to know Christ, the more we will come to sense our need to grow." (Hughes, 2013) page 148

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.

To reach a point of satisfaction in your faith is to begin a period of stagnation that always produces a reduction and corruption of faith. Never be satisfied with the depth of your knowledge of Christ (Matt. 5:6).

There are some who will boldly confess that they are imperfect but are making no effort to strive toward perfection. That is an act of lazy rebellion against God's known will.

After Paul's humble confession, he describes a mighty resolve.

'lay hold of that' – the grace of God. If you have been gripped by the grace of God, your right response is to press, or strive toward the goal of God's grace.

"He has grasped me in order to make me perfect, and I want to grasp that perfection." (Spurgeon, 2015) page 109

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

Scriptures:  
Hebrews 6:1 - Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God...

### 13 Brethren, I do not count myself

to have apprehended; but one thing I do,

2638 -

forgetting those things which are behind and

1950 - to forget  
(suppress) v. — to  
dismiss from the  
mind; stop  
remembering.

3694 -

reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

1901 - to strain  
⇒ stretch out v.  
— to exert effort  
or energy to the  
utmost;  
conceived of as  
extending or  
stretching out to  
the full length.

1715 -

Notes:

Paul repeats himself – “I am not there yet!” Paul knew that he wasn’t perfect because he had not yet attained to the resurrection of the dead. All of life is a journey of striving toward Christlikeness. Perfection is not achieved until we receive our resurrected bodies.

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.

‘forgetting those things which are behind’ doesn’t mean that Paul didn’t remember those things. He simply chose not to allow those things to slow him down as he raced for the prize.

“Does not this inability to leave the past behind contradict everything we confess about the healing, forgiving, redeeming power of God?” (Dunnam, 1982) page 295-296

‘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.

‘looking back’ keeps us from moving forward. All of our focus must be on the next step we take, and we need to forget anything and everything that might get in the way of that.

‘reaching forward’ – better – ‘straining forward’ – like a runner straining to beat the runner next to him.

“Someone has well said that today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.” (McGee, 1983) page 316

Scriptures:

2 Timothy 4:6-8 - For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

1 Corinthians 15:10 - But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Matthew 5:48 - Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

# 14 I press toward the goal for the prize

1377 -

4649 -

1017 -

## of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

507 -

2821 -

Notes:

At the end of Paul's life, he would look back and claim that he had been successful at this (2 Tim. 4:7).

Just as with a gun, the bullet goes where the gun is aimed, so also, your life will go where it is aimed. Be deliberate about where your life is going. Keep your eyes on the finish line.

The prize is to fully know Christ. The world is calling us down to be like the world. God is calling us upward to be like Christ. There was a sense that Paul knew he had to run harder than anyone else, because he had once persecuted the church. It was if he had started the race from far behind, he had to run harder (1 Cor. 15:10).

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.

God does not call us to run our race better than someone else – He calls us to run our race as well as we are able. Run your race!

It is God who has determined the target we are to be aiming at – perfection (Matt. 5:48).

Salvation is a gift received by faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9). The prize and the gift are not the same thing – the prize is not salvation. The prize that we press toward after we have received the gift of salvation is a full knowledge of and conformity to Christ.

Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 2:6-8 -  
However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

1<sup>5</sup> Therefore let **us**, as many as are are mature,

5046 – genuine, complete, perfect, adult

have this mind; and if in anything **you** think

5426 – have this attitude

5426 – hold a view

otherwise, <sup>4</sup>God will reveal even this to **you**.

2088 - differently

601 - disclose

Notes:

Paul is saying that it is a sign of maturity if you agree with what he is saying. If your race, your life' is being hampered by constantly looking back at past successes or victories or at past mistakes, failures, or sins, (yours or someone else's, it is a sign that your faith still needs more maturing.

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.

"The Bible makes the point over and over again – that our consent is necessary for Christ to act transformingly in our lives." (Dunnam, 1982) page 298

God works in us according to our obedient response to Him. And those obedient responses must come every day and with every new call to obey.

Scriptures:

16 Nevertheless, to *the degree* that

Notes:

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 – Jesus.

This is a call to be faithful to the work that God has already completed in you.

we have already attained, let us walk by the same

5348 – achieve a particular state

4748 - behave, adhere one's life to a standard, imitate

846 -

rule, let us be of the same mind.

2583 – principle, standard

846 -

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