

Philippians

Lesson 6

Chapter 3:12-4:9

Participant Guide

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Lesson 6

Philippians 3:12-4:9 Pressing on Toward the Goal

“Our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20)

Prayers

Introduction

How we view our life is fundamental to our priorities, how we live, and our faith. Paul reminds us that a life in Christ is focused on eternal priorities because heaven is our home, and this life is only an introduction to the life we were truly created. Our pastor gave an excellent illustration of our life with a tape measure. In the illustration, our life equaled one inch on the tape measure. If we lived 100 years, our birth, education, marriage, having kids, working, retiring, growing old, growing really old, and dying would all be compressed in that one inch. Compare that to the first 5000 years in heaven. Then your life would be four feet long on the tape measure, but the only time you knew any pain, suffering, or loss would be in the first inch. The other four feet on the tape measure would be a life surrounded by people we love and who love us, joy, and perfection. We were created to be in fellowship with Christ, now and forever. How will we view the importance of that first inch from eternity?

Read Philippians 3:12-4:1, Pressing on Toward the Goal

- Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me
- Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,
- Phil 3:14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
- Phil 3:15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.
- Phil 3:16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.
- Phil 3:17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.
- Phil 3:18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.
- Phil 3:19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.
- Phil 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,
- Phil 3:21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.
- Phil 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

3. The perfection that Paul is striving for in verse 3:12 is in the context of verses 3:8-11, where Paul discusses his past (verses 3:4-7), present (verses 3:8-9), and future hope (verses 3:10-11). Based on the context of these verses, what is Paul hoping to bring to completion (perfection)?

^{Phil 3:8} What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ^{Phil 3:9} and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

^{Phil 3:10} I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ^{Phil 3:11} and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

^{Phil 3:12} Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

^{Phil 3:13} Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

^{Phil 3:14} I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

4. In verses 13 and 14, Paul writes about pressing on to complete the goal of his calling in Christ. Paul is comparing his life to an Olympic runner competing for the prize. Pressing on is a two-fold process: we forget what is behind (failures, pains, triumphs, former glory and treasures) and move toward the goal ahead.
- What did Paul leave behind?
 - How was Paul's "pressing on" to the goal different from salvation?
 - What challenges did Paul face in pressing on to his goal?
5. How is Paul's goal in such stark contrast to a worldly view of the goal of life?
6. The Greek word *teleioi* (perfect or complete) used in verse 3:12 appears again in verse 3:15. Compare the King James translation to the NIV translation. How do these translations convey Paul's meaning of "perfection" concerning the prize in verse 14?

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be **perfect**, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. (Philippians 3:14-15, King James Version)

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are **mature** should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. (Philippians 3:14-15, NIV and ESV)

7. After focusing on what is ahead, Paul returns to what the Philippians have already attained in verses 3:16-17. What are some of the things they have already attained?

8. How would you describe your race toward the prize if Paul spoke directly to you?

9. Verse 3:20 was one of the favorites of Billy Graham, the evangelist, who paraphrased it by saying, "My home is in heaven; I'm just traveling through this world." How might our lives look if we embraced this truth?

Closing Prayer