



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Highest Goal in the Capitol

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14

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Most who serve in the capitol have lofty goals to which they aspire. It took setting a goal to spend the time, effort, and money necessary to campaign and win an election. Many currently serving in office have aspirations to move ahead to greater positions of leadership and influence or to achieve higher elected office. The large number of candidates for governor in our recent special primary election shows that there are many who would set their sights on the highest elected office in our state.

What is the highest goal you can set for yourself in the capitol? It is not that of the highest elected office or the greatest positions of influence and leadership. It is that of knowing and following Jesus Christ. This is the goal that Paul describes for us in Philippians 3:10-14:

¹²Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

¹³Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul uses very strong, active words in describing his pursuit of the goal he set for himself. He speaks of his desire to “press on” in order to “lay hold” and of “reaching forward”. Paul must have been something of a sports fan as he often used imagery and illustrations from the world of athletics. He wrote of boxing (1 Cor. 9:26) and of wrestling (Eph. 6:12). He described his Christian life as a fight (2 Tim. 4:7) and compared believers to those who competed in athletic contests. Here in this passage, Paul is using the athletic metaphor of a footrace to describe his Christian life and the goal he had set for himself. In doing so he uses his own life as an example to encourage the Philippian believers and us today to set knowing and following Jesus Christ as our greatest goal in life. We can learn much about the highest ambition for which we should strive by considering Paul’s highest goal, his divine discontentment, and his maximum effort.

PAUL’S HIGHEST GOAL

Paul’s highest goal, really his only goal in life was to know and follow Jesus Christ. In our passage he says he has not already attained it (vs. 12) and that he pressed on toward the goal (vs. 14). To fully understand what his goal was, we must look back at the verses we considered in our previous study. In Paul’s gospel accounting he considered everything to be loss “for the sake of Christ” (vs. 7), compared to the value of “knowing Christ” (vs. 8), and so that he might “gain Christ” (vs. 8). He goes on in verse 10 to “know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death”.

In verse 12, Paul says he “presses on to lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ”. We find the dramatic account of Christ “laying hold” of Paul on the road to Damascus at the time of his salvation (Acts 9). Jesus “laid hold” of Paul to save him from his sin and self-righteousness. He “grabbed” Paul in order to change him and to make him more like Himself. This is a process that will only be fully realized by believers at the resurrection, when we lay aside our sinful bodies and are with Christ: “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2). Paul realized the purpose for which Christ had laid hold of Him. Consequently, Paul made it his goal to press on and reach forward for that purpose. One writer described this as being “grabbed by grace”. Paul realized what a sinner he was, and God’s amazing grace in sending Christ to suffer and die for his sin. He never got over how Christ “humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8). He was gripped by the fact that he could be found in Christ, not by his own righteousness, but that “which is through faith in Christ, which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Phil 3:9). These are the truths that laid hold of Paul’s heart. These are the truths that moved him to set his highest goal.

To put it simply, Paul’s highest goal was to know Christ fully, and to experience perfect fellowship with him. This led him to seek to be like Christ and to serve Him faithfully in life and ministry. Paul wrote of his own goals in order to encourage the Philippian believers, and us, to pursue Christ more faithfully in our own lives.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL INTERIM BIBLE STUDY TUESDAY, JULY 12

12:00 NOON – TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54 IN BASEMENT OF EAST WING)

The Highest Goal in the Capitol (Philippians 3:12-14)

What is your highest goal as you serve in the Capitol? Higher office? Positions of influence and leadership? Do you give any thought to spiritual goals as you seek to serve in state government? This is not to say that you have to lay aside any goals and ambitions you might have in politics in order to follow Christ. This is a reminder to evaluate what is most important in your life. Reaching the highest pinnacles of government becomes a small thing in view of eternity and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

PAUL'S DIVINE DISCONTENTMENT

In light of his goal of fully knowing and following Jesus Christ, Paul had a constant, divine discontentment. When he considered his goal, Paul honestly reveals that "I have not already obtained it or become perfect". He openly shares that "I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet". By discontentment we mean that Paul was never satisfied with the current condition of his spiritual life and growth. By divine we mean this was a God-given discontentment which led to pressing on and reaching forward to know Christ better. Later Paul writes of being content with his physical condition and circumstances (Phil. 4:11). He often encouraged believers to be content with the circumstances and situations in life so as not to lead to bitterness and complaining (2 Cor. 9:8; 1 Tim. 6:6, 8; Heb. 13:5). But when it came to his relationship with Christ, Paul was never content or satisfied with his current state. He always wanted to know Christ better, to love Him more, and to serve Him more faithfully.

Paul demonstrated this discontent by "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (vs. 13). Those things which were behind him could have been all those self-righteous achievements he described in 3:4-6. They could have been all the amazing things he had accomplished as a missionary and church planter. It would certainly have been easy to be satisfied with all that he had done. It could have been the sins and failures of his past that might have led him to discouragement and despair. Paul always saw himself as the "foremost of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), yet he knew Christ had come into the world to save sinners like him.

Like Paul, we should have a divine discontentment with the current state of our Christian lives. One of the surest signs that we are truly followers of Christ is a constant, overwhelming desire to know Him better and to follow Him more closely. The better we get to know Him, the more we see how infinitely wonderful He is, how sinful we are, and how amazing His grace really is. This

leads us to love Him and desire to know Him more. This puts us in a "divine cycle" which will only end when we are with Christ.

PAUL'S MAXIMUM EFFORT

The lofty stature of Paul's goal and his constant discontentment with his current spiritual condition led him to put maximum effort into his Christian life and service for the Lord. He used very strong, active words to describe his effort. He wanted to "press on", and "lay hold of". He desired to "reach forward" towards his goal. He said this is the "one thing I do". The picture here is of a runner in a race. As the runners near the finish line, the leader may hear the footsteps of his opponent close behind. He does not look back, as this would likely cause him to falter and lose the race. As they near the tape, the athletes put every ounce of effort into the race, then stretch and strain with all their might to cross the finish line and gain the prize. This is the illustration Paul is using to describe his effort to know Christ and follow Him. We are reminded of the great lengths to which Olympic athletes will train, sacrifice, and discipline themselves in order to compete at the top levels of their sport. Paul uses the same imagery to describe the Christian life in 1 Corinthians 9:25-26: "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim..."

What effort are you putting into your Christian life and your walk with Christ? You may put great effort into your business or career. You might work extremely hard towards your political goals. We need to make sure we put maximum effort into those things which are going to have eternal value.

CONCLUSION

- **WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST GOAL IN LIFE? IS IT TO KNOW CHRIST BETTER AND TO FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM? CONSIDERING ANEW THE AMAZING GRACE OF GOD TO SEND CHRIST TO SUFFER AND DIE FOR US WILL LEAD US TO SET KNOWING HIM AS OUR GREATEST GOAL.**
- **ARE YOU CONTENT WITH THE CURRENT STATE OF YOUR WALK WITH CHRIST? TRULY KNOWING CHRIST BETTER WILL LEAD US ALWAYS TO DESIRE TO KNOW HIM MORE.**
- **WHAT KIND OF EFFORT ARE YOU PUTTING INTO KNOWING CHRIST BETTER AND FOLLOWING HIM. WHATEVER OUR PLACE IN LIFE, WE SHOULD POINT TO THIS AS THE "ONE THING I DO".**