

What Are Your Goals?

Philippians 3:12-21

Introduction:

Now that 2018 is approaching, many of us have probably already set our New Year's resolutions. According to a recent poll, the most common New Year's resolutions are:

Slide 2 (Each number has a transition on the slide)

1. Exercise more.
2. Lose weight.
3. Eat healthier.
4. Take a more active approach to health.
5. Learn a new skill or hobby.
6. Spend more time on personal well-being.
7. Spend more time with family and friends.
8. Drink less alcohol.
9. Stop smoking.
10. Other.

A lot of these relate to physical health. I personally am striving to exercise more and lose a few pounds since I gained nearly twenty since I got married (my wife's cooking is nice). While these goals are good, they should not be our first priorities as believers. We should be striving to have healthier bodies since our bodies are a temple and we need to be glorifying God in our bodies. So what should be our top resolution or our priority? The #1 priority we should have is to grow closer in our relationship with Jesus and be more like Him. This brings us to Philippians 3:12-21.

(Slide 3)

The church at Philippi was established by the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey between A.D. 49 and 52. The story of the church's origin is found in Acts 16. The first convert was a woman named Lydia. Later we read about the Philippian jailer and his household were converted after Paul and Silas were thrown into jail after being beaten publicly. This Pauline epistle is often known as the epistle of joy. Paul writes to the church in Philippi approximately A.D 60-62 while he was in prison in Rome for many purposes. A few of the purposes include to explain his situation at Rome (1:12-26), exhort the church to unity (1:27-2:18), and thank them for their financial support (4:10-20). In 3:1-11, Paul is warning these Philippian believers about false teachers going around. The teaching was that Gentiles (non-Jews) could only be saved if they adopted Jewish traditions and Old Testament commands as well. Since this church was a primarily a Gentile church, it was crucial that this warning got to them. Paul then renounced his old life for the sake of knowing Jesus. Nothing on this earth can ever satisfy and compare to knowing Jesus. This brings us to 3:12-21

(Slide 4-7)

¹² Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. ¹⁶ Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. ¹⁷ Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an

ensample. ¹⁸ (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) ²⁰ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: ²¹ Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Outline:

I. Pursuing the goal of being more like Christ. (vv. 12-14.)

A. Paul says he has not yet attained perfection.

1. He picks up off this idea from verse 11 “resurrection of the dead.”
2. This idea is of the doctrine of glorification – where our bodies will made new and perfect.

(Slide 8)

3. 1 John 3:2: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.
4. Paul wrote from such spiritual maturity and purity that we might expect he believed that he had conquered all spiritual difficulties and saw himself as having arrived at near perfection. He assures the readers that is not the case.
5. Charles Spurgeon wrote: “While the work of Christ for us is perfect, and it were presumption to think of adding to it, the work of the Holy Spirit in us is not perfect, it is continually carried on from day to day, and will need to be continued throughout the whole of our lives.”

(Slide 9 transition)

B. Though Paul is not yet perfect; he “follows after” to apprehend Christ.

1. This phrase “follows after” means he “presses on.”

Illustration: When Spain led the world (in the 15th century), their coins reflected their national arrogance and were inscribed Ne Plus Ultra which meant “Nothing Further” - meaning that Spain was the ultimate in all the world. After the discovery of the New World, they realized they were not the end of the world, so they changed the inscription on their coins to Plus Ultra meaning “More Beyond.” In the same pattern, some Christian lives say, “Nothing Further” and others say “More Beyond.”

3. Paul pressed on for what Jesus wanted. His effort was put forth to do God’s will, not his own.
4. Some believers live with the attitude: “Jesus got a hold of me; so that is it now. I am a Christian and I am going to heaven.” While this is true, if you have put your trust in Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection to save you from your sin, you will go to heaven. However, Paul showed a different attitude, that he would take hold for that for which Jesus took hold of him. Being saved is only just beginning; we ought to strive to grow every day because that is where true joy is found.

(Slide 9 – transition)

C. This one thing Paul does: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forth what is ahead.

1. The phrase “this one thing I do” literally means, “I am single-minded.”
2. The expression single-minded is just one word in the original language.
It refers to “single-mindedness,” “having one purpose,” “being focused on one,

single goal”—one and only one. There is no room for double-mindedness in this expression. So it is with the runner who must not look to the left or to the right, but must keep his focus on the goal

3. First, he forgets those things behind.

a. This does not mean he does not remember his past, but rather he lets it all go. The past no has no hold on him.

b. We often let those things in the past distract us, whether they be good things or bad things. Looking at what is in the past often keeps us from what God has for us in the future. The present is where eternity touches us now. Paul knew that a race is won only in the present moment, not in the past or in the future.

D. Consider what Paul had let go (vv 4-7). **(Slide 10)**

⁴Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: ⁵ Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

(Slide 11) (each one has a transition)

1. He was circumcised on the eighth day. ***

(He was a native Hebrew and legitimate Jew from the beginning, not a convert.)

2. He was of the nation of Israel. ***

(He had a pure lineage that can be traced back to Jacob.)

3. He was of the tribe of Benjamin. ***

(Being from the tribe of Benjamin was a high honor for several reasons. Israel's first king came from Benjamin; the tribe of Benjamin remained loyal to the house of David when Israel at one time divided into two nations; Benjamin also was the tribe that had the city of Jerusalem within its boundaries.

4. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews. ***

(Paul contrasts himself with the Jews who embraced Greek culture called Hellenistic Jews. He was raised in a family that retained the Hebrew language and custom.

5. He lived according to the law as a Pharisee. ***

(He was the son of a Pharisee and he studied under the well-known rabbi named Gamaliel. Paul was among the elite people of the Jews that were noted for their devotion to the law.)

6. He zealously persecuted the church. ***

(Anything that was considered a heresy to Judaism, he actively fought against it. He thought he was serving God zealously by persecuting the church.)

7. He was blameless in having righteousness by the law. ***

(Among men, he achieved the standard of righteousness. This standard fell short of God's standard, but from the outward perspective of conduct and observing the Mosaic law, he was blameless at it.)

8. All of these accomplishments, yet, he counts them all as loss for the sake of knowing Jesus. All of these things have been put behind him.

E. The things we need to leave in the past. **(Slide 12 + 13)**

1. We need to leave our achievements in the past. **(Transition)**

(It is a great thing to enjoy and celebrate your success and most importantly your hard work achievements. Don't fall in the trap of minimizing your accomplishment. But after your celebration you need to start work on towards your next achievement. You need to press on. God has much more for you than your yesterday's achievement.)

2. We need to leave our hurts in the past. **(Transition)**

(You may have been hurt somewhere in the past and you may still feel the pain and the shame. You are a victim. You suffered. However, it is unfair to you to and your loved ones to keep carrying the shame and the pain any more. Give over your pain to Jesus. He is able to take anything broken and make it new. You cannot change the past, but you can change your present and future. Accept God's forgiveness and forgive those who hurt you. Lewis Smedes quotes, "When you forgive you set a prisoner free. And then you discover that the prisoner was you").

3. We need to leave our sins in the past. **(Transition)**

(You may be at a point where you done terrible things in the past and convinced you are beyond repair. You might be wondering how God can forgive someone like you. Sin is a serious matter. Sin always has consequences. Sin is not only makes us feel guilty; it offends and

breaks fellowship from God. However, there is no sin in your life God cannot forgive. 1 John 1:9 promises: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

F. Paul proclaims he presses on. **(Slide 14 transition)**

1. Paul says he presses towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
2. The prize is the high calling of God. The prize is the call itself, not the benefits that come from the call.
3. It is a high calling because it comes from above, from God; the conception of it has emanated from His heart. It is a high calling because it is worthy of God. It is a high calling because it is so much above the ideals of men. Because it is such a glorious call, it is worth reaching forward for it.

II. Adopting the same mindset. (vv. 15-16). **(Slide 15)**

A. Paul exhorts his readers to have this same mindset. **(Slide 15 transition)**

1. Those who are perfect (mature) in Christ must have this mindset of letting go of the past and pursuing Jesus.
2. Those who do not have this mindset, he assures God will reveal it to them.
Anyone who is God’s children, He will work on them.

B. Those who belong to Jesus must reflect that with the way they live. **(transition)**

III. The example to follow. (vv. 17-21). **(Slide 16)**

A. The example of the godly.

1. Paul says to follow him as an example.
2. He is not being boastful; he is speaking with the attitude as he told the Corinthian church: “follow me as I follow Christ.”
3. In addition to following Paul, follow other godly people as examples.
4. When we follow godly people’s example, we follow Jesus.

B. Follow after those who have godly examples because there are many bad examples.

1. With weeping, Paul says there are many who are enemies of the cross.
 - a. He weeps because of the way they live.
 - b. He weeps because they do not know Jesus.
 - c. He weeps because their end is destruction.
2. Their god is their belly – They are driven by idolatry - They live for the pleasures the world offers.
3. Their mind is set on earthly things – The focus is not to please God, but please the world.

C. The believer’s destiny. **(Slide 16 transition)**

1. The conjunction “for” is functioning as a contrast. Our citizenship is in heaven.
2. A paraphrase: “We have our home in heaven, and here on earth we are a colony of heaven’s citizens.”
3. We are ambassadors for Christ. We represent heaven. No matter what your thoughts are on the President of the United States, being an ambassador is a huge honor. How much more an honor it is to be as ambassadors for Jesus.
4. We eagerly wait for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

- a. The titles “Savior” and “Lord” were given exclusively to Caesars in these times. Applying it to Jesus’s name is an offense to Rome.
- b. Many Christians were martyred for refusing to call Caesar Lord and professing Jesus to be the one true Lord.

5. Jesus will change our earthly bodies and we will be made like His.

- a. He can do this because He is able. There is no one like Jesus.
- b. This is the blessings we get to look forward to as Christians.

Conclusion: (Slide 17)

As we approach the New Year, here are some things we can pursue to grow closer to Jesus:

1. We can strive to read our Bibles through.
2. We can start off our days in prayer.
3. We can commit to faithfully tithing and giving.
4. We can actively seek out places to serve and help out in our local church.
5. We can strive to be better husbands and wives.

Maybe, your New Year’s Resolution is you need to be saved. You do not have to wait until midnight. If there has never been a time you put your trust in Jesus to save you from your sin, there is good news and bad news. The bad news is: your end is destruction just as those described in our text we read. You have no relationship with God, and you will spend eternity separated from Him because of your sin. The good news is that God loved you so much that He gave His only begotten Son to live a perfect life, and die on the cross and rise again on the third day for your sin. Because of Jesus, you can be saved! If you put your trust in Him to save you, you will become a citizen of heaven and you enjoy a life with the Lord forever that begins immediately.