

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Philippians 3.12-16 | November 1, 2020
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our study of **Philippians Chapter 3**. In the passage we studied last week (**verses 1-11**), Paul boldly declares his past identity and accomplishments are "garbage" in comparison to knowing Christ Jesus.

Paul now goes so far as to say that he forgets what is behind and strains toward what is ahead. This is a bold statement for the Apostle, since before he was found by Jesus, he persecuted the church! So, he wasn't only letting go of the good things to chase after the best thing; he was letting go - forgetting, even! - his past sins to "press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."

To say that the year 2020 has been unique would be the understatement of the decade (or longer)! It seems as though every facet of our lives has been disrupted. Yet, Jesus' mission we engage in and through Good Shepherd remains vital to the health and well-being of our community, nation, world, and one another. Many Life Groups, mission opportunities, weekly worship, and discipleship opportunities continue, typically having adapted to the online format. Our ministry charge that Jesus has called us to, has not stopped. In fact, it has been enhanced by being able to reach even more people in new ways. And we need to continue our support and prayers by the power of the Holy Spirit and continue to PRESS ON toward Jesus' goal for this part of His Flock call Good Shepherd!

II. Connecting with One Another

In your dreams of the ideal life, are you more like the pioneer (always pushing on) or the settler (settling down)?

III. Study the Text

- a. Read, again, **Philippians 3.1-11**. See if you can summarize what Paul's main point is in these verses.

Now read **Philippians 3.12-14**. There are two main ideas in these three verses. In your own words, what are they? What is their connection with **verses 1-11**? (Or, to think about it in another way, what came into Paul's mind immediately after writing **verse 11** that prompted him to continue with **verse 12**?)

- b. In **verse 12**, Paul writes, *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."* To what do you think he is referring in this verse? Is he referring to salvation? Or something in addition to salvation? Check out **Matthew 13.44-46** for an interesting parallel parable from Jesus' ministry.



- c. How does “neglecting” or “no longer caring for” your past sins help you forge ahead in seeking to know Jesus?
- d. How can looking back distract us from running the Christian race? (**verse 13**) What is behind you that you need to forget in order to strain toward the things ahead?
- e. In the second half of **verse 13**, Paul asserts that he forgets what is behind and strains toward what is ahead. But is “forget” how we should understand it? Reread **verses 4-11** to see if he’s really forgotten. Is forgetting even really possible!? The Greek word could also be translated as “neglect” or “no longer care for,” which gets to Paul’s original intent: namely that he no longer hangs his hat on the identity and accomplishments of his past.

One scholar puts it this way: “Paul has not forgotten his past. He has reconceived it from the perspective of one who is now in Christ, but it is not forgotten. In fact, it is quite clear that it is only now, from the perspective of being in Christ, that Paul can offer a truthful account of his past. His ability to ‘press on toward the goal’ can be sustained only by the truthful account of his past he is now able to narrate.”

- f. Why can Paul be so confident about his views (**verses 15-16**)

IV. Pray

- a. .Pray that God will help you to focus on the heavenly goal and not be sidetracked by temptations.
- b. Continue to pray for the witness of the Church during this difficult and divisive election season. (**Look for the November PRAYER GUIDE in the 10/31/20 Keeping Connected e-mail from Good Shepherd. Need one sent to you? Please contact Ellie 562/493.2553 x200**)
- c. Continue to pray for Christians around the world who are being persecuted for their faith.
- d. Pray for Good Shepherd during these unprecedented times in our surrounding communities, nation, and world. May we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, seek in new and creative ways, to PRESS ON by inviting all people to grow into a Christ-centered life in God’s family.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. Paul compares his quest for heaven to a race. What are similarities? The Christian life is like a race; elsewhere Paul uses athletic imagery in a similar way. (**See 1 Corinthians 9.24-27; 1 Timothy 6.12; 2 Timothy 4.7-8; cf. Matthew 24.13; Hebrews 12.1**)
- b. What have been your two or three primary life goals, and what have you done to achieve them? If someone had been observing you during the past week, what would they conclude were your primary goals?
- c. Reflecting on last week’s study guide, how has being found in Jesus (**verse 9**) led you to seek after Him as well? What connections do you see between the way you were found and the way you try to seek after Him? In what areas of your life would you like to grow in knowing Jesus?

