

### **Last week we addressed the issue of Lust**

<sup>27</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; <sup>28</sup> but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

### **Next week Bob will tackle Divorce**

<sup>31</sup> "It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE'; <sup>32</sup> but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Matt 5:27-32 (NASB)

### **Context: What Desire can lessen carnal lust and thwart divorce?**

If our eyes and sexual intentions are to be devoted to God and lust is to be condemned, what, in today's unspeakably perverse culture will motivate such purity in the heart of sinners? We will be charged in next week's passage to persist in consideration, grace and faithfulness with our spouses. What can empower us in today's trend toward civil unions and rampant divorce to sustain such fidelity in marriage. In reality, this whole portion of the Sermon on the Mount, which addresses the many ways in which we relate to others – the lost (for whom we are to be salt), those in darkness (for whom we are to be light), the libertine (before whom we are to be righteous), the self-righteous (unlike whom we are to be humble), the hateful (with whom we are to be gracious), those we've offended (from whom we are to seek forgiveness), those to whom we promise (with whom we must have integrity), those who harm us (who we are to forgive), indeed everyone who is our neighbor (who we are to love even as ourselves) – this whole passage begs the question, "How can I fulfill these expectations?"

The answer comes resoundingly at the beginning of chapter six: "You can't!" Don't even pretend to be righteous. You're not! Don't pretend you have much of any worth to offer others. You don't! You yourself are poor and needy. You *I need* a holy, heavenly, sovereign Father to accomplish what only He can in every aspect of lives and to Him we *must* pray. Our reliance *must* be upon Him and our desire *for* Him. He welcomes our dependency in which His goodness is made manifest and our desire by which His glory is both sought and received. So let us consider "Desire for God" and more specifically "Desire for Christ."

Perhaps no other passage of scripture speaks as directly to this topic as Philippians 3:7-16. There, Paul is commending the accomplishments of his life to the believers in Philippi but only for the purpose of propping up a "straw-man." All the things that should rightly afford him confidence in accomplishment, character and pedigree, he has come to count as rubbish in comparison to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. I invite you to turn to Philippians 3:7 and let us stand in acknowledgment of our great God and His glorious Word.

### **I. The Desirable Christ (Phil. 3:7-11)**

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the *surpassing value of knowing* Christ Jesus *my Lord*, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish that I *may gain* Christ, and may be *found* in Him, *not having righteousness* of my own derived from *the Law*, but that which is through faith *in Christ*, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may *know Him* and the *power* of His resurrection and the *fellowship* of His sufferings, *being conformed to His death*; in order that I may *attain to the resurrection* from the dead.

## A. Excellency of Christ - *hyperecho*

The first portion of our text is replete with phrases that describe the desirable character of Christ. Contemporary poetry struggles to accurately expound Christ's worth and so we resort to singing, "You are more. You are more than my words could ever say."

However, the Apostle Paul points to at least seven characteristics or benefits afforded us in Christ that should stoke our desire for Him. The first is found in the phrase, "I count all things to be loss in view of the *surpassing value* of knowing Christ Jesus." This is the only translation of *hyperecho* as "surpassing value" in the whole of Scripture. Obviously it points to the exclusivity of Christ's worth. Perhaps that is why the King James Version translated the word as "excellency." Jonathan Edwards spoke to the excellency of Christ in his sermon entitled "Safety, Fullness and Sweet Refreshment in Christ."

"But Christ Jesus has true excellency, and so great [an] excellency, that when [sinners] come to see it they look no further, but the mind rests there. It sees a transcendent glory and an ineffable sweetness in him; it sees that till now it has been pursuing shadows, but that now it has found the substance; that before it had been seeking happiness in the stream, but that now it has found the ocean.

The excellency of Christ is an object adequate to the natural cravings of the soul, and is sufficient to fill the capacity. It is an infinite excellency, such a one as the mind desires, in which it can find no bounds; and the more the mind is used to it, the more excellent it appears. Every new discovery makes this beauty appear more ravishing, and the mind sees no end; here is room enough for the mind to go deeper and deeper, and never come to the bottom. The soul is exceedingly ravished when it first looks on this beauty, and it is never weary of it. The mind never has any satiety, but Christ's excellency is always fresh and new, and tends as much to delight, after it has been seen a thousand or ten thousand years, as when it was seen the first moment. The excellency of Christ is an object suited to the superior faculties of man, it is suited to entertain the faculty of reason and understanding, and there is nothing so worthy about which the understanding can be employed as this excellency; no other object is so great, noble, and exalted."<sup>1</sup>

Although the Greek word employed in this first phrase is translated "surpassing value," it is, most literally, the conjunction of "to have / hold" and "above / over." Which brings to mind the traditional matrimonial phrase, "to have and to hold from this day forward ..." I do not know the origin of the phrase that is so frequently employed in wedding ceremonies but our understanding of that phrase is similar to Paul's implication in Philippians 3:7. Paul counted the excellency of knowing Jesus as the single, most precious possession of heart. Similarly, we are called to *wed* ourselves, if you will, to the knowledge and person of our Lord Jesus. This idea of intimacy with Christ is certainly carried forward in the second aspect of significance in vs. 8.

## B. Intimacy with Christ – *ginosko*

"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of *knowing* Christ Jesus." The Greek word *ginosko* refers to the reception of knowledge but more so it means "coming to know" some-thing intimately or "gaining a comprehensive understanding" of the object or subject at hand.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Safety, Fullness and Sweet Refreshment in Christ," from *A Treasury of Great Preaching* (WORDSearch Bible Software: Austin, 2013)

The Apostle John wrote in his first epistle,

“And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so *that we may know Him* who is true; *and we are in Him* who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 5:20 (NASB)

The previous quotation clarifies that a relationship exists between the Son of God and those to whom He has given understanding. So *ginōskō* suggests that what is *known* “is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the [reason for] the relationship.” (Vine’s Exp. Dict.) Galatians 4:9 says,

“But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things ...”

So intimate and of such great value is the knowledge shared between the individual parties of the relationship that the verb is used to speak of the union between man and woman. (e.g., “Joseph took Mary as his wife but “knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn son ...” Matthew 1:25, KJV) With that level of intimacy in mind I quote Edwards again concerning the beauty of knowing and being known by Christ.

This love of Christ is exceedingly sweet and satisfying, it is better than life, because it is the love of a person of such dignity and excellency. The sweetness of his love depends very much upon the greatness of his excellency; so much the more lovely the person, so much the more desirable is his love. How sweet must the love of that person be who is the eternal Son of God; who is of equal dignity with the Father! How great a happiness must it be to be the object of the love of him who is the Creator of the world, and by whom all things consist, and who is exalted at God's right hand, and made head over principalities and powers in heavenly places, who has all things put under his feet, and is King of kings and Lord of lords, and is the brightness of the Father's glory! Surely to be beloved by him, is enough to satisfy the soul of a worm of the dust. (See note on Edwards sermon above)

### **C. Lordship of Christ – *kyrios***

Edwards rightly captures the magnitude of our relationship with Christ in pointing to His Lordship. Paul makes clear that the know-ledge shared in this relationship, though intimate, is of a much more authoritative degree than that of a man and woman / husband and wife.

Being married to a Virginian coal-miner’s daughter, I dare not come home at the end of the day and say, “Dear woman, your Lord and master has returned and awaiteth thine attendance.” Apart from dodging large and sharp metal objects in flight, I can only imagine the response would be something on the order of, “You put your pants on one leg at a time like every other red-neck fool. Now get in here and tend to these children who certainly didn’t come by their crookedness through my side of the family tree! And don’t make me ask ye again!”

Unlike the complementary relationship we seek to nurture in our homes, the expectations and merits of our Lord Jesus require our full surrender. Unfortunately, *this* understanding of “Lord,” while utterly common in its expression among Christians, is completely foreign to us from a cultural and spiritual perspective. The word *kyrios* (“lord”) was employed in Jesus’ day in the same way we use “sir;” as a designation of respect for any one in authority over another whether they be a civil official, an elder or someone of higher social rank. Sadly, the use of “sir” is so uncommon in contemporary culture that its use is considered antiquated and cause for humored curiosity. “Would you listen to him? He says *yes sir* and *no mam*. How quaint! He must be from the South!”

While some modern cultures have retained enough protocol to retain the use of the title “Lord So & So”, we understand those titles to be little more than ceremonial and mere indicators of some austere social classification rather than illustrative of some real measure of authority. Not so in Jesus day! The word “Lord” denoted one who owned others who were at his disposal and obligated for his service on any occasion for any reason. The title belonged to emperors and kings and extended, in governance, to land owners, fathers and men. “Lord” was the designation given to Jesus by His followers from the outset of His ministry and the title He assumed for Himself. Jesus first claimed this title for Himself in the Sermon on Mount saying,

“Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father Who is in heaven. Many will say *to Me* on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy *in Your name*, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me you who practice lawlessness.’” Matthew 7:21-23

According to the record of Scripture, “there is no record that *kyrios* was ever again used by believers in addressing any save God and the Lord Jesus.” (Vine’s) By the day of Pentecost, Peter’s good confession in Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16) had grown in courage and conviction to the extent that he would say to a crowd of thousands of Jews, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified!” Acts 3:36

**D. Gaining Christ – “*have suffered the lost*” of all things (temporally) and “*count them as rubbish*” (comparatively) that I might *gain* (eternally and explicitly) Christ (the Lord)**

Put this way is there really a loss in light of what has been gained?

I think of [John] and [Jane] Doe, missionaries in a foreign country, whose daughter [Joy] was briefly a student of mine at Boyce College. Though [John] and [Jane] are both battling cancer, they *desire* to remain on the mission field, far from family and home, for the cause of Christ but also because of the *fuller* experience of life that is theirs as they live in the moment and power of God’s provision. These last two weeks they’ve placed their supporters on a heightened prayer alert as their pastor training school has come under greater scrutiny. A week ago [Joy] wrote the following,

Last night our training site was visited at 9 pm by the local police. They asked the students lots of questions, took down ID numbers and various other information on each student, did a general survey of the place ... and left saying they would be back the following evening to ask more questions and do a more detailed search. Some of the men were a bit shaken up. What was this all about? Some are surmising that either the local police do not know anything about what is going on and simply stumbled in at this time while doing a routine check (which is what they said), or that they do know something ... and are giving us a warning to take notice and watch out. Right now we are praying [and anticipating the investigation] this evening. The men are spending the day “cleaning” the place in preparation for tonight. We know our God is in control of all things and that He will [even] work out this for good. We are confident that His purposes will not be thwarted and He will prevail.

*Please pray that ...the men would be wise as serpents but gentle as doves, would take advantage of this opportunity to boldly confess Christ, but would not say or do anything that would expose the training and further jeopardize their own well-being.*

Does the “suffering the loss” of American ease, immediate family, democratic liberty, personal leisure, and physical security, or any other earthly thing compare with the surpassing value of laboring for the eternal cause of Christ anywhere; Being embraced by a broader and deeper foreign family of faith or intentionally embracing the restrictions of a Communist regime for the sake of the eternal kingdom of heaven?

Can superficial concerns for personal well-being afford the same fulfillment as knowing that every moment of every day is invested in the remarkable responsibility of raising the next generation of evangelists and pastors and every hour is filled with the exhilaration of knowing that you are living exclusively in the power and protection of the sovereign God of the universe Who is working all things – indeed, your daily life – according the purpose of His eternal will? I think not!

Our children sang the following words for us this morning:

I wanna live my life with courage. I wanna live out on the edge.  
I wanna have the faith to trust You with everything and nothing less.  
No doubt, no fear, no wondering if You are here.

Change my heart, O God. Open up my eyes.  
I wanna see your glory shining like a light.  
Change my heart, O God. Open up my eyes.  
I wanna feel your Spirit movin’ in my life.

Are those simply catchy words to a stylish little contemporary Christian song or have we considered that *that* is *precisely* how God wants us to live: willing to “[suffer] the loss of all things and count them rubbish [in comparison to that which we] **gain** in Christ.”

### **E. *Being Found in Christ* –**

Not only do we gain Christ and all the glories of His kingdom, but we are also “found” in Him. Depending on the dictionary you consult, there are a number of meanings for the word “found” that go well beyond the basic past tense of “find.” Each one is encouraging and together they create an amazing picture of our redemption *in* Christ. There is the meaning to “establish” or “to lay the bottom or foundation of something,” from French origin. There is also the idea of “casting, mixing and melting metal,” from both French and Latin origin. English employs the word in the form of an adjective with the meaning that the object is equipped, outfitted, or fully furnished; better yet, that the furnishing is free of charge. The word has been used to describe a lost or abandoned child – a *foundling*. Finally, there’s the simpler American version that something, perhaps even that lost child, has been rescued and restored to its rightful owner. Oh! Do you see the glorious implications that pour from our text?

The “foundation” as well as the eternal “equipping” of our salvation was “established” in the gracious design of our God through our Lord Christ. Moreover, our lives and destinies have been fused and intermingled with those of our Lord from the foundations of the world. Isn’t that exactly what Paul is driving home in the first chapter of Ephesians 1 where he writes,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us (indeed, “fully furnished us”) with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” Ephesians 1:3-6

Peter also alludes to God’s eternal plan and adds the image of our lives being *cast* together *with* Christ for His glory. He writes,

“Blessed be the God and Father of Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be *found* to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ ...” 1 Peter 1:3-7

Then, of course, there is the simple but ever so poignant perspective of the hymn-writer who has given us “Amazing grace how sweet the sound ... I once was lost but now, am found. Was blind but now, I see.”

Unfortunately, the majority of Christianity hymnody and certainly contemporary song speaks of us finding God rather than His rescue of us, which is certainly the greater reality.

Even our text affords a strong suggestion of the role that our faith plays in the imputation of God’s righteousness. Verse 9 reads, “... and being found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith ...”

I exhort you to remember however, that Paul made clear in his letter to the Ephesians that the work of our redemption, while received *by* faith, was the initiative and gift of God’s grace to those that were disinterested in seeking and incapable of acquiring it on their own. He wrote in Ephesians 3:8,

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it* [meaning the faith and the grace are together] is the gift of God ... Ephesians 2:4-8 (NASB)

I’m reminded of the power of being found by the story of a 7 yr. old little boy that was lost from his family for nearly half a day in the weekend of July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776 in historic colonial Williamsburg. . . . .

.....  
He was convinced he had been deserted though he had no cause to doubt.  
He had strayed far from family, friendly surroundings, safe boundaries.  
He was afraid, desperate, destitute, hungry, in danger, unidentified ..... That little boy’s name was Nathan Platt and *I* was even then in a more hopeful state than we were in relation to God! What *we* required was a rescue to absolute righteousness.

## F. Righteousness from Christ

I remind you of Paul's quotation of Psalm 53 in Romans 3 where he meticulously exposes the desperate condition of man in relation to a perfectly righteous God:

"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." (Psalm 53:1-3)

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and the entire world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus ... Romans 3:19-24 (NASB)

## G. Resurrection in Christ

In case you're still incoherent to the glories of our desirable Christ and His accomplishments on our behalf, Paul concludes this pericope with a "grand-slam" of glories that are afforded in the resurrection of our Redeemer and Lord.

... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection ...  
(by faith I *may know Him* AND *the power* of His life in me)

... that [I *may know*] *the fellowship* of His sufferings,  
(not just suffering *for* His sake but experiencing His presence *even in* the most mundane struggles I face)

... being *conformed to His death*  
(by which I am justified before God and permitted to truly live)

... that I may attain to the resurrection *from the dead*.  
(for forget not that everyone *will be* resurrected from the dead. The majority however will be resurrected *from* death *to* eternal death and torment. Only those in Christ will be raised *from* death *to* everlasting life.)

OH! What a glorious promise that is. Yesterday my children were a bit bewildered with the thought of Jim Kuczma's death because they knew that I had been visiting with him throughout the week. I was able to explain with joy the reality that one moment he was laboring with death and the very next instant he awoke to find himself alive *in* Christ, embraced *by* Christ, and, for the first time, fully aware *of* Christ! Hallelujah! What a hope is ours *in* Christ! We were redeemed to desire and, more so, to delight in this hope!

## II. Redeemed to Desire (Phil. 3:12)

Paul writes, “Not 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.”  
Philippians 3:12

Though this sermon is intended offer spiritual motivation for us in our battle against fleshly lust and encouragement to fidelity in our marriages, I must admit that selection of the topic was a matter of some convenience for me as well. We have begun a study of John Piper’s book *Desiring God* in College Ministry and my hope was that considerable insight from that book might inform today’s sermon.

With respect to a rightly *re-ordered* perspective of our relationship with God, that has certainly been the case. The principal thrust of Piper’s book is that Christians do NOT think rightly about our relationship with God. We consider the mandate to “*love* God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength” as a duty rather than privilege. Even more deeply, we have been taught to some extent and tend to think to a greater extent that the last motivation we should have in loving God is the pleasure it affords us. After all, the Christian life is the way of the cross and we are called to offer our bodies as a “living sacrifice.” Surely there is more duty than delight in daily discipleship with Christ.

Piper is not the first to promote the idea of desiring and enjoying God. The historic Westminster Catechism begins with these words,

“The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

Piper’s counter cultural call is to *Christian Hedonism*; that is, unabashed indulgence in the riches of God’s provisions through Christ. He exhorts us toward abandonment in the pursuit of God, boisterous exultation in the praise of God, delight in the deepening knowledge of God, grateful revelry in the experience of God’s grace, mercy and vulnerability motivating all our interaction with others, and valiant service under the sovereignty of God’s calling and in His care; “no doubt, no fear, no wondering if [He] is here,” but unfettered optimism that God will work all things together for our good as we love Him and follow His calling wherever it may lead us.

The following quote, though lengthy, is characteristic of Piper’s call to “Christian Hedonism”:

“The pursuit of joy in God is not optional. It is not an “extra” that a person might grow into after he comes to faith. It is not simply a way “to enhance” your walk with the Lord. Until your heart has hit upon this pursuit, your “faith” cannot please God. It is not saving faith.

Saving faith is the confidence that if you sell all you have and forsake all sinful pleasures, the hidden treasure of holy joy will satisfy your deepest desires. Saving faith is the heart felt conviction no only that Christ is reliable, but also that He is desireable. It is the confidence that He will come through with His promises *and* that what He promises is more to be desired than all the world.

We may speak of the “joy of faith” at three levels. First, there is the new spiritual taste created by the Spirit of God for the glory of God. This new taste is the seed and the root of joy. Thus, it is the “joy of faith” in embryo, as it were. Second, there is the shoot, the stem; of faith itself reaching out actively for all that God is for us in Christ. The pith of this stem is joy in God. It is not possible for vital genuine faith in the Fountain of Joy not to partake of that joy. Joyless embracing of the God of hope, for who He really is, *is* impossible. Third, there is the fruit of daily gladness that Paul speaks of in Romans 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all *joy* and peace *in believing*.”

Here joy and peace flow out *from* faith in the whole of life (e.g., Gal. 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ...”).

In conversion we find the hidden Treasure of the kingdom of God. We venture all on it. And year after year in the struggles of life, we prove the value of the treasure again and again, and we discover depths of riches we had never known. And so the joy of faith grows.

When Christ calls us to a new act of obedience that will cost us some temporal pleasure, we call to mind the surpassing value of following Him, and by faith in His proven worth, we forsake the worldly pleasure. The result? More joy! More faith! Deeper than before. And so we go on from joy to joy and faith to faith.

Behind the repentance that turns away from sin, and behind the faith that embrace Christ, is the birth of a new taste, a new longing, a new passion for *the pleasure* of God’s presence. This is the [very] root of conversion. This is the creation of a Christian Hedonist.”<sup>2</sup>

While Piper’s argument makes me a bit uncomfortable in that it calls into question the integrity of my faith and that of every other believer who does not daily display an over-riding exuberance in life, I believe there is much merit in what he says.

The reality of all that we have received in Christ ought to motivate us to praise, thanksgiving and even exuberance more often than not. I must confess however, that the responsibilities of life, the legitimate expectations of others, the demands of being a brother, father, husband, pastor, partner in ministry, son, servant to all and bond-servant (i.e., “slave”) to Christ are utterly overwhelming at times. My desire and yet, inability to be ALL these things results in a robbery of joy.

What then? What can I do to renew my “Desire for Christ?” **How do I do desire?** Well, thankfully our brother Paul provides ample practical application to address the dilemma of waning desire.

### III. Doing Desire (Phil. 3:13-16)

He writes in vs. 13 of our texts, “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* [i.e., *the resurrection of the dead*] yet; but **one thing I do:** *forgetting* what lies behind and *reaching forward* to what lies ahead, ***I press on*** toward the goal **for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus**. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, *have this attitude*; and if in anyone of you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us *keep living* by that same standard to which we have attained.” Paul identifies here a number of things we can *do* to fuel our desire for Him.

#### A. Forgetting

What is needful for us to **"forsake and leave behind?"**

What bitterness, brokenness, chemical or physical dependency, issue of guilty conscience, prohibitive habit, matter of pride, leisurely preoccupation, personal plans, rights, sins, vocational ambition? What causes you to forget about Christ and the blessings that are available in Him? Forget *it* and forsake the emotions that accompany your desire for *it*.

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<sup>2</sup> John Piper, “Conversion: the Creation of a Christian Hedonist,” *Desiring God*, rev. ed. (Multnomah Books: Colorado Springs, 2011 by Desiring God Foundation), pp. 73-74.

## B. Reaching

How are we to be “**straining for what is ahead?**”

How active could we be in prayer? How faithful could we be in the study of and surrender to God’s Word. How fervently and frequently could we engage in worship? Are these not the activities that will occupy us in heaven? Let us strive for full engagement in these activities in our daily lives!

## C. Pressing On

Isn’t our ultimate goal the “**upward calling of God in Christ?**”

What “on earth” are we looking forward to? Is it a career, an education, financial independence, leisurely retirement, marriage, a relationship, the return of sanity to a ridiculous culture, the return of religious values to an unrighteous nation? What causes do we champion? What stickers adorn our cars? Where does our money go? We have kingdom to inherit and siblings in faith to call from darkness to light and hope of glory – Christ in us – to celebrate! Look less at today and make glory your goal!

## D. Anticipation is the mature response of the believer

Who has seen the world for what it is worth and says instead, “Give me Jesus!” How can we age or mature in attitude with a view toward glory? The older I get the more of my mentors and friends who pass, at times painfully but gracefully, from this life to the next, the more my spirit is quieted. The wisdom that speaks in that quiet says, “Seek, by God’s grace, to be perfected from perfectionism, pride and vain preoccupations. Instead, pursue with gratitude the righteousness of Christ by which you have been made perfect. So that when your time comes to be called from death to life, you may have no regrets and may readily embrace the perfection and pleasure that awaits you.”

## E. Reliving

Should we not perpetually **live in the reality of eternal life in God?**

The Apostle Paul commended his spiritual son, Timothy to, “Fight the good fight of faith; **take hold of the eternal life** to which you were called ... 1 Timothy 6:12 (NASB)

## Jim Kuczma’s Impact

I have been rebuked these past two weeks by the perspective of a dying brother. I did not fully recognize the beauty of his fragile position lingering between “life” and “death” until I went to encourage him one last time. The Lord directed me to John 11 -12 as I considered what I might read with him. I had no idea that *I* would leave his hospital room *as* encouraged as him having clearly seen a glimpse of eternity in his fading physical countenance. Together we read:

**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." John 10:27-30**

Jesus said to [Martha], "**Your brother [Lazarus] will rise again.**" Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "**I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?**" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world." **John 11:23-27 (NASB)**

Jim's final hours were filled with a fresh and full understanding of what the psalmists express in Psalm 84:

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul *longs*, yes, *faints* for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are those who  *dwell* in your house, [they shall be]  *ever* singing your praise! Selah [Seriously! Think about that!]

For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than  *dwell* in the tents of wickedness. **For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. NO good thing does he withhold** from those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you! **Psalms 84:1-4, 10-12 (ESV)**

Pastor Keith is continually such a tremendous encouragement and model to me in ministry and he was prompted by the Lord, as he regularly is, to exhort me toward joy this week. With his encouragement he included a prayer that was undoubtedly ordained of the Lord for our conclusion this morning. Let us take the words of this anonymous Puritan pastor, and make them our own as we close:

**Closing Prayer:** Oh, [our] Savior, help us! [We] are so slow to learn, so prone to forget, so weak to climb; [we are often] in the foothills when [we] should be on the heights; [we are] pained by [a] graceless heart, prayer-less days, poverty of love, sloth in the heavenly race, [guilty of a] sullied conscience, wasted hours, [and] unspent opportunities.

[We are] blind [when] light shines [all] around [us]; take the scales from [our] eyes, grind to dust [our] evil heart[s] of unbelief. Make it [our] chief joy to study Thee, gaze on Thee, sit, like Mary at Thy feet, lean, like John on Thy breast, appeal, like Peter to Thy love, count, like Paul all things [as loss in compare to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord].

Give [us] increase and progress in grace so that there may be more decision in [our] character, more vigor in [our] purposes, more elevation in [our lives], more fervor in [our] devotion, more constancy in [our] zeal. As [we] have position in the world, keep [us] from making the world [our] position; may [we] never seek in the creature what can be found only in the Creator.

Let not faith cease from seeking Thee until it vanishes into sight. Ride forth in [us], Thou King of kings and Lord of lords, that [we] may live victoriously, and in victory attain [the resurrection in Jesus Christ, our Lord!] Amen!

**Closing Song:**                      *Knowing You, Jesus*                      **Kendrick**

All I once held dear, built my life upon,  
All this world reveres and wars to own,  
All I once thought gain, I have counted loss;  
spent and worthless now, compared to this:

**Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You;  
There is no greater thing!  
You're my all! You're my rest!  
You're my joy, my righteousness!  
And I love You, Lord!**