

## Philippians 3:12-21

As human beings we are created to worship something or someone!

We all worship something. This could be yourself, your spouse or kids, or our career or our financial standing. It could be a performer, a politician or an athlete. I can give many more examples.

There are halls of worship in theaters or sport arenas or even in front of your TV or computer.

There are chants and songs and noise to celebrate the worship.

I will give you some staggering figures of worship:

In 2019 the NHL brought in 4.43 billion US\$

NBA 7.4 billion

Major League Baseball 10 billion

NFL 13 billion US \$

These sports brought in all together \$34.83 billion dollars

The porn industry during the same time brought in \$97 billion dollars.

In the US last year the donations to the church and charities were \$50 billion

Broken down it shows of all church goers 5% tithe(10%) and 80% gives 2% of their income.

Why do I mention all this? It has been said that if you want to see peoples priorities you need to see where the money goes.

God started speaking to me through this passage many years ago. I was in Angola with the special forces of South Africa and with the feared 32 Battalion whose nick name was "The Terrible Ones" We were camped and camouflaged as protection against the terrifying Hind Russian assault helicopter gunships and I was lying under a tree reading the Bible under the threat of death, when God opened this passage to me. Emphasizing to me the real importance in life. It is not to physically survive, but to experience the fullness of life Jesus has provided for us. Since then He keeps on bringing me back to this passage. Like with Paul I have not quite got this right and God continues to remind me to keep on straining myself towards this goal. By God's divine provision this passage was given me to preach out of all the other possible passages in Philippians. I have had some apprehension about preaching on this very important life changing message. I am concerned that I will not be able to fully convey the importance of this message. I pray that this opportunity will bring me as well as you closer to making this a reality in our lives!

We have to review the previous section, since that is the focus of the next section.

**7But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and**

count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ **9**and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— **10**that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, **11**that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

In V7-11 we read that we have to give up everything and consider it excrement in order to obtain this treasure.

What is this treasure?

- it is to truly know Jesus for who He really is
- for Him to be in me and I to be in Him
- to attain the righteousness of Christ by faith
- to know His power like what He exerted at His resurrection
- to suffer for Him
- to die to ourselves in order to be raised and be with Him at our resurrection.

We have a treasure so great that is should consume us like it did Paul as he explains in this chapter. We have to realize this and treasure it dearly. Paul emphasizes this in:

**1 Cor 2: 9**But, as it is written,  
“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the heart of man imagined,  
what God has prepared for those who love him”—  
**10**these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

Dear brother and sister we get so used to the gifts and promises in the Bible that it does not affect us much anymore. It is like we get inoculated to the message! We like to keep Jesus at arms length in order for Him not to mess with our private lives.

How amazingly privileged are we? We read in the first part of Phil 3 firstly that we need to rejoice- we have the best treasure and news in the universe!

Paul emphasized that this is not a one-time event, but something that we should be consume with daily! It is amazing how temporary things with no eternal value can consume us!

**12**Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

None of us will reach our goal while on earth, but we need to press on with urgency and determination in order to lay hold of this immense treasure. Jesus

have chosen us and for us the receive this great treasure. We need to to make sure we take hold of that.

**13**Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, Paul indicates the effort that need to go into attaining this. To me it gives the picture of a ox or horse leaning into the harness to move the heavy cart. The Greek for straining here is dioko- which has been translated as pursue, or strain or press on. This indicates purposefulness, intent and great effort, commitment and dedication.

We need to appreciate the great importance and necessity this is for us to also pursue with all our time and energy. Gerhardt talked about the unction of God. It is overwhelming sense of HIs presence and purpose in our lives.

There might be things in your life that you do not have a good answer for. There might be things you have done or others have done to you, but you cannot allow anything to distract or deter you from pursuing this goal!

You need to forget what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. You need to forget the past that might trip you up, but you have to remember how God has made eternal provision for you since before the creation of the world.

Like Paul, he had to forget that he cherished him being Jewish and the traditions and he also how he hated and persecuted Christians.

**14** press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. This treasure concludes in our resurrection from the dead to spend eternity with Jesus. How awesome and spectacular is this! We are waiting on our call to go to heaven to spend eternity with God.

How does that or should that change your view on life on earth?

We all like to strive for a prize. To get an A+ at school or honours at university, win a championship or get the prized job or career, or just a “well done”!

This promise blows all of that not out of the water but out of the atmosphere!

This is worth pursuing more than anything else in the world.

We have an idea in our mind what Paul wants us to have, but, really, we have not idea! This knowing Jesus and being part of His Kingdom is so precious that we can not fathom it. Jesus is trying to give us a glimpse of how precious the kingdom of heaven is like:

**Matt 13: 44**“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

**45**“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, **46**who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

It is very important for us to self-assess and see what is most important for us. **Matt 6: 19**“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust<sup>e</sup> destroy and where thieves break in and steal, **20**but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where we focus and invest our time effort and money in, there our heart and mind will also be. Are we focussed on Jesus on the the world?

**15**Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. **16**Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

We have to make sure we have this attitude Paul has. We need to ask God to reveal our attitude and whether it is pleasing to Him and whether we pursue Him with enough effort and purpose. This a sign of Christian maturity that you: **14** **press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

Paul says that if you are a mature Christian you too will think be of this mindset. And if you are a serious Christian,and not feel this way, God will lead you there if you seek His will.

That means holding fast to what Jesus have already given you and straining toward the prize of fully knowing and experiencing Jesus.

**Mat 13:18**

**18**“Hear then the parable of the sower: **19**When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. **20**As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, **21**yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.<sup>b</sup> **22**As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. **23**As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

We are Christian churchgoers, but how fruitful are we? Has tribulation or persecution for the Gospel make you slide back. Or does the cares of the world or the deceitfulness of riches choke the power of God' word in your life?

A crucial element of attaining this relationship with Jesus and receiving the righteousness is faith in Jesus who provided this treasure for us and He wants us to have it and enjoy it!

Paul Tripp wrote: "Faith is taking up your cross, dying to yourself, and committing yourself to live as a disciple of Jesus. Faith is letting the cross of Jesus Christ and his empty tomb define your identity and your hope. Faith is much more than a one-time decision; it is a lifestyle lived with the presence, promises, and call of God always in view.

I'm going to tell you something that will surprise you. Faith is impossible. It is unnatural and counterintuitive for us all. Self-trust is natural. Fear is natural. Worry is natural. Self-righteousness is natural. Doubt is natural. Autonomy and self-sufficiency are natural, but faith isn't natural. So here's where the call to faith always leads you. Faith, properly understood, always leads you to cry out for God's grace. It takes grace to have the faith to entrust yourself and everything you are and have to God and his grace. Faith is important because it is the only pathway to finding and receiving God's greatest gift, his grace in the person of his Son, Jesus.

What this text in Philippians 3 does for me, is questioning my whole reason and purpose for living, who am I and what am I on earth for and what am I doing with that what Christ has already accomplished for me?

All I have has been given to me, not just for my own interest bit for the glory of Jesus. We read that our talents are for the sake of the Church.

We have been given this amazing gift of knowing Jesus and experincing His power!

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How come we do not see the clear evidence of it?

Why is our ministries so weak? The problem is God gave us some abilities and we think we can do the work we need to do in our abilities. We also want to do work for God and we do. Unfortunately, nothing we do is worth anything even if we do it for God, unless it is God doing it through us.

When we do something we expect to get some glory. God is a jealous God and He wants the glory. Not because He is an egomaniac, but He knows it is the only way that is good for us and Him.

**2 Tim 2: 11 : If we have died with him, we will also live with him**

The question I have for you and for me, is have you died with him to yourself and are you living for Him? How come we are so ineffective then? God has made provision for us to know Him and live for Him. Unfortunately we have the sinful flesh that prevents God to be able to work in our lives unless we daily die to ourselves. When we realize that we are weak and unable to do His will, then He can do it through us and get the glory.

Paul tells us in this chapter that even his substantial accomplishments is but excrement!

The key here is that all we do for God is nothing, but that what the Lord does in and through us, is very valuable. How then can we honour God?

**1 Cor 15: 58** **Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**

We do need to subdue the our fleshly desires that hinders us. We never can totally get rid of it this side of heaven, but it is a daily submission to the will of God that sustains us and brings glory to God!

**Gal 2: 20** **I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21**

We are unable to successfully fight the fleshly desires our selves. We need Jesus and he Holy Spirit, but we have to moment by moment surrender to Jesus in order to lay hold of that which Jesus wants for me and gave His life for.

The cry of Paul's heart is as he states in **V10**:**“that I may know him and the power of his resurrection”**

It has been said: “Men will trust in God no further than they know Him”

How do we get to know Jesus? Yes from the Bible, but it is much more. It is about a relationship with Jesus for which He sacrificed himself and choose you to be His child and ambassador. As. When we have such an intimate relationship with Jesus we love to spend time with Him and get to know who He really is and discover His power. Intimacy also means that we allow Him to see who we really are and what parts of our lives do not honour Him and has to be surrendered to Him in order to glorify Him.

We need to get to love Him for who He is and not just what He can do for us.

We were born into the law of sin due to Adam and we were doomed to obey the law of sin. As we died to sin with Jesus and was raised to new life our bondage to sin has been broken and we are free to love Jesus. Somewhat like a wife's husband has died and now she is free to marry another man.

Jonathan Edwards said the most important knowledge that you can have is to know God and yourself as revealed by God.

Yes, it is worth every effort to attain this great gift of knowing Jesus and laying hold of that that He wants for us. In the process you will also get to know yourself and your dependency on Him.

When you exposed yourself daily to the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit, you will get to know Him and yourself.

**Heb 4 : “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account”**

We will find out that we are much less than we think we are, but we will find that Jesus is much more than we think He is!

John Newton the slave-trader turned Christian and the writer of “Amazing Grace” said in his later years “Although my memory is fading, I remember two things very clearly: “I am a great sinner and Christ is a great saviour.”

**17Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.**

Most of us have people we would like to be like. For us there is only one person we should want to be like and that is Jesus or perhaps someone that honours Jesus with their life? That does not deter Paul from asking people to imitate how he and other mature Christians pursue Jesus.

Are you ready to lead other Christians in pursuing Jesus with all they have?

We need to lead in this way otherwise, there are many that would like to lead them away from pursuing Jesus!

**8For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19Their end is destruction, their god**



**is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.**

You are either pursuing Jesus and getting closer to Him or you are not and drifting away from Him, which will lead to your destruction. Our flesh is always there to entice us to sin and we cannot give into it.

When we stop pursuing Jesus, we and our fleshly desires become the most important in our lives. Then we have a lot of people to follow.

They are the enemies of the cross of Jesus. All what Jesus has accomplished for you on the cross, all the things Paul is pursuing will be cancelled when you follow these people and the desires of your flesh. Be very careful who you trust to follow. Good leaders like good trees are known by their fruit. So are bad leaders and bad fruit!

There is destruction and eternal damnation for those who make the wrong choices!

**Rom 1: . 21For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.**

**24Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.**

**26For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.**

**28And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.**

Brother and sister we see here how Paul sheds tears for these people, we should to. We clearly see in this passage the difference of only knowing God, but not honouring Him as God in your life and the different outcomes are as opposite as heaven and hell. The most common thing we put in place of the glory of God is our own glory! We need to fight that and allow God to be God in our lives. We



live amongst these people and we should not be negatively influences by them, but we should love them and make them aware of the reality of God and His love for them. You cannot argue them out of their worldview, but you can introduce them to the love of Christ and your worldview. This way they can be transformed any the renewing on their minds by the Holy Spirit

**John 15: 1**“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. **2**Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. **3**Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **4**Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. **5**I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. **6**If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. **7**If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8**By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. **9**As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. **10**If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. **11**These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

God has grafted you into His family and will prune you, but you will only be able to bear fruit if you abide in Him. Abide means to surrender to Him and stay in his presence and will all the time. It is to be in communication with Him all the time and are submitted to all He guides us to do. The reason Jesus wants you to abide in Him is that His joy may be in you and that your joy may be full!

You might say, “but I do not have time for this, I have a life to live and responsibilities to look after”, but Jesus responds to you:

**Mat 6: O you of little faith? 31**Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32**For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33**But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Paul states that our citizenship is in heaven. Do not get bent out of shape about what is going on here! God is sovereign and He has the last say and this is not our final destination!

We with great excitement and anticipation are awaiting our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ to come and get us. Whether we are alive or dead to the body at the time, we will get a body like His and go back to be with Him in heaven.

We will reign with Him and by His power He will subject everything under himself

**Ps 1: 1Blessed is the man<sup>a</sup>  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
2but his delight is in the law<sup>b</sup> of the LORD,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.  
3He is like a tree  
planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.**

Only when your focus is on God will you be successful.

Do you think I want to cramp your style and how you enjoy life? No Jesus wants you to enjoy life to the full!

**John 10:10 “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full”**

Jesus wants you experience not just victory but success or fullness of life and the ultimate reward. What better motivation could you have?

**Matt 16: 24Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25For whoever would save his life<sup>g</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? 27For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.**

*To truly follow Jesus will cost you everything, but not following Him will cost you much more, even your soul!*

The Christian walk is not for sissies. There is a war for your soul and the souls of those you know and love. If you have not realized it yet you will. Jesus came and

sacrificed himself in love for you in order to win your soul and protect it. Likewise, you need to sacrifice your life for Him. He is now on His throne in heaven with the father and rules and reigns the universe.

He wants to continue the battle against Satan through you. We will also need to suffer for Him and we will need to consider suffering for Him a privilege.

**Jer 20: 11** But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior;  
so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail.

He is the one you want to be in battle with. By yourself you will get slaughtered.

God is always there to help you if you do His will.

**2 Chron 16:** For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.

Without Him you cannot win any battle. If you fight with Him in the battles He wants you to fight, then the battle is His and the outcome guaranteed!

**20** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

We are citizens of heaven and we need to act like that. God wants to bless us and God has a mission for each of us and we need to fulfil it. One day He will come back and the living and the dead will need to answer to Him.

God is calling you to Himself. You need to surrender to Him and strain to know Him and allow God to work through you in order to glorify Him with your life. He has also placed people in your life that need to get to know Jesus in order to experience His love and promises, otherwise they face eternal damnation!

Do I mean that you have to give up your dreams and have your joy in God? What does the Bible say about what happens if you trust in God and do good and delight yourself in the Lord?

**Ps 37: 3** Trust in the Lord, and do good;  
Dwell in the in the land and befriend faithfulness.  
Delight yourself in the Lord  
And he will give you the desires of your heart.

Jonathan Edward sums up I think of what Paul is telling us here. He said: “ God’s purpose for my life was that I have a passion for God’s glory and that I have a passion for my joy in that glory, and that these two are one passion.”

God is calling you today and you will not get away not responding. He wants your life and He wants you to do what He has called you to do. He also want you to has a fulfilling joyful life and He wants to give you the desires of your heart! God wants you to surrender your life to Him and strain with all your power to know Him and experience Him in order for Him to guide you in a life changing and joy-filled life.  
This need to be the passion of your life.

**1 Cor 7: [17](#) Only let each person lead the life<sup>e</sup> that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him.-**