



**PRESS FORWARD!**  
PHILIPPIANS 3:12 – 4:1 (NLT)



**I. INTRODUCTION**

In our last lesson, we discussed the importance of knowing Christ. Paul was willing to give up pedigree, prestige, prominence and power to know God fully. Even though he was imprisoned, (some scholars believe he had been in prison for at least two years), his priority was to grow closer in his relationship with Christ Jesus. One would think that after two years of imprisonment, Paul's priority would be to get out of prison. The book of Philippians paints a different story. It seems that his imprisonment propelled him toward God, instead of away from Him. In Philippians 3:12 – 4:1, Paul encourages us to press forward and don't give up.

**PRESS ON TO CHRIST NOT WORLDLY PERFECTION**

**Philippians 3:12-13** Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead...

**1. Paul admits that he doesn't know everything about God.**

Attain (*lambanō*) – to take hold of, to grasp, to enter into a close relationship, to make one's own.

**2. Paul admits that there is work to be done in his life.**

Perfect (*teleioō*) – to be complete, to finish.

**3. Paul will not let his lack of knowledge of God or his human imperfections keep him from pressing to God.**

Press (*diōkō*) – to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing.

Lay hold of (*katalambanō*) to lay hold of as to make my own, to win.

**4. Paul admits that he must forget the past and reach for what is ahead.**

Forget (*epilanthanomai*) – not to have remembrance of something; no longer caring for.

- Hebrews 12:1-2

Reaching for those things (*epekteinomai*) – to stretch out toward.

## II. Live for the Goal of God in Christ Jesus

**Philippians 3:14** I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

### 5. Paul is reaching for a goal that encompasses all of God.

Goal (skopos, derived from the Greek word skopeō) - the object an athlete fixes her gaze upon in a race.

- I Corinthians 9:24-27

Prize (brabeion) – an award to the victor in the games.

- 2 Timothy 4:8
- Hebrews 3:13

The upward call (anō/klēsis) – an invitation to experience special privilege and responsibility that is an upward goal.

## III. Embrace Your Kingdom Citizenship

**Philippians 3:17- 4:1** Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. <sup>18</sup> 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: <sup>19</sup> whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame-- who set their mind on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. **4:1** Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

### 6. Paul encourages the Philippian Christians to follow his examples.

- Corinthians 4:15-16
- Philippians 4:9

### 7. Paul instructs believers not to set their minds on earthly (worldly) things, but on the Kingdom of God. Those whose minds are focused on earthly affairs are considered enemies of the cross.

a. Destruction (apōleia) – loss, annihilation, ruin.

- Romans 8:5-8
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
- Galatians 5:17-21

### 8. Lastly, Paul commands the disciples to “stand fast in the Lord.”

a. Stand fast (stēkō) – to be firmly committed in conviction of belief.

- Colossians 2:6-7
- 1 Corinthians 15:58

**References:** Philippians: Discipleship Lessons by Ralph F. Wilson

## Scripture References (New Living Translation)

### Philippians 3:12 – 4:1 (NKJV)

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. <sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. <sup>17</sup> Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. <sup>18</sup> 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: <sup>19</sup> whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and whose glory *is* in their shame-- who set their mind on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. **4:1** Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

**Hebrews 12:1-2** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. <sup>2</sup> We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith, Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27** Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! <sup>25</sup> All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. <sup>26</sup> So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. <sup>27</sup> I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

**2 Timothy 4:8** And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.

**Hebrews 3:13 (NAS)** But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," lest anyone of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

### 1 Corinthians 4:15-16

For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. <sup>16</sup> So I urge you to imitate me.

**Philippians 4:9** Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me - everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

**Romans 8:5-8** Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. <sup>8</sup> That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11** Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, <sup>10</sup> or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

**Galatians 5:17-21** The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. <sup>18</sup> But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses. <sup>19</sup> When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

**Colossians 2:6-7** And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. <sup>7</sup> Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

**1 Corinthians 15:58** So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.