

Philippians 3:12–4:1

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. A special greeting to those of you who have recently moved to the neighborhood. We're glad you're here and look to get to know you over the next few weeks.

Welcome to Christ Church Chicago. The substance of our text would have us sit down on the opening phrase of verse 15.

Let those of us who are mature think this way. By way of translation into the sermon, I would title this talk, My Minds Made Up.

When it comes to what I hope to secure in your heart, it's simply my mind's made up.

I hope yours is too. Let those who are mature think this way.

[1 : 13] Harry Blamires wrote a book that influenced me long before 95% of you walked the earth.

1963. A book titled The Christian Mind. It opened up with a provocative sentence. Quote, There is no Christian mind.

And the book outlined six areas of mental weakness within the Christian church concerning its immaturity rather than maturity in the way we think.

Verse 15a, Let those of you who are mature think this way. The mature person has a particular mindset.

Church today is confused in her thinking. What corresponds to the Christian mind reaches back in the text all the way to chapter 2 and verse 5.

[2 : 33] Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus. Have this mind among yourself. Our own text, same word, different translation.

The mature have a particular kind of mind when it comes to their outlook on life. That same word on the mind of the church is the singular thread which is being pulled through the letter of Philippians no fewer than 10 times.

Twice in our own central verse. Let those of you who are mature think this way or have this kind of mind. And if anyone thinks otherwise or is disposed of a mindset unlike this well, well, Paul's aim was that God would show them otherwise.

It's not only the mind of Christ that I've made my mind up on, but it's that mindset that Paul wanted in the church.

Take a look even back chapter 2 verse 2. We see it again, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being full accord and of one mind.

[3 : 57] What Paul says the church is to have concerning Christ was Paul's heartbeat for the church at Philippi. In fact, he opened the letter, chapter 1 verse 7, saying that I have a certain feeling about you.

literally, I have a certain thought about you. I'm thinking about you that what God started, he's going to do, so then grow up into it. Let those who are mature think this way.

My mind's made up. How about yours? Well, what was the mindset of Paul? Well, at this point in the letter, it's simply the goal of attaining Christ.

It's a mindset that has his life fixed on the future. Last week, we saw in verse 7, 7, but whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

He wants to gain Christ, verse 8. He wants to, by all means possible, 11, attain the resurrection from the dead.

[5 : 17] What was the mindset of Christ? It was fixed on the future rather than the present. It was devoted to attaining Christ.

It desired to reach heaven. It has as its supreme goal a right relationship with God when you leave this world for the next.

His mind was made up. In fact, when you think about the roots of this letter, even back to chapter 1, verse 21, he summarized it clearly.

For me to live is Christ. To die is gain. And that gain, that prize, that reward governed everything he thought about when he went about his life.

Now, in our text then, Paul now takes the image of a runner in the Olympic Games. He weds it to the goal of attaining Christ and that eternal gain.

[6 : 27] And therefore, it will focus all of his actions on a single verb twice used in our opening frame. Verse 12, not that I have already obtained this or already perfect, but here it is.

Here's your central verb. I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus made me his own. Brothers and sisters, 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, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

If Paul's noun related to heaven and its future, Paul's verb related to the present pressing on.

What's your verb? What's your verb? What are you on about? For Paul, I'm pressing on.

on. Let's sit on that for a moment. Pressing on with all of this focus on straining forward is the imagery of a runner, and I'm not one, who can go long distances to attain a particular prize, or short distances if you're in those sprints.

[8 : 12] Pressing on in classical literature has the concept of being put to flight, like out of the gates, the gun, I'm gone.

Pressing on means I am chasing something down. Pressing on means I am in continual pursuit of. Pressing on requires that my eyes don't look back, according to verse 14, but everything else is straining forward.

Pressing on means that I know I have made a start, but I have not yet finished. And when you think of Paul saying that he is pressing on here, while on death row, you would be stunned to realize that it requires the end of life unto the final hours of pressing on or pressing on.

Such was his mindset. How about you? You got your verb right? Your verb will never be right if your noun is wrong.

[9 : 30] For Paul, the noun was eternal gain. And so every waking moment he was as a man off at the sound of the gun.

Some progress had been made, he said, but perfection is yet, let me put it this way, around the bend. I spoke to my mother this morning to make sure that I had some factual considerations correct on the illustration I want to use, which holds the force of the sermon I'm speaking to you today.

The mom, who is it in that little painting on your desk that you treasure and look at each morning? She says, that's Uncle Bryant. Her uncle, picture walking as an elderly man, straw hat upon his head, five to six foot walking stick in his hand, obviously on a trail, but yet just now coming into sight for him not for you, what was around the bend.

That's the image of pressing on. That's the one who unto aged years in life is still walking the path, one whose eyes are forward.

You cannot see my great uncle's eyes. You're viewing him from the back. you're a bit behind him on the trail and it's as though only his eyes in the painting meet what's around the bend, but yours are not yet able to see it.

[11 : 30] Paul says, I'm pressing on and the reader can visualize him already seeing the glories of heaven that he is entering into, but you must yet follow.

Paul says, let the mature think this way. A mindset that is governed by the future.

A mindset that requires the repetitive and ongoing action of the present. The mindset that is pictured in a runner who is pressing on and a hiker who is not yet at his or her destination.

My mind's made up. We're not home yet. Malcolm Muggeridge said, the worst thing that can befall the Christian church is to feel herself at home here.

How about you? Close to quitting? Get your mind right. For those of you who are old school, still spinning the little discs to try to work out in the morning, looking on your screen at Tony Horton, trying to keep up with him on his P90X as I do.

[13 : 08] I can hear him. Get your mind right. It's going to be good through the sweat, through the toil, through the work, through the effort, through the repetition, through the verb of pressing on.

How about you? Close to quitting? Get your mind right. Close to dying today? Get your mind right.

Tired? Just tired. Too tired? Get your mind right. Sick today? Get your mind right. Exhausted from relational discomfort? Get your mind right. Keep pressing on. Dylan, I'm pressing on, on, on, on, on, pressing on, on, and, on, and, on, on, pressing on to the higher call of my Lord.

[14 : 25] Don't stop. I'm not going to let you stop today. I don't know what your past is or what your history. I don't know how your mind is this morning.

My mind's made up and yours should be too. Fortunately, we're not left without models. The text moves, doesn't it, from the mindset of Paul, 12 through 16, to the models, both positive and negative put forward by Paul, verses 17 to 19.

Evidently, we need models in our life beyond simply the memory of Christ. we need three-dimensional breathing men, women, and children in our midst with whom we are in relationship that are modeling this mindset.

[15 : 38] Paul brings forth himself then as one of these models. Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

Paul himself, back to the Latin, talks about imitatio. He does this imitation thing. He does it in a variety of New Testament letters. Ephesians 5 or 6, I can't remember precisely. We're to actually imitate God as our father. Corinthians, you're to imitate Christ and imitate Paul as he imitates Christ. Here, he's not concerned with all the proper qualifications of imitation that go through Christ.

He just says, imitate me. Put your eyes on me. I'm ahead of you on that trail, says Paul. You and I need to see, hear, touch, know, others.

This is interesting. It's a, it's an argument for presence.

[17 : 03] it's a, it's a statement that there's no real discipleship without relationship.

And there's no real relationship without awareness, presence, sight. There's no real church without gathering.

gathering. There's no real ability for you and me to find our way to the final goal without knowing one another and seeing people ahead of us along the path.

Paul says here, keep your eyes on them. Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. not only am I a model for you, says Paul, but even in your own midst there are others.

Follow them. Let me put it to you this way. Who is capturing the attention of your eye?

[18 : 22] Who are you chasing down? Who are you walking after? Your mother, father, sister, brother, like my own mom every morning awakening to a painting of her uncle.

You got to know. You got to know someone who's ahead of you on the path. You need intergenerational relationships. You need old men in straw hats and walking sticks. You need elderly women who have gone through the trials and tribulations of life that you could follow. You need men who have walked in this neighborhood and find themselves faithful yet. You need citizens of heaven walking it out now. You need men, women, and children that have a noun that's the eternal future and a present that's a continuing going on.

You cannot do this without real people in a real place with genuine relationship. Paul says pay attention. Keep your eyes on those who walk and follow my example.

[19 : 42] They're not the only models out there. I mean, I suppose that's why verses 18 and 19 follow. You got a lot of people you can put your eyes on. Here comes some more to the fray.

For many of whom I have often told you and now even with tears walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly.

Their glory is their shame. Here it is. Their minds are set on earthly things. Who are you following? Notice he says this is even with tears.

I've been in ministry a long time. 30 some years. I'm well aware that not everybody is going to stay on the path.

Not everybody does. Let me put it to you clearly. Not all of you will. Nor will I unless I keep pressing on.

[20 : 45] Paul says it is a tearful thing. It is a heart-wrenching thing. Watch men and women take their eyes off of their eternal gain and quit before they've gone through the tape.

It's a sad thing to watch brothers and sisters in Christ lose their way. Destruction is their end.

Their God is their belly. glory becomes their shame. And what all of those things mean are centered on the final phrase. They set their mind on earthly things.

their mind and their had not been made up. They live for here not for them.

There. They live for here not for now. Which I suppose is why Paul closes the way he does. Verses 20 and 22 and why I close with him and find my own seat.

[22 : 00] But this wonderful word in verse 20 but our citizenship is in heaven. And from it we await a savior the Lord Jesus Christ who would transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Therefore brothers and sisters whom I love I long for my joy my crown stand firm have your mind made up my beloved soon I will be trading this lowly body for a heavenly one and so will you you are closer now to your goal and your game than you've ever been to this point.

I'm on the trail. Won't you join me? I'm not looking back.

Won't you fix your eyes? walking stick in hands? Straining forward.

I'm telling you my mind's made up. Don't try to distract me now. Don't attempt to turn me back.

[23 : 49] I've come too far for that. my mind made up. Discouragement will not take me out.

Disappointment is not going to deter me. Disease can't hold me.

Sickness won't sit me. Conflict won't keep me. the departure of others from the Christian path are not going to deep six me.

Distrust and distractions won't up in me. I have been on my journey since the spring of 1978.

My mind's made up. I'm almost there. And there are others in our midst who, like my Uncle Brian, can already begin to see within the scope of their eyes, but because of the elevation of their soul, they're at a point where I am not yet recognizing the glories of heaven already glancing across their brow.

[25 : 13] they see, they know, they will not turn around, but you can trust the path they go.

There's a new body and a new way of life. My citizenship, my membership, home, my place of belonging is somewhere beyond the blue.

Well, how about you? How about you?

let the mature think this way.

Why not you? Why not you? Why not you? Why not want!

[27 : 01] And may that now control our action from this day forward and forevermore.

Until we see you, and we will, face to face. Our Heavenly Father, this life is a labor.

May it not be in vain. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.