

Philippians 3:12-4:1

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- [0 : 0 0] Today's scripture reading is found on page 981. It's Philippians 3.12 through 4.1. Once again, on the blue Bibles that you may have picked up, they're on page 981.
- Would you please rise for the reading of God's Word? Amen.
- Let those of us who are mature think this way. And if anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.
- Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many of whom I have often told you, and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.
- Their end is destruction, their God is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.
- [1 : 4 4] Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.
- Shall we pray? Father, thanks for the morning. Thanks for the opportunity for worship.
- The privilege of being in your house with your people on this day. And we offer ourselves, we offer this preparation to you, that you would, as it were, may the fire of God lap up the wood and water of the altar, and may your name be glorified through the proclamation of your word this day is my prayer in Christ's name.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. You would have thought that I was James Richardson this morning around the house, even as I leapt, leaped a bit, as I thought about the preaching of the word.
- I get to preach this morning around the table sometime in staff meeting. We go around and have prayer requests, and we have to teach the new guys a little thing.
- [3 : 1 1] Somebody said, well, pray for me. I've got to preach. Got to preach? You get the privilege of preaching on a given Sunday. So we're glad that we are here with you this day with the honor of proclaiming God's word and the hearing of God's people.
- Today is the first Sunday in Advent. Advent. That marks the beginning of the Christian calendar. Advent anticipates and prepares us for the celebration of Christ's birth at his first coming.
- But at the same time, Advent reminds us that we are strangers. We are aliens.
- We are exiles in this world. And as such, we await our Lord's arrival again at his second coming.
- Does not Hebrews chapter 9 remind us of this in verse 28? So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

[4 : 50] Huh? Those who are eagerly waiting for him. That's the link with our text today. You see it there?

Chapter 3 and in verse 20. But our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Huh? Verses 20 and 21 are particularly a reference to certain things akin to our Lord's advent, which is to come in the future.

And friends, I believe that embedded in our text this morning, we have things that are both implicit but also explicit as far as instructions for those who await his coming.

First thing I want you to see is in verses 12 through 16. There we find what I would call an orientation to adopt.

[6 : 01] An orientation to embrace. Here, friends, we are reminded in these verses that we are to pursue Christ wholeheartedly.

As we await for, as we anticipate his coming, we are to pursue Christ wholeheartedly.

Three words describe Paul's orientation, the direction of his life, the thrust of his life. Here it is.

He's a man in pursuit. Did you catch that from the tone, the wording, the content of the verses? Paul's attitude, his disposition, he reflects a holy hunger.

And he reflects our holy hunger for something that he does not yet possess. Now, certainly, as we saw on last week and as we know of Paul, he was one who identified with Christ in his death and his resurrection positionally.

[7 : 14] When those who are in Christ, we share in his death, death on behalf of our sins and his resurrection, we share in that positionally.

We are in him. So while we see that is true, there was something, though, that Paul had not yet attained.

Is that not what we see in verse 12? Not that I've already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own man in pursuit.

The reference that is obtained this is to the resurrection of the dead mentioned in verse 11. What could well be in view is the end of the age advent of Christ, where all who belong to him will be conformed into his image.

John speaks of this, does he not? 1 John chapter 3. Now we are the children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

[8 : 41] And every man that has this hope within himself purifies himself, even as he is pure. The glorification of believers is what John has in view in that text.

And certainly the fullness of Christ's likeness will, in fact, be ours at resurrection. But that was not Paul's present possession.

But there's also another sense in which he did not possess what he desired. There's a thrust in the passage. And the thrust of the passage seemed to be that Paul was in present pursuit of something that he did not possess.

Something that he was going hard after, if you will. While for Paul and us, there is an eschatological endgame, there was also an immediate goal of conforming to the likeness of Jesus' death and resurrection and sanctification.

Where we are being continuously raised out of death, raised out of sin, raised out of selfishness. And therefore becoming more and more like Christ.

- [10 : 05] Now, does not Paul elsewhere, in his writings, employ the death and resurrection metaphors? Think about Romans chapter 6.
- What then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we who have died with him live any longer in sin? Huh? The spiritual perfection was not Paul's lot.
- He couldn't achieve that in Jewish religion. And through law keeping, that couldn't produce it. Nor had he yet fully grasped it as one who was following the Lord Jesus Christ.
- One who had trusted in him. Huh? While such indeed was Paul's earnest desire, He acknowledges here that he had not reached that spiritual, ethical perfection.
- Huh? Though he earnestly desired to be conformed to the image and the likeness of Jesus. What about you this morning?
- [11 : 08] Huh? You want to look more and more like him? You want to be more and more conformed to his likeness?
- In his death and in his resurrection? Walking in the newness of life? Representing him well? Being a Jesus lookalike in this world?
- Is that your desire? Is that what you're pursuing? Huh? Oh, there are a lot of things in life to pursue, are there not? Huh?
- We can go down and there would be a list of things and not all of them are bad. But what, friends, is your primary pursuit? As those who wear the name of Christ.
- Huh? Huh? What are you really ultimately pursuing? Huh? Did you notice that Paul says, I press on to make it my own? Why?
- [12 : 08] Because Jesus has made me his own. He belonged to him, heart, mind, and soul. Huh? You remember where Jesus caught up with Paul, don't you?
- Huh? It was on the Dismascus Road. Huh? Huh? Now, the question that I want to ask you is, when did Jesus catch up with you?
- Are you still running? Huh? Some of you here this morning never had a chance to run. You were raised in Christian homes. Huh?
- You've known nothing but the Christian faith. Because of prayerful, nurturing parents and grandparents. Christianity has been just about second nature to you.
- Friends, don't take that for granted. Be grateful that you just sort of walked into the faith. In a sense, yes, you had to believe.
- [13 : 06] It's not automatically yours. You had to embrace it. But still, it's just about an easy step for you. Not all of us have been that way.
- Huh? Yeah, the pursuit of Christ may have been for you from the grips of the world, the flesh, the devil, or some aberrant philosophy. Huh?
- That masquerades itself as truth. What did he rescue you from? How has he pursued you? I remember 15-year-old kid. Living in urban African America.
- Huh? Home that wasn't a fully Christian home. God bless my godly grandmother who loved Jesus.
- Hymn singing, catechism reciting, piano playing, Presbyterian. That's my grandmother. But my dad hadn't quite caught the faith.
- [14 : 06] Jesus caught up with me in Sunday school on one morning. Easter Sunday morning, way back there. He caught up with me. He caught me. He pursued me. I ran.
- But he got me. Did he get you? Huh? You may be here and you're still running. But guess what? Even this morning, may he be hot on your trail.

Ah. Two words. What do you do? What do you do when he calls you? Huh? What do you do? Two words.

Two words for you this morning. Just say, yes, Lord. Huh? Listen closely because Jesus may be calling you this morning.

May be calling you today, huh? And when he does surrender, just like Paul did. The pursued, the pursuer Paul, became now the pursuit.

[15 : 09] Was the pursued and now is the one who is pursuing Christ in our text. Huh? That's the posture that we see here, is it not? Christ had made him his own.

And now Christ was pressing to make Christ in his spiritual fullness his own. Huh? The imagery is athletic.

Huh? And it's not difficult to see or to illustrate what we see here. All the way from the playgrounds of our childhood, whether in the streets or in the alleys or whether you're urban, suburban or rural, we know what it means to race, don't we?

There's a runner. A runner is in the context. As I remember, when we were younger, we used to have this contest known as Ninth Street Relays.

Huh? Where we would run and race and rip and run the streets in fun and games. Huh? Uh, but the signal goes off.

[16 : 19] Whether it's the clap of the hand or the pop of a gun or the drop of something and the race begins. Huh? And before. So there is a goal.

Huh? Whether it is a line or it was a tree or whatever it was, we ran. Huh? And there was a prize. Huh? Think about it.

Arms are pumping. Huh? Legs are stretching. Muscles are flexing. And they may have been little muscles back then. But eyes are straight ahead.

Or at least they should be. Look at the text. Huh? Verse 13. Brothers, I do not consider that I've made it my own. But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

Wholehearted pursuit of Christ. Huh? I pray that he's not preoccupied with what's behind him. How many races have been lost by a little glance behind?

[17 : 21] Or how many balls have been dropped because the eyes have been taken off the ball? Huh? In context. Huh? A momentary look back can be very, very costly.

Huh? But he strains for what lies ahead. And what is it that lies ahead? Huh? The prize. Huh? Having reached the goal, there is then a prize.

And the one to bestow and get this prize in the text is the Lord. Paul's still thinking. Athletic games. What is likely in view here is where the winners are summoned up to the judge to receive a reward.

After the race is over, think of the Olympics. Medals are won. Anthems are played. Medals are awarded. Paul and our text friends is a man in pursuit.

The goal is reached. The prize is won and received. Again, that's the picture. To reach a goal and reward. What is the prize? Simply this.

[18 : 26] The blessing of life eternal for all that await. All who have been called to Christ. And who continuously heed the call to Christ likeness.

The call. To be like Jesus. Look at verses 15 and 16. Let all. Here's this encouragement.

Paul's encouragement. Let all. Of us who are mature. Think in this way. And if anything. You think otherwise.

God will reveal this. Also. To you. The desire to be more and more. In the likeness of Jesus. Is the mindset.

Friends. Of those who are. Mature. They're to think. This way. Those who let all. Who are mature.

[19 : 23] Think. In this way. That word. Think. Is. Is. The same word. That we see. About in 10 other places. In. The book. Itself.

We see it in. In chapter 2. In verse 5. Take a look at that with me. We've seen that before. That great text. Where. Have this mind.

Among yourselves. Which is also. In. Christ Jesus. Again. Thinking. The mind. Again. That's. The.

The. The. The. The zone. There. That we're talking about. Paul encouraged believers. To have. The mind. To think. Like. Christ. To have them.

Mind. Set. Of Christ. Here. The encouragement. In our text. Is to think. In accord. With Paul's perspective. On pursuing Christ. And the implications.

[20 : 17] Thereof. For spiritual progress. Spiritually mature. People. Think. In a certain way. They share. The kind. Of orientation. That Paul. Speaks of.

In our text. Paul. Is a man. In pursuit. He wanted. The people. In Philippi. To have. That same. Mindset.

Regardless. Of where one. Finds him. Or herself. There to hold fast. To the growth. That has been achieved. And to walk in the light. That they've received. We see that in verse 16. Here was an orientation.

To adopt. But the question. That may be best for you. Are. Is. Are you in the race? Are you still running from Christ? What's the orientation.

That's been adopted. In the text. Pursue Christ. Wholeheartedly. That's the pulse. That's the pulse. That we see. Emanating. From these verses.

[21 : 15] What's the direction? The orientation. Of your life. If you then. Have been risen with Christ. Paul writes. In Colossians 3. 1. Through 4. Have been raised with him.

Seek the things. That are. Above. For Christ is. Seated. At the right hand of God. Set your minds. There it is. On things that are above. Not on things.

On the earth. For you. Have died. And your life. Is hidden with Christ. And God. And Christ. To which your life appears. Then you also appear with him. In glory. The mindset.

The affection. The desire. Of those. Who are in Christ. Above. So we see. Not only here. An orientation. To adopt. In verses 12.

To 16. But we see. In verses 17. Through 19. And in. To 21. An invitation. To accept. You see it. Look at verse 17. Brothers.

[22 : 11] Join. In. Imitating. Me. And keep your eyes. On those. Who walk. According to the example. That you have in us. Huh.

You see that there. An invitation. To imitate. Paul and others. Perhaps. He's thinking about Timothy. Or Epaphroditus. Who share. This heavenly.

Orientation. Paul is a man. On earth. Who has heard. Heaven's call. And he's responded. To it. This. And here is one. Friends. Who has felt.

The weight. Of glory. In his soul. And because of this. His eyes. Are on the prize. That is before him. And he invites.

Others. To join him. Huh. Oh. How we want to live. In a way. That is. When. That invites. Others. And makes them desire.

[23 : 07] What we have. Because we're reflecting. Heaven's values. Most. And perspective. In the way. That we live. Huh. So they say.

Say. That's what I want. Paul's invitation. Is otherwise. Be imitators of me. As I am of Christ. Question this morning. Who do you have. Your eyes on.

And I'm grateful. That we don't have to look. Outside of our congregation. For those. Who are. Imitating Christ.

And walking with him. Are you still in school. There's. There are students. In our congregation. That you can look at. Huh.

Who love Christ. All the way. From grade school. To grad school. There's students. Who. Are here. That. You can look at.

[23 : 58] You can get your eyes on them. And you can see what it means. To be a follower of Christ. You hear this morning. You possess a very. Strong. Intellect. God has.

Endowed you. Strongly. In that regard. You can look around. Our congregation. They're. Educators. They're thinkers. They're scholars.

They're academics. Among us. That you can look at. You can see a person. Who is. Pursuing. Christ. Ah. They're lawyers.

Among us. Huh. You. Had that orientation. They're lawyers. Among us. They work. Eight to five. Or so. However much. Their company. Requires them. To bill all those hours. Huh. Eight to five.

As lawyers. But 24 seven. As followers. Of Jesus. Huh. Bankers. And business people. Who live open handedly. Before God.

[24 : 53] You can. Look at them. And our fathers. And mothers. Among us. Persuading Jesus. Wholeheartedly. Huh. Every. Day.

People. From every. Strait of. Of. Society. In our midst. Driven. By the passion. To honor Christ. With their lives.

Examples. Among us. You need examples. Yeah. Imperfect people. But yet seeking. To live for Christ. In our world.

You've got them. You've got them here. In our midst. Huh. In the midst. Of Paul's. Invitation. To imitate.

To imitate. The mature people. Huh. Godly people. He also. Did you see it. In verse 18. He issues. A very. Passionate.

[25 : 47] Warning. About those. Who. Profess. Christian faith. But rather than. Imitating. Paul's. Heavenly. Orientation. For life. They're very. Earthbound. Earthbound.

In their thinking. Earthbound. In your living. Do you see that there? Many. Of whom. I've often. Told you. And now. Tell you. Even. With tears. Walk.

As enemies. Of the cross. Of Christ. Huh. Who are. These people. Huh. They are. Seemingly. A second group. That bears.

Watching. We saw. Them. A group. On. Last week. Look out. For the dogs. Those. In. In verse. Two. Of chapter. Three. These.

Same. Seem. To be. Not. The legalists. On that end. But these. Were those. Who. Subscribed. To. License. In. Christian. Liberty. Huh. Those. Who.

[26 : 41] Abuse. Christian. Liberty. If. They. Were. Christians. In fact. At all. Huh. Did you notice. That there were. Many. Of them. Huh. Paul. And that Paul. Had warned. About them.

Huh. And even. To the point. Of. Seeing. The. Ha. Of tears. Because. Of the harm. That they. Could. Do. To. The Christian. Calls. Their enemies.

Of the cross. Of Christ. Though. They profess. That they. Know him. They all. Actually. Calls. People. To turn. From. Them. The kind. Of people. Who live. Leave.

A bad. Taste. In. One's. Mouth. Causing. People. To stumble. Creating. Their lifestyles. Erect. Barriers. For people.

Entering. To the faith. Rather than. Bridges. Huh. He tells. Them. He speaks. About. Them. Tearfully. Because.

[27 : 35] They were. Enemies. Of. The cross. They were. Not. In step. With the principles. Of the cross. That include. Self-sacrifice. And self-denial. Rather than.

Being marked. For. Salvation. They are. Marked. For. Destruction. Verse 19. Their gods. Their appetites. Or their gods.

No holds. Barred. Pursuit. Of self. And self-fulfillment. But. In some way. They. Were. In the shadow. Of. Of. Christianity.

But not. Perhaps. In the faith. At all. The shameful. Ways. Were not shameful. To them. Quite the opposite. They glory. In the opulence.

They glory. In their wealth. As we see. In today's world. Some things. That you see. That masquerade. As Christianity. Are indeed. Very. Very.

[28 : 31] Shameful. Wolves. And sheep. Clothing. That bear. Watching. If you will. They mind. Earthly things. They're obsessed. With the things. Of this life. This world. Is clearly.

Their home. Earthbound people. They are. Oh God. Help us. And help them. As. As. As they. Misrepresent. What it means. To be Christian.

At all. In. And even. Some of them. As God's. Servants. He warned them. And I would say.

The same. To you. This morning. Watch out. Beware. Sometimes. They get a hook. In you. And. There are all kinds. Of different. Brands.

And versions. Beware. Beware. Notice. The contrast.

[29 : 23] That he. Puts forth. But you. But our. Emphatic. Citizenship.

Is in heaven. Huh. Why should Christians. Join. In pursuing. Christ. And walking. With Christ. In this world. Because we are.

Citizens. Of heaven. Because heaven. Ultimately. Is our. Homeland. Because. We are resident. Aliens. The implications. Of our being. Part of. Heaven's.

Citizens. History. Comes through. Very clearly. In these verses. He speaks. Of true believers. And states. Certain things. Worth noting. About them. He speaks.

Of again. Our citizenship. This word. Translate. The word. That signifies. The condition. Of the life. Of a citizen. The related word. We've seen it.

[30 : 16] In chapter 1. Verse 27. The meaning there. Is to conduct. Oneself. In a gospel. Worthy. Manner. Huh. In this world. Huh. The Philippians. Quit relate.

In that. Philippi. Was a Roman colony. And they shared. The rights. And the privileges. Of Roman citizenship. Even though. Their feet. Had never. Been. Been. In Rome. Huh.

And so. Heaven. Our homeland. Huh. Not there yet. But we are to reflect. The status. Of. In Chicago. We are to reflect.

The status of heaven. Even as we. Our feet are here. But our factions. Are there. Huh. Yet while we eager. To await. The return. Of our savior.

Huh. We are to be. Reflect. Heaven. Citizenship. Here. Huh. Jesus. Comes in the spotlight. I love how. He brings them in here.

[31 : 12] In the last part. Of verse 20. We await a savior. The Lord Jesus Christ. Huh. We. The savior. The idea.

Of a deliverer. Not the. A human. Deliverer. A powerful. Earthly. Ruler. They were referred to. As savior. One of the labels.

Or title. Or lord. Huh. Our lord. Is not an earthly. Ruler. An earthly. Potentate. But he is the. Ultimate. Deliverer. The god. Of heaven.

And earth. With all. Power. And all things. In his control. Huh. What's the posture. For the christian. In this world.

Huh. As those. Who. Await. His coming. Huh. Huh. On the one hand. We're running. Huh. On the other hand. We're waiting.

[32 : 07] For a savior. To transform us. Huh. That's our posture. I mean. Sort of. Sounds. It's. It's. It's. Somewhat oxymoronic.

Isn't it. We are running. On the one hand. But we're waiting. On the other. We're doing. Both. Huh. The first speaks. Of what our lord. Will do. At his second advent.

Huh. The one who brought. Salvation. Through his death. Will bring. Bodily. Transformation. At his return. The text note.

That our. Earthly bodies. Are going. On going to. Under. Go. A change. Huh. These. Bodies. That are. Equipped. For. Earth.

These bodies. Of humiliation. That are subject. To disease. And decay. And death. Will be transformed. Into bodies. Of glory. Huh. These bodies. That are just right.

[33 : 00] For our. Earthly. Existence. Will be. Outfitted. For heaven. Huh. How is this. Going. To happen. Huh. By the mighty. Power. That he. Support.

By he. Subdues. All things. Unto himself. Huh. Oh God. Are we ready. For those bodies. Are we. Uh. Uh. Uh. Uh.

Uh. The song. That we sang. And we don't sing. These things. Uh. With mindfully. Enough. Come quickly. Lord Jesus. Come. We sang it. This morning. Didn't we. Do you really.

Want him. To come. Huh. Are you comfortable. You like your. Earth suit. So well. Uh. Uh. Oh. Come.

Quickly. Lord Jesus. May. You. So. Work. In our hearts. That we. Understand. When we. Sing. That.

[33 : 54] And we. Mean. Uh. Sometimes. We need. Uh. To. To. To. To. Continue. To. Taste. How. Dreg. Like.

This. Earthly. Existence. Is. Huh. A few. Knocks. And bumps. In this. Life. Sometime. Make you. Long. For.

The next. Life. Huh. Uh. How. Will he. Do this. It's. Going to. Transform. These. Old. Earthly. Bodies. An.

Orientation. To. Adopt. An. Invitation. To. Accept. Look. At the. Last. Verse. In our. Text. For. Today. And. There.

We. Will. See. An. Exhortation. To. Obey. You. See. It. In. Verse. One. Therefore. My. Brothers. Whom. I. Love. And. Long. For. My.

[34 : 48] Joy. And. Crown. There. It. Is. Stand. Firm. Huh? Running. Waiting. And. Now. What?

Standing. Firm. Huh? As. Those. Who. Anticipate. Our. Lord. Advent. We. Run. We.

Wait. On. The. Other. Hand. But. On. The. Other. Hand. We. Stand. Firm. Huh? Ah. We've. Seen. That. Before. Haven't we? I believe it's in chapter one.

Was it. Verse. Thought I had it. And it's not my glasses like it was Dave's on last week.

Huh? One twenty seven. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel. So that whether I come or see you or am absent I may hear of you. There it is. That you are standing.

[35 : 46] That you are standing. That you are standing. In one spirit. One mind. Striving side by side for the faith. Of the gospel.

Huh? Paul's pastoral heart comes through doesn't it? In our text. Particularly here. His love for them is expressed. Uh. Uh.

Whom I love. And. And. And then. And the verb of that. Then in the noun form. Beloved. Huh? Love by God. Expressed through the love of the apostle. Other.

Various terms of endearment. He longs for them. There is joy. His token. A victory. His crown. Stand fast. Huh? Is explicit exhortation to God's people.

Uh. What he has said is not to be ignored. Huh? Keep. Your eyes on the prize. Paul's orientation is everywhere.

[36 : 44] His invitation. Is to the father of Christ for all time. And his exhortation is for us today. May we hear it. May we heed it.

Uh. As pastorally. Uh. We often talk about. A book. That we're preaching through. It's really messing with us.

Philippians messes with my heart. Messes with my mind. And I trust that it's doing the same thing for you. Huh? What am I saying today? Simply this.

Our lives are to be lived in wholehearted pursuit of Christ. Christ. With eager anticipation for Christ. And standing firm.

In Christ. Until. He. Comes. Amen. Lord we love you. Thank you for this text.

[37 : 42] May Philippians. Mess with our hearts and minds. To the point. That it becomes a part of our prayers. And may we find ourselves.

Running. And stretching. And reaching. And waiting. And standing. Until you come.

Be glorified. In us. Lord we want to walk. As children of light. In this world. Help us to do so.

Is my prayer. In Christ's name. Amen. Let's stand. Let's sing. Together.