

Xplore Our Goals

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Preacher: Steve Brown

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 25th of January 2004.

The preacher is Steve Brown. His sermon is entitled Explore Our Goals and is based on Philippians chapter 3 verses 10 to 16.

I thought I'd blown it. I thought I had no chance. I thought that life was over before it even had a chance to begin. I was down and out. I was miserable. I was upset. I was lost. Moping around the house every day.

Then I remember my dad. He grabbed me by the scruff of the neck, threw me into the car, drove me down to Danyanong TAFE, took me up to the enrolment desk and told me, apply for a business certificate course.

I applied. Amazingly, I got in. All of a sudden, I had a goal. This was my goal, to complete the course in two years and get good enough marks for university.

[1 : 15] For me, that was like going to Mars. I wasn't very confident. You see, I'd already failed during VCE. It was a big ask. I had no idea about business marketing, but that goal motivated me to work hard.

Complete the course in two years, good enough marks for university. It helped me to be focused. It helped me to build and shape my life for the future.

Ten years later, Mars doesn't seem too far away now. Next year, I should, I hope, complete my Masters of Divinity. Don't get me wrong, I'm still definitely not an academic, but having a goal certainly takes you a long way.

Having a goal may even take humanity to Mars within our lifetime. Having a goal may help you achieve your own Mars landing in your life, whatever that is.

You see, when we set goals, we usually go all out to achieve them. No matter how big they are or how difficult they may seem, no matter how much of a big ask our goals are, it's amazing what we can achieve.

[2 : 34] No doubt you've got your own goals to achieve. Have a quick look at your cards. Look at those goals you may have put down. Do you believe that you will achieve them?

You see, goals are important to have. They give us purpose, they help us to be motivated, focused, and they help us to build and shape our lives. And without goals you lose that purpose.

You become lazy and unmotivated. Become directionless and lost, not focused. We crumble and our lives sort of lose shape. Paul the Apostle knew that it was important to have a goal.

He knew that the Philippian Church needed purpose. He knew that young followers of Jesus needed motivating. He knew that they needed to be focused. That they needed to continue to build up and shape their new Christian lives.

So he says there in verse 10, I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death.

[3 : 48] If somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. It's a big ask, isn't it? When you meditate on those words, it's a big ask.

It's definitely setting the bar very high. It's the ultimate goal. You see, that goal is the Christian equivalent of going beyond Mars.

You see, Paul's goal is to know Christ. To really know him. To have an intimate knowledge of Jesus. To know Jesus so well that they're better than best of mates.

To know Jesus so well that he becomes closer to him than anyone else in this life. To know Jesus so well that he knows God's will for him in every aspect of his life.

Paul's goal, I want to know Christ. Is that your goal? Did you write that down on your card tonight? Paul's goal is to know the power of his resurrection.

[4 : 52] You see, Paul wants to experience resurrection life. Paul wants to live a resurrected and heavenly life in this world. To live a life that reflects heaven to everyone around him.

A life, wants to live a life here in this world. As though he's already present in heaven before God's throne. Paul's goal, I want to know the power of his resurrection.

Is that your goal? Did you write that down on your card tonight? Paul's goal is to share in Jesus' suffering and become like him in his death. You see, he wants to serve like Jesus served.

By dying to self-ambition. He wants to give up his life to God so that he can serve him on earth. He wants to die to self so that he can serve others and maybe save them too.

That's Paul's goal. I want to share in Jesus' sufferings and become like him in his death. Is that your goal? Have you written that on your card tonight? You see, Paul's goal is to somehow attain the resurrection from the dead.

[6 : 04] He wants to be rid of the old life and experience the new life. He wants to be rid of the sinfulness of the old life that's dying and rotting and decaying away. And enjoy the holiness of the new life that goes on forever.

He wants to be rid of the old life. He wants to be rid of his imperfections and become perfect. He wants desperately to be close to God. Serving him always.

Perfectly. That's Paul's goal. I want to somehow attain the resurrection from the dead. Is that your goal? Have you written that down in your card tonight? Because when I look at my goals in life, when I look at the card that I've written my goals down on, I don't see Paul's goals here.

These are my goals. One, to be ordained in two years' time. That's one of my goals. Two, ride in the Wild Side Mountain Bike Classic in Tassie next year.

Three, keep fit by swimming three times per week. They're okay goals. But they seem pretty insignificant.

[7 : 19] Don't they? They seem almost pathetic when I compare them to Paul's goal. It tells me that maybe, just maybe, if I focus too much on those goals, that I don't have the right priorities in life.

It tells me that maybe I need to rethink what my goals are. It tells me that maybe I need to rethink what motivates me. It tells me that maybe I've focused on insignificant things.

Or that I've built and shaped my life around goals that aren't going to last forever. It tells me that maybe I've been wasting my time. Wasting my life.

You see, getting a Masters of Divinity, or getting ordained, or keeping fit, or getting a massive enter school at VCE, or having a great big house, or having a job that pays a lot, or having the latest clothes.

They're okay goals to have, I suppose. But they pale in comparison to Paul's goals. I want to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the sharing of his sufferings, by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

[8 : 47] You see, that's the goal, isn't it? That's the goal worth achieving. That's the goal worth dedicating all your effort towards.

It's the goal worth giving your life for. But some people aren't too excited about that goal. Some say, it's too difficult.

I'm busy with school. Some say, the cost's a bit high. I don't want to give up too much time for God. Some say, oh, there's other important things to achieve first, like providing for my family, which is true.

Getting that big enter score, or achieving popularity at school, whatever. But Paul reckons that it's worth striving for, this goal.

It's worth motivating yourself to achieve. It's worth focusing and building and shaping your life around. Because he goes on to say in verse 12, not that I've already obtained this, or I've already reached the goal, but I press on to make it my own.

[9 : 57] Because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but this one thing I do.

Forgetting what lies behind, and straining forward to what lies ahead. You see, if Christ has made you his own, by dying for you on the cross, then this is the goal to reach for.

If Christ has made a difference in your lives, by giving you a new resurrected life with God, then this is the goal to press on and take hold of, to make your own.

If Christ has saved us from a life without God, by sending his spirit to be with us always, then this is our goal, that we need to strain forward towards, forgetting what lies behind.

Every now and again, on radio, there's a great competition called Beat the Bomb. You may have heard it on the radio before.

[11 : 10] Beat the Bomb is a competition where you can win some big money. The last one, I think, was worth about \$5,000. And in Beat the Bomb, an amount of money you start off with.

It's said, and then the game starts. And then the amounts steadily increase. The contestant has to say, stop, before the bomb goes off.

And whatever the amount they stopped at, that's what they get. Okay? It's a pretty easy game. And they try to stop before the bomb goes off, otherwise they won't get anything. So the catch is, when do they say stop and take the money?

And when do they take a bit of a chance and let the amount increase? That's the catch. Usually the game starts at about \$20 and then the money increases.

And then so does the pace and so does the tension and so does the pressure. When will that bomb go off? Stop. After they're stopped at \$350, they're congratulated on their prize by the DJ.

[12 : 22] But then the real fun of the game begins. You see, the DJs, they keep playing the game to see just how much that contestant might have got if they had a little bit more courage just to keep going.

\$350,000, \$420,000, \$600,000, \$950,000, \$2,300,000, \$3,000, \$4,500, \$5,000.

Boom! Guess what? Everyone's disappointed. You could have won the prize. could have had that \$5,000, but they were satisfied with too little.

They didn't have goals that were high enough. They lost out in the end. \$350,000 was nice, but they could have had \$5,000. Isn't that the same with us?

We set our goal too low. We're satisfied with too little. We're happy with a degree.

[13 : 37] We say, stop there. We're happy with being, for me anyway, ordained. Stop there. We're happy with the nice car in the house. Stop there.

We're happy with the big enter score. Stop there. But Paul doesn't stop there, does he? See, he wants it all. He doesn't stop there.

He has the courage to go the whole hog. Verse 14, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

He presses on until he achieves the ultimate goal. He presses on until he gets the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. You see, he forgets what's behind and he strains onto what's forward, what lies ahead.

Paul isn't inter-hedging his bets because all the goals that this life offers are nothing compared to what, but compared to the goal of the heavenly call.

[14 : 44] I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death. Somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

You see, unlike beat the bomb, God's competition has no bomb. There's no threat of losing out.

There's no threat of the bomb going off and then getting nothing from God because it says there in verse 12, not that I've already obtained this or I've already reached the goal, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Tonight I want to say to you, brothers and sisters, we can't lose. That's the point. We can't lose.

There's no bomb with God.

So set your goals high. Why? Set your goal on heaven, not on earthly things because we belong to Jesus and Jesus is now in heaven and whatever belongs to Jesus will be with him in heaven one day.

Do you believe that? If you do, then you'll set your goal on heaven rather than on earth. You'll live your lives like you're preparing yourself for heaven.

[16 : 12] You'll live your lives like you're getting ready to stand before God. You'll live your lives like you're honing your skills to serve Jesus forever.

You'll dedicate yourself to Bible reading, getting to know the one you'll worship forever. You'll pray to God about everything, talking to the one who'll guide and provide for you forever.

You'll go to Bible study with your brothers and sisters in Christ, learning how to love and encourage the ones you'll live with forever. You'll do everything possible to make sure you're attaining the resurrection from the dead, the heavenly call.

tonight, set your goals high. Set them on knowing Jesus like Paul does.

In 2004, set your goals high. Set them on attaining the resurrection from the dead in your life on this earth. 70 years perhaps. Set your goals high.

[17:21] Set them on heaven. Whatever you do, don't be satisfied with earthly goals. They're okay, but don't miss out on the ultimate goal, the ultimate prize, heaven.

I say this tonight because all too often I'm satisfied with earthly goals and earthly achievements. You see, I know how easy it is to hedge my bets.

I know how easy it is to be satisfied with just a little. I know how safe it is to say stop when you're at 350 rather than 5 grand.

To say stop at ordination or swimming three times a day a week to be fit or competing in a mountain bike race. When I say stop, I lose my grip on the ultimate prize, heaven.

I say this tonight because all too often I see Christians like yourselves satisfied with earthly goals and achievements. I see how easy it is to hedge your bets.

[18:31] I see how easy it is for you to be satisfied with too little to say stop at 350 rather than 5 grand.

To say stop with a nice car and home. To say stop with the lovely family. To say stop at the big enter school, the uni. To say stop with the degree.

To say stop at a big paying job. To say stop. Comfortable retirement plan. When you say stop you lose your grip on the ultimate goal and prize, heaven.

Paul the Apostle saw how easy it was too. So he urges us from verse 15. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind and if you think differently about anything this too God will reveal to you.

Only let us hold fast to what we have attained. Setting high goals. Setting our goals on heaven isn't easy.

[19:38] That's the point. It's just like going to Mars. That's not easy either. But we must determine ourselves to hold fast knowing that we have attained our goal because Jesus has made us his own and he's there waiting for us to come.

Brothers and sisters set your goals on heaven. Set them high. Set them and remain determined to achieve them. Keep those little cards in your wallet or your purse just to remind yourselves to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death if somehow we may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Thank you.