

Philippians 3:12-21

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[0:00] Good morning. Those of you I have not met, my name is Dave.! In verses 12 and 13, Paul is going to say, not that I have already obtained this.

And he's going to say, I do not consider that I have made it my own. What is this? What is it? We're going to make any sense of today's passage.

We need to know what this and it are. And so as we begin reading our passage today, let's back up just a bit to remind ourselves what videos that we're looking at, what this and it are, will help us as we enter into this passage.

So I invite you to join me in Philippians chapter 3, beginning in verse 18. Paul says, indeed, 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.

[1:35] Be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes from faith in Christ. The righteousness from God that depends on faith.

That I may know him, the power of his resurrection. And may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. That by any means possible I may attain the resurrection of the dead.

And now this week verse 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.

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. I press on toward the goal.

To the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way. And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

[2:35] 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 me.

For many, of whom I have often told you, I now tell you even with tears what his enemies are the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction.

Their God is their belly. May glory in their shame, with mine 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 body to be like his glorious body. By the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Praise God. Lord, what a weighty word of truth. Will you guide me into clarity.

[3:37] As I seek to open up these beautiful truths for your people. And Lord, may we not only understand them, but rejoice in them. Walk in them.

For our good, the glory of your name. We ask this. By your son and your spirit. Amen. Amen. So, what is this?

What is it? What is Paul striving after? In verses 8-11, Paul was talking about this whole collection of interrelated blessings.

Right? A gift of righteousness from God. Resurrection. Conformity to Christ. And together they bring one overarching blessing.

That he calls the surpassing worth. Of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord. And we saw last week that even the most unexpected things like suffering can produce in us a blessing.

[4:51] As it draws us closer to Christ. Let me ask you then. Does that sound best?

Right? It is knowing Christ of surpassing value to me and to you. Or would you rather something else?

Like honestly, like what do you really want the most? Knowing Christ? Is that the best thing? Is that the thing of surpassing value?

Yes. Yes. And what he said last week about suffering. And how he could find even in that a blessing. As it drew me nearer and nearer to his Lord.

As he shared Christ's sufferings. And this week, as well as we'll get to it, we'll find it in another place. But is that worth the most?

[5:51] In our hearts. Because we won't go into suffering. We won't get into today's battle meeting. We won't go into obedience. Longing for blessing. Looking for blessing.

We will reluctantly go there, if at all. If you don't. So what is worth it? Perhaps there might be something more valuable to you.

Than a relationship. Right? As someone who has just fallen in love, what is most valuable? All the world dims.

Right? And poverty or riches doesn't matter one bit. Ask any parent. Ask someone who just lost with their parents.

Or a spouse. We might get distracted. But we know. We know. That relationships are what matter the most. And Paul is saying here that we have the opportunity to delve into a relationship not just with a great and wonderful human person.

[7:09] But with Christ himself. The alpha and the mecha. The beginning and the end. And that is about surpassing. What I want. And it is that whole collection of blessing, then, that Paul says in verse 12, not that I have already obtained this or I'm already perfect, but I pass on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

And there is a whole lot just in this one verse. Right? First, it's okay to be a work in progress because Paul was too. The apostles themselves were not yet perfected, completed, even in their office of apostleship.

You do not have to have it all figured out, all worked out, to be welcomed in Christ's church.

Repentance, not perfection, is the way in the kingdom.

Humility is the mark of maturity. And in fact, the more mature a disciple is, the more that disciple has eyes to see, the need for change in his or her life.

Which is actually the second thing in verse 12. The Christian life is restful, but it is very active. How sweet is it to rest our souls on Christ's completed work for us.

[8:31] To know that our life is hid with Christ our Savior on high, Christ our Savior, our God. The adoption offered in his promise is the soul's peace.

The life offered by his resurrection is the soul's home. And so there is a profound rest in the gospel, but Paul is really active here. These are action words.

Christ's own people are not inert, not inactive. Paul presses on. He strives. There's a holy discontentment birthed in the heart of a Christian in their new birth.

A passion for God grows in God's people as God himself comes to indwell his people. So, we're about to explore more of this striving.

But the third thing that I see here in this verse is that it's so wonderful. Christ has made us his own. Earlier in chapter 3, Paul was talking about how he couldn't, and like we didn't have to, make himself acceptable to Christ as if he could.

[9:45] Christ made Paul his own. Christian, Christ has made you his own. Here's how Jesus put that same thing.

In John chapter 10, he said, My sheep, you're my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

My father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand. I and the father are one.

That's what it means for Christ to make you his own. You are held in his hand. Secure. Not because of how hard you're holding on, but because of how mighty his shepherding hand is.

Which is precisely why, precisely why, Paul wants to press into these blessings more, because he wants more of the shepherd. The shepherd is himself the highest good.

[11:03] Knowing him is the surpassing blessing. So Paul presses on, strives forward. What does it look like, then? Functionally. Like, actually, what does he do to press close to God, to walk more forward in that blessing?

Last week we explored how, verse 10, we could know and rejoice in Christ better as we share his sufferings. If you missed that, do yourself a favor.

Go back and study that. As you contemplate that, it's actually kind of extraordinary what Paul is saying. It is a life transform. It brings joy to the place we would least expect it.

And this week, Paul brings joy to the second least likely place that we would expect it. Because this week, all it is all about, verse 12, he talks about not already being perfect, but moving in that direction is his goal.

Verse 17, he says, walk according to the example you have in us. Verses 18 to 19, he warns us against walking in the wicked path.

[12:18] He's talking about obedience and how that presses him closer to Christ. The structure of Paul's thought here is basically, verse 8, the highest and best blessing, the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

That's the best thing. So I pursue, he says, more knowledge of Christ. Verses 13 and 14, one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, turning forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal, that same goal, for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

One way he presses into that was verse 10 last week, sharing Christ's sufferings. Another way, this week, what he does to do that, to press in, to strain upward, is verse 15, by following.

Another way to pursue the upward calls to grasp the surpassing worth of knowing Christ is through obedience. Paul wants ultimate blessing when it's found in Christ.

Found in being with him and near him. So he presses closer to Christ and he does it by the path of obedience.

[13:38] Is that how you think about obedience? We must obey God because it is right and good.

That's biblical, but that's not what Paul is talking about here. We must obey God because he has commanded it. That's biblical. But that's not what Paul is talking about here.

We must obey God because that's a light to the world. That's true and biblical, but that's not what Paul is talking about here. We must obey God because it accords with our new creation in Christ.

That's biblical, but that's not what Paul is talking about here. We must obey God so as to not quench the Spirit. That's true and biblical, but that's not what Paul is talking about here.

He is talking about it. It is not the normal way. You think about it. He is. His great desire is to draw near to God to, verse 14, press on for the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

[14:53] And one way to do that, to strengthen towards that goal is, verses 17 and 18, to walk the path of righteousness and avoid the path of destruction.

And it's not just for the apostle. It's the path of walking with Christ for us too. As he says, verse 15, let those of us who are mature think this way, let anything, in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Which makes no sense, right? Isn't obedience a killjoy? Isn't obedience boring?

Thou shalt not have fun? That's the summary of the decalogue right there, right? And, didn't Paul just go to great lengths in verses 4 through 8 to say that he considered his obedience rubbish?

How now does he come here and say, I'm striving hard on the path of obedience? Of course, if you've been reading him thoughtfully, you probably already know that he's making a distinction.

[16:12] Earlier in chapter 3, he was trying to earn God's favor. His approval, which is impossible. So, obedience, in the pursuit of earning God's favor, is loss, is rubbish.

It amounts to nothing. But, if God bestows his favor on you, if he clothes you in his own righteousness, which is mine, if he makes you his own, verse 12, suddenly, cloaked in Christ's

righteousness, Paul is now welcome in heaven.

Verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven. So, Paul wants to walk heaven's streets. What are heaven's streets like?

There is no sin there. There is no envy. There is no grief, which means that is why there is no suffering in heaven. So, do you want a taste of heaven?

First, you must, like Paul, be welcomed there by repenting and believing in Christ so that he may bestow upon you his righteousness and not make you his own so that heaven is your own.

[17:25] And then, if you want to enjoy a taste of heaven today, well, walk in the land. Scripture, our view is dimmed here, clouded, but it is a true taste of blessedness.

How does obedience, walking the righteous path, avoiding the path of destruction, how does that cross us actually closer to the upward goal?

How does it draw us closer to Christ? Because he said here, his goal in all of this is to know Christ. How does this help us know Christ? Let me see if I can give a couple portraits of it.

Some come from within this text, some come from within the broader context of Philippians, and some even further away within the scriptures. First, within the book of Philippians itself.

Think back to chapter two. obedience relies on God's power, and therefore provides for us a direct experience of love.

[18:43] In chapter two, Paul said, therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Sometimes I hear Christians saying they want to experience the power of God. Me too. What do you mean by that?

I think some people expect to feel like some electricity running through them, which, I mean, God can't do that, but there's not really a biblical precedence for that, except when he smites people.

But God has promised, he has promised, he has promised, to bring his power to bear in your life as you pursue obedience to him.

Do you want to feel God's power at work in your inner person empowering you? Do you want that? He has promised to deliver it right now.

[20:05] Do you want to feel his hand on you, his energies in you? Go here, because this is where he has promised. Strive for obedience, ask God for help, and watch him show up in power in your life.

That is a real experience of God in power in your life. You want to know him in his power.

Here it is. Walk in the path of righteousness. It's he who empowers his people to do just that. another way.

Last week, I'm going to draw an analogy to what we saw last week with Christ's suffering, sharing Christ's suffering. What did we say in general about sharing Christ's sufferings?

It wasn't Christ comes to me while I suffer. It was actually I go to him. It's a different, like when I go sharing his sufferings.

[21:21] Some things, and then Paul will point in that, because as I go to sharing his sufferings, there's a camaraderie that is built there.

I'm getting to know Christ better as I walk his power. that was the point of it. And we know this to be true. Some things, cancer, produce an I get it moment.

I don't get it. I've not walked the back of cancer. I know people who have. I love people who have. But I haven't myself. But there is a camaraderie that comes from I get it.

Sharing in your suffering. If you've been through chemo, you have a fraternity, a knowing with people who have also gone through it.

If Paul suffers like Christ, for Christ, with Christ, he will come to a better understanding of the heart of his Lord, who went through that, not just went through that, but went through that on purpose, willingly, for him.

[22:36] And so he will know Christ better, which is his goal, because knowing Christ better is of surpassing value. Likewise, as we think of obedience in this passage, there is also a camaraderie, which comes from walking the same path.

There's a fraternity, a knowing, a camaraderie, between members of the armed services, even if they served generations apart. You put on the uniform and there is an identification, there is a knowing.

Or parenting, right? If a toddler is melting down in the grocery store, your reaction immediately shows whether or not you have been a parent or not. If you're not a parent, your first reaction is probably, man, that is annoying.

If you're a parent, I feel you, brother. Stay strong, sister, right? It is categorically different. There is a community that is produced by walking the same path.

And I think that there is a brotherhood with Christ that comes from walking this path of righteousness. righteousness. When you come to the point of temptation, and you look to Christ who defeated the tempter, and you to renounce temptation, there is a true and real conflict between you and your Savior.

[24:15] When you are insulted, and you look to Christ who returned insults for love, and you choose his path as well, you understand more of his heart, more of what love costs him, more of him.

Walking in obedience is walking in the footsteps of this father's land. Follow his path, know him better, father.

And why? Why was that his path? Because another reason, another way that this shows us God, that obedience teaches us God to know him better, is because obedience shows us God's heart. God's commands aren't arbitrary. Where did they come from? They came from him. who he is. God identifies very, very, very closely with his law.

Look at Leviticus 19. I just picked one. He does this a ton of times. He's saying, walk in righteousness, obey me.

[25:54] What does he do? He says, all these things, I am the Lord. He is associating himself with his love. God's law is an expression of his own goodness.

That's just some random arbitraries. It comes from his own heart. And so as we contemplate his law, we are contemplating his own character.

As we obey his law, we are conforming ourselves to him, being like him, walk in his laws, to walk in his ways, and so we know him better.

Last time. Obedience gives us a taste of hope. We will lead it to this hour. there's an undercurrent of heavenly language weaves through this second half of 40's break.

Verse 13, strain forward, it lies ahead. Verse 14, it comes about the upward column. Verse 19, he contrasts all of that with their end, with the wicked, their end his distortion.

[27:29] It's talking about God's things, heaven and heaven. Verses 20 and 21 are very explicitly about heaven. That's like where he lands the plan. It says our citizenship is in heaven.

From heaven, we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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.

So how does Paul finally connect our obedience? Have you ever traveled somewhere and brought something back with you? Whether it's a trick to remind you of a picture, or whether it's a practice from that place, you visited Britain and brought back tea time into your routine, or a siesta from a Spanish routine, or have you incorporated a new spice into your cooking because it's staggling, or perhaps reverse, you are here transplanted and you have brought something upon the deed to remind you of who a tradition, a mannerism, a style, to remind you of someone, or of someone. Paul has a reverse nostalgia. He doesn't long for the home he has left. He longs for the home that is being prepared for him.

he longs for the home that he knows he will one day go to, and he is bringing a taste of that into his present home, his present world.

[29:33] And what does that taste of heaven look like? We've already mentioned, right? But there is no sin, because verse 21, he will transform us to be like his world.

There's going to be a day when you will be strong and healthy forever, as one of my mentors once said. And you will be morally protected to be like your world.

And so there will be no envy there, there will be no greed there, that's why there's no suffering there. And so putting off sin in our own lives is a taste of heaven.

And it's not just the absence of something, it's not just putting off sin, it's also putting on righteousness. It's the active presence of something good. In heaven there is the unhindered practice of love.

There is a sense in which this might sound too mystical, I'm sorry, but there really is a sense in which the space between heaven and earth rubs thin as we walk in heaven's ways and by this great time.

[30:54] Perhaps you've seen it. Perhaps you've seen it happen when you've witnessed an extraordinary act of sacrificial life and sensed that you were standing on the earth.

Perhaps seen that when you've had a particularly genuine and profound experience of Christian fellowship and sensed that something more, something greater was happening than you could really see in front of your eyes.

Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Friends, it truly is. It is God works among his people and power. Roughly 500 years ago, the Protestant Reformation kicked off the year.

One of the hallmarks of the Reformation teaching was the teaching on the three uses of the law. The law was not for us to earn our way to God.

The first use of the law was to convict us of sin and how we needed to save it. The second use of sin was to restrain evil in the world as in that time especially.

[32:14] Governments actually were very attuned to things of scripture and not that they were good and perfect governments or anything like that but they were attuned to that and there is still written on every human's heart an understanding of the law that does restrain people in this world.

The world is not as sinful as it could be because God has written his law in people's hearts.

That's why everyone stands in the even if they haven't read this because they know that they have sin. And the third use of the law in the Reclamation thinking is that it patterns the lives of believers.

Paul here today adds a fourth to us because it helps as the law patterns our lives. It teaches us to know Christ Jesus in us a joy that we could not have if we did not walk in it.

That's right. Lord, I thank you that what you've done in your word for us is that you have transformed obedience from something that we do as a transaction something we do in our minds perhaps to stay off your wrath which we couldn't do or to make ourselves acceptable which we couldn't do to earn some blessing which we could never earn or to get our prayers heard as if we could.

[34:04] Lord, that you have transformed it from that transaction into a pathway where we can draw near to you and experience your power and know your heart and experience our forever home even now.

Lord, give it the blessing surpassing worth knowing Christ Jesus over you and help us to do just that knowing as we walk you through this.

May I ask this in his name. Amen.