



Steadfast Bible Fellowship

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## **The Importance of a Goal, Philippians 3:12-4:1**

Reviewing 3:12-14 is important. It demonstrates how Paul strategized about his life. He did not look back. His eyes were not on the rearview mirror nor were his feet on the brake. He “pressed on” towards the future. He looked towards Jesus, the embodiment of his hope. He was not backward-looking but forward-driving. And he had a great deal to forget! He had killed and imprisoned Christians. He had advocated a position of utter hostility and hatred towards Jesus and His church. And he believed he was doing God’s will in doing so. He even declared that he was doing all this with a “good conscience” (Acts 23:1). But the blood of Jesus Christ covered his past. He cut all ties with his past—and he pressed on.

### The Call to Christian Maturity as a Goal, 3:15-17

3:15-17: Paul was calling on the Philippian church to share with him the pursuit of Christlikeness—the “mature” (*teleios*). He began with the thought life—“think this way” (to be “like-minded”); a clear reference to what he had argued in 3:4-14. [Together, we are pressing on, focused on Christ and putting the things of our past life behind.] And if there was anyone who did not think this way, God would deal with them, Paul declared.

So, he repeated in v. 17 the exhortation to walk together at the level of maturity each had already attained. Each one had been justified—and all were equal in that position and standing before God. Also, each one was in the process of sanctification—and should be thankful for the grace God has shown along the way. They were unified in the goal (to become like Jesus) and they all understood the process. Their like-mindedness was in effect Christ-likeness!

For that reason, Paul declared that the believers at Philippi should follow godly examples in the process of sanctification. Audaciously, Paul asked them to “imitate” (literally “mimic”) him, and to “walk according to the example” of others in the church who were already doing so. This exhortation was not sourced in pride or arrogance. Paul asked them to mimic him as he mimicked Christ (see 1 Corinthians 11:1). For each of us today, it is important to have good spiritual role models, who can both teach us and model for us the “walk.”

### Catastrophic Role Models of the Goal, 3:18-19

3:18-19: These verses constitute a reason for v. 17—there are catastrophic role models out there. In context, Paul was no doubt referring to the Judaizers. In doing so, he cited five horrific characteristics of these “models:”

- “enemies of the cross of Christ;” because they insisted on additional “works” needed for a more complete salvation. What Jesus did was not enough!!!
- “their end is destruction;” God has already declared their condemnation and judgment
- “their god is their belly,” meaning their focus was on worldly appetites and satisfying those, not eternal values (see Romans 16:18)

- “they glory in their shame,” meaning that they glorified and magnified the very things about which they should be ashamed (e.g., circumcision as needed for salvation)
- “their minds are set on earthly things,” not the values, virtues and standards of God, which are eternal.

### The Motivation to Pursue the Goal, 3:20-21

3:20-21: These verses establish a clear contrast between the Judaizers and the Philippian believers. Those who lived in Philippi were living there as colonists of Rome, while their citizenship (*politheuma*) was actually in Rome. Similarly, Christians live on earth, while their actual citizenship is in heaven. Our king is Jesus and His throne is in heaven. But, since we are citizens of heaven and our King is there, we “eagerly await” (“with tiptoe anticipation and longing”) our Savior, Jesus Christ. Paul reminded the Philippians of this grand truth, in distinct contrast to the Judaizers whose focus was on “earthly things” (v. 19).

Why should believers have this motivation to serve diligently while we eagerly wait? Because at the event called the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), Jesus will transform our “lowly bodies” to be “like His glorious body” (see 1 Corinthians 15:51-57). He will do this by “His power,” the same power that produced the resurrection, the defeat of all evil and the power that will proclaim Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords and subject all of creation to His Lordship (see Philippians 2:5-11).

### Stand Firm, 4:1

Paul now exhorted the church to “stand firm” (yield no territory to the evil one or to the false teachers). The Philippians were his “joy” and his “crown” (*stephanos*, the crown of victory). This church was to Paul what the victory wreaths were to the runners in the Greco-Roman games.

### Questions:

1. In terms of your walk with the Lord, what is your goal? Paul encouraged his readers to “think this way” (v. 15). What did he mean?
2. Why do you believe Paul asked the Philippian church to imitate him? Is that not self-elevating? Read 1 Corinthians 11:1. Should you imitate other believers?
3. In vv. 18-19, Paul illustrates the disaster of choosing the wrong role models. Who are your role models?
4. In vv. 20-21, Paul offers a motivation to pursue godliness in life. What is that motivation? How should the promises of Jesus motivate us to godliness?
5. Will you commit to “standing firm,” to yielding no territory in your life at all to the evil one?

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