

Joy on the Journey: Joy in the Pressing

OPENING STORY

Let me start with something many of us have experienced. Have you ever saved up for something you really wanted?

Maybe a new phone. A car. A vacation. Something you believed would finally make you happy.

You work hard.

You save the money.

You finally get it.

And for a few days it feels amazing. But then something strange happens. The excitement fades. And suddenly your heart starts looking for the **next thing**. That's the cycle our world lives in. Always chasing something. But the Apostle Paul discovered something different. He discovered that real joy is not found in chasing things.

Big Idea: Joy is found when Christ becomes our greatest treasure.

Joy is not found after the race — it is discovered while we are running it.

INTRO — **WHAT ARE WE CHASING?**

Have you ever worked incredibly hard to get something you believed would finally make you happy... only to discover it didn't?

A promotion.

A house.

Recognition.

A level of success.

For a moment it feels amazing. But eventually the excitement fades and something inside us begins chasing the **next thing**.

Our culture runs on that cycle.

Achievement.

Temporary joy.

Then another pursuit.

Living in Southern California we see this everywhere.

People move here chasing dreams.

The next opportunity.

The next connection.

The next breakthrough.

But often the people who have the most success are not the people with the most joy. Because success can fill your calendar... but it cannot fill your soul. The Apostle Paul discovered that truth firsthand.

And he writes something shocking in Philippians 3:7: “But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.”

Everything Paul once chased... he now counts as loss. Why? Because he discovered something greater.

Before we walk through this passage together, let’s hear Paul’s words in full. As we read, listen for his heart — what he leaves behind, what he pursues, and where his hope ultimately rests.

Text: Philippians 3:7–14

*But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. **8** What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in [a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. **10** I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, **11** and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. **12** Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. **13** Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,*

14 *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

In these verses Paul shows us three movements of the Christian life:

what we release,
what we pursue,
and what we hope for.

THE CITY OF PHILIPPI — A CULTURE OF STATUS

Philippi was a Roman colony.

You can see this in Acts of the Apostles 16:12.

Roman colonies were filled with retired soldiers who had been granted land and Roman citizenship. Citizenship mattered deeply.

Status mattered.

Honor mattered.

Reputation mattered.

Philippi functioned like **a little Rome outside of Rome**. But Paul writes to them and turns that entire value system upside down. Because Paul had already experienced the same transformation in his own life.

PAUL'S TESTIMONY — BEFORE AND AFTER JESUS

In Philippians 3:4–6 Paul lists his résumé.

Circumcised on the eighth day.

Of the people of Israel.

Of the tribe of Benjamin.

A Hebrew of Hebrews.

A Pharisee.

Zealous for the law.

Paul had everything religious people admired. But then everything changed. On the road to Damascus Jesus confronted him.

In Acts of the Apostles 9 Christ interrupted Paul's life and redirected everything.

That is why Paul later says: "Christ Jesus took hold of me." — Philippians 3:12

Paul was not searching for Christ. Christ came searching for Paul. Grace always moves toward us first.

1. COUNTING EVERYTHING LOSS FOR CHRIST (*Justification — what Christ has done*)

Philippians 3:8 says: "I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

Paul uses financial language here. Everything he once placed in the **profit column** of his life... he moved into the **loss column**. And Christ alone became the true gain.

Notice the phrase: "**knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.**"

The theologian John Stott once said: "The essence of Christianity is not knowing about Christ, but knowing Christ Himself."

Paul is describing relationship, not information. Walking with Jesus. Trusting Him. Becoming like Him.

That is what Paul discovered. Religion had filled his mind... but knowing Christ transformed his life.

Paul even says he considers everything **garbage** compared to Christ. The Greek word *skubalon* refers to refuse or waste thrown away. Paul is saying nothing compares to Jesus.

The preacher Charles Spurgeon once said: "If Christ is not all to you, He is nothing to you."

Jesus does not simply become part of our lives. He becomes our **greatest treasure**.

And this leads to the first truth Paul teaches us: Christ is better than what we leave behind. But the Christian life is not only about what we leave behind.

It is also about what we pursue.

2. PRESSING TOWARD THE PRIZE (*Sanctification — what Christ is doing now*)

Paul continues in verse 12: “Not that I have already obtained all this... but I press on.”

The phrase **press on** comes from the Greek word *diōkō*.

It means to pursue intensely. Before meeting Jesus Paul used that intensity to persecute Christians.

Now he uses that same passion to pursue Christ.

Paul says: “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings.”

— Philippians 3:10

Knowing Christ means walking with Him in every part of life.

The Christian life is not static. It is a journey of growth.

Paul describes it like a race. “I press on toward the goal to win the prize...” — Philippians 3:14

And the writer Hebrews tells us to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus.” (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Ancient runners strained forward toward the finish line.

Anyone who has run a race knows the moment when your legs want to quit. Your lungs burn. Your mind tells you to slow down. But something inside you leans forward anyway.

That is the picture Paul gives us. A believer leaning forward toward Christ.

But pressing forward also requires something else. It requires releasing what tries to pull us backward.

And this leads to the second truth: Joy grows as we pursue Him.

3. LETTING GO TO GROW (*Future hope — glorification*)

Paul says: “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead.” — Philippians 3:13

Some people need to leave behind past failures.

Psalm 103:12 says: “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

Romans 8:1 reminds us: “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Others need to leave behind past successes. Because God is always doing something new.

Isaiah 43:18–19 says: “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!”

THE FINAL PRIZE — RESURRECTION LIFE

Paul presses forward toward: “the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” — Philippians 3:14

The Christian journey moves through three stages.

Justification.

Sanctification.

Glorification.

One day we will see Christ face to face. And this leads to the final truth: The prize ahead is worth the pressing now.

THE SECRET OF JOY

Remember something important. Paul writes these words while **in prison**. He is chained to Roman guards. Yet Philippians is one of the most joyful letters in the New Testament.

Why? Because joy is not rooted in circumstances. Joy is rooted in **knowing Christ**.

The writer C. S. Lewis once wrote: "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world."

Paul discovered that truth. Nothing in this world compares to knowing Jesus. This is why Paul can have joy even in prison.

When Christ becomes your greatest treasure, joy becomes your constant companion.

RESPONSE

Let me ask you three honest questions.

- What are you still counting as gain?
- Are you pressing forward in your faith?
- What do you need to leave behind today?

Remember these truths:

- **Christ is better than what we leave behind.**
- **Joy grows as we pursue Him.**
- **The prize ahead is worth the pressing now.**

Take a moment right where you are. Open your hands before the Lord. Talk to Him. If there is something you have been

chasing more than Christ...release it to Him. If you have grown weary in the race... ask Him for strength.

You might pray:

"Jesus, help me pursue You again."

"Jesus, forgive me for chasing lesser things."

"Jesus, be my greatest treasure."

Take a moment and bring that before the Lord.

CLOSING

Church, one day the race will end. One day every pursuit of this world will fade away. And one day we will stand before Jesus.

On that day we will realize something beautiful. Every sacrifice we made to follow Him... Every moment we pressed forward in faith... Every step of obedience...

Was worth it. Because the prize was never success. The prize was never status. The prize was never comfort. The prize was always **Jesus**.

So remember:

Christ is better than what we leave behind.

Joy grows as we pursue Him.

And the prize ahead is worth the pressing now.

So church... fix your eyes on Jesus. And press on.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You are our greatest treasure. Forgive us for chasing lesser things. Help us pursue You above all else. Free us from the weight of the past. Strengthen us to press forward in faith. Fix our eyes on You so we may run the race well. And fill our hearts with joy as we follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen.