

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Philippians
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Distractions on the Journey Home
Philippians 3:15-4:3

"All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life."

Good morning, Harris Creek. One thing our family enjoys doing is going on a walk in the neighborhood. We'll kind of just walk around together. Sometimes the kids join in. Sometimes it's just Monica and me, and we'll just be praying for our marriage, our kids, and you guys as we walk. It wasn't something I enjoyed doing. She kind of pulled me into it. I went reluctantly and then learned over time that I actually enjoy it. Sometimes the kids will follow on their bikes and scooters.

We go up this hill near the lake, and then we come back down, and when we come back down, we're on our way home. We're returning home. When we're on our way home, there's this house that is usually a distraction for me. I don't know what is going on in this house, but they've started putting out free stuff on the curb. I am a complete sucker for free stuff. I like cheap stuff, and the cheapest stuff is free stuff. And it's good stuff. It's new stuff, like, in the package stuff, in a box.

It's like Christmas for me. I'm like, "I can't wait to see what they're giving away today." I've scored some journals, I've scored pens...just different things. What happens is if the kids or Monica see there's stuff outside, they're discouraged, because they know that's going to hang me up. They're like, "No, no. Oh, Dad, come on! We've got to go home. Dad, let's keep going. Let's keep going home." I'm like, "Just a minute," and I'm going through there. They're always trying to keep me going.

Here's the deal. I got the best of them one day, because as I'm going through this stuff, I see this pair of shoes. I'm looking at this pair of shoes, and I'm like, "I think these are expensive shoes." They're like, "No, they're not. They're used shoes." I'm like, "They're brand new. They're made to look used, but I think these are expensive."

Now listen. There are two things I know a little bit about: first, the Bible; second, shoes. I used to sell them in the Richland Mall here in Waco. (Third, golf carts. Fourth, accounting.) So I know a little bit about shoes. I'm telling them, "I think these are expensive." They're like, "No, they're not. Leave them. Don't bring home used shoes." We get home, and I get on the Internet and start doing a little bit of research, a little bit of research on the worldwide web.

It turns out these shoes sell for \$500. Let me show you. Here's the ad. As you can see, the little picture at the bottom... That's these shoes right here. In case you can't see there at the top, I have written it nicely for you right there: \$495. To which I'm going to the family. I'm like, "Who's laughing now? Daddy just scored Christmas. Good news, kids. We have Christmas this year. I'm going to sell these shoes." It's a distraction for me on the way home.

Well, it turns out, upon further review, a little bit more research, a little more time on the web, those are fake. Completely worthless. They're like, "See, Dad? It's not worth it. We should keep going home. Don't get distracted." That's really a summary of the message today that the Holy Spirit through his servant, the apostle Paul, is going to tell us through Philippians, that we are on our way home, and on our way home there are a lot of distractions.

One day, much sooner than we think, we're going to realize these distractions were not worth it. They felt like it then. We felt like we were winning in the moment. We felt like we gained something, but in the end, it was not worth it. So, that's the subject this morning: the distractions we encounter on our way home. The Scripture today is Philippians 3, starting in verse 15, and then I'm going to try to go all the way to chapter 4, verse 3.

It's going to talk about how we're not home yet, that there is this prize waiting for us between now and then, but between now and us inheriting the prize, we will be faced with many distractions, things that slow us down in our pursuit of Jesus and, if completely distracted by them, things that can keep us from getting to Jesus.

Now, I know that's confusing. As I say that, you should be thinking, "But wait. I placed my faith in Jesus. I've trusted in his death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. I am saved." But Scripture uses this language to both give you security of your salvation but to also warn us not to be distracted and go the way of the pagan, lest we weren't actually saved. I know that creates some confusion and conflict for some of us.

I believe the Scripture should afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted. That's a part of the Scripture we're reading. You get to determine who you are in that. Are you in a place where you feel like, "Hey, I'm saved, so I'm going to live my life however I want and get fully distracted and engulfed by the world" or are you in this place where you're like, "I don't know. Have I actually placed my faith in Jesus?" and you need to be comforted, like, "No, neither

height nor depth nor rulers or principalities or anything under the sun is going to separate you from the love of God"?

So, as we move through this text, we're going to see how the mature in the faith model the way, how the distracted are destined for destruction, and the call for those running in the gospel to get along. Just as a reminder, Paul wrote this letter. It's a letter to the church in Philippi, which he helped start. He planted this church. The year is about AD 62. He's in prison in Rome, most likely chained to a Roman soldier.

He's penning this letter or he's having someone write it as he dictates it, and it has been preserved by the Holy Spirit for thousands of years so we can read it and apply it to our lives today. In chapter 1, he expresses his deep affection for these people he started this church with, and he calls them to courage. He calls them to unity as they contend for the gospel in the midst of opposition.

Then in chapter 2, he holds up Christ's example of humility and calls believers to follow Christ's example of humility. He challenges us to exercise our salvation, to actually use it. Then Pastor Carter looked last week at this idea that Jesus is greater than religion and introduced the first distraction in this chapter, which is legalism...you thinking you can do something to make God love you more, you performing *for* God's acceptance rather than *from* it.

Then he ends that section with verse 13, "**But one thing I do...**" Paul is going to say, "This is the summation of my life. This is the most important thing. You boil all of my existence down to this one thing." "**Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**" "That's what I'm about."

Father, I pray as we move into this text and through this text that that would be the cry of our lives, that we would forget what is behind us, not controlled by our shame, not given to the Enemy, but we would look forward through the gospel to Jesus, to the prize you've given us in him, and that we would race, that we would run to that and we would not get distracted on the way. Father, today, protect us from evil. Open our hearts and minds to learn from your Scriptures what you desire us to learn. In Jesus' name, amen.

He says in verse 15, "**All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things.**" What does that mean? What things? That God has a prize for us in Jesus and that we are to keep our eyes focused on him. "**And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.**"

He says, "The mature in the faith realize they're marching forward on the way to the prize. If you don't realize that, take heart. God is going to make it clear. I don't have to convince you. I don't have to persuade you or compel you. As you continue to dive into the Word, God is going to open your mind to see the truth that there's a prize set up for you, and that's what matters most: that you're marching toward Jesus."

Then he says this really powerful idea in verse 16: **"Only let us live up to what we have already attained."** The prize you're marching toward you already possess. You can build your relationship with Jesus today. You don't have to wait. Today, you can know in part. Then he says, **"Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do."**

He says, "Follow me as I follow Christ." That's a bold statement. How many of us could say that? That we could say to our unbelieving friends, "Listen. You don't know the way to Jesus? Just follow me. Just live as I do. Just do what I do. Just talk how I talk. Just go where I go. Just give how I give. Just say what I say. Just read what I read. Follow me as I follow Christ."

This is an idea that's repeated. In 1 Corinthians 4 he says, **"...for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me."** In 1 Corinthians 11 he says, **"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."** He says, "All of you who are mature should take such a view of things." That's my first point.

1. *The mature in faith model the way.* Verse 15: If we are mature, we should focus on the prizes we have. If you lose sight of that, God is going to make it known to you. Stay the course. Verse 16: Live up to what you have already been given in Jesus. The prize is yours. Run the race. Ironically, I put that in the distraction category.

I think there are people here, people who hear me right now, who think, "Well, if I'm saved, what's the point? If I'm going to be with God, what difference does it make how I live? If I'm going to die and go to heaven, then why don't I enjoy the party here?" You think for a moment that you actually can find joy apart from God, which is a false idea.

It's the same false idea Paul is writing to. Earlier in this chapter, he speaks to the legalist, and now he is talking to the antinomian. *Anti-nomian* (law): people who live like there is no law. It looks like this: "Well, if I'm saved, then I'm going to be with God, and I can do whatever I want." He says, "No. Live up to the prize you've already been given."

Then he says, "Join together in following my example. Keep your eyes on those who live according to the faith." I think some of us are like, "Well, if I'm going to get an A, why do I need to take the test? If I'm going to win the race, why do I need to run it?" It's for three reasons. First, because you were made to. That's why God made you. Secondly, out of obedience. God calls you to. Thirdly, you will not find joy, meaning, or purpose apart from doing that which God created you to do.

The way home is a marathon. It's not a sprint; it's a marathon. Stay in the race. You know how in a marathon people group up based on their pace, the pace that they run together? There's usually this group in the front. They're the fast ones. These are the mature in the faith. Paul does an amazing example to say those who are mature in the faith should turn around and cheer on those behind. "This is the way. Come on, guys. Let's go! The finish line is close. Let's keep going." You use your maturity to spur on those who aren't as mature as you.

A real challenge in the church has always been to find leaders of Life Groups, because leaders tend to flock together. They find themselves in a Life Group where... You have a group over *here* that has no leader, and you have a group over *here* that is all qualified leaders. I'm not discouraged by that. It's natural. Paul says this. The mature in the faith tend to stick together. But you have to use your maturity to spur on those less mature than you. This is a part of the purpose of your existence in the faith, that you're challenging others to grow. "Hey, come on, guys. Let's go. We can do this. We can do this."

If you want to become faster, you run with fast people. The same is true in the faith. Listen. Life is hard. I want you to know that. I talked to somebody this week questioning their faith, because they were like, "I've got some questions for God when I get up there. Why did *this* happen, and why did *this* happen?" This happened because of Genesis 3. The world we live in is fallen. It's not as it was intended to be, so there's all kinds of brokenness around us. Life is hard.

Every person who hears me saying this right now, at some point... You might be there this morning. You're going to be tempted to stray off the path, to stray off the way home, the finish line. You have to have people in your life who are going to come alongside you, come around you, and say, "No, no, no. That's the way. Let's get back on the path. Let's get back on the way." You can't go at this alone.

This is a really clear message in the Scripture. We're to bear each other's burdens. We're all going to be there at times...*all* of us. We're going to be there, and we have to challenge each other to get back on the path. Life is hard, but it's a whole lot harder when you're distracted. You can bring difficulties on yourself. That's why he writes in verse 18, "**For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears...**" This was preserved in history.

This guy is writing this letter in prison, and the thought he's about to go to has driven him emotionally to a place where he's crying. The tears are hitting the page, and he documents it. He says, "I want you to know I'm so moved with emotion by what I'm about to tell you that I'm crying." "**...many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.**"

It reads poetically the way he writes it. It's these short, machine-gun fires. "They're enemies of the cross. Their destiny is destruction. Their god is their stomach. Their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things." When it says "Enemies of the cross," it doesn't say "Enemies of Jesus." I don't know if you've noticed this. Most people are cool with Jesus. You can talk to people. You can go all throughout the world in some of the most pagan cities and say, "Hey, you know Jesus?"

"Oh yeah, man. Jesus lived a great life. He was a good prophet, a good teacher. Great teachings. 'Love people. Love your neighbor as yourself.' That's good stuff. Man, Jesus is my homeboy. You're talking about the hippie carrying the lamb, throwing the deuce? I like that guy."

"Yeah, but the one who went to the cross and died the death you deserve for your sins because you ran from God, and he defeated death through the resurrection so you can be with God only by trusting in him?"

"No, man. That's offensive. Get that away from me, closed-minded talk. 'One way.' What are you talking about? That's offensive."

The cross is offensive. There are enemies of the cross of Christ, and their destiny is destruction. That's not annihilationism. That's not snuffed out. That's eternal destruction forever. It's not something to be made light about. We think, "Oh, hell is a party." Not a party. There's no celebrating in hell.

He says their god is their stomach. What does that mean? I'm going to go out on a limb and say for some of you, maybe, on Thursday your god was your stomach. Maybe you experienced this. You went one time through the buffet line. You had your fill. You're sitting there. "Oh, I'm so full. I'm so full. I can't eat another thing.

I'm so full. I don't want to see food ever again. What kind of pie is that? Oh, is that Aunt Margaret's? That's the pumpkin pie? Oh yeah. Let me get a piece. And is that pecan too? And coconut cream? Yeah, I'm going to try each of those. And I do think I need to try the dressing again." And you go back through the buffet line.

I don't think he's talking about food. He's talking about sin. He's talking about your sinful desires, your sinful appetite. There are people who go through this world, and they see the world as their buffet line, and they eat whatever they want. They follow their desires. Their appetite is their god, and their glory is their shame. They boast about the things Jesus died for.

It's the locker room conversation. "You're not going to believe what we did. Man, we drank so much. We went here. It was crazy. You won't believe who we did, where we did. Come here, man. I've got to tell you about last Friday." Their glory is in their shame. It's the things that held Jesus on the cross. Their mind is on earthly things.

If I were to say, "Raise your hand if you're here and you're an enemy of the cross of Christ," probably not a lot of hands would go up. Probably none of you would say, "That's me. I'm here, Sunday morning, enemy of the cross." But if I said, "How many of you, your mind is set on earthly things?" there would probably be some hands that would go up. Distracted. Some of you have been a believer a long time and just got distracted by earthly things.

2. The distracted are destined for destruction. This has some teeth on it. Almost every word is straight from the text. When we're on our way home, we don't want to get distracted. This is a really clear narrative in the Scripture. It's not just said here, lest you think I grabbed an obscure text. First Peter 2:11 says, "**Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles [as strangers and aliens], to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.**"

There are desires inside of you that you are to abstain from, and it takes a war, a battle. He says in 1 John 2:15, "**Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.**" What? We can't say, "Well, God, you should have said it clearer." It's so clear. It's not like, "Well, that's some obscure stuff happening in the Greek there." No, no. "If anyone loves the world, the love for the Father is not in them."

There are these things you want to do that you shouldn't do. I spend a lot of my time with young adults, a lot of time with people in their 20s and 30s, so I've heard this argument a lot through the years. "Well, if God didn't want me to do it, why would he have given me these desires? If God didn't want me to go that way, why would he have given me these desires? Why would he make me feel this way? If he didn't want me to do that, why would I have these feelings?"

The Scripture, the Bible, this book, this collection of books God has given us, says repeatedly, "You have desires inside of you. If pursued, they will kill you. If you follow them, they will lead you to destruction." There are things you want to do that you should not do. You should make war with those things you want to do so you don't do them. This is a really clear idea in the Scriptures, that we should not buy whatever we want to buy, that we should not eat whatever we want to eat, that we should not go wherever we want to go, and we should not do whatever we want to do.

A part of growing in maturity as a Christian is to go without, to be able to do something, to have all the means to do something and say, "You know what? For the sake of greater holiness, I'm not going to. I'm going to abstain." There's this spiritual discipline that's also clear in the Scripture that I think is often forgotten called *fasting*, that we would actually go without something we need for life to pursue that which has greater life, that we would willingly go without.

This is not popular in America in 2020. It's very clear in the text. He says in 1 Corinthians 9, **"No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."** Not following the urges of my flesh but bringing my flesh under the control of the Spirit. What are you denying yourself right now? What are you going without right now?

I want to make sure you know something. Satanism has a Bible. Do you guys know that? They have a Bible, much like Christianity has a Bible. They have a book or a collection of books they read that teaches you the way of satanism, satanic worship. It was written by Anton LaVey. It's a real thing. It looks like a Bible. On the cover of it, there's a mantra of the satanic church. Do you know what it is?

The mantra of the satanic church written on the cover of their Bible is "Do as thy will." I'll translate that away from Elizabethan text: "Do whatever you want." The mantra of the satanic church is that you should do whatever you want to do. Now, if we were to take the Scriptures and summarize them in a mantra similar to that, it would be, "Do whatever the Father desires. Do as the Father would." Jesus says in the garden, "Not my will, but thy will be done, Father."

I'm not going to follow my urges, but I'm going to do the will of my Father in the way I date, in the way I parent, in the way I'm married, in the way I work, in the way I pursue gain, in what I do with my morning when I wake up and what I do with my evening as I go to bed. What is the will of my Father? Satan will receive worship of you doing whatever you want, just like God receives you raising your hand and singing a song and shouting praise in this room. You doing whatever you want... Satan takes that as worship. He's like, "Yeah, bring it. I'll take it."

The reason the cross is so offensive is because it's the greatest act of selflessness the world has ever seen. God, who is all-powerful, became a man and humbled himself like a servant and became obedient to the Father, even to the point of death, death on the cross. That's offensive. The greatest act of selflessness.

So, the call to the Christian in the Christian faith is that you would be selfless, that you would live a selfless life. There's something in us, our desires which we must wage war against, that doesn't like a call to selflessness. Let me just be pragmatic for a moment. Would your parenting be better if you were selfless? Would your marriage be better if you were selfless? Would your employment be better if you were selfless?

Every relationship we have would improve if we acted out of selflessness, not selfishness. One is an act of worship to the Creator, God of the heavens and the earth, and the other is an act of worship to his Enemy. Those shoes were fake. Collecting them was an act of futility, pointless, meaningless. The revelation... I felt so foolish, like, "I'm sorry I held you guys up on our way home to take time to get something that had no value."

I think we have that revelation in so many different ways. We collect these trinkets and treasures and stuff and status and things to get to the end of this race to realize they were pointless. They were without value. We are put in a box, and those things are left to be distributed to those who remain alive for just another moment longer than us.

Imagine how silly it is to collect gold only to realize it's asphalt in the kingdom, that the streets are made of it. God is telling us so clearly. I'm not saying you can't have nice things. I am saying use your nice things for the kingdom. Share them. Use them to bring people into your nice homes to share the gospel, to give them rides in your nice cars, to serve others, to be selfless.

Verse 20: **"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."** This is not your home. He's repeating this idea. I like how Hebrews 13:14 says it, particularly in the New Living Translation. It just says it plainer. **"For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come."** Jesus is coming back, and he's going to make your body like his glorified body.

What's interesting to me is I believe that we'll all... We all know Jesus is going to bring unity among us. We're going to get along with Jesus. File this away in the JP "not sure" file. Let me go do some more research there. It's interesting to me. It may not be interesting to you. I think there's a possibility... I could argue from the Scriptures, but I could not prove it from the Scriptures. I'm just saying that plainly up front as a disclaimer.

I think it's possible that Jesus is going to bring uniformity, which is different than unity. That's particularly interesting in a time where we are choosing all kinds of things to be divided over, that we may one day appear all the same. Now, that's a distraction. There are a lot of things I could say about this. Do angels look the same? Do demons look the same? What will we look

like? What does it mean when it says he's going to make our bodies like his body? Is it like in essence or like in appearance? A lot of things we don't know for sure.

So, file that away. Don't be distracted by that. Come back to this text and know that... Here's what we know, we can be certain of: Jesus is going to bring unity. We'll go to chapter 4 now, verse 1, under this banner that Jesus is going to bring unity. **"Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!"** He loves the Philippians. He calls them. "Hey, stand firm, knowing that Jesus is coming back, knowing that your citizenship is in heaven."

"I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord." He says, "I want you to think the same or to have the same attitude in Jesus." **"Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life."**

We don't know a lot about these women. This is the only mention of them in all of antiquity. What we know about them is what the Holy Spirit has preserved here. They had a divided opinion. They disagreed on the opinion of something. Paul cared enough about unity in the Philippian church to mention this and to mention them by name, and he once contended for the gospel with them.

Keep in mind the Philippian church was born out of a women's Bible study. In Acts 16... We talked about this week one. There was a group of women gathered by a river. Paul went and met with them, and the church was born out of Lydia's living room. These women were probably a part of that. We don't know for sure.

He's writing them because they have this disagreement. Paul reminds them that they are on their journey home and that disunity, a disagreement, is a distraction. I think sometimes we take time to get in fruitless arguments because we are not focused enough on the gospel. The gospel is not a big enough priority to us.

3. *Get along in the gospel to the finish.* The finish is coming, and we're to get along in the gospel. What I mean by "get along in the gospel" is twofold. First, the gospel, believing upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, brings unity to our thinking, unity to our belief, and we should get along in that. We should be at peace with one another in that, but also, we should grow in that idea.

The gospel, though it is simple, is also complex. We continue to surrender our lives to it daily, and we should move forward in that, growing to maturity. The ones who show others the way, who take time to look back and say, "This way; come with me this way..." That we would make disciples, so we would get along in the gospel to the finish.

Disunity in the church is almost always a sign of immaturity. Somewhere in disunity there's usually someone given to pride, wanting to win, wanting to get their way, not taking the time and

the patience to see from the other side. Disunity is almost always a result of some form of immaturity in the faith.

You see this. I'll say it plainly. Most church splits are the work of Satan. Not all of them. There are churches that multiply themselves and plant and those kinds of things, but a lot of them are over disagreements of chairs and temperatures and loudness of music and things of that nature. It's the work of the Enemy and often born out of some immaturity.

So, Paul is pleading with people to help these women who are believers but are distracted. Unresolved conflict is a distraction. To resolve conflict, it takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of effort. It takes a lot of courage. It's often exhausting, and you will hardly ever feel like it. People will say all the time to me... I'm like, "Hey, you have to go talk to them." "I'm not ready." You're not going to be ready. Don't wait until you're ready to resolve conflict. With a tremendous sense of urgency, resolve conflict.

I stood on this stage, and we went through a series called *Conflicted*, and I said, "This may be the most important series I ever preach from this stage," not because I have a low view of the gospel or low view of Jesus. It's because I know that Jesus in the gospel calls his people to unity, and there's so much disunity. He says, "I plead with these women to be of the same mind. Help them."

My appeal to you is the same: help them. In your Life Group, help them. Take time. Spend evenings pursuing unity. Don't move forward until you do. Don't agree to disagree and just sweep it under the rug. Stay there. Have the discussion. Be calm and patient. Sit on your hands. Listen. Live out all of the things we taught up here from the Scriptures, because without it there is no peace.

This week, Monica and I were sitting on the couch watching a movie. The kids were down. All was right in the world. It was cold and rainy outside, perfect movie weather. We're sitting there. It's good. Everything is right. There's peace in our home. I look over at the fireplace, and scurrying up the little screen is a little two-inch animal with a tail. I'm in this real dilemma now. I'm like, "Do I tell her or do I not? Do I discreetly get up and just go destroy this thing without her knowing? Do I bring her attention to this little mouse? What do I do?"

I'm not sure I chose correctly, but I said, "Hey, babe, look at that." Before you knew it, she was on her feet behind the couch screaming at me to kill it. So, I get up courageously, and I approach the fireplace, and it runs off. He was victorious. Or she. I didn't check. Point, mouse. Now this animal is in our home, and I would have never guessed how much unrest this little rodent would bring to our house.

She's like, "Well, where is it?" I'm like, "I don't know. It disappeared." She goes, "What if it gets in our mouth while we're sleeping?" Like, things I've never thought about. Now who's going to sleep? It's like, "Why did your mind go there?" It just brought so much unrest to our home, this little furry, cute creature. In the same way, we think, "Oh, it's fine. We just have some differences. It's fine." And it brings unrest to the entire body of Christ, at least this local representation.

Even a church of this size... You come in, and a disagreement between two... "You sit over there. I'll sit over here. I don't know if we're going to be in Life Group with you anymore. I don't know if we can." It robs you of peace. In the gospel, the call is for us to get along in unity. Disunity is a distraction.

There are a lot of distractions in this chapter alone. In verses 2-8, legalism. Working for the love of God is a distraction. In verses 14-17, licentiousness is a distraction, seeing salvation as license to do as you please. In verses 18-19, sinful desires are a distraction, an appetite for sin. In verses 19-21, materialism is a distraction, a mind set on earthly things. In verses 2-3 in chapter 4, disunity, or not getting along, is a distraction.

In summary, the mature in faith model the way, the distracted are destined for destruction, and the call for those in the gospel is to get along to the finish. I know for many of you, Thanksgiving looked different this year. There probably weren't all of the people around the table who are usually there. Plans maybe had to pivot a bit. Maybe you went to a place where you had to wear a mask or you didn't wear a mask.

Maybe you have people in your family not comfortable traveling to you or having you travel to them or maybe you *are* that person who says, "You know what? I think we just need to stay home this year." It was not an easy decision. It was a difficult decision. Probably a lot of discussion, some disagreement. We're reminded that home is more about who you're with than the actual place that surrounds you. I believe that's true. There's a longing in our hearts to be physically in the presence of Jesus.

I spent a part of my Thanksgiving watching this montage of soldiers returning home. I don't know if you've seen these videos of them returning home around the holidays and just the way that can change or interrupt the holiday in the best kind of way. Just watch this for a moment.

[Video]

I show you that for two reasons. First, because it would be crazy if people just went on about what they were doing when that person came home; if they looked up and said, "Oh, hey" and just continued to make the turkey, continued to play the game, and just continued to be distracted; if that kid opened that present and said, "Oh man! I wanted a Nintendo Switch. What's Dad doing in here?"

That would be a different video if when he walked up they were just like, "Oh yeah. Have a seat. Glad you're back." We are longing for Jesus to come home. We are waiting right now for Jesus to come home. There's a longing in our hearts, whether you know it or not, and depending on how mature you are in the faith probably depends on how often you think about this. There's a longing in your heart for the return of Christ, and the reason that resonates with us...

There's a reason that moves us in emotions or brings joy to us or there's some sort of completion we experience when we watch that. It's because that's what's going to happen with us. We're

going to be reunited with our Savior, the one we've been longing for. Augustine says, "My heart will not find rest until it finds its rest in thee."

Your heart will remain restless until it finds its rest in Jesus. That's true. That's not pastor talk. You're living that right now, whether you know it or not. So, begin to feed that relationship. Begin to pursue him. Begin to grow in the faith toward maturity so you can show others the way to not be distracted. Get along in the gospel. Pursue unity, but also pursue maturity. Let me pray that we would.

Father, our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. So, Lord, would you help them find rest in you? Father, we love you. We thank you for this amazing book that you penned through your servant by the power of your Spirit from a prison. Father, would you stir in us a greater desire? When we are faced with the temptations of this world, would you stir in us a greater desire for you? Help us to stand firm, to be strong.

I pray that those who are mature in the faith would model the way, that they would show the way we are to go, and that our church would continue to grow in maturity and that we would always be surrounded by the immature believers, that there would be constant new births happening here and that would be a sign of health among us. We love you, Lord, and we thank you for Jesus. Amen.