



*“THE ULTIMATE GOAL”

Biblical Text: [Philippians 3:10-14](#)

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I knew it was going to be a good weekend Thursday night. We had a great Church Council meeting. And ended early, which *might* have been because there was a Chiefs game on! And what a game! *A 42-27 win over the defending Superbowl champ Patriots! And another K-State victory on Saturday didn't hurt my feelings!

*And there also has been **just** a little activity and excitement this week around Old Mission. It's like there's a big once every seventy-five-year party or something going on next weekend! *Oh, wait a minute, there **IS** a big 75th anniversary party going on next weekend! And it is going to be great, big, an event not to miss! * I mean if you are going to miss going to Church, for something else, **don't miss next weekend!**

*But our Biblical text from Philippians 3 makes it clear. Even on great days. Even after great victories. There's a long season ahead. And there are no stopping points in victory or in defeat for the people of God. We always have more work to do.

*Philippians 3:13-14 says: ****“This one thing I do ... forgetting what lies behind ... I press on to the what lies ahead – to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”***¹

It's good to remember the glories of the past, but we're not intended to live there. Likewise, sometimes we hold on to our feelings of regret. But God didn't design us to live there either. **Whatever our past may have been, God still has work for us to do.**

*It's tempting to remember “*back in the day.*” Or for parents and grandparents to say to their children, “*When I was a kid...*” And there is a place for our memories.

But the ultimate goal of life is not to achieve a place in history, or to pass on a heritage to our families. The goal of our school days is not to graduate with honors successively from Pre-School, Elementary School, Junior High, High School, College, and then Graduate School, although those are noble ambitions and parents like that.

But we have a bigger purpose to fulfill. *That's what I'm after in today's message.

We've been talking about some of the things that make a difference along the way in our “*Old School Values*” series. *We've talked about the power of life-long learning, the influence of friends, the importance of homework, *the reason why practice is essential, and last week, the importance of character. * Today I want to talk about why all of that matters in this message, “*The Ultimate Goal.*”

¹ Philippians 3:13-14, paraphrased by the author.

And our text, if you'll open your Bibles, is from *Philippians 3:10-14. In it you'll find the Apostle Paul's "Jack Palance" line for every city slicker or country boy or girl who needs for guidance through the tangled web of life. *You find his "one thing."

OK - it may be a stretch to compare Paul to Jack Palance. *But the Apostle Paul was significant. He was highly educated, influential, respected, and successful. After all, he is responsible for at least two-thirds of the New Testament and second in his impact on what Christians believe only to Jesus! So, we might wonder what made him so successful. Well, he tells us in our text from Philippians 3:10-14! *

It was as if he is saying to us today: ***"Here's the one great goal of my life and the one thing I do that I want to share with you that can change your life for the better."***

So, let's get into the text. Every verse is power-packed. Start with verse 10. It expresses the ultimate goal that should be ours if we are a follower of Jesus Christ. It says: ***"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection ... and I want to become like him... ..in his life, death, and resurrection."***²

I want to *know Christ. That's the starting place. There is no "generic" Christianity. It all begins for all of us by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives. But the ultimate goal of life is not just to "be" a Christian, but to *become **like** him. To follow his lead to let him be our role model. Not just to ask "What would Jesus do?" but to actually DO what Jesus would do. There's no higher calling for our lives.

*There is a lifetime of living in that calling. But there is no room for arrogance as if we have somehow become "the ultimate Christian." Nor is there any room for wallowing in regret that we aren't "better Christians." Paul says in *Philippians 3:12: ***"Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal..."***³

And Philippians 3:12 continues: ***"... but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."***⁴ We **keep on** seeking, striving, giving, serving out of profound and humble gratitude that Christ has loved and forgiven and accepted us

*If anyone had learned that lesson, it was Paul. He persecuted Christians. He mocked the Son of God. He had every reason to just say, ***"Who I am to speak about the things of God? I was the worst sinner of all!"*** But Paul was made new through Christ Jesus, so he could let go of the past. And so can you. So can all of us, including me.

I have a close clergy friend who shares God's grace so freely with his congregation, and they are growing by leaps and bounds. But he still struggles to feel worthy.

² Philippians 3:10, paraphrased by the author.

³ Philippians 3:12, New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Copyright © 1989. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁴ Ibid.

The good news is not that God is worthy. That is simply a fact. The Good News is that God counted US worthy of giving us new life in his Son. That's why Romans 8:1 says, **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

*And the most important teaching in this text is Philippians 3:13-14, Paul's "ONE THING" which says this all important thing for Paul and for every one of us:

**“This one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind ...straining forward to what lies ahead ...I press on toward the goal, for the prize ... the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”*⁵

*Forgetting what lies behind... Straining forward to what lies ahead... I press on toward the goal... (What is that goal?) The heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

*I love the way verse fourteen is translated in the English Standard Version:

*“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*⁶

As I said earlier, *there is **always** an onward and upward call for the people of God.

*So we are at an end for our series, but not for our lives.

I am not so presumptuous to think I know what you are facing this morning. But I know this. Whatever your circumstances – in joy or sorrow – in victory or defeat – if you are feeling on top of the world, or struggling under the weight of it. You have a life to live to the glory of God. I have this advice. It's actually Paul's advice.

Do this one thing. Press forward. Don't dwell on the past. If there are people you need to forgive, forgive them. If you need to forgive yourself, do so now. Don't let regret or memories of the glory days bind you to the past. Life is meant to be lived!

Focus on this one thing, this one truth. It will never lead you astray. Repeat it in the morning when you get up for the day. Utter it as your prayer at night. Hold on to it.

**“This one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, I press forward to what lies ahead...”*

**“This one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, I press forward to what lies ahead...”*

Amen.

⁵ Ibid. Philippians 3:13-14, New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

⁶ Philippians 3:14, English Standard Version (ESV), Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, Good News Publishers. Used by permission.