

Philippians Illustrations 3

PHILIPPIANS ILLUSTRATIONS

OUR DAILY BREAD, F B MEYER, SPURGEON

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PHILIPPIANS 3

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11 BECOMING WHAT WE ARE

At a British university, a group of students had raised the question, "What do you want to be?" Different answers were given—a champion athlete, an influential politician, a noted scholar. Shyly, yet clearly, one student said something that caused thoughtful silence: "You may laugh at me, but I want to be a saint."

Imagine—a saint! Whatever his concept of sainthood, many in our secular society would view that ambition as eccentric. Yet if we are Christians, it ought to be the highest priority of our life. The essence of sainthood is simply to be like Jesus. Paul said that the overarching purpose of God the Father is to make us like His Son (Romans 8:29).

Of course, every believer is guaranteed perfect conformity to Christ in the world to come. But God does not want us to wait passively until we enter heaven for that supernatural transformation to take place (1 John 3:2). We are to be cooperating with the Holy Spirit to grow more and more like Christ "in this world" (4:17).

Yes, we are already saints by faith in Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:1). But each day we face the challenge of becoming what we are—Christlike in every area of our lives.—Vernon C Grounds

More like the Master I would live and grow,
More of His love to others I would show;
More self-denial, like His in Galilee,
More like the Master I long to ever be. —Gabriel

To belong to Christ is to be a saint; to live like a saint is to be like Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 3:7 WHEN ALL IS LOST READ: Philippians 3:7-14

What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. —Philippians 3:7

I was rummaging around my son's garage and found all the trophies he had won in his years of athletic competition. There they were in a box—about to be thrown out.

I thought of the blood, sweat, and tears that had gone into gaining those awards, yet now he was putting them in the trash. They no longer had any value to him.

It reminded me of a whimsical children's poem by Shel Silverstein called "Hector the Collector." It describes all the things that Hector

collected over the years. He "loved them more than shining diamonds, loved them more than glistenin' gold." Then Hector called to all his friends, "Come and share my treasure trunk!" And all the people "came and looked and called it junk."

So it will be at the end of our lives. All our possessions—the things we've spent a lifetime working for—will be nothing but junk. That's when we'll surely know that the best things in life are not things.

But we can have the right perspective now, as Paul did. "What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:7). We can keep a proper attitude about our possessions, because we possess the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord. —David H. Roper

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold,
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today. —Miller
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Our greatest riches are the riches we have in Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14

WHAT are you living for in your few fleeting years here on this earth? Anything other than fame, wealth, or influence?

When Thomas Naylor was teaching business management at Duke University, he asked his students to draft a personal strategic plan. He reports that "with few exceptions, what they wanted fell into three categories: money, power, and things— very big things, including vacation homes, expensive foreign automobiles, yachts, and even airplanes." This was their request of the faculty: "Teach me how to be a money-making machine."

That's not exactly an exalted ambition! No thought of humanitarian service and no thought of spiritual values! Yet, what those students wanted was what many people want—maybe what most people want.

The apostle Paul's overriding ambition was totally different. His consuming desire was to know Jesus and become increasingly conformed to His holy example (Philippians 3:10). He wanted to serve Him by proclaiming the life-changing good news of God's grace.

What is our highest goal? Do we want only to make money, which can never buy lasting happiness? Or do we want to become more like Jesus, which results in ultimate satisfaction? —V C Grounds

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-9, 2:5-11

God's Paradoxes

Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. --Matthew 16:25

The Bible tells us there is a wisdom that is foolish and a foolishness that is wise (1 Cor. 1:20-25). There is a gain that is loss and a loss that is gain (Phil. 3:7-9). And there is an exalted way that leads downward and a humble way that leads to exaltation (Phil. 2:5-11).

Statements like these seem to be contradictions, but they are actually paradoxes. A paradox is a statement that contains two truths, which at first glance seem to be incompatible.

A psychiatrist once unknowingly referred to one of God's paradoxes, remarking, "The greatest secret of mental health comes down to us in the words, 'Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will save it.'" He added, "I forget who said that, but it is a great truth."

Who said that? Our Lord Jesus Christ! He gave us that principle in Matthew 16:25. And the apostle Paul lived it out as he endured countless hardships for the benefit of others (2 Cor. 4:8-12). Yet Paul knew that even as his physical body was dying, his spirit was being renewed (v.16).

You cannot find your richest personal fulfillment until you sacrifice your time, strength, and resources to God's will. "Lose your life" for Christ. Start really living! --V C Grounds

Take up thy cross and follow on,
Nor think till death to lay it down,
For only he who bears the cross
May hope to wear the glorious crown. --Everest

Christ showed His love by dying for us; we show our love by living for Him.

PHILIPPIANS 3:8

To be good is not necessarily to be godly. But to be godly is to be good. Failure to make this distinction leads to misunderstanding. Christians sometimes assume that just because their conduct is above reproach, they are right with the Lord. But this may not be true. The Bible says it is possible to be moral without relying on God or even knowing Him.

The Cheyenne, a group of native Americans who once lived in central Minnesota and northern South Dakota, were highly moral people. They practiced moderation, dignity, and generosity, and they manifested an almost unbelievable degree of self-control. Parents loved their children and gave them affection without spoiling them. They also taught them ethical values, so that most of them became dedicated, self-sacrificing, well-behaved human beings. Yet these people were not Christians.

Knowing that people can be good without being godly should cause us to inventory our own lives. If non-Christians can be moral in their own strength, so can we. But no matter how nice we may look on the outside, as long as we depend on ourselves, we displease the Lord. Being godly is a virtue that comes only through relying on Christ. Our goal should be goodness that comes from godliness. —M. R. De Haan II

Holiness is a journey that leads to godliness.

PHILIPPIANS 3:8

SPURGEON - MORNING AND EVENING

Spiritual knowledge of Christ will be a personal knowledge. I cannot know Jesus through another person's acquaintance with him. No, I must know him myself; I must know him on my own account. It will be an intelligent knowledge—I must know him, not as the visionary dreams of him, but as the Word reveals him. I must know his natures, divine and human. I must know his offices—his attributes—his works—his shame—his glory. I must meditate upon him until I "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." It will be an affectionate knowledge of him; indeed, if I know him at all, I must love him. An ounce of heart knowledge is worth a ton of head learning. Our knowledge of him will be a satisfying knowledge. When I know my Saviour, my mind will be full to the brim—I shall feel that I have that which my spirit panted after. "This is that bread whereof if a man eat he shall never hunger." At the same time it will be an exciting knowledge; the more I know of my Beloved, the more I shall want to know. The higher I climb the loftier will be the summits which invite my eager footsteps. I shall want the more as I get the more. Like the miser's treasure, my gold will make me covet more. To conclude; this knowledge of Christ Jesus will be a most happy one; in fact, so elevating, that sometimes it will completely bear me up above all trials, and doubts, and sorrows; and it will, while I enjoy it, make me something more than "Man that is born of woman, who is of few days, and full of trouble"; for it will fling about me the immortality of the ever living Saviour, and gird me with the golden girdle of his eternal joy. Come, my soul, sit at Jesus' feet and learn of him all this day.

PHILIPPIANS 3:8

RELIGION OR RELATIONSHIP?

The 19th-century Danish theologian Soren Kierkegaard identified two kinds of religion -- Religion A and Religion B. The first is "faith" in name only (2 Tim. 3:5). It's the practice of attending church without genuine faith in the living Lord.

Religion B, on the other hand, is a life-transforming, destiny-changing experience. It's a definite commitment to the crucified and risen Savior, which establishes an ongoing personal relationship between a forgiven sinner and a gracious God.

This difference explains why for many years British author C. S. Lewis had such great difficulty in becoming a Christian. Religion A had blinded him to Religion B. According to his brother Warren, his conversion was "no sudden plunge into a new life, but rather a slow, steady convalescence from a deep-seated spiritual illness--an illness that had its origins in our childhood, in the dry husks of religion offered by the semi-political churchgoing of Ulster, and the similar dull emptiness of compulsory church during our school days."

We all face two pivotal questions: First, are we bogged down in the empty ceremonialism of Religion A? If so, we must receive Jesus as our Savior. Second, is our relationship with Christ growing more deep and vital? -- Vernon C. Grounds

You only are true life--
To know You is to live
The more abundant life
That earth can never give. --Clarkson

You can have tons of religion without one ounce of salvation.

PHILIPPIANS 3:8

F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk.

SECRET IDOLS

"Jesus beholding him loved him, and said: One thing thou lackest .. sell whatever thou hast, and give to the poor ... Come, take up thy cross, and follow Me. And he was sad, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."-- Mark10:21-22.

HOW MANY there are who know in their hearts what their duty is, but fail to do it because they are hiding some forbidden thing; they refuse to launch on the current sweeping past them, because they are secretly anchored to a sandbank; they go from one teacher to another, with an appearance of earnest inquiry after eternal life, which never comes to anything, because they are unwilling to renounce their secret idol.

In the case of this young man, it was the love of money. "He had great possessions." There is no harm in money It is one of God's gifts to men, but it is hard to own it without coming to look upon it as one's own, instead of realizing that we are stewards only. It was for this reason that our Lord proposed this supreme test. St. Francis of Assisi thought that these words applied universally, and founded the Order of the Franciscans, pledged to poverty. But it seems more in harmony with the spirit of the Gospel to believe that it was a special test put to this seeker after truth, to reveal him to himself.

The law of love is not negative only but positive. The most essential condition for each of us is to be willing, like another young man who was living at that time, "to count all things but loss, in order to win Christ and to be found in Him" (Phil3:8). If you would follow Christ and are prepared for Love's sake to surrender all, you will probably be entrusted with manifold more, because Christ knows that He can make you His almoner with no fear of gold dust adhering to your palm in its transmission.

Let us guard against the idol of money or possessions. Riches which open most doors, will not furnish a pass-key to Heaven. Let us see to it that we always act as stewards of God's property, but this is not possible unless we are living perpetually in fellowship with our Master, who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich, and who says to us also, "Come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

PRAYER - The dearest idol I have known, Whate'er that idol be, Help me to tear it from Thy throne, And worship only Thee. AMEN

PHILIPPIANS 3:9

CAPTIVES IN CHURCHES

Unbelievable, yet true; bizarre, yet it happened. A 16-year-old girl was kidnapped and held prisoner for 4 months. Where? In the attic of a church in Memphis, Tennessee.

Week after week that congregation gathered to worship, to sing, to pray, to enjoy Christian fellowship -- and for 4 months in that very same building there was a terrified human being needing to be rescued. Until she was discovered and released by two men on the church's maintenance staff, that girl was a helpless captive.

Imagine! A prisoner in church! But perhaps there are more people hidden away in church than we realize--people who have been taken captive by God's diabolical enemy (2 Tim. 2:26). Like the apostle Paul before his conversion, they may even think they are living for God while they are dead in sin. There may be people in our churches who have not experienced spiritual freedom through faith in Jesus Christ.

Evangelist Billy Sunday quipped that taking a horse into a garage doesn't turn it into an auto, nor does merely taking a sin-bound person into a church change him or her into a child of God. Only personal faith in Jesus does that.

Are you a captive, or have you been set free?--Vernon C. Grounds

Salvation is a gift of God.
Not something earned or won;
He freely gives eternal life
To all who trust His Son. --Sper
True freedom is found in captivity to Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 3:10

SALVATION IS FREE

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection (Philippians 3:10).

Salvation is knowing a Person. We are not saved by anything we do; we experience redemption only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By His perfect life and sacrificial death on the cross of Calvary, He provided it for us. No wonder the longing of the apostle Paul's heart was that he might "know Him."

The Youth's Living Ideals magazine related the following story: "An old Christian woman whose age began to tell on her had once known much of the Bible by heart. Eventually only one precious bit stayed with her, 'I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day' (2 Tim. 1:12). By and by part of that slipped its hold, and she would quietly repeat, 'That which I have committed unto him.' At last, as she hovered on the [borderline] between this world and heaven, her loved ones noticed her lips moving. They bent down to see if she needed anything. She was repeating over and over again to herself the one word of the text, 'Him, Him, Him.' She had lost the whole Bible but one word. But she had the whole Bible in that one word."

Though her memory had failed, that dying saint of God never lost the One she loved so well. Her salvation was based on a living relationship to Jesus Christ. He satisfied her heart's need even in death. The only way of salvation, is through knowing the Savior.
—R W De Haan

Knowing the Scriptures is one thing; knowing the Savior is another.

PHILIPPIANS 3:10

SPURGEON - MORNING AND EVENING

The doctrine of a risen Saviour is exceedingly precious. The resurrection is the corner-stone of the entire building of Christianity. It is the key-stone of the arch of our salvation. It would take a volume to set forth all the streams of living water which flow from this one sacred source, the resurrection of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; but to know that he has risen, and to have fellowship with him as such—communing with the risen Saviour by possessing a risen life—seeing him leave the tomb by leaving the tomb of worldliness ourselves, this is even still more precious. The doctrine is the basis of the experience, but as the flower is more lovely than the root, so is the experience of fellowship with the risen Saviour more lovely than the doctrine itself. I would have you believe that Christ rose from the dead so as to sing of it, and derive all the consolation which it is possible for you to extract from this well-ascertained and well-witnessed fact; but I beseech you, rest not contented even there. Though you cannot, like the disciples, see him visibly, yet I bid you aspire to see Christ Jesus by the eye of faith; and though, like Mary Magdalene, you may not "touch" him, yet may you be privileged to converse with him, and to know that he is risen, you yourselves being risen in him to newness of life. To know a crucified Saviour as having crucified all my sins, is a high degree of knowledge; but to know a risen Saviour as having justified me, and to realize that he has bestowed upon me new life, having given me to be a new creature through his own newness

of life, this is a noble style of experience: short of it, none ought to rest satisfied. May you both "know him, and the power of his resurrection." Why should souls who are quickened with Jesus, wear the grave-clothes of worldliness and unbelief? Rise, for the Lord is risen.

PHILIPPIANS 3:10

F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

"Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."-- Rom6:4.

THE KEYNOTE of this inspiring paragraph is life in union with the Risen Christ. Behind us lies the Death of our Lord, which severed for His people their fellowship with the world. As the voice of praise or blame cannot reach the dead, but are arrested at the fast-closed ears, so it is intended that the murmur of the world should not affect us, but that we should be set only on the Will of God.

It is not wise, however, to dwell always on the negations of the Christian life. It is true that they are always present, but to dwell on them is to miss the power by which self-sacrifice and self-denial become easy. Do not live on the dying but the risen side of the Saviour's work. Behold Him as He goes forth upon His upward way to the Throne of Glory. Seek to experience union with Him in the likeness of His resurrection (Phil3:10).

There ought to be a finality in our experience. It is good for us to recognize the break with our past life. It must be clearly defined; we must have done with it for ever. It is possible that we may be tempted, and come temporarily beneath the dominion of old sins; but in principle, like the Israelites, we have passed from Egypt, never to return to it, and the Red Sea of Christ's redemption severs us from our former condition. We do not reckon ourselves to be dead to sin in the sense that our nature is henceforth incapable of sinning. If we think thus, we shall soon be disillusioned, and find that tendencies and strivings are within us which prove the contrary. But we must reckon that we have died to sin, and whenever temptation comes, that it has no claim upon us. Nelson turned his blind eye to the signal to retreat from action, and we are to turn blind eyes and deaf ears to the tempter.

The Apostle says that we are to present our members as instruments of righteousness to God. Do not look at the tempter, but at Christ; yield the eyes, ears, heart, and mind to Him, that He may make the best possible use of them; and that which becomes the habitual practice of the outward life will inevitably affect the soul and spirit.

PRAYER

Constrained by Thy love, O Lord, we would here present ourselves, spirit, soul, and body, not to live unto ourselves, but unto Thee who didst die, and rise again. AMEN.

PHILIPPIANS 3:10

"THE HIGHEST GOAL"

"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." -- 2 Peter 3:18

What are you living for in your few fleeting years here on this earth? Anything other than fame, wealth, or influence?

When Thomas Naylor was teaching business management at Duke University, he asked his students to draft a personal strategic plan. He reports that "with few exceptions, what they wanted fell into three categories: money, power, and things -- very big things, including vacation homes, expensive foreign automobiles, yachts, and even airplanes." This was their request of the faculty: "Teach me how to be a money-making machine."

That's not exactly an exalted ambition! No thought of humanitarian service, and no thought of spiritual values! Yet, what those students wanted was what many people want -- maybe what MOST people want.

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What is our highest goal? Do we want to be a money-making machine, which can never buy lasting happiness? Or do we want to

become more like Jesus?-- Vernon C. Grounds

His Spirit fill my hungering soul,
His power all my life control;
My deepest prayer, my highest goal,
That I may be like Jesus.-- Chisholm

A wise person sets his earthly goals on heavenly gains.

PHILIPPIANS 3:10

New Wood

Read: Philippians 3:1-16

Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. --2 Corinthians 4:16

The poet Henry W. Longfellow was on in years and his hair was white, but he remained a vigorous man. When someone asked him the secret of his vitality, Longfellow pointed to an apple tree in bloom and said, "That tree is very old, but I never saw prettier blossoms on it than it now bears. That tree grows new wood each year. Like that apple tree, I try to grow a little new wood each year."

That is God's design for His children. Although the years take their toll on our bodies, our souls have the capacity for unending renewal. Through life's experiences, narrow attitudes can broaden into greater understanding if we let them.

The apostle Paul found his motivation for growing "new wood" in his relationship to Jesus Christ. He longed to know Him increasingly, not in theory but in reality (Phil. 3:8,10). This meant reading (2 Tim. 4:13), renewing his mind (Rom. 12:1-2), accepting life's trials as part of the good that God was continually working out in his life (Rom. 8:28), and holding to his confidence in Christ (2 Tim. 2:13).

Worn Bibles, prayer according to God's will, and trusting Him in all circumstances are characteristic of Christians who are growing "new wood." Is this true of us? --DJD

Dear Jesus, take my heart and hand,
And grant me this, I pray:
That I through Your sweet love may grow
More like You day by day. --Garrison

Continual growing in Christ comes from a deepening knowledge of Christ

PHILIPPIANS 3:12

'HURRY SICKNESS'

"Hurry Up!" "You're too slow!" "We're late!" How often do impatient words like these crop up in our speech, revealing our fast pace of life? If we're not careful, we become people living in the fast lane, demanding quick arrivals and instant results. Stress experts call this problem "hurry sickness."

In Philippians 3, the apostle Paul's testimony of lifelong growth reminds us that Christian maturity can be encouraged but not hurried. In his book "Overcomers Through The Cross," Paul Billheimer says that just as God takes time to make an oak tree, He takes time to make a saint. Christian growth is a process.

Billheimer writes, "An unripe apple is not fit to eat, but we should not therefore condemn it. It is not yet ready for eating because God is not done making it. It is a phase of its career and good in its place."

Are you feeling impatient over your spiritual growth? Remember, God is not finished with you -- nor does He expect to be until He calls you home. Only make sure that your goal is to know Christ and to become more like Him. Then slowly but surely, under blue

skies and stormy, He will bring you to maturity. It's His sure cure for "hurry sickness." -- Joanie E. Yoder

O God, make me one of those rarest souls
Who willingly wait for Thy time;
My impatient will must be lost in Thine own,
And Thy will forever be mine. -- Bowser

There are no shortcuts to spiritual maturity.

PHILIPPIANS 3:12, 14

KEEP PRESSING ON

Many years ago, a promising Greek artist named Timanthes was under the instruction of a well-known tutor. After several years, the young painter created an exquisite portrait. He was so thrilled with what he had painted that he sat day after day gazing at his work.

One morning, however, he was horrified to discover that his teacher had deliberately ruined his painting.

Angry and in tears, Timanthes ran to him and asked why he had destroyed his cherished possession. The wise man replied, "I did it for your own good. That painting was retarding your progress. It was an excellent piece of art, but it was not perfect. Start again and see if you can do even better." The student took his advice and produced a masterpiece called "Sacrifice of Iphigenia," regarded by some as one of the finest paintings of antiquity.

God never wants us to be content with our accomplishments. He wants us to reach even higher plateaus of service and Christlikeness. Paul recognized this, for even though he was a godly man and accomplished much, he admitted that he still needed to advance in holiness (Phil. 3:12-14).

Child of God, don't be satisfied with your spiritual attainments. With His help, keep pressing on! -- Henry G. Bosch

When you've reached a plateau,

And your strength's almost gone,

But the Lord still says, "Go,"

That's the time to press on.

If you think you've arrived, think again.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

I am a twice-a-week golfer at most, so I don't play enough to perfect my swing or to master all the shots. In every round, I make mistakes. A drive goes astray. An iron shot splashes beautifully into the creek. Or a putt breaks left when I was sure it would break right.

For this reason, I like these words from *The Tumult and the Shouting* by Grantland Rice: "Because golf expresses the flaws of the human swing—a basically simple maneuver—it causes more self-torture than any game short of Russian roulette. The quicker the average golfer can forget the shot he has dubbed or knocked off line—and concentrate on the next shot—the sooner he begins to improve and enjoy golf. Little good comes from brooding about the mistakes we've made." Rice then commented, "The next shot, in golf or in life, is the big one."

In Philippians 3, the apostle Paul gave essentially the same advice. He said that the key to forward movement in the Christian life is to set our eyes on the goal and keep looking ahead. When we look back to our past sins or shortcomings, we open the door to discouragement.

When past sin gets us down, when we find ourselves brooding about it, or when we get discouraged because of some failure, we can confess it to God, claim His forgiveness, and put it behind us for good. In the Christian life, as in golf, the next shot is the big one. —D C Egner

We must never let defeat rob us of success.

Philippians 3:7-14

The Pudding Guy- The airline industry referred to David Phillips as the "Pudding Guy." That's because he had made the most of an airline promotion that offered frequent-flyer miles for purchasing certain brand-name products. He quickly spent \$3,000 to buy 12,150 cups of pudding and, in the process, earned 1.25 million miles. For a time, it seemed as if his whole life revolved around getting frequent-flyer miles.

As people observe our lives, what do they see as being the most important thing in life to us? First-century friends of the apostle Paul had no trouble identifying the passion of his life. His walk matched his stated goal: "One thing I do, ... I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

Even if "frequent-sailor miles" had existed in Paul's day, I doubt that he would have given them much thought on his missionary journeys to Asia. Christ alone was at the top of his priority list. Everything else was secondary, "that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

Paul's example of single-minded devotion to Christ calls us to examine our own purpose and priorities in living. What is most important to us? For what are we spending our lives?

What place will we give Jesus in our hearts today? — David C. McCasland

Searching to know life's true meaning?
You'll find it in only one way:
Serving the Lord with commitment
And living for Him day by day. —Branon

**Jesus gave His all to save us—
are we giving our all to serve Him?**

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk

STAND AT THE BOW!

"Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal."—Phil 3:13-14 (R.V.).

ALWAYS STAND at the bow! Leave the stern with its backward look and make for the bow. To spend time in sad review of past sins and failures is not to put them to the best account. Confess them, and believe that for Christ's dear sake they are absolutely forgiven! Failure often provides the Matterial for success, and our dead selves may become the stepping-stones to better things. Did not our Lord say to His disciples: "Sleep on now and take your rest"—the past is irreparable, but immediately added: "Arise, let us be going!"--the future is available. Therefore, leave the stern with its backward look, and make for the bow.

True, the sky before us may be dark with storm-clouds. The weather-prophets say that the world is shedding its old sanctions without replacing them with better ones; that seven civilizations have already passed, and we are to see the death of the eighth. Be it so, but they forget that God holds the stormy waters in the hollow of His hand; that Jesus walked the threatening billows to succour His friends. They forget that when the earth was without form and void, the Spirit of God brooded in the chaos and darkness, creating the heavens and earth. They cannot detect the voice of the Creator saying, "Behold, I make all things new!" Out of chaos is born the cosmos. Each age ends in travail, out of which a new age is born.

Look out to the vast circle of the horizon, and prepare for the new lands to be explored, the wonderful discoveries that await us, the great missions hidden in the future which are waiting to be fulfilled. Never doubt that the clouds will break. Never dream that wrong will triumph. Never count yourself God-forsaken or forgotten. The Master may seem to be asleep on His pillow, oblivious and uncaring, but His hand is on the helm. He guides your course. He rules the waves and they obey Him.

PRAYER - He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; So He bringeth them in the haven of their desire. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness! AMEN.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

Looking Ahead

READ: Philippians 3:7-14

Forgetting those things which are behind ... , I press toward the goal. —PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

The month of January is named after Janus, the Roman god of beginnings. He was symbolized as a man with two faces, one looking back and the other looking ahead.

Some people have trouble looking ahead with hope because they keep looking back and moping over the mistakes of the past. Their outlook for the future is dimmed, and their enthusiasm is dampened. But there is no use "crying over spilled milk." History is likely to repeat itself if they keep on brooding over failures of the old year, or continue complaining about the injustices they suffered during the last 12 months. Nothing is gained by continually grieving over the past.

On this day early in the new year, begin by confessing your sins to the Lord and accepting the gracious forgiveness He offers (1 John 1:9-10). Make right what needs correcting, and then, "forgetting those things which are behind," press onward with confidence and trust in your heavenly Father (Philippians 3:13-14). That was Paul's secret, and it worked.

Let's stop looking back and brooding over past failures. Rather, with a forward look, let's move ahead with hope and joy. —Richard De Haan

THINKING IT OVER

What mistakes of the past are still burdening you?

Have you confessed them to God and accepted His complete forgiveness? (1 John 1:9). When you do, your future will hold great promise.

Instead of living in the shadows of yesterday, walk in the light of today and the hope of tomorrow.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13, 14

PRESSING TOWARD THE PRIZE

Determination and tenacity are requirements for success in almost any worthwhile endeavor. Note how a hungry cheetah displays such single-mindedness when he chooses one specific animal in a herd of deer or antelope and goes after it. Ignoring others less desirable, which might easily be caught, the swift predator has been clocked at nearly seventy miles per hour in his hot and unrelenting pursuit of his intended prey. Think of the many scientists who, in spite of discouraging setbacks and negative attitudes on the part of their fellow workers, have persisted year after year in carrying on research in order to find a vaccine for some specific disease. Such tenacity of purpose is highly commendable. What boy has not thrilled to the popular tale of the western rancher who, having set his mind upon capturing a certain wild stallion, did not give up until he had corralled and trained the creature? To attain success, both determination and perseverance are necessary!

In like manner, to live a victorious spiritual life, a steadfast resolve and a constancy of purpose are needed. The apostle Paul declared that a desire to experience the fullness of Christ's resurrection power so gripped him that it became the controlling factor in his life. His words "I press toward the mark" describe a runner racing hard with his head forward, body bent and angled, and eyes on nothing but the final tape. Such was Paul's zealous attitude in reaching out toward the spiritual goals of service and blessing. If we would show the same oneness of purpose, we would likewise be filled with joy, experience victory over sin, and possess a deeper sense of God's constant presence.

Let us press toward "the prize of the high calling of God"!

I'm pressing on the upward way,

New heights I'm gaining ev'ry day;

Still praying as I onward bound,

"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground." —J. Oatman, Jr.

Sanctification is much like riding a bicycle — either you keep moving forward, or you fall down.

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

Keep The Prize In Mind

Read: Philippians 3:7-14

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. —Philippians 3:14

My son Steve wanted to get in shape for the upcoming cross-country season, and I wanted to keep from accumulating middle-age

flab. So we started running each evening.

As we would begin our excursions, we were full of energy. But as we made our way through the designated route, we grew a bit weary. I decided we needed an incentive to keep us going. So each night, I thought of some kind of prize at the end—something to keep our minds off our bodies and on a reward.

One night it was pizza. Whenever Steve wanted to stop, I'd say, "Pizza!" And that kept us going. Another night, I thought of our plans to watch football on TV. So the key word was football. Each night a new prize spurred us on.

The believer can also grow weary in living for Christ. We can wonder why we keep going—why we keep pushing ourselves. Paul used an incentive for motivation a long time before I did. He said, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

When life's race gets you down, remember, the greatest incentive you as a Christian have is awaiting you at the finish line—seeing Christ face-to-face and sharing in His eternal glory! Keep that prize in mind, and you'll keep going. —J D Branon

For every follower of Christ

There is a race to run;

And when we cross the finish line,

We'll be with Christ, God's Son. —Fitzhugh

In the race of life, it's always too soon to quit.

PHILIPPIANS 3:14,17

Past, Present, & Future

READ: Philippians 3:15-21

I press toward the goal... Brethren, join in following my example. —Phil 3:14,17

In his painting "An Allegory of Prudence," 16th-century Venetian artist Titian portrayed Prudence as a man with three heads. One head was of a youth facing the future, another was of a mature man eyeing the present, and the third was of a wise old man gazing at the past. Over their heads Titian wrote a Latin phrase that means, "From the example of the past, the man of the present acts prudently so as not to imperil the future."

We need that kind of wisdom to overcome the anxiety created by our past failures and the fear of repeating them in the future—an anxiety that keeps us from living to the fullest now.

Paul was able to "forget" his past and anticipate his future (Philippians 3:13-14). This doesn't mean his memory was erased; it means that Paul was free of any guilt or pride he may have felt from his past actions, because God had forgiven him. This attitude enabled him to live in the present and "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (v.14). So he had one driving passion—to know Christ better.

As we close the chapter of 2004, let's rededicate ourselves to Christ. Jesus will enable us to live fully in the present as we gain wisdom from the past and face the future with courage. —Dennis J. De Haan

Standing at the portal

Of the opening year,

Words of comfort meet us,

Hushing every fear. —Havergal

Lord, I'm standing at the door

Of this new untarnished year;

Help me to live it all for Thee,

Use me in Thy service here.- McAllaster

Never let a bleak past overshadow a bright future.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

HEAVENLY PEOPLE

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above (Colossians 3:1).

Christians are a "heavenly" people. That's what Paul meant when he told the Ephesians that God has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). We live on earth, but "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). We should therefore "seek those things which are above," and store up treasures in heaven.

We see a graphic difference between an earthly minded person and a heavenly minded person when we look at two Middle Eastern tombs. The first is the burial place of King Tut in Egypt. Inside, precious metal and blue porcelain cover the walls. The mummy of the king is en-closed in a beautifully inscribed, gold-covered sarcophagus. Although King Tut apparently believed in an afterlife, he thought of it in terms of this world's possessions, which he wanted to take with him.

The other tomb, in Palestine, is a simple rock-hewn cave believed by many to be Jesus' burial site. Inside, there is no gold, no earthly treasure, and no body. Jesus had no reason to store up this world's treasures. His goal was to fulfill all righteousness by doing His Father's will. His was a spiritual kingdom of truth and love.

The treasures we store up on earth will all stay behind when this life ends. But the treasures we store up in heaven we'll have for eternity. When we seek to be Christlike in thought, word, and deed, we will live like "heavenly" people. —P.R.V.

Wise are those who gear their goals to heavenly gains.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

One of the terms used often during the 1992 Summer Olympics by television sports commentators was dual citizenship.

One athlete with dual citizenship was a swimmer named Martin Zubero. He was born in the United States, where he has lived nearly all of his life. He attended the University of Florida and trained for competition in the U.S. However, he was swimming under the colors of Spain. Why? His father is a citizen of Spain and so Martin is too. At the Olympics, he chose to represent his father's nation, to which he felt greater allegiance.

Christians too have dual citizenship. We are citizens of this world, no matter what nation we live in, and as followers of Christ we are also citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20). We have all the rights and privileges that accompany being a child of God. He is not only our heavenly Father but our King, and our first loyalty must be to His kingdom. —D. C. Egner

WE LIVE IN THIS WORLD, BUT OUR ALLEGIANCE IS TO HEAVEN.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

As believers in the Lord Jesus, we are citizens of heaven. Here on earth we are only pilgrims journeying toward our eternal home. Yet all too often we act as if this world is our permanent residence.

Many years ago, a man visited his longtime friend, a British military officer stationed in an African jungle. One day when the friend entered the officer's hut, he was startled to see him dressed in formal attire and seated at a table beautifully set with silverware and fine china. The visitor, thinking his friend might have lost his mind, asked why he was all dressed up and seated at a table so sumptuously arrayed out in the middle of nowhere. The officer explained, "Once a week I follow this routine to remind myself of who I am—a British citizen. I want to maintain the customs of my real home and live according to the codes of British conduct, no matter how those around me live. I want to avoid substituting a foreign culture for that of my homeland."

Christians should have a similar concern. Our true citizenship is in heaven, so we must beware of substituting the foreign culture of this world for that of our real homeland (see Ro 12:2). We are not to take on its sinful ways or adopt its values. We need to live in such a way that others will see that we are different.

And we need to remember that we are strangers in this world and citizens of heaven. —R W De Haan

The Christian who lives above the world draws closer to heaven.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

The great preacher F. B. Meyer once asked D. L. Moody, "What is the secret of your success?" Moody replied, "For many years I

have never given an address without the consciousness that the Lord may come before I have finished." This may well explain the intensity of his service and the zeal of his ministry for Christ.

One of the most encouraging teachings in the Bible is that of the Lord's return to earth. Three times Revelation 22 repeats this promise. As God was about to close the pages of divine revelation, He called attention to this grand theme, announcing in the words of Christ Himself, "Surely I am coming quickly." The last words of our Lord before leaving this earth twenty centuries ago remind us that He is coming back for us. With such a forceful assurance closing the canon of Scripture, we can have this hope continually in our hearts. The expectation of seeing our Savior, being like Him, and being with Him for eternity should prompt us, as it did Moody, to serve the Lord.

In this sinful world it's easy to lose our upward look. Yet we must keep the hope of Christ's return burning in our hearts. The apostle Paul talked about this when he said, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

The hope of His last words, "Surely I am coming quickly," should motivate us all to lives of sacrificial service. —P. R. Van Gorder

The hope of glorification keeps before us the need of purification.

PHILIPPIANS 3:21

"Frozen Heads"

A newspaper article told about a California mathematician with a life-threatening brain tumor who wants to have his head quick-frozen while he is still alive. The process is known as cryonic suspension. The man believes that scientists will discover a way to cure his tumor and attach his head to a healthy body. He is quoted as saying, "Everyone should be immortal. I am dying and want to continue to live."

We can't fault that man for wanting to live forever in a healthy body. But we seriously question his method of fulfilling his desire. First, he has no assurance that this expensive procedure will work. Second, even if it did, its benefits would be only temporary. His new body and old head would die eventually.

There is a way, however, to secure all the benefits that he desires. It is to receive Jesus as his Savior. When Christ returns to this earth, everyone who has trusted in Him will get a new body that will last forever and will never be subjected to disease or death. According to the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21).

With a new, glorified body guaranteed to those in Christ, who would want a "frozen head"? -- Richard W. De Haan

He is coming! I shall know Him,

Jesus, my beloved Lord!

Changed forever to His likeness -

Oh, what joy this will afford! - Dimmock

Because Christ arose with a new body, we are guaranteed a new body.

PHILIPPIANS 3:21

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

The working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself. (r.v.) Php 3:21

What cannot He do? From the dust of mother Earth He was able to build up man in the image of God, in the first creation; and from the dust to which death shall again reduce us He will build up again our bodies in the likeness of his resurrection body. The formless clay shall be obliged to yield to his voice, his touch; and if He can do this, what can He not do?

There may be sins within your heart that have long resisted control. Do with them as you will, they still defy you. So long have they been entrenched within the citadel of your soul that, like the Jebusites in the days of David, they laugh you to scorn. But if you will hand over the conflict to Jesus, He will subdue them; He will bring them under his strong, subjecting hand. Be of good cheer. What you cannot do, He can. Whenever the old temptation arises, directly you are aware of it, lift your heart instantly to Jesus, and reckon on Him to cope with it in your behalf. The Lord will fight for you, whilst you shall hold your peace.

So with other difficulties in your life. The raising of a noble nature and character within you; the calling of souls, by your voice, from

the death of sin to a life of righteousness; the bringing forth of a fair and well-ordered work from one which seems mere chaos and ruin—all such things are within the scope of this wonderful text. They must be easy to Him who from the dust of death can raise a body ethereal enough to be the home and vehicle of the new celestial life, which shall unfold into perfect beauty in his presence. Repeat the words until the rhythm charms away your doubts, “He is able to subject all things unto Himself.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:21

FAITH'S CHECKBOOK - SPURGEON

This Body Fashioned Anew

OFTEN when we are racked with pain and unable to think or worship, we feel that this indeed is “the body of our humiliation.” And when we are tempted by the passions which rise from the flesh, we do not think the word “vile” at all too vigorous a translation. Our bodies humble us, and that is about the best thing they do for us. Oh, that we were duly lowly, because our bodies ally us with animals, and even link us with the dust!

But our Savior, the Lord Jesus, shall change all this. We shall be fashioned like His own body of glory. This will take place in all who believe in Jesus. By faith their souls have been transformed, and their bodies will undergo such a renewal as shall fit them for their regenerated spirits. How soon this grand transformation will happen we cannot tell, but the thought of it should help us to bear the trials of today and all the woes of the flesh. In a little while we shall be as Jesus now is—no more aching brows, no more swollen limbs, no more dim eyes, no more fainting hearts. The old man shall be no more a bundle of infirmities, nor the sick man a mass of agony. “Like unto his glorious body.” What an expression! Even our flesh shall rest in hope of such a resurrection!