

I Press toward the Prize: Philippians 3:12–4:1 (Philippians Series)

Grace Chapel

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INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

(1:3–8) Thanks to God for the good work begun at Philippi (financial partnership)

(1:9–11) Prayer for the Philippians' love to abound still more in discernment so that they would approve the things that really matter (thru Christ enabling)—that they might be rewarded

(1:12–18) What really mattered about Paul's imprisonment is that it furthered the gospel, because: Roman officials know that he is innocent, but is imprisoned for the gospel & many brethren now boldly proclaim gospel w/ proper motivation w/o fear (even tho some brethren preach it from envy & strife (hoping to afflict Paul), but Paul rejoices when the true gospel is proclaimed (something that matters))

(1:19–26) What really matters in Paul's life is that he magnify Christ in his body (thru life or thru death),

(1:27–30) What really matters in dealing w/ the Philippians' adversaries is that they stand fast in one spirit (striving together for the gospel faith) & that they not be terrified by them.

(2:1–11) Something that really matters in dealing with other believers is that believers be like-minded, by regarding others above self and that they have the same (gracious) mindset for others as Christ who willingly emptied Himself by taking a servant's form & appeared as man, He humbled Himself & obediently died on a cross, and thus the Father gave Him the supreme name for all creation to bow before Him and to confess Him as Lord

(2:12–16) [In light of Christ obediently humbling Himself] something that really matters is that the Philippians produce their own deliverance (fearing shame at the Bema), because God works in them to accomplish His purposes that they might be His blameless and harmless children who shine as lights in this perverse world by holding onto the life-giving word that Paul (and the Philippians) may rejoice without shame at the Bema

(2:17–24) Paul rejoices with the Philippians at their sacrificial service in faith, altho his life is being poured out as a libation offering in prison & they should join him in rejoicing & plans to come to Philippi shortly after he sends his proven apprentice, Timothy, so that this likeminded one might encourage Paul with a Philippi update

(2:25–27) [Tho Timothy/Paul would come soon] Epaphroditus should return to Philippi, because he knew that the Philippians worried because he almost died, but God healed him

(2:28–30) [In light of Paul rejoicing w/ sorrow] Paul eagerly returned Epaphroditus to increase the Philippians' joy & decrease Paul's sorrow, so they should rejoice & welcome a man such as Epaphroditus, because he risked his life to minister to Paul on behalf of the Philippians

(3:1–2) [In light of Christ, Paul, Timothy & Epaphroditus approving what really matters] Paul again tells the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord & to beware of those distracted by an unnecessary focus on human accomplishments, which Paul counted them as loss (things that do not really matter), so that he would have [experiential] righteousness through faith, that he might know Christ, His resurrection power (in life), participate w/ Christ in suffering, & conform to Christ's death in order that Paul's life might attain the standard of Christ's resurrection

NEW EXPOSITION

The Confusion of the Commentaries

Chapter 3 only makes sense, if everlasting life is guaranteed, but rewards are not guaranteed.

Chapter 3 only makes sense, if everlasting life is a gift, but rewards are earned.

Chapter 3 only makes sense, if everlasting life are differentiated from rewards.

Gerald Hawthorne, *Philippians* (Word Biblical Commentary), 43:149, 168, is typical:

Paul's Greek at this point [4:12ff.] is difficult. Hence, it is not possible to see precisely how it relates to what has gone before. True, the new section does begin with a conjunction—*hoti* [*that*], but the ambiguous nature of this conjunction (= "that" or "because") does not permit one to speak with any assurance. . . . One can only hope, therefore, to make an intelligent guess as to how vv 12–16 fit with vv 4–11. [Hawthorne]

This section [3:20–21] seems not to fit easily with the context in which it is placed. [Hawthorne]

Fortunately, Hawthorne and his fellow commentators are wrong. Paul's argument makes sense in context. We need to pay attention to the contextual flow of biblical books.

The Parallelism between 3:12 and 3:13–14

3:12	Not that:		<u>I have</u> already <u>taken</u> or I have already been [fully] matured but <u>I press on</u> if <u>I also may take hold</u> of that for which <u>I also have been taken hold</u> of by Christ Jesus
3:13 Brethren, but one thing, disregarding the things behind, 3:14	I do not regard myself		<u>to have taken hold</u> , reaching forward to the things before <u>I press on</u> toward the goal for the prize of God's upward calling in Christ Jesus,

Not that // I do not regard myself

I press on // I press on

Taking hold // being [fully] matured // reaching forward to the things before // the prize

(3:12) [Although Paul counted all things loss & sought to fellowship with Christ in sufferings] Paul pursues the not-yet finished-course had set before him by Christ nor had he yet fully matured

Not that Paul does not want the Philippians to misunderstand him in 3:1–11

Lay hold of = *katalambanō*

Paul was a mature believer; yet he affirms that Christ continues to mature him

This is how *mature* (trans. *perfect* in NKJV) verse 12 reconciles with *mature* verse 15

(3:13–14) In pursuing the not-yet finished-course set before him, Paul past accomplishments to distract him from aiming at the prize: full reward

Prize = *brabeion* This is a rewards context

(3:15) [In light of Paul's example] all who are mature should allow nothing to distract us from a focus on the prize: full reward, but God will [in time] clarify any issues where they may understand things a bit differently than Paul does

(3:16) [Whether or not God clarifies any issues] the Philippians and Paul are both to single-mindedly function as team-players aiming at the prize: full reward

(3:17) Bels ought to join those who follow Paul's example [of following Christ] & note others who do so

(3:18) The reason for noting those who follow Paul's example is that many believers have defected and now oppose the gospel message

(3:19) Earth-focused self-serving bels (who join legalists of 3:2) face ultimate discipline

(3:20–21) The reason that earth-focused self-serving (legalistic) believers face God's ultimate discipline is because believers have a heavenly citizenship and await the rapture, when our Savior will transform us (*before* subduing all things to Himself)

(4:1) Paul urges believers (for whom he will answer at the Bema) to stand fast in the Lord

CONCLUSION