

GOD'S PLAN & YOU (Pt 4 of 9): "PERSEVERE AND PATTERN"

THESIS: Persevere And Pattern

TEXT: Philippians 3:4—4:1

OPEN: Is there something about yourself that you would like to forget? In **Philippians 3:4—4:1** let's discover God's plan for how you may forget the past and forge ahead in power living towards the heavenly goal.

1. PERSEVERE IN CHRIST FOR THE HEAVENLY PRIZE.

A. **Php 3:10-11** "I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

1. **Illustration:** (*breitbart.com* "Philippine Christians Nailed To Cross Commemorating Good Friday")

Philippines: Christians Nailed to Cross in Good Friday Observances
By Frances Martel (*breitbart.com* 03/30/18)

Thousands of people congregate in the town of San Pedro Cutud, Philippines, March 30th to witness volunteers being crucified. It's an annual reenactment of the crucifixion of Christ in a town north of Manila. Christians in the Philippines also observe Good Friday with floggings and processions. Individuals volunteer to be crucified as a means of experiencing the pain they believe Jesus suffered for the salvation of humanity. This year at least 8 men and 1 woman were nailed to crosses for a short period of time by men dressed as Roman soldiers. The most experienced among the re-enactors is 58-year old Ruben Enaje. He's experienced 32 crucifixions. Town mayor Edwin Santiago says an estimated 50,000 people watched the event this year. The Philippine Catholic Church frowns upon the ritual. The Archdiocese of Manila says the "church never encourages self-flagellation, much less crucifixion."

2. **Acts 20:23-24** "I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."

a. **Illustrn:** *breitbart.com* "North Korean Christians Live In Fear Their Children Will Expose Them"

3. **Romans 12:1-2** "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

a. **Living sacrifice** (Greek: *thusia*) denotes the act of offering, a constant dedication.

1. **Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

b. **Quote from W.E. Vine:** "(Offering our bodies to God as instruments of right living) is to be intelligent (involving heart, mind, and will) in contrast to those offered by ritual and compulsion."

B. **Philippians 3:12-14** "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

1. **Press on** (Greek: *dioko*) means to eagerly pursue or seek.

a. Forget what is behind—what is behind for the Apostle Paul?

1. **2 Corinthians 5:15** “And Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.”
2. **Philippians 3:4b-7** “If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.”
 - a. **Historical:** Prior to becoming a Christian and an apostle of Christ, Paul was known as a man of great learning (*Acts 26:24*) and being the epitome of a ritualistic “religious” man.
3. **Philippians 3:8-9** “What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”
 - a. **Insight from William Arthur Ward:** (Forget yourself into greatness)
 Forget Yourself Into Greatness
 By William Arthur Ward (John Maxwell, *Be A People Person*, p.62-63)

If you are wise, you will forget yourself into greatness. Forget your rights but remember your responsibilities. Forget your inconveniences but remember your blessings. Forget your accomplishments but remember your debt to others. Forget your privileges but remember your obligations. A person must forget himself to be long remembered. He must empty himself in order to discover a fuller self. Forget yourself into greatness. Lose yourself into immortality.

- b. Strain toward what is ahead—what is ahead for the Apostle Paul?
 1. **1 Timothy 6:11-12** “Flee from all (foolish and harmful desires), and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”
 - a. **Historical:** Ancient Olympics included foot races and boxing competitions. The prize was a perishable wreath of leaves. The stadium was an oblong area. The starting place of a race was at the entrance and the opposite end was the goal (finish line), where the judge sat holding in his hand the prize. The eyes of the runners were fixed on him.
2. **PATTERN TO CHRIST FOR THE HEAVENLY PRIZE.**
- A. **Philippians 3:16-21** “Let us live up to what we have already attained. Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say 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 their shame. Their mind is 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.”
 1. Take note and follow the example of those who pattern to Christ (3:16-17).
 - a. **1 Corinthians 16:15-16** “You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it.”
 - b. **1 Timothy 4:12** “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”
 - c. **Hebrews 13:7** “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”

1. **Insight from John Maxwell:** “What kind of attitude do you have when it comes to learning from others? Most people fall into one of these categories:
 - a. No one can teach me anything—the arrogant attitude
 - b. Someone can teach me everything—the naïve attitude
 - c. Everyone can teach me something (good or bad)—the teachable attitude.
 Here’s how to learn from others:
 1. Make learning your passion
 2. Value people & develop relationships with growth potential
 3. Identify people’s uniqueness and strengths
 4. Ask questions. Change should be the goal of learning. You cannot have growth without change (*Winning With People*, p. 81-82).
2. Set your mind on heavenly things—the heavenly prize which includes an immortal body (3:20-21).
 - a. **Colossians 3:1-4** “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”
 1. **Glory** (*doxa*) means splendor, brilliance, or honor.
 - a. When Jesus returns everyone (dead or alive) will see us in the display of resurrection glory. No more trouble or ridicule for the Church—we shall be called to the honorable position with Christ. Our physical appearance will be one of brilliant splendor.
 - b. **2 Corinthians 4:16—5:5** “We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”
 1. “What is to come” is eternal glory (2 Cor 4:17), eternal house & heavenly dwelling (2 Cor 5:1-2) which refers to the Christ-like glorious resurrected body (Php 3:21).

CONCLUSION: Forget what is behind and press on toward what is ahead—the heavenly prize.

Illustration: (*Our Daily Bread—“The Life That Matters”*)

Our Daily Bread: “*The Life That Matters*”

By David Roper (08/09/10)

A little known pastor named Isaac Hann served a small church in Loughwood, England, in the mid-18th century. At the close of his ministry, the membership of the church numbered 26 women and 7 men. And only 4 of the men attended with any regularity. In this age of mass media and mega-churches, who would consider this a successful work? In our world today, Isaac Hann would be considered one of those pastors who never quite “made it.” He certainly wouldn’t have been invited to speak at pastors’ conferences, nor would he have written articles on church growth. Yet, when he died at 88 his parishioners placed a plaque on the wall of their meeting house that remains to this day. It reads in part: Few ministers so humble were, yet few so much admired: Ripened for heaven by grace divine, like autumn fruit he fell; Reader think not to live so long, but seek to live as well. First Peter 5:5-6 comes to mind: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble

yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” Pastor Isaac Hann “made it big” in a way that matters—humility before God and a reward in heaven. We can too.

True greatness does not come to those
Who strive for worldly fame,
It lies instead with those who choose
To serve in Jesus’ name. —D. De Haan

Humility is the recipe for success.

Philippians 4:1 “Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.”

CLOSE: Persevere in Christ and pattern to Christ for the heavenly reward—it’s God’s plan for you.