

True Joy - The Wisdom of Philippians
Rejoice in the Lord - Looking Forward (Phil 3:12-16)
6-13-10
Scripture Reading - Phil 3:12-16

Introduction - It's easy to spend your whole life looking backward.

There's nothing wrong with looking backward.

- It's a blessing to remember good times gone by.
 - That's why I love pictures.
 - Pictures can bring back a flood of memories.
 - Yearbook with Mike.
- It's also good to learn from past mistakes.

But looking backward can quickly become unhealthy.

- Get stuck in the glory days of the past.

Glory Days by Bruce Springsteen

I had a friend was a big baseball player
back in high school
He could throw that speedball by you
Make you look like a fool boy
Saw him the other night at this roadside bar
I was walking in, he was walking out
We went back inside sat down had a few drinks
but all he kept talking about was

Chorus:

Glory days well they'll pass you by
Glory days in the wink of a young girl's eye
Glory days, glory days

Well there's a girl that lives up the block
back in school she could turn all the boy's heads
Sometimes on a Friday I'll stop by
and have a few drinks after she put her kids to bed
Her and her husband Bobby well they split up
I guess it's two years gone by now

We just sit around talking about the old times,
she says when she feels like crying
she starts laughing thinking about

Chorus

Now I think I'm going down to the well tonight
and I'm going to drink till I get my fill
And I hope when I get old I don't sit around thinking about it
but I probably will
Yeah, just sitting back trying to recapture
a little of the glory of, well time slips away
and leaves you with nothing mister but
boring stories of glory days

- Be haunted by past regrets.

Cat's in the Cradle - Harry Chapin

My child arrived just the other day
He came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it, and as he grew
He'd say "I'm gonna be like you dad
You know I'm gonna be like you"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon
When you comin' home dad?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

My son turned ten just the other day
He said, "Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on let's play
Can you teach me to throw", I said "Not today
I got a lot to do", he said, "That's ok"
And he walked away but his smile never dimmed
And said, "I'm gonna be like him, yeah
You know I'm gonna be like him"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon

Little boy blue and the man on the moon
When you comin' home son?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

Well, he came home from college just the other day
So much like a man I just had to say
"Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for a while?"
He shook his head and said with a smile
"What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys
See you later, can I have them please?"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon
When you comin' home son?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

I've long since retired, my son's moved away
I called him up just the other day
I said, "I'd like to see you if you don't mind"
He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I can find the time
You see my new job's a hassle and kids have the flu
But it's sure nice talking to you, Dad
It's been sure nice talking to you"

And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me
He'd grown up just like me
My boy was just like me

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon
When you comin' home son?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

- Had Jesus not gotten a hold of me, I'm certain I would have been BOTH of these guys.

But, even as Christians we're susceptible to looking backward in an unhealthy way.

- For some this means longing for Egypt
 - o Israelites
 - o Philippians
 - o I'm tempted by this
- For others this means dwelling on past sins

Paul could have looked backward.

- Former life
- Past sins

But he chose to look forward instead, and so should we.

- One of the best things about being a follower of Christ is our future!
 - o The best is always yet to come!!!
 - No matter how good your life on earth might be, your life in Heaven will be infinitely better.
 - No matter how bad your life on earth may be, you have the rest of eternity to look forward to in Heaven.

Body - We should rejoice in the Lord for all we have to *look forward to*, namely eternity in Heaven with Him.

Paul makes three main points in this section, all of which are mentioned in verse 12.

- 1) There's much to look forward to in Christ.
- 2) We should press on to obtain it.
- 3) Christ is our motivation for looking forward and pressing on.

1) There's much to look forward to in Christ.

a. This is alluded to throughout the passage. Listen for it.

i. Philippians 3:12-16 (ESV)

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

*¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and *straining forward to what lies ahead,**

¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ *Only let us hold true to what we have attained.*

- b. What is the “much” we have to look forward to in Christ? *All the blessings in Christ that will one day be fully realized in Heaven.* I think that is what Paul is referring to when he talks about being made perfect in verse 12 and the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus in verse 14.
 - i. Philippians 3:12 (ESV)

¹² *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.*
 - ii. What is “this”? The blessings mentioned in the previous section, namely knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection.
 - 1. Philippians 3:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,*
¹¹ *that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*
 - iii. Though we can *begin to know* Christ and the power of His resurrection now in this lifetime, we will not *fully know* either until we are made perfect at His second coming.
 - 1. Paul knew both Christ and the power of His resurrection.
 - 2. But he longed to know them fully.
 - a. Philippians 1:23 (ESV)

²³ *I am hard pressed between the*

two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

- b. 1 Corinthians 13:12 (ESV)
¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.
- c. Philippians 3:20-21 (ESV)
²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

- iv. The *already / not yet* nature of the Kingdom of God gives us so much to look forward to! God gives us the chance to taste all these good things now so that we can *look forward* to enjoying them fully for eternity.
- v. The *already / not yet* nature of the Kingdom of God also gives us the *confidence and assurance* we need to run the difficult race of the Christian life with boldness, and not look back.
 - 1. At the end of this section on running, and straining, and seeking to obtain the prize which is not yet in hand, Paul says this...
 - a. Philippians 3:16 (ESV)
¹⁶ Only let us hold true *to what we have attained*.
 - 2. One off the things that separates Christianity from all other world religions is that we are running, and straining, and seeking to obtain an eternal prize *that has already been attained for us*. Jesus Christ

already won the race for us 2,000 years ago on the cross! We see this same sort of language in Eph 2...

a. **Ephesians 2:4-7 (NIV)**

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ *And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,* ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

3. Knowing that Christ has already won the race for us and secured our heavenly prize, frees us to press on to obtain it *with confidence* knowing that all is not lost when we stumble.
 - a. I'm so glad my salvation is not dependent on my performance.
 - i. My experience with running .
 1. If I had to come in under 24 minutes every day, no matter what, I think I would quit. I certainly wouldn't look forward to it.
 2. If I had to come in under 15 I wouldn't even start.
 - ii. But because of Christ's victory on the cross, we can not only start the race but ENJOY IT, knowing that victory is ours!

2) We should press on to obtain it.

a. **Philippians 3:12 (ESV)**

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, *but I press on to make it my own*, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

b. How do we do this? Paul tells us in verses 13.

i. Philippians 3:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. *But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,*
¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

c. Paul puts it his way in Col 3

i. Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)

¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

d. Our minds are the key to winning the battle against sin and making progress in the Christian faith. We need to be constantly forgetting the earthly things that lie behind and setting our minds on the heavenly things that lie ahead.

e. That's why Paul goes on to say to the Philippians...

i. Philippians 3:17-21 (ESV)

¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly,

and they glory in their shame, *with minds set on earthly things*.²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

ii. Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

f. If our minds are set on earthly things we can't move forward in Christ. We must make a conscious daily effort to set our minds on the things above, namely Christ Himself!

g. None of us, including Paul, would have any motivation to do any of this if it weren't for Christ.

i. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (ESV)

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

3) Christ is our motivation for looking forward and pressing on.

a. Philippians 3:12 (ESV)

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, *because Christ Jesus has made me his own.*

Conclusion - Stacey's story

A woman looking forward and not looking back because of Christ.

Pray

- Philippians 3:15 (ESV)
¹⁵Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.