

The Goal Out Ahead

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Philippians 3:8-16

⁸ And what is more, I consider everything as a loss because of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Messiah Jesus my Lord.

Because of him I have forfeited all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may have **the Messiah as my gain** ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that is from Law, but that which is through the Messiah's faithfulness, the righteousness from God that is bestowed on faith.

¹⁰ My aim is to know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming shaped by his death, ¹¹ that by whatever path I may arrive at the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I already obtained this or have already been brought to maturity/perfection, but I press on to make it my own, because Messiah Jesus has made me his own.

¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have made it my own. **One thing** rather: forgetting the things 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 Messiah Jesus.

¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this, and if you are thinking something otherwise, God will reveal this also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Philippians 2:1-2, 5-11

¹ So if there is any encouragement in the Messiah ... ² fill up my joy that you think **the same thing**, having the **same love**, together in soul and thinking the **one thing**. ...

⁵ **Think this** among yourselves, which also means **in Messiah Jesus**, ⁶ who, though he was **in the form of God**, did not consider that **equality with God** a thing to be exploited, ⁷ rather he **emptied himself**, by taking the **form of a slave**, being born in **human likeness**. ⁸ And being found in **human shape**, he **humbled himself** by becoming **obedient** to the **point of death**, even **death on a cross**.

⁹ **Therefore God has highly exalted him** and graced him with **the name** that is **above every name**, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow**, of those in heaven and on earth and under earth, ¹¹ and **every tongue confess** that "**Jesus Messiah is LORD**," to the **glory of God the Father**.

Galatians 2:19-21

¹⁹ For through Law I died to Law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ **I have been crucified with Messiah/Christ**. I live, but it is no longer I; **Messiah lives in me**. And the life I now live in flesh **I live in the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me**. ²¹ I do not nullify the **grace of God**, for if righteousness were through Law, then the Messiah died for no purpose.

Matthew 5:48; 6:31-33

⁴⁸ **You therefore shall be perfect** (complete/mature) as your heavenly Father is perfect. ...

³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and **your heavenly Father knows that you need them**. ³³ But **seek first his kingdom and his righteousness**, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Ephesians 4:13

¹³ ...until we all arrive at the **unity of the faith** and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to **mature** adulthood, to the measure of the stature of **the fullness of the Messiah**.

The Gain of the Messiah

Paul has talked about losses, suffering, possible death. He is sitting in prison! But Paul is not a masochist seeking pain. He has experienced something that brought clarity/beauty to life/reality – renewal of mind, something of ultimate value. It is the event of Jesus, Messiah of Israel, fully God, truly human, faithful even to the cross, exalted as LORD.

Paul challenges us to let that truth shape us: 2:2 – think the same...same love... think the one thing. 2:5 – think this (the story of Jesus). 2:11 – every tongue confesses Jesus Messiah is LORD. 3:1 – Paul writes the same things. 3:8 – the surpassing value of the knowledge of Messiah Jesus my Lord. 3:13 – one thing I do. 3:15 – the mature think this.

Jesus' story creates a new lens for seeing everything: Who am I? What give me standing in the world, before God? Ethnic identity as Jew or Roman? Something else I achieve? No. It is what God has done in Jesus' faithfulness, a gift bestowed on me as I trust him. What of suffering, death? God/Jesus take death's power in and create resurrection life. Suffering still hurts! But I can know pain and death have no ultimate power. Rather life!

The Goal Ahead

This supreme value, this renewed mind, transforms anyone, not just an apostle like Paul.

It is a gift based on the Messiah's faithfulness not my spiritual achievement.

Paul stresses that he has forfeited an identity that he could reach and be blameless in for one that is always out of reach, out ahead. The OT story of the Law is of the failure of even the best achievement. Even a "blameless" Pharisee could miss God's new King.

Here's a wonderful paradox. We need not settle for small aims within our power to achieve.

We reach for what is always out of reach, but with confidence. Jesus has reached out and taken hold of us. What Jesus has done does not stop our quest for the ultimate.

It shapes it and allows it to be completely realistic and still filled with confidence and hope. Jesus says, "Seek God's kingdom!" "You shall be perfect as your Father is perfect!"

Release the worries that consume you. God will give what you worried about as a gift.

Paul relinquished ethnic identity and rights as an apostle – learning to live boldly and faithfully, to know the power of Jesus' resurrection life more and more in the present.

The Race of Life

Paul uses the Greek image of a race toward a goal. Not in the sense of competition against others, but from the experience of a runner with a defined aim out ahead. That goal – the "one thing" – is the full humanity defined by Jesus, a mature adulthood, trusting his faithfulness, knowing him and thus knowing who I am as God's creature and child.

The race, seeking, renewal of mind, "pressing on" never stops in this life. We are always in a sense at a beginning. What matters is not mistakes and failures of the past, but the next step into the future, toward Jesus. The past is there, forgotten only in the crucial sense that it no longer determines our present action and future aim. Rather the goal draws us forward – all that is revealed about human life in the event of Jesus!

Called Up for the Prize

"The One Thing" embodies past, present, and future, even ultimate future. Jesus' life, teaching, ministry, death, resurrection are past. The present is the life-giving transformation by the meaning of all that story. The ultimate prize is the call up to the master's box to receive the prize – being "in" the true human, true God, in Jesus.

Maturity is knowing we can be on our way but are not there yet. "Think this." Think Jesus!