

# Laying Hold or Lying Down

by Anton Bosch

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*Anton Bosch's sermon emphasizes the importance of continually striving for spiritual growth and purpose in Christ, using Paul's teachings in Philippians as a foundation.*

**Duration:** 42:44

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:13

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

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## Description

In this sermon from Philippians chapter 3, Paul emphasizes the need to press on towards the goal of knowing Christ and being conformed to His image. He urges believers to forget past successes or failures and to reach forward to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. The focus is on seeking more of Jesus and fulfilling the unique calling God has placed on each individual's life.

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## Transcript

Chapter 3 as we continue our study on Philippians, and I'm going to begin speaking in verse 11 of Philippians 3, but I'm going to begin reading in verse 1. So Philippians chapter 3, speaking from verse 11, reading 1 through 16. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord, for me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation, for we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Though I also might have confidence in the flesh, if anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I'm more so. Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, concerning the law, a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gained to me, these I have counted loss for Christ, and indeed also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have already attained or am already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do for

getting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things that are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore let us as many as are mature have this mind, and if in anything you think otherwise God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. And so Paul has been speaking about the things that the normal Jew would rely on, his ethnicity, his religiosity, his faithfulness to the law, and all of those kinds of things.

And Paul says, if anyone could rely on those things, I could rely on those things more than anyone else. But he says, I recognize that those things were not able to save me. I counted them as rubbish, I threw them away.

And not only did I throw them away, but I counted them as a negative, as a debit on my account, that I might gain, that in the credit side I might have Christ. And so now he says that that's really what I'm all about. That's basically what Paul is saying.

And then he says that I may know him. We dealt with this last week, that I may know him. And the resurrection, but also the sufferings, those two things always go together, the cross and the crown.

And so that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, being conformed to his death, that I may be made like him in his death. And Paul has two things in mind here. Obviously he has in mind the fact that when he got saved, he says in Galatians, I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. So he's speaking about the fact that when we come to Christ, the old man dies, it is buried in baptism, as it were, and we are raised to walk in newness of life. So we are new creatures.

So that's part of what he has in mind. But clearly he has something more in mind here also, and that is a continual dying to self, a continual dying to the flesh and to the world, that Christ might come forth in us. He speaks about the fact that he dies daily.

And so there's a need for us to die once when we come to Christ, but then there is a need for us to continually be dying to the things of the world, to continually be dying to the call of the flesh, that Christ may continually be revived within us. Then there's a third thing that he has in mind, and that is physical death. Remember that this is also in the background of Paul's thinking, and so that he would be conformed to Christ in dying a martyr's death.

Now when we speak about conformed to Christ in a martyr's death, obviously Jesus was not a martyr in that sense. Jesus' death was different in that it was an atoning death. He died for us, but at the same time the principle is the same, and that is that he did not die for his own misdeeds, but he died for the faith.

And so Paul says that I might be conformed to him even in dying the death of a martyr, in dying for the faith. And so he says that by any means, if somehow, in verse 11, if by any means, if somehow I can also attain to the resurrection of the dead. Now there's a difficulty here, because on the surface it would seem that Paul wasn't sure of his salvation, that Paul is saying, well I don't know if I'm going to make it to the resurrection.

Now we clearly understand that that was not Paul's intent, that Paul was absolutely sure of his salvation, that he says that if I die to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. He says I don't know what to choose, whether to stay here, which is good for you, or whether I should go to be with the Lord, which is really what I want to do. So Paul is sure of his salvation, but at the same time he's saying there is a need for us not to be presumptuous, not to just assume that I'm going to make it.

And now he's going to continue to explain that in saying that there needs to be a reaching forward. And so what Paul is addressing here, and what we're going to address in these verses this morning, is the need for us to never be satisfied with where we are spiritually. That's really the point that Paul is making.

Now remember Paul has cited his catalog of achievements in the Jewish faith, and he says I've counted those things as rubbish. But now he can say, well, you know, I've served God in the true sense since I met him on the Jesus on the road to Damascus, and I've been a true Christian. I've served him faithfully, and Paul did.

There was no question about that. Paul had these revelations that we heard from Henry in Sunday School this morning, that he received the gospel from the Lord Jesus himself. He wrote most of the books by now he had written.

I think the only book that he hadn't written by now was to Timothy. And so he had written the letters, he had established many churches, he had been true to the faith, and I'm sure that Paul can say, well, I can take it easy now. I can coast to my death.

I can just coast along for the few years or few days or few weeks that are left to me. And yet Paul says I'm still not satisfied. There is still something ahead, and something that I need to reach out towards.

Now the problem is that so many Christians and so many of us feel that once we are saved, well, I've arrived. That's all I need. I need to be saved, I need to believe on the Lord Jesus, and that's fine.

Some go the next step and they get baptized and say, well now I'm baptized. Now, you know, now I'm set. I don't need to do any more than that.

But at no stage can we say that we have arrived. If Paul, near the end of his life, with all of his achievements, with all of his faithfulness to the Lord, with all of his holiness and sanctification that he had attained, with everything that Paul had attained, Paul still says, I'm still not satisfied. I still need to stretch out.

I still need to reach forward to the prize that is set before me. Now he's changing the allegory, and you remember on Thursday night when we were in Timothy, you saw how that he used three different allegories to illustrate the point that he was making. He spoke about accounting, he spoke about a soldier, and he spoke about farming, those three.

Now here he has been speaking in accounting terms, and so he says, those things that I saw to be for my profit, I have counted those as loss, that I may make the true profit, which is Christ. But now he changes the picture to athletics again. Remember in Timothy we saw that he uses the athletic metaphor, and so here he's now going to speak about athletics.

And so he says, not that I have already attained or am already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me. So Paul says, I haven't made it. I haven't achieved what

needs to be achieved.

And folks, I'm going to say this again, and I'm going to say it again later. If you think that you're where you need to be, you're in trouble, because it is a sign that you are not just standing still, but going backward. You see, there's a natural law in the universe which applies to the spiritual realm also, and that is that nothing stands still.

If you're not progressing, you are regressing. If you're not moving forward, you are moving backward. That is just the way it is.

It is true of anything and everything. If you don't maintain the building, the building is going to fall apart. This building was built many years ago.

We remodeled it seven or eight years ago, and already we can see that there are things that need to be done. In these last seven years, things have deteriorated. The paint is busy fading.

Paint is peeling here and there. There are small little issues creeping into it here and there. If we leave it, it's eventually going to be in ruins, and the same is true of our spiritual life.

If you leave it alone, it's going to go backwards. That's just the way it is. And so Paul says, no, I am reaching forward.

So now he says then, not that I have already attained, or am already perfected. So that's the standard. Are you perfect? Now I know some of us think we are, but if the answer is no, and the true answer is no, well then does that mean there's still work to be done? Yes, there's work to be done.

The standard is not 60 percent, or 50 percent, or 80 percent, or 90 percent. The standard is a hundred percent. Be he perfect even as your Father in heaven is, perfect.

That's God's standard. Now obviously we understand that that will only happen at the day of the resurrection, and that's part of why Paul is pressing towards the resurrection, because he's looking for the perfection that's going to come at that point. But until then, I need to not be satisfied with where I am, but I need to say I want to grow more.

I want to be deeper in my walk with the Lord. I want to know more of His Word. I want to, as he said in the previous verses, I want to know Him.

I want to know Him in reality. I want to know Him not just in theology or in theory. I want to know Him in practice.

I need to be reaching. He says, I'm not perfect yet. Now by the way, we maybe joke a little bit, and we say, well, you know, we think we're perfect, and I know some folk laugh at that, but deep down they feel, well, you know, relatively everyone else, I'm pretty good.

I'm pretty perfect. Well, we need to go back to the standard, of course. The standard is Jesus.

You know, you can easily look at me and say, well, you know, I'm much better than Him, so I'm pretty good. I'm not your standard. No one else is your standard but Jesus Christ.

And so have you fully become like Jesus? That's simply the question. If the answer is no, you need to be like Paul and say, I'm reaching forward. I'm grabbing hold of that for which He has grabbed hold of me.

But there's also another problem here, and I think that that's also what Paul is addressing, and that is what today we call the doctrine or the teaching of sinless perfection. And so there is a teaching that goes around which teaches that once you achieve that second work of holiness, they call it, some kind of second experience other than salvation, that you become perfect at that point. You become sinless, and you don't sin after that.

Now, that sounds great in theory, and obviously they have verses from the Bible that they back that up with. The fact is that I don't need the Bible to tell me that I'm not there, and that you're not there, and that I know of no man who is there. And if anyone had achieved sinless perfection, then Paul would have been that man.

And yet Paul is the very man who's saying, we're not perfect. We still have work to be done. There are still things that need to be changed.

There are still heights to be attained. There are still depths to be plumbed. And so Paul says, I am not perfect, and if I am not perfect, he's saying, you are not perfect.

That's an old teaching that was a teaching that he was obviously addressing at this time. There were those who were going around and saying, you know, once you achieve some kind of standard within your Christian walk, well, then you're there. You're perfect, and everything's cool after that.

And Paul says, no, not that I have attained, and not that I am already perfected. That word perfected we're going to come back to again later on. But he says, I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

The word press on here is the same word, and that's why it's an athletic metaphor that he's using, is the same word of that of that athlete who comes to the finishing line, and I'm sure we've all seen the Olympic Games or track and field, how that in that last few yards before the line, the athlete reaches forward with everything he has. He throws himself at the line with all of his strengths, with everything that he has, reaching out, and many times even losing their balance as they throwing themselves at that line and saying, I have to put the last ounce of energy, everything I have, into these last few steps, because they can make the difference between winning or not winning. And that's the picture that Paul is using here.

And so he's saying that we as Christians need, and Paul is certainly he's saying, I'm reaching out, I'm stretching myself, I'm pushing to the very edge of my abilities and the limits of my power and my strength to be able to reach whole and to grab hold of that for which Christ has grabbed hold of me. You can see this is not a half-hearted effort. This is not a saying, well, you know, let's we'll just cruise along and see, you know, how things go.

No, Paul says I need to live with intent, I need to live with purpose, and I need to stretch myself to the very limit that I may grab hold of that for which Christ Jesus has grabbed hold of me. The idea of resting was not an idea that Paul enjoyed. One of the big, and you've probably heard me say this before, but one of the big impressions on my life was the story of my great-grandfather.

I never met him, but I've read books about him. And one of the things that he said, and this has been deeply imprinted in my own heart and my own mind, is that when people told him you need to rest, he

would say, I will rest when I get to heaven. There'll be plenty of rest in heaven, but in the meantime we need to work while it is still today.

And so the idea of retiring, in the Christian sense of saying I've served the Lord for a certain period of time and now I can take it easy, doesn't exist in Paul's mind, and it is not in God's goal and God's purpose for us. Now he says then, I throw myself, I stretch out, I reach forward with everything I have, for what purpose? To grab hold of that for which Christ also grabbed hold of me. And he's using a play on words here.

So he's saying, Jesus arrested me. Where was Paul arrested? On the road to Damascus. Jesus grabbed hold of him on that road.

Now it's interesting, and I think that this may be in part of what he has in mind when he's writing, what was Paul doing on the road to Damascus? He was going to arrest Christians and to bring them back to Jerusalem for trial. But who got arrested? Paul got arrested. And that's literally the word he's using here.

I got arrested. I got grabbed hold of. And Jesus grabbed hold of me and arrested me and put me under his control.

Because that's what arresting is all about, is to take the prisoner and bring the prisoner under the control of the policeman. And so he says, Jesus arrested me. He grabbed hold of me.

Why did he grab hold of me? Just because he had nothing else to do? No, he had a purpose for me. And he says that purpose that he had for me now needs to be my purpose. So the reason that he grabbed hold of me for is what I now need to grab hold of.

He grabbed hold of me, I need to grab hold of that purpose. And that purpose is twofold, I believe, in the context that Paul is writing here. First of all, that purpose is obviously to be conformed to Jesus, to become like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every one of us has been saved for that purpose. Paul is very clear about this in Romans chapter 8 and verse 29, that he has predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son. And it's interesting, he uses the word conformed there, and here he speaks about being conformed to his death.

Same word. And so number one, purpose for each one of us. Why did God save us? We need to ask that question.

Sometimes we say, well yeah, he just saved me. Saved me because of his grace. Yes, but was there no purpose? Does God do things with no purpose? You know, when you ask your kids, why did you do that? Because.

I just did it. God doesn't just do things because, just for no real reason. He saved us with a purpose, and that purpose is that we become like Jesus Christ.

And so Paul is saying, that's what he saved me for. That's what he grabbed hold of me for. Now I need to grab hold of that, and I need to become like the Lord Jesus.

Not just theologically, not just forensically, but in practice and in reality. But then there's a second thing. Did God save Paul just to save him and for him to become like Jesus, or was there more to it than that? Obviously there was more to it than that.

God had a purpose for him. God had a job for him. So what about you? Did God save you just to save you and for you to become like Jesus, or did he save you with a job for you in his mind? I believe he had a job in mind for each one of us.

Now for Paul, that job was to be the great apostle. We understand that. We're not all called to be apostles.

We're not all called to be preachers, or to be teachers, or to be prophets, or whatever else there may be. But each one of us has been called with a purpose, and God has a job for us to do. And that job has nothing to do with being a teacher, or a mechanic, or a plumber, or whatever else.

That is just by the way. And I know that many people talk about the fact that that's my calling in life--to be a teacher, or a nurse, or a fireman. No, that's not our calling in life.

That's just your job. God has a spiritual job for you, a spiritual calling for you. Now are you reaching out for that purpose? Are you trying to make that a reality in your life? Or are you saying, well, you know, what will be, will be.

It's just gonna happen. There's a terrible teaching that came out in the 60s or the 70s, and it basically said, let go and let God. In other words, there's nothing I can do.

Now we understand the theology behind that, and that is true, that there is nothing I can do to save myself. There's nothing I can do to keep myself saved, and so on and so forth. It's all of Him.

It's all of grace. But it doesn't mean that I just need to sit there and just allow things to happen. And God's somehow going to make things happen in my life.

He's somehow going to open my mouth to make me speak when I need to speak. He's somehow going to force me to become holy when I need to become holy. He's somehow going to, you know, no, God doesn't, God expects us to help Him.

And I say that very carefully, very respectfully. It doesn't mean that God needs help. But we heard this morning, and I think that the the question that Clayton asked in Sunday school, why can God not just use the angels? The angels can do the preaching of the gospel much better than we can, and that's true.

But God has chosen in His infinite wisdom to use foolish things to confound the wise. That, for what purpose? That the excellency of His power may be made manifest through us. You see, when God uses something which is nothing and achieves something glorious out of that, the tool that He used can take no glory.

The glory is all His. Now if He used the angels, we would say, well, the angels are powerful, the angels are wise, the angels are, they know everything, the angels are able to translate themselves from one place to the other, and all of these things. And so, yeah, the angels just reach the world and they preach.

But you know, the fact that God is able to actually save people through foolish instruments, like us, shows His amazing and marvelous grace. So He wants to use us. He has a job for you.

Are you grabbing hold of that? Has that become your purpose in life? You know, that is being imported into Christianity today. I read a little while ago about the fact that Christians need to have, and you'll see in my office I have a magnet board in front of me and I have pictures of the kids and all sorts of things on there. But you need to have in front of you wherever you work, you need to have a picture of that

Lamborghini that you want.

You need to have a goal in life. And this is written to Christians. No, you don't need a picture of a Lamborghini in front of you or in your mind's eye.

You need a picture of God's calling upon your life. And you need to say, I want that. I want what He wants for me.

I want to achieve what He saved me for. This is what Paul is saying. And so to say, well, you know, my goal is just to be happy.

Now that may be enshrined in the Bill of Rights for Americans, but it's not in God's Bill of Rights. God never said that He just wants us to be happy. He wants us to achieve and to attain to that which He has called us for.

And so I believe that so many Christians live their lives in an aimless way. So many young people live aimlessly in the world. The young guy on the skateboard or the 25-year-old, 30-year-old guy on his skateboard.

The biggest goal in life is to hang out with his friends and skate on his skateboard. And we say, well, what kind of life is that? But you know, there are Christians with their skateboards, and they spiritually just want to cruise along and play with their friends and have a happy time. And God says, no, I saved you for a purpose.

I saved you with a reason, and I want you to achieve that which I saved you for. And so Paul says, I reach forward and I stretch myself out that I may grab hold of, that I may apprehend that for which Christ Jesus grabbed hold of me. Now maybe if you're not reaching out, maybe He hasn't grabbed hold of you yet.

Maybe that's where the problem is sometimes. In my own testimony, I have absolutely no question that God arrested me. And if He didn't, I would have been the worst of the worst today.

But by His grace, He grabbed hold of me. And I know He grabbed hold of me because He changed me in that moment, placed within me a desire to do the things that He has called me to do. But, folks, it's so easy when you become discouraged.

In these last four months, I have many times seriously considered giving up on the ministry. I've been tempted several times not to go on this trip tomorrow because I'm tired. I'm worn out.

I'm discouraged. But God has grabbed hold of me, and He will not let me go. And I cannot let go of Him.

I need to grab hold of the purpose for which He has saved me, and He didn't save me to stay at home and to work in my workshop. He saved me to do a job, and He has saved you to do a job. Will you grab hold of that purpose for which He has grabbed hold of you? Verse 13, brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do for getting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

And so, again, he says the same thing. I don't think I've made it. I'm not there yet.

And in that process, he says, I forget what is behind. Now, in Paul's case, what was behind Paul? Failure or success? Success. Many achievements.

Thousands had come to Christ. Many were physically healed. Many churches had been established.

The truth had been defended. The truth had been established and been written down. Paul had achieved all of those things.

So if anyone could say, I've arrived, if anyone could sit down and rest on their laurels, as it were, then Paul could have done that. But he says, what I did yesterday is of no consequence. It doesn't matter.

It's what I'm doing now that's of importance. And so, folks, it's easy for us to rest on our past achievements, whatever those may be. Oh, I was born again.

I was baptized. I've been coming to church faithfully every Sunday. I did this.

I've done that. I've done the other thing. Paul says, I forget what's behind, because what's behind does not count for today.

There's only one thing that counts for today, and that is, am I reaching out? Am I reaching forward for that reason for which he has called me? I don't think that this was part of Paul's thinking, and I don't think that this was what Paul has in mind, but there is another thing we need to forget, and that is the failures of the past. It's so easy for us to say, well, you know, I've never been able to do very much. I've messed up so many times.

I've bachelored in so many times. I've sinned so many times. I just haven't been able to do what God has asked me to do, and so that's just the way it is.

Paul says, forget it. Forget your past failures. Your past failures and your past successes have no impact on your attitude today, he is saying.

Your attitude today has to be one of saying, it doesn't matter if I failed yesterday, and it doesn't matter if I succeeded yesterday. There is only one thing that matters, and that is what's ahead. And I know it's a trite saying, but this is the first day of the rest of your life.

I know it's trite, but it's true. You can't take yesterday back. You can't recover all the time you've wasted up to now in your life, maybe other years that you've really just half-heartedly served the Lord.

You can't get that back. It's gone. But you have today, and it's interesting that in the book of Hebrews, the writer four times in chapter 2 and 3, four times he says, today, while it is called today.

We don't have tomorrow, and we don't have yesterday. We have today. And today, Paul says, I'm reaching out.

I want to grab hold of that today. Folks, not mañana. Don't say I'll do it tomorrow or next week.

Today. If you're going to change your attitude, if you're going to change your aspirations, if you're going to change your goals, you need to do it today. And James will be here at the front to pray with you if you need prayer after the service.

Today. Forgetting what is behind. And I know it's hard.

I know it's hard for those of us who fail so often, who are so deeply aware of our weaknesses and of our sinfulness and of all of the stuff that we deal with, our complexes and all of the stuff, the baggage that we

drag with us. And I'm there with you. It's hard for us to look forward and say, well, you know, it doesn't matter the failures.

It doesn't matter the losses. It doesn't matter how many times I've been knocked down, because there's only one thing that matters, and that's the resurrection. And the resurrection is before us, and it's that which I'm reaching forward to.

It's that that I want to achieve. And so Paul then says, I don't count myself to have ever ended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things that are ahead, I press towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. I press towards the goal, and he says there's a prize.

What's the prize? Well, clearly in the context is the resurrection. What is it all about? Well, you see, if my goal is a Ferrari, then the streets of gold look very attractive. Just think about that.

If my goal is material things, then a mansion in heaven is really what it's all about. But if my goal is to become like Jesus, then the resurrection is what it's all about. It doesn't matter about the streets of gold.

I just want to be like Jesus, and I know that that will be completed and fulfilled on that day of resurrection. It doesn't matter if I live in a shack in heaven. It doesn't matter if I live on a dusty street, if I can just be like Jesus.

Paul is not thinking, and he's not talking here about material things that we gain in heaven. He's talking about gaining the image of Jesus Christ, that I may become like him. Now, if your goal is material things, you're going to be disappointed in heaven.

Because while there may be material things, streets of gold, and mansions, and crowns, and all those kinds of things, those things are not what heaven is all about. Heaven is about Jesus. He is the center.

He is the focus. He is what everything is about. And if Jesus is not everything to you today, heaven is not going to be a very comfortable place either.

And obviously my theology is a little bit out here, but you understand what I'm saying. And so Paul says, I reach forward for that prize. What is the prize? It's not the crown of gold.

Yes, there is a crown that he's going to give. And in Timothy, we're going to get to this in Timothy in a few weeks' time, he says that henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord is going to give me. And not just to me, but all of those who love his appearing.

So there is a crown. But I don't think that that's what Paul has in mind. What Paul has in mind is Jesus.

That's the prize, that I become like him. Not just that I become like him, but the moment I become like him is because I will see him. And really Paul is saying, I just want more of him.

Isn't that what he said earlier? He says, I count everything rubbish that I may gain Christ. I want him. I want more of him.

And so he says, look, and I believe that this is what is in Paul's heart. And I believe this is what should be in our hearts. And that is that we want more of Jesus.

And the prize is that I will see him face to face. I will know him even as he knows me. I'm no longer going to see through a glass darkly, but I'm going to see him clearly.

I'm no longer going to have to worship him in faith, but I'm going to be able to worship him in reality. As I see him, see the wounds in his hands and in his side, see the thorn scars on his brow, see him in his glory and his beauty and his holiness. That's what I'm reaching out for.

That's the prize. And then he says the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. So there's the key.

It is in Christ Jesus. And it's a call to go ever higher, ever higher in our walk with him, ever higher in our relationship with him. And so he says the call is not down towards the world or back towards hell or the things of this world.

Remember the people of Israel. God was calling them to the promised land. But where were their eyes? On Egypt, constantly wanting to go back, constantly wanting to go down to Egypt.

Interesting that throughout the scriptures, when it speaks about Egypt, it speaks about going down to Egypt. But God was taking them up to the promised land. And Paul says there's a higher call upon our lives, the upward call.

Not only is the call towards heaven, but the call is from heaven. There are two things he has in mind here. First of all, the call is towards heaven, towards God, towards Jesus.

But the call also comes from him. And that's a glorious thing. Over these last few weeks, last month and a half, many people have sat on the edge of their chairs waiting for a call from the president-elect and now president, hoping he'll call them to some kind of office, some kind of fancy job in the White House.

And I guess there's still some vacancies and there's still some people sitting at the edge, just watching their phones, hoping maybe he's going to call me. Folks, we have a call, not from an earthly president, but a call from the King of Kings. And he's calling us, and he's calling us to higher service, to the highest job that you can have, and that is to be an ambassador for the King of Kings and for the Lord of Lords.

Yes, many people want to be the secretary of defense or the foreign secretary or secretary of state, rather, all of those fancy jobs. But folks, the greatest job you can have is to be an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ. And he's called each one of us to that job.

And Paul says, that's where my eyes are. I want to fulfill the calling upon my life. Remember, we've spoken about this idea of a calling before.

A calling does not just belong to those who are in full-time ministry. Everyone who is saved and born again has a calling upon their lives. God has called you.

He's called you out of darkness into his light, and he's called you with a purpose to serve him in whatever capacity he has called you. Now, are we satisfied, or are we like Paul and saying, Lord, I want to reach out. I want to grab hold of that for which you have grabbed hold of me.

Father, we thank you for your Word that constantly speaks to us. And, Lord, we thank you that even 2,000 years later it is still real and it still applies to us. And, Lord, I pray that that which is in Paul's heart that he sought to transmit in this letter, Lord, and that which is in my heart and which I've sought to transmit in my preaching this morning.

And, Lord, I'm weak, and I have failed in many ways to somehow convey the reality of that which is in this text and that reality which is in my own heart. But, Lord, I pray that by your Spirit you would just confirm that call upon each one of our hearts. And, Lord, grant that there may be a determination to forget what is behind, to forget the successes, forget the failures, and, Lord, to reach out for that call that you have upon each one of our lives.

Lord, I pray that this may be a day of change, a day of turning for each one of us. Lord, that we may not just go back into our daily routine without stopping for a moment, as it were, on that road to Damascus and saying, Why did you save me, Lord? What purpose do you have for me? Lord, help me to not be satisfied with where I am in my holiness, not to be satisfied in where I am in my witnessing, not to be satisfied where I am in my being like Jesus. But, Lord, help us to reach out for more of him.

In Jesus' name we pray. We pray that you'd go with us, Lord, keep us, protect us, bring us together again safely next week. And, Lord, for those who travel, we pray for Paul and Becky who travel back to Montana this week.

We pray that your protection on them and for myself as I travel also. And so, Lord, we commit ourselves to you now in Jesus' name. Amen.

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