

One Thing I Desire

by Gbile Akanni

Gbile Akanni teaches that the apostle Paul's singular desire to know Christ, live by faith, and press on toward the heavenly calling is the ultimate goal for every believer.

Duration: 43:08

Scripture: Philippians 3:7-14, Romans 1:16, Romans 15:20, 1 Corinthians 2:2, 1 Corinthians 9:16, Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 4:16, 1 John 2:15

Topics: "Faith in Christ", "Christian Dedication", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this devotional sermon, Gbile Akanni explores the apostle Paul's passionate desire to know Christ and live a life fully dedicated to Him. Drawing from Philippians 3:7-14 and other key scriptures, Akanni challenges believers to detach from worldly values, deepen their faith, and identify with Christ through suffering and perseverance. This message encourages Christians to maintain focus on their heavenly calling and live with disciplined commitment.

Transcript

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Telephone numbers 0703 03636 59 0703 76811 98 Email address lsmediaatlivingseed.org Or visit our website at www.livingseed.org Let us sit back and listen as the servant of God brings forth the Word of Life. Lord God, we continue to open ourselves up to you. We continue, oh God, to appreciate all that you have been doing in our lives, especially in this retreat since our arrival.

We thank you for the privilege, we thank you for the opportunity. We thank you that we can draw near to you and you will draw near to us. Speak again, that we may hear, and in hearing you, that we may understand.

In understanding, that we may believe and obey, and in doing so, that we may be blessed. And as we are blessed, we may be channels of blessings to others. In Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.

Please join with me to the Philippians. Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 3, we will read verses 7 to 14. Let's take it to 14.

Philippians chapter 3, verses 7 to 14. I'm reading from the English Standard Version. And count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

And be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, that comes from the Lord, but that which comes through faith in Christ. The righteousness from God that depends on faith. That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.

And may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death. That by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 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. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, and straining forward for what lies ahead.

I press on toward the goal, for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. Amen. One thing I do.

We have seen that of David in Psalm 27. And we are seeing that of the Apostle Paul in this letter. We remember that this letter actually was written when he was in prison.

And actually, he had been a missionary for well over 40 years, we believe. And he was sharing a testimony to encourage the brethren. And we see this in the context of his sharing his testimony.

One thing I do. I have a subtitle for it, which I call, My One Desire. That's what I want to talk about this morning.

My One Desire. Before we get into this, I want to quickly remind us that, as I said, this is a special context. If you watch Paul in other places, you will see that his whole life was given to the gospel.

And so there is, in a sense, in which he could say that the only thing that he came out to do in life was to preach the gospel. So one thing I do is to preach the gospel. He could have said that.

But he was trying to make a point here. In Romans 1, verse 16, he said, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. And you see similar things all over the place that Paul was saying.

For example, we find him in Romans 15, verse 20, saying, I make it my ambition. That is in terms of preaching the gospel. It's my ambition in life.

Romans 15, 20. In 1 Corinthians 2, verse 2, he said, I decided to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified. So that was his, you know, whole life, the preaching of the gospel.

And that famous statement in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 16, woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. But I think that why he was sharing this testimony at this time, in that particular point in that letter, was because He himself told the Ephesian elders in that farewell speech, in Acts chapter 20, verse 28, He said, take heed to yourselves, and then to the flock to which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Take heed to yourselves.

He was admonishing them. And when he was writing to Timothy, in 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 16, he said the same thing. And I think that one, I want to read it, because it's something that is very, very important to

all of us.

That we need to continue to repeat from time to time. He said to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 16, keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

So Paul was conscious of the fact that he needed also to make sure that he was not what they call in some parts of Nigeria, Ocho Pasenja. Ocho Pasenja means, you know, a kind of this motor parked house, you know. He would be there, telling people, Lagos, Lagos, Lagos, Abuja, Abuja, Abuja.

And you would think that he's going with you. The people that we enter the vehicle, we enter the vehicle, and then we go to Abuja. Those who want to go to Lagos, we go to Lagos.

He would continue to be there. He was working for his pay. He would get the allowances given to him.

So he was just interested. He was not going anywhere. And the idea here is that we as ministers will not be Ocho Pasenjas.

We point the way to the people, but we are not even going to that place. May God forbid in Jesus' name. And so Paul had earlier confessed to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapter 9. I want to read from 26 to 27.

1 Corinthians 9, 26 to 27. Because this is a necessary background for us to enter into what we want to enter. So I do not roam aimlessly.

I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control. Lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified.

He was conscious of this very fact. Not to deceive himself. Not to be a hypocrite.

Not just to preach what I have learned somewhere. He himself was burnt for making heaven. One of the sad statements in that book that is very very difficult to understand sometimes.

The Song of Solomon. The one thing that is standing out there as a very sad commentary. Is chapter 1 verse 6 of that Song of Solomon.

Where he said that they made me a keeper of vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept. I think you are familiar with that passage. And I think that the essence of this retreat this year for us is not to be a victim of this kind of situation.

They made me a keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept. It will not be a portion in Jesus name. And so we go back to Philippians.

And I will make only three points there. Because we are asked to have a little time to also pray and go to other things. My one desire.

From all that Paul was saying there. And I think that Paul's one desire is the desire of every one of us. I want to believe that.

It is my own desire. And if we all have this one desire. We are not going to tell the story about Paul.

This morning. We are going to see what we learn from him. And how we apply these things for ourselves.

Here and now. In this generation. The Lord that has given us this calling.

The Lord that has saved us from darkness and brought us into that marvelous light. He has brought us out of the kingdom of this world. Into his own kingdom.

We are going to see. Whether we can keep this one desire in view. In focus.

As a goal. And how do we do that? If we must have this one desire. I suggest three things.

Number one. Detachment. From the world.

Detachment. From the world. And there is a way this has been mentioned again and again.

In this retreat already. And will still be mentioned. Verses 7 to 8. I read again.

But whatever gain I had. I counted as loss. For the sake of Christ.

Indeed I count everything. As loss. Because of the surpassing worth of Jesus Christ my Lord.

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things. And count them rubbish. This is.

Somebody. If you read from verse 1 of that chapter 3. You see why he is making that statement at this point. Paul was saying that it was no more a matter.

Of social status. He was a Roman citizen. And he was also born in Thassos.

So he was a citizen of Thassos. He was a Jew. And he was born in Thassos.

And so he became a citizen of Thassos. You know when you read Acts chapter 21 verse 39. And Acts chapter 22.

Verse 2 and 3. You find how he said that Thassos was. A city of no means. A citizen of no means city.

That's how he put it there. In some versions. And actually Thassos was a very big commercial city.

And a university city also. It was a very big city. You see some people are going to America to have their children there.

So that you can be an American citizen. Some are going to England. And other places.

All these things Paul had them. And he is saying here that. All the things that were gained to him.

Including the social status and whatever you may call it. His academic position. His qualifications.

He counted them. Not only as a loss. But also as rubbish.

As a dung. In some versions. Just like.

That person said. Who tasted so many things in life. And at the end he said.

Vanity. Or vanity. All is vanity.

The things that are eternal. Are much more important. Than all the things we are talking about here.

It's not a matter of tribe. He said he was of Benjamin. And you know that Benjamin was the last child.

Of Jacob. He was so much loved. And apart from that.

The tribe of Benjamin. Actually geographically. Included such towns as Bethel.

And even Jerusalem. Is part of the towns. Within the tribe of Benjamin.

So he had a lot of things to boast about. If Jerusalem. Of all the cities.

In fact Jericho was also part of the tribe of Benjamin. It's not a matter of tribe. Where I come from.

It's not a matter of religious group. I belong to that denomination. I belong to that group.

We are the people that did this. He was a pharisee. A zealous pharisee.

And whatever you can talk about the pharisees. You know. Yes they went to extremes.

And that led them not to accept Christ. Most of them. Not all of them.

But they were really really. A group from which. Many people will learn a lot.

That's why he said. If your righteousness. Does not exceed the righteousness of the pharisees.

So at least for that time. And for their generation. They were very very serious.

In the observance of the law. In their fastings and so on and so forth. It's not a matter of religious group.

So Paul had. A new orientation. When he encountered Christ.

Value orientation. And that makes a difference. He was able to remember.

What Jesus Christ told the disciples. In John chapter 17. Verses 14 and 16.

We will not be reading all this because of time. This devotion. But it's good to note them.

He said. You are not of this world. But you are in the world.

And another place he told them. The world will hate you. Because they hated me.

And this is the mistake that many people make. We try to still love the world. Despite the warning.

From the apostle John. In 1 John 2 verse 15. Love not the world.

Not the things that are in the world. You see. The essence of this crucifixion.

The cross. Is that the cross is. Among many other things.

A symbol of rejection. The world has rejected us. Whether you like it or not.

If really you are a child of God. You are rejected by the world. Because the way you think and the way you act.

Will not agree with what they do. And so if you yourself. Deliberately.

Refuse to reject the world. The world that has rejected you. Then you are making a great mistake.

The cross means. That you must also reject the world. And avoid all these attractions.

So called in the world. And when we are still loving the world. It's still a sign of canality.

Secondly very quickly. It's not only detachment from the world. You see.

They meant nothing again to him. All these things. We are not even talking about sin here.

But beyond that. The second thing here. Is his dedication to Christ.

Because detachment from the world. Is actually impossible. Without this dedication to Christ.

It's his encounter. With Christ. That helped him.

To begin to renounce. Those things. That seemed very attractive.

To reject them. When you talk of detachment. We have people that live in monasteries.

And people who have tried to detach. As it were. A kind of asceticism.

And you know. People take the vows of poverty. Of chastity.

And of obedience. In many places. Well that is good.

But if that ends there. Without. The life of Christ.

In that individual. Then it is useless. The dedication to Christ.

There are three things there I think. Verses nine to ten. That's where I am right now.

And I will read. Although we have read it. The first thing there is.

Dedication to Christ begins. With true salvation. That is found in Christ.

Verse nine. Of that place. Where he said that.

It's no more the righteousness of the law. But the righteousness. That is found in Christ.

This is again where. People don't know. What is called the true gospel.

It is still being confused. And I want to read. The portion in Romans chapter three.

To portray that fact. Romans chapter three. Verse twenty one.

But now the righteousness of God. Has been manifested. Apart from the law.

The law does not confer. Any righteousness upon anybody. Although the law and the prophets.

Bear witness to it. Verse twenty two. The righteousness of God through faith.

In Jesus Christ. So the righteousness. Can only come from God.

And Paul realized that despite. Everything he did as a Pharisee. In fact.

He said there. That's a Philippians chapter three. That as a Pharisee.

He was blameless before the law. And yet. He was not saved.

He could see very clearly. That some of the things we claim. We are doing.

We are nice in this area. Or that area. They mean nothing.

So he understood very well. That is all by grace. What Jesus has done for us.

Is what we receive by faith. We lean on him. We depend on him.

We cannot save ourselves. And that. Will always make us to be grateful to him.

Dedication to Christ. Through salvation. It has been said here again and again.

That is not. Your parental background. Is not your.

Church background. Is not. Every other rites.

Or ceremony in the church. That confers salvation. One must renounce sins.

And believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ. And receive him in your life. To be really served.

Righteousness through faith. And his righteousness from God. Because.

Our own righteousness. Is by faith he arrives. And secondly there.

Dedication to Christ continues. With the desire to know him more. In verse 10.

Of that Philippians. That I may know him. Is not because he had not encountered him.

You see desire to know him more. Is part of that consecration. Dedication to Christ.

And the power of his resurrection. I may share his sufferings. This is somebody who has been working for about 14 years.

He has seen signs and wonders. He has seen miracles. And he is still saying I want to know the power of his resurrection.

In my own life. And in the ministry. To know him more and more.

To grow in that knowledge. Just as he was praying for the churches. You know in Ephesus.

And Thessalonica and other places. To grow in the knowledge. That their eyes.

May be opened. He saw this. As part of his own needs.

In continuing to grow. In Christ. And this is.

What the apostle Peter. In his last letter. At the very end of that letter.

Second Peter chapter 3 verse 18. Say to all the Christians at that time. You know grow in grace.

And in the knowledge. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Second Peter 3 verse 18.

So this dedication. Begins with salvation. Must continue in consecration.

In the desire to know him more and more. And that is. Then thirdly.

Dedication to Christ will culminate. In identification with Christ. Identification with Christ.

Because he said there. Not just to know him. And the power of his resurrection.

That may share his sufferings. Becoming like him. In his death.

Becoming like him in his death. Share his sufferings. And becoming like him in his death.

The living Bible puts it like this. And to find out what it means to suffer. And die with him.

Is as serious as that. Identification with Christ. Just like Paul saying.

I bear the mark. Of Christ upon me. I am crucified with Christ.

Is no longer either living. That is kind of thing you see here. Coming out from his testimony also.

And I think it has been read here. Luke 9. 23. If you are going to follow me.

You must take up your cross. Daily. And part of it.

The cross is also always a symbol of suffering. We must be ready. In one way or the other.

I thank God for this Leah Sharibo. In fact even for her father. Because her father was the first person to tell the whole world.

That her daughter. Was left in captivity. Because she refused to deny Christ.

She wanted to suffer. In fact she is ready to be killed if possible. Just a girl of about 15 years.

I think it is a message to the church of our time. It is not a very good story. We are sad about it.

Of her detention. But it is a message. To many of us who don't even know.

What Christianity is all about. We are just thinking that it is still religion. And when her own brother was being interviewed.

Her brother said. I am not happy. My sister is in detention.

But I thank God that she did not cry. The brother was saying that. And you begin to wonder.

What kind of teachings they have received. The way they have been disciplined. To that extent.

At that age. And not just a series of hallelujahs. That we are shouting especially down our own side.

And when anything happens. People are ready to just compromise. May God help us in Jesus name.

Dedication to Christ. One desire that I have. And then you come to the last stage.

Of this. Our meditation. The detachment from the world.

Which is not possible without dedication to Christ. And what some of the implications of that dedication we mean to us. And then finally determination for heaven.

Determination for heaven. Is something that you will very strongly pursue. This heaven.

Verses 11 to 14. It is a destination. It is a goal.

But if we must reach that goal. There are three other things I want to mention there. Under that determination.

There is no sense of contentment. In this race. You know in the material things.

We should be content. We should be satisfied. In 1 Timothy chapter 6 verse 8. This Paul admonished Timothy and said.

With food and clothing. Let us be content. Let us be satisfied.

And in another place in this Philippians chapter 4. Where he was talking to them. He said I have learnt to be in any condition. Whether I have something I am okay.

If I don't have something I am okay. That is the kind of contentment. For a child of God.

In terms of material things. Don't worry yourself. But when it comes to spiritual things.

There is no contentment. You have not arrived. And unless we have that sense.

Of no contentment. We will not have the desire. To hunger and to thirst.

But the Bible says. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. For they shall be satisfied.

So you see. Anytime you begin to find. A kind of.

The sense of you have made it. It is a deception from the devil. No sense of contentment.

Quickly number 2 in that place. Determination to make heaven. Is there is no looking back.

Can somebody say no looking back. No sense of contentment is in verse 13a. And we are rushing.

And no looking back is in 13b. Of where we are reading. God says.

But one thing I do. Forgetting what lies behind. Actually.

The one thing. He was telling us here. Is not that he was forgetting something behind.

The one thing. If you read it very very well. You see that is in verse 14.

You discover that one thing. Forgetting the things behind. Was to help him to make that one thing.

Are you following what I'm saying. The one thing he was doing. Was not forgetting the things behind.

But that was to help him. To reach that goal. He didn't want that to be.

Something that will stop him. I press toward the goal for the prize. For the upward call.

Of God in Christ Jesus. But let me just finish with. Not looking behind.

Jesus. After. That great teaching.

In Luke chapter 9. Verse 62. He said no one. Who has put his hand on the plow.

And looks back. His feet for the kingdom of God. It's as simple as that.

There's no looking back. The classical example in the Old Testament. Of a. Lost wife.

Running. A race for life. You want to escape for your life.

And this idea of. Oh. Maybe things I left at home.

Or whatever. It's a very sad story. And then.

She could not make it. It will always be a lesson. Because that story is repeated.

In the New Testament as a warning. And so we must not look back. And this looking back.

We don't have time to deal with it. There are many ways in which we are tempted to look back. But we must resist it.

Crucified life. Means. That you have reached a point of no return.

That's what it means. And people we know it. Then the final thing I want to say there is.

In determination for heaven. As we maintain. That desire.

And. We are not contented with our present spiritual positions. And determine not to look back.

Because that forgetting. The past does not mean loss of memory. Some people who have spoken to us here.

Share testimonies of what happened before. You see. But what it means actually in this context.

Is that the failures of the past. Must not discourage us. Or deter us from moving on.

And pressing forward. The failures of the past. And then the success of the past.

Must not make us complacent. That's why. There is no sense in which you put them behind you.

The failures. The success. Or whatever.

That's. The point. There.

Then finally. Let it take your whole. Energy.

And concentration. This is my one desire. We take my whole energy.

And concentration. The word straining. There.

I don't know what your version says. You know that is in verse 13c. Means to stretch.

To fight. To make a great effort. I strain.

And then he used the word. I press also. These two words.

Forward. To push firmly. To push firmly.

To press forward. To continue without giving up. No matter what the obstacles may be.

In Luke 13.24. Jesus told them. Strive to enter. Through the narrow gate.

Determination for heaven. It's a firm intention. The strength of will.

That come what may. By the grace of God. By the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

We shall reach heaven. Is Paul's one desire your own desire? I believe it is. And so let us renew our dedication to Christ.

Let us detach ourselves from the things of the world. That seem to confuse us. And God will help us to make it.

Shall we stand to pray. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face.

And the things of the world. We grow strangely dim. In the light of his glory and grace.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face.

And the things of the world. We grow strangely dim. In the light of his glory and grace.

We're not talking about congregation here. It's my own personal race. How am I moving on? How am I determined to make it? A lot has been said about the prayer life.

A lot has been said about forsaking sin. How am I applying this in my personal race? So that in keeping other people's visions. I will not neglect my own.

How am I taking heed to myself? Heaven is a beautiful place. It says eyes have not seen. Ears have not heard.

It has not entered into the heart of man. What God has prepared for those who love him. Have you seen a glimpse of heaven? Then what will take you back? I want you to pray this morning.

Say Lord. I give my all. I'm ready to put in everything.

That I may make that heaven. I want us to pray. We have a few more minutes to pray.

Heaven is a wonderful place. The home of bliss. The home of eternal peace.

No tears. No pain. No sorrow.

No death. No darkness. The Lamb himself is the light in that place.

Oh wonderful place. Continue to pray. Oh heaven is a wonderful place.

Oh how wonderful heaven must be. I know there is a mansion for me. The half of its glories have never been told.

How wonderful heaven must be. I'm longing to go. I'm longing to go.

When the trumpet shall sound. For the mansions above. I'll leave without saying goodbye.

Heaven is a wonderful place. Take a decision today. It's a personal decision.

It's not about my children. At this time now. It's not about my wife.

It's not about anybody. I have no reason to give. It is myself and God right now.

Oh Jesus help us. One thing I do. Forgetting all that lies behind.

And straining for the things that lie ahead. I pray so. Towards the mark of the high calling.

Of God in Christ Jesus. And so father we pray that. May.

Our rolling and labels. To make heaven. May not be.

Overtaken by the things of the world. Grace. To be focused.

And grace. To see you alone as our target and our goal. You will grant unto us in the name of Jesus.

As we try to seek peace. In this world. If we not seek peace.

That we mar our journeys. But feel that we enhance it. And make us to meet the goal.

At the end. Let this be. Our Lord in the name of Jesus.

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