

# Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

by Greg Locke

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*Greg Locke emphasizes the importance of focusing on spiritual growth and the ultimate prize in Christ amidst life's distractions.*

**Duration:** 16:17

**Topics:** "Christian Joy", "Faithful Service"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Philippians and how it teaches us about experiencing joy. The word 'joy' or 'rejoice' is mentioned 17 times in just four chapters of Philippians. The preacher highlights three key points: Paul's past, where he emphasizes that confidence in the flesh is not the source of true joy; Paul's pursuit, where he encourages believers to press toward the goal of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and Paul's price, where he emphasizes that serving God is not about personal gain but about faithfully preaching the word and enduring afflictions. The sermon concludes with a story about Moses and the Red Sea, illustrating the importance of trusting in God's power and provision.

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## Transcript

...travels as an evangelist the past four years with his wife, Melissa. I want to introduce to you the evangelist, Greg Block. God bless you, brother Greg.

Thank you for coming. If you have your Bible tonight, you can turn to the book of Philippians, chapter number 3, and let me say, it would be an understatement to say that this is a blessing, this is a great honor and a great privilege for me to be able to come back to my church and my school and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. What a blessing that is.

I'd like you to all stand, please, out of respect for the Word of God. As you follow along with your heart and mind, as I read Philippians, chapter number 3, and we're going to begin in verse number 7. I had a phone call tonight before we came from one of the seniors. He said, keep it short, simple, and to the point.

So that's what I'm going to do tonight. I'm reminded of a young man who went to school. He came back home one day from Sunday school, and his mother said, Son, do you remember what you learned? And he said, Yes, I do.

He said, As a matter of fact, we learned about Moses, the great military commander. And one day they came to the Red Sea and said the Egyptians are after them. And so Moses began to pray, and God sent

out the army and the navy, the marines and the air force, and just about everything you can imagine.

And all the artillery said they got the land-to-sea bridge builders, said they brought in the helicopters and they brought in the tanks, they brought in all these things, and said they began to build the bridge longer and longer and longer, and eventually it spanned miles and miles all the way across the Red Sea. And said they got to the other side, and before they'd completed it, they'd put some dynamite on the bottom of it so when the Egyptians came across, it would detonate and explode and throw all the Egyptians down to the bottom of the Red Sea. And said, sure enough, they got over there.

Moses got down and began to pray and said, God, let the detonators go off. He pushed the big red button, and kaplooeey, everybody fell into the Red Sea. And his mother looked at him and said, Junior, now is that really what you learned in Sunday school? He said, no, ma'am, but if you won't believe a fact like that, you certainly won't believe the way they told me, that's for sure.

Amen. And so I hope you young people never forget what you've learned the past few years that you've been in school. Philippians chapter number 3, we begin our reading in verse number 7. The apostle Paul said, But what things were gained to me, those I counted lost for Christ.

Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do counten but dung that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead, not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also am I apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I'm preaching tonight to the entire congregation, but especially to these in the first few rows, and I had a simple message entitled, Keep Your Eyes on the Prize. Thank you very much. You may be seated.

Let's bow our heads and hearts and have a simple word of prayer tonight. Father, I pray very humbly, very honestly, that you would help me tonight as I preach the wonderful word of God. And Lord, just as much, if not more, I pray that you would help these as they listen.

Use the word of God as a great hammer and as a great fire tonight, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. In the four chapters of the book of Philippians, the Apostle Paul is writing and telling the church at Philippi how they can experience joy.

Seventeen times the word joy or rejoice is used in just these four short chapters. As a matter of fact, a verse that we've quoted many times. Philippians chapter 4, verse number 4 of the Bible says, Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.

But in chapter number 3, the Apostle Paul begins to tell you and I as God's people how we can truly have joy in our life. Very simple outline tonight, if you have your Bible open. I want you to look please, if you would, at verse number 4 of Philippians chapter number 3. I want you to see first of all tonight what I call Paul's past.

Paul's past. Philippians chapter 3 and verse 4. Paul said, Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Now here's the reason.

Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the triumph of Benjamin, and Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law of Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gained to me, those I counted lost for Christ. The Apostle Paul begins to reminisce about his past.

Now one thing that the Apostle Paul never did with his past was gloat in it. He was never happy about what he used to be. He was never excited about the fact that as a religious lost man that he always persecuted the church.

But something that I noticed, how God used the Apostle Paul greatly, probably one of the greatest pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and authors, the greatest Christian for that matter, that ever walked the face of God's green earth. Although he did not gloat in his past, Paul never forgot where he came from. As a matter of fact, he stood before Herod.

He stood before Agrippa and some great magistrates and presidents and men of high degree. And he would stand before them and they would say, All right, big boy, what's your story? And he'd say, Well, let me tell you then. I don't have much to say, but one day I was on the road to Damascus to go persecute the Christians.

And he said, All of a sudden a light brighter than the new day sun smote me off my horse and put me on the ground and my face was in the dirt. And I heard a voice that said, Saul, Saul, it's hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he said, Lord, who art thou? And the moment he got saved by the grace of God, he said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? They thought that's an interesting story, but they still put him in jail.

Two chapters later, Acts chapter number 16, he's standing before another man. And he comes and says, Listen, you're fixing to go to jail. Which, by the way, the Apostle Paul was accustomed to jail because he spent most of his writing time and most of his preaching time there.

And they said, What's your story? He said, You won't believe it, but let me tell you this for a minute. He said, One day I was on my way to Damascus to persecute the Christians. And he said, All of a sudden a light brighter than the new day sun smote me off my horse and down to the ground and my face was in the dirt.

And he told everybody, everywhere he went, that story of how God saved him and miraculously delivered him on the road. And he did not gloat in it, but Paul never got over his past. That's why he could say in 1 Corinthians chapter number 15, I am what I am by the grace of God.

And by the way, ladies and gentlemen, tall, short, fat, skinny, hairy headed, bald headed, makes no difference, red, yellow, black and white, we all are what we are by the grace of God. And young people, don't you ever forget your past. It's not your own whims.

It's not your own smarts. It's not what got you here today. It is the glorious grace of almighty God.

And Paul never got over what God did for him. And we ought not to either. But also, I don't only want you to see Paul's past.

I'll tell you what kept Paul going. Paul had a passion. His passion is in verse number 10 of Philippians chapter 3. Would you look there? He says very simply that I may know him.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, we could preach a long time, although we will not. We could preach a long time on that one little phrase that Paul said, I may know him. He did not say, I want to be a fancy-dancy preacher.

He did not say, I want to be known by the world. He did not say, I want fame, fortune, money, family, finances, or a paddle in the back. He said, I want one thing, and that one thing is to know God like I've never known him before.

The apostle Paul had one passion, and that ought to be the passion of every blood-bought, born-again child of God, especially you young people as you embark on life's highway. That passion ought to be able to know God and have the power of God upon your life and upon your Christian testimony. If you watch TV, you're going to come across a fellow one day by the name of Bill Gates.

Now, I don't know any other way to say this except for this, being as nice as I can. Bill Gates is the richest man in the world, but I'm going to be honest with you, Bill Gates is a geek, all right? If you ever see Bill Gates on TV, he's the most interesting case to study in the world. Here's a man that has trillions and billions and googolillions of dollars, I mean, just money flowing out.

He's having trouble giving a million dollars away every single day. He can't find enough organizations that want a million dollars a day. Now, friend, I got news for you.

I believe I can think of a few things I could do with a million dollars, and I think there's probably some organizations and ministries I could think of. But here's a man that gets up on TV. His hair looks like he hasn't combed it in three weeks, like he just got out of bed and has cowlicks all over it.

His tie is always way over here, and he gets up and he's worth billions and billions of dollars, and so I watched him on CNN about six weeks ago. A Korean fellow raised his hand at a press conference in Washington, D.C., and said, Mr. Gates, he said, what does it feel like to be not the richest man in America but to be the richest man in the entire world, to have money in banks all over the world? He said, what is that like? And Bill Gates, with his own mouth, got close to the microphone and looked at that man and said, Sir, this is just the tip of the iceberg. He said, I want more, more, more.

And you know what I think about Bill Gates' statement? And you know what I think about Bill Gates' big bucks? He can have every cotton-picking dime. He can have it all. I'm not interested in his money.

I'm interested in one thing, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and have the power and glory of God upon my life, and that should be your passion as well. And by the way, let me just remind you and remind Mr. Bill Gates that the Bible says in the book of Psalms, chapter number 32, that riches make themselves wings and fly away with the morning. And bless God, you're not taking a dime with you to heaven.

I'll promise you that right now. And here was a man that had a path that he never got over, and here was a man that had a great passion that I may know him. But I want you to look now, please, if you would, at

verse number 12.

The Apostle Paul in verse number 12 says, Not as though I had already attained. Now, if Paul said he's not arrived, I don't know why some of us many times think that we have because we have not. You see, here's a man that was the greatest Christian, no doubt, that's ever lived, but he said, Listen, I've not arrived.

He said, I'm not sinlessly perfect to that point until I catch up glory dust on the streets of gold. I remember when I first started traveling evangelists and my wife and I would pull in and I'd hold a meeting and a dear old sweet lady would come to me after the service and she'd shake my hand and she'd say, Brother Locke, she'd say that was the best message I've ever heard in my life and my head would swell up like a watermelon I couldn't get in the minivan. And I was so proud until one day it dawned on me she told that to the last 35 speakers that came through that church as well.

You see, friends, we all put on our socks the same way. There's nobody arrived, there's nobody perfect, and there's no peripheral supermans in the world. Paul said he's not arrived.

And he goes on to say, Not as though I had already attained. Either were I already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, God's people, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

Number one, his past. Number two, his passion that he may know God. But number three, I like what I call his pressing.

The Apostle Paul said that he was a man that pressed toward the mark. The word press is the Greek word agonisima from where we get our word agonized. The Apostle Paul said, Listen, it cost me something to serve God.

He was a man that was spit upon. He was a man that in the book of Acts, he was stoned outside the city of Lystra. He was left for dead.

He just picked up his Bible, dust the blood off, fixed himself up a little bit, got himself a few stitches, walked right back in there and just kept on preaching the word of God. They could not get this man down. I mean, they cursed him, they put him in jail, they spit on him.

In Acts chapter 28, he floated around on a board for a night and a day in the deep like a toothpick in a bathtub. And he was a man that just could not be put down. He continually pressed, pressed, pressed, and he strained to serve the Lord.

And some of you young people, I don't know if you're going to go to a secular school, I don't know if you're going to go to a Bible college, but you're going to get in a Bible college and you're going to get yourself some mealy mouth job flipping hamburgers this, that and the other, and you're going to get discouraged and you're going to run out of money and you're going to seem like the heavens are brass and you've been praying for money and it's not coming down your school bill and you're thinking to yourself, I want my mama back, I want my daddy back. You say, well, that won't happen to me. You just wait till you get to college, you'll find out that it will.

And you're laying there in that lonely bed and you're miles and miles and centuries away from home and you think to yourself, man, I've just got to go home, I've just got to call mama, I don't care if I get a thousand demerits, get me kicked out of here, let me say to you, just keep on pressing, just keep on fighting, just keep on straining, just keep on going because God will use those that sweat for His glory. Can I announce to you tonight that we have it real easy when it comes to serving God in America, but also may I announce to you that it may not always be this easy. And I think, my dear friend, that we will press then if we are pressing now.

I read an article when I was in Bible college whenever the Olympics came to Atlanta, Georgia. I mean, hotels were filling up everywhere and I believe it was the 100-meter dash. I'm not sure, don't quote me on that.

But I was reading and it had this article about these ladies that were running in this 100-meter dash and I looked at the front cover and I can't remember the young lady so we'll call her John Doe or so-and-so, all right? And so I remember looking at the front cover and there were three ladies all side by side and they had the finish line all going across their stomachs and it looked like they were all going across at the same time. All of their hands were behind them, they were on their tiptoes, their necks were outstretched like a bunch of giraffes and I mean they were pressing and they were straining and they were doing their dead-level best to get across that line. And you know what the caption on the front page of the Atlanta Times was at the bottom of that picture of that race? It said, so-and-so wins by an eyelash.

And some of you ladies say, hey, thank God for Maybelline, huh? So the truth of the matter is, here's some people, every one of them were straining, every one of them were pressing, I mean they were sweating to get across that line but only one of them won. You say, yeah, but she only won by an eyelash. Doesn't make any difference, she still won.

And here was a picture in the secular field of people that were straining, of people that were agonizing, people that had disciplined themselves to press toward the march. And friend, let me say tonight, we need some pressers. We need some people that are willing to sweat and that are willing to strain.

But if you would look at verse number 14, we'll be through it in just a moment. The Bible says in verse 14, Paul did I press toward the march for the want, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. You got it? Lastly, we see what I call Paul's prize.

Paul did not serve God for what he could get out of it. Let me tell you what Paul served God for. He said in 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse number 1, I charge you therefore before God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge both the quick and the dead as his appearing, preach the word, talking to young Timothy.

Preach the word, be in season, out of season, reproof and rebuke of all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come, and by the way, already has come. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but heed to themselves teachers having itching ears, and shall turn their hearts away from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables, but watch not all things.

Endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist. Make full proof of thy ministry, for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight.

I have kept the faith. I have finished the course. He says in verse number 10, henceforth, because of this, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give

me at that day, and not unto me only, but unto them also, that love is appearing.

And the apostle Paul told young Timothy, hey, listen, the Romans are about to take me out. They're going to put me on my knees and put a potato sack over my head, and they're going to chop my head off via the guillotine, and down the palace steps my head's going to roll. He said, but that's all right, because God's going to pick it up and put a crown on it.

He said, Timothy, you just keep on preaching. He said, you keep on sweating, and you keep on straining. He said, because it's not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15, 58, Bible says, Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Why? For as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. And Paul was working for the prize.

He never got distracted. He never got to the place where he was so discouraged that he dropped out of the race. But he continually ran, keeping his eyes focused ahead of him, not to the left, not to the right, not putting his hand to the plow and turning back, but keeping his eyes focused on the prize.

And so you say, all right, the reason I should live for God then, or the reason that Paul lived for God, is so we can get a bunch of crowns one day. And everybody can look at us and say, look at what great Christians we were. No sirree bob, because you know what the Bible says in Revelation chapter 5? And they cast their crowns at the feet of the Lamb and said, Thou art worthy, he that was slain, redeemeth back to God again out of every nation, out of every kindred, out of every tongue, and out of every people.

And Paul said, the reason I am striving for a prize is not so I can get it and you can look at Paul, but so I can get it and you can look at Jesus. And friend, we need to sweat tonight. We need to strain.

You young people need to get to the place where you are working towards the prize that in all things he might have the preeminence. That Mr. Mr. John the Baptist, the greatest man that ever walked the face of God's great earth. Jesus said, the greatest man that ever came forth of a woman.

He said in John 3.30, He must increase and I must decrease. And friend, there's a great prize. There's a great need for people to stand up and have a passion to know God.

Listen, I'm through. There was a man in church history by the name of Christmas Evans. Christmas Evans was an evangelist.

He was a unique fella. He weighed about 355 pounds. He outlived three wives and had about 15 different children.

Here's a man that had a patch over one of his eyes. He had a broken shoulder most of his life that doctors could not mend. He was a man that was in and out of pain and always in pain, but yet he preached over 75,000 different gospel sermons around the world.

On his death bed, his son came to him and said, Father, I've got your diary and I want to make one last entry in your diary. I'd like you to know what you'd like to tell Christianity down through the years and down through the centuries now that you're dying. And he said simply these words.

He said goodbye and go on. And young people, tonight at this graduation ceremony, our hats spiritually are off to you. And we say tonight to you, thank God for all that you've done.

And tonight might I say to you goodbye, but go on for the glory of God. And Paul said, just keep pressing.

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