

Jesus First. Always.

Lesson for Sunday, January 5, 2025

TEXT: Philippians 3:12-14

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Happy New Year! It's a new year with new opportunities! It's the time of year that everyone begins to dream about a better everything (person, relationships, spiritual walk, financial status, etc.). Ask: Has anyone set a goal (or goals) for 2025? Anyone willing to share? *Allows for discussion...*
- ⇒ According to sources, the top New Year's Resolutions are: save more \$\$; be happy; improve physical health; improve mental health; lose weight; get organized; learn a new skill; spend more time with family.
- ⇒ The point of today's lesson is simple: In 2025: Jesus first. Always. (In all things.)
- ⇒ There isn't a more important goal than that! Let's look at a text when Paul shared with us his goal of putting Jesus first and his attitude that shaped this specific goal.
- ⇒ Read today's text.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. **Assessing** His Situation (vs. 12).
 - a. When setting a new goal, you must define reality (Max DuPree).
 - b. First, note how Paul assessed himself **realistically** (12a).
 - i. Paul did not feel he had arrived nor was he ready to rest on his laurels.
 - ii. This is an amazing thought when we consider where Paul was in life. Philippians was being written in a Roman jail cell. His death was coming soon!
 - iii. That means most of his accomplishments were already complete!
 1. Paul had planted numerous of churches and had evangelized entire areas of the map!
 2. Paul had influenced a number of young men to follow his example (Timothy, Luke, Titus, etc.).
 3. Paul had performed miracles (healing the lame, casting out demons, curing the sick, etc.).
 - iv. With all that he had accomplished, he still said, "I haven't arrived yet!" The word "perfect" means consummated or to make a full end.
 - v. Paul was assessing his situation in the light of cold facts: the work of world evangelism was barely begun.
 - vi. QUESTION: Is Jesus first in every area of your life? What areas do you need to assess realistically? Now is not the time for excuses. Now is the time for a realistic assessment.
 - c. Second, note how Paul assessed himself **resolutely** (12b).
 - i. Paul borrows from the language of an athlete: "I am pressing on with a view to seizing that for which I have been seized."
 - ii. The word translated "follow after, press on" is the same word translated "persecuting" in Philippians 3:6.
 - iii. The same kind of commitment that once drove Paul to stamp out Christianity now drove him on to plant Christianity everywhere he could!
 - iv. Paul had one consuming passion: to get hold of that for which Christ had gotten hold of him. Or to say it another way, Paul had a consuming passion: Jesus first. Always.
 - v. QUESTION: If we were to follow you for a week and observe everything about you, what would we conclude is your consuming passion? Would it be Jesus?

2. **Adjusting** His Sights (vs. 13-14).
- a. A **Full** Start (13a):
 - i. Have you read Philippians? It is a beautiful short book that centers on the joy that putting Jesus first brings. Some of the greatest spiritual truths are contained in its chapters, and some of the most familiar verses are found on its pages (1:6; 1:21; 2:3-11; 3:7, 10; 4:6; 4:13; 4:19).
 - ii. Yet Paul states clearly, "I don't think I have grasped all that there is to grasp! I have not arrived yet!"
 - iii. From an earthly position, Paul's life seemed to be coming to an end. But in his mind, he still had so much to do! He wasn't comfortable with his accomplishments. He was energized to continue all-out for his Lord.
 - iv. QUESTION: In your mind, have you already arrived? Or is there more out there you want to grasp for?
 - b. A **Fresh** Start (vs. 13b-14)
 - i. First, we see Paul's **plan** (13b).
 - 1. The past was the past. Thank God for it, but it was the past.
 - 2. The work was unfinished. Paul decided there was only one thing for him to do: begin again as though nothing at all had already been done.
 - 3. He was setting his sights on new targets that were in front of him.
 - 4. Notice that his plan began with the thought, "This one thing I do!" DL Moody used to say, "It is better to say, 'This one thing I do,' than to say, 'These 40 things I dabble with.'"
 - 5. When we say, "Jesus First," that's our "one thing."
 - ii. Second, we see Paul's **prize** (14).
 - 1. Throughout this passage we see Paul as a man running a race. His head is thrust forward, his expression is set in fiercely determined lines, his body is straining toward the goal...
 - 2. Every last ounce of energy and will power he has is being intentionally spent to win the prize.
 - 3. What is the prize? "The high calling of God." What motivated Paul was Christ.
 - 4. QUESTION: What is it that motivates you?

APPLICATION/DISCUSSION: What will our lives look like when Jesus is first? What areas of our lives should we evaluate as we seek to allow Jesus to be first – always?

- ⇒ Strive to make Jesus first in the first times of the day (start the day with the Bible on your lap).
- ⇒ Strive to make Jesus first on the first day of the week (be in church).
- ⇒ Strive to make Jesus first in the first dime of every dollar (stewardship).
- ⇒ Strive to make Jesus first in the first in your home.
- ⇒ Strive to make Jesus first in the first in your habits.

This outline was taken from John Phillips's commentary on Philippians.