

One Thing

31 - Living the Simple Gospel: Philippians
Church on the Park | Sunday, 10 Sept 2017

Text: Philippians 3:7-16

Theme: The simple life is the most effective life.

Intro: I come to this passage with some inner conflict and hesitation. This passage is the pinnacle of Philippians—it's one of the most important passage of Scripture and also one of my favourites. All of Scripture is holy ground, but here we are coming into the holy of holies. I am afraid to touch the ark. But I also want to do justice to this passage. So what should I do? I'm going to focus on the one thing I believe God wants to speak to our congregation this morning. It all revolves on Paul's one thing—his sole purpose and passion. He says, "But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). Paul then goes on to tell us to follow in his footsteps.

1) Simplify your life down to one thing (Phil 3:12-14).

- In this passage we see Paul describing the life of faith as a **journey, pilgrimage** or **race**.
 - You've got to **leave all behind** to **keep pressing forward**.
 - Your **eyes** have to be on the **goal** if you are going to **win**.
- Someone on a **pilgrimage** has **one thing** in mind: getting to their **destination**.
 - If they don't keep that **one thing** before their **eyes**, they will end up **off course**.
 - Life is full of **distractions**—from people, from circumstances, from yourself and even from your spiritual adversary.
 - Without **simplifying** your life down to one thing, you'll never **reach** God's goal for you.
 - In the same way, if you are on a journey, you need to **lighten your load** to the essentials so that you can make your destination.
 - Remember **Mrs. Chew's testimony** about the **luggage** when she came back from European adventure.
- Here's the thing: with the Christian life, it's **not** about **your goals** anymore, it's about **God's goal** for you.
 - **Faith** means an **exchange** of **your one thing** for his **one thing**.
- **Before I was saved**, I had one thing in mind: I wanted to be a great business leader and entrepreneur. I wanted to build skyscrapers and casinos, as well as trade in stocks and bonds, and develop businesses.
 - But between the ages of seventeen and eighteen, the Lord began to **wrestle** with me—to **lay hold of me** (καταλαμβάνω, *katalambano*).
 - It took about one year of God wrestling with me and convicting me before I surrendered.
 - Here I discovered that **salvation** begins with **God's pursuit** and **conquest of you**. And our **flesh** first **fights** against it.
- When I came to that point of surrender, I was just about to begin university—business school to be exact.
 - But now I knew God's call for my life and it was to be pastor. So I really wanted to go to Bible School. (Bible School was different then. You had to study full time during the day; there was no evening school that I was aware of).
 - But God said, "No! I want you to finish your business school first. Afterwards, you can go to Bible School."
 - Here I discovered who was **Lord**. Jesus just claimed **four years** of my life.
 - Then I was about to get engaged to my girlfriend and God said, "No" to that too. Now God was claiming not just four years, but **all my plans**.
- The Lord was **laying hold of me, seizing me**, like he did Paul. That's really what **salvation** is: **God taking hold of you**.
 - Just like **Joshua** took hold of the **Promised Land**, Jesus takes hold of your soul. You are now his.

- While at first this is **both glorious and painful**, you begin to learn God has **better plans** for your life.
- When God gets a hold of your life **he simplifies** it, just like a **gardener prunes** a rose bush back so that it can be fruitful.
- For a **sauce** to be exceptional it must be **reduced**. In the same way, the Master Chef, Jesus Christ, wants to **reduce your life to one thing**.
- *What is the one thing?*

2) Make your one pursuit knowing Jesus and carrying out his will (Phil 3:10-11).

- **Paul simplifies** his life down to **one thing: knowing Christ**. That is **growing in knowing Jesus intimately**. Not just a mental knowledge, but a **deep personal knowledge of Jesus**.
- And knowing Christ meant one thing: **taking hold of Christ** in the same way **Christ took hold of him**.
 - It meant a **straining and stretching** for Jesus. It meant a **passionate pursuit**.
- Paul teaches us that this is **not just 'his thing'** but that all who are **mature** will have this one **pursuit** (Phil. 3:15-17).
- There's also **three other passages** that talk about '**one thing**'. I'd like us to look at them.
 - **Psalm 27:4 - David's pursuit**
 - **Mark 10:21** (17-31) - Jesus' encounter with the **Rich Young Ruler**.
 - **Paul** in Philippians **reminds us** of this **rich young ruler**, but Paul responds to Jesus, while the rich young ruler goes away grieving.
 - The rich young ruler was a **righteous man**, but your **righteousness cannot save you**. Your goodness will keep you from God's goodness.
 - *What was the one thing the rich young ruler was missing?* It wasn't selling everything. It was **Jesus**—that was the one thing he was missing. It was the stuff, his possessions, that was keeping him from following Jesus.
 - The lesson: **get rid of everything that is keeping you from following Jesus**.
 - **Luke 10:42** (38-42) - **Mary and Martha**
 - *What was the one thing that was necessary?*
 - Sitting at Jesus' feet, soaking in his words (v. 39).

3) Don't let your past define your future (Phil. 3:13-14).

- Paul says, "**Forgetting what lies behind**."
- We have **two errors** with regard to our past: 1) taking **pride** in our **successes**, or 2) being filled with **shame** for our **failures**.
 - Both the **good and the bad** when need to **leave behind**. **Learn** from it, but **don't focus** on it.
- **Paul** had to **leave behind his family** and what **they valued**—the righteousness of the law. In other words, being a **good and successful Jewish boy** and man.
- Paul also had to leave behind the **guilt of persecuting Christians**—tearing apart families and putting many to death. Of course, he put them to death legally, on the grounds of blasphemy and keeping the law. But the Jewish interpretation on the law was wrong.
 - Both the **good and the bad weighed heavily** upon his conscience.
 - What Paul says in Philippians, came out of his **own struggle and strain**.
- You may have had a **good past** or a **shameful past**—**both** can keep you from **fulfilling God's purposes**.
- You'll only find your **destiny** in **Jesus Christ**—**knowing him** and **carrying out his will**.
- There's also **pain** that many carry from our **past**—things that have been **done to you** through **people** and **circumstances**. These will **weigh you down**. They can even cause us to become **bitter** and have a **negative attitude** about life.
- If you keep looking back your like someone driving who constantly looks in the **rearview mirror**. Eventually, if you keeping looking back, you will crash. Or, like **Lot's wife**, turn into a pile of salt.

Conclusion: It's easy to make life more complicated than God meant it to be. Your life is about one thing: knowing Jesus. Make him your passionate pursuit. And don't let your past define your future.