

Series:	Reference:	Title:	Date:
	Philippians 3:13-21	Delayed Gratification	07.14.2019
<p style="text-align: center;">Website Writeup:</p> <p>Do we live with the end in mind in delayed gratification for the sake of Christ in the world? Or, do we mask our desire for instant gratification in the loose fitting shirt of Christian Culture? Hard questions!!</p>			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

I've decided to add a fifth sermon in our leadership series before I take off on vacation!

In the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus calls us to certain things we've looked at for weeks. Jesus authority. Go & make disciples of all nations (people groups). Baptize them. Teach/train them to follow all Christ commands. And lastly, *there's an end in mind* & He's with us. We must keep this end in mind, lest we lose hope!

Our hope isn't only Jesus for us right now, but His full reign of peace, restoring the world to what it was created to be. In the meantime we work to bring His message to all people groups. The Scriptures lead from the fledgling start in the Garden of Eden in Genesis, all the way to the City of God in Revelation, where Christ rules fully in peace & justice. It's that for which all humanity longs, although they may not have come to that conclusion; wholeness & salvation are found in Jesus - nowhere else. We all have that longing, some just haven't awoken to the fact that Christ is the only answer for it.

Living with the end in mind seems like a great idea, until you have to implement it! We live in a fast & furious culture under the mantra of *instant gratification*. Businesses like McDonalds where the first to reflect this inner desire in us. We almost disregard learning now, given we have a smart phone in our pocket with greater computing power than the first space flight! "Siri, how do I get to Timbuktu?" "Siri, how many feet are in a mile?" Have your battery die on a road trip & try to find a paper map, let alone use it!

Some of that's very useful, but it causes us to cut corners in human development. And very much of it brings greater darkness to life, given what's now at our fingertips, a young boy of 14 would've had to find someone to buy for him 30 years ago! And content becomes evermore deviant. Social conditioning & numbness come from everything now instantly thrown at us on a consistent basis. We're more impolite, angry & stressed out. We post in social media things we'd never say in polite company, which isn't integrity, it's just rudeness! Instant gratification isn't actually that helpful.

This can easily be imported into the church with every good intention, and end up in disaster. In character, church development & spiritual formation, slow growth is solid growth. Anything worth while takes time to build & isn't worthy of corner-cutting. In seeking to move us & our church forward, we must serve now with the greater end in mind. Leaders must lead towards the end in order to break through faith barriers.

Kim had a chore system while homeschooling our kids. She had a play cash register with fake money. Chores were worth certain amounts. Cleaning your bedroom, bathroom, taking out the trash, cooking dinner, each had a certain dollar amount. Cleaning the bathroom was worth more than taking out the trash. They could cash in for various things like 'free soda day', 'free snack day', or the most expensive, 'No school day'! Of course my kids being as intelligent as they are quickly figured out that the piece de resistance was to save up all your money & cash it in all at once. I knew when that happened when coming downstairs at 11am with one of my kids on the couch, having just woke up themselves eating pop tarts & popcorn, drinking a coke, wrapped in a blanket, watching cartoons, while all the other kids were in the basement doing school! They'd saved up all their money & bought free snack day, free soda day, and no school day all at once! They'd practiced delayed gratification & were living the adolescent dream!

One of the best kept spiritual secrets is **delayed gratification** - focusing on what's central (Jesus & His call) with the end in mind to maintain what's of eternal importance (the final reign of God once more). It's surrender of our own will, ministry & success for God's measure of those metrics.

An important focus to maintain is the knowledge, no matter what people in our culture, or some seemingly successful pastors in churches say, the Christian life *isn't* about '*your best life now*'. To follow Jesus faithfully is, in part, an acknowledgment, our best life comes *later* & our lives right now should reflect this reality. An important aspect of breaking through barriers revolves around this important principle - living out of the abundance of our lives to come.

I'd like to present to you a number of shifts such a focus engages from Philippians 3:13-21: *Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what's behind & reaching forward to what's ahead, 14 I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore, all who are mature should think this way. And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this also to you. 16 In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained. 17 Join in imitating me, brothers, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us.*

18 For I have often told you, and now say again with tears, that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction; their god is their stomach; their glory is in their shame. They are focused on earthly things, 20 but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject everything to Himself.

Our best life is yet to come!

Paul had, **A positive change of perspective...**

Paul, in Phil. 3:4-7, speaks of his own changed heart, life & perspective. He details his reasons to have confidence in the flesh, or we may say, his own abilities... *I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. ⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.*

Religiously Paul was at top the of his game. Oozing credentials, he had every reason to take pride in his knowledge, ability & status. But that all proved for naught upon being knocked off his horse when **Jesus said to him, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. ⁶ “Now get up & go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (Ac 9:5–6.)** The guy who barked orders at everyone else, was now going to be told what to do. **This was a humbling moment for Paul to meet Jesus in this miraculous encounter.**

In the city, where Jesus told him to go, he met Ananias, to whom the Holy Spirit had given a heads up about Paul’s coming, *“This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles & their kings & to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” (Ac 9:15–16)*

So, Paul who’d brought suffering on so many Christians, was now called to suffer for Christ himself! What a change of circumstances in the blink of an eye! All of what Paul was had been upended! In Paul’s meeting Jesus it resulted in a complete transformation & redirection of life purpose. It ruined his plans. Has Jesus ruined yours? Or are you still riding your horse, thinking you’re all that?

Because this change of perspective brings about an increased fruitfulness in ministry. After meeting Jesus Paul absolutely embodied the Great Commission! And like him, sometimes we ‘think’ we’re doing ministry, but we’re really just living in religiosity, pursuing only safety & comfort, taking no real risk in our walk with Christ. Up to the point where Christ transformed Paul’s life, the fruit of his ministry was an anathema to God. But now, everything which flowed from complete surrender & intentional Gospel direction bore lasting fruit for God’s kingdom through Paul.

What are you attempting to do in your God-given ministry? Do you see your circumstances as orchestrated by God for your good & the furtherance of His purposes? Are you willing to be knocked off your horse to suffer for Jesus? Or are we still pursuing self-gratification? When Jesus says, “They need your ministry right now, go.” Or, if we have a Kingdom Opportunity in our community, do we find a reason not to engage? Or, when Jesus says, “Pray for that person, right now.” Do we think, “I’m uncomfortable with that!” Does anyone you work with know you’re a Christian? Do you come here on Sundays, but have a whole different set of friends who’d never know you were a Christian by how you live? Don’t you hate that your pastor’s asking these questions!?! Do we make excuses?

I'm not talking about *not* having healthy boundaries in life. That's taught in the Scriptures as well, but it's always taught in the balance of expending ourselves for the sake of ministry. Jesus sent out the 72 disciples to do ministry. **The boundaries He set were,** ⁸ *“When you enter a town & are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there & tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰ But when you enter a town & are not welcomed, go into its streets & say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ (Lk 10:8–11)*

We're to be busy in ministry towards others, not wasting our time with those who constantly deny what Jesus offers. That's sometimes complicated, but it is a general principle & we can always pray for anyone, anytime. Right now isn't the time for comfort, it's the time to expend ourselves in good strong faith risks of ministry to those who need Jesus both within & outside the church!

We must seek to build as a local Body of Christ...**A culture of transition & not one of having arrived...** Salvation isn't the end game just waiting for Jesus to return. At no point in Paul's life did he give anyone the impression he'd 'arrived' despite his credentials. Paul understood the underlying reality - our lives on earth aren't to be seen as a cul-de-sac in God's eternal dream. As *pilgrim people*, our present lives shape what's to come & our eternal lives shape the present.

Francis Chan did a sermon once where he had a rope extending from the pulpit all the way out the door, with an inch painted red at the end in his hand. He explained, many live for that 1 inch, when there's an eternity ahead of us. There's a real & meaningful interaction of these realities as we minister in the world to people we encounter. Are we people who see with eternal eyes in delayed gratification, or live in instant gratification? Paul likens life to a race - one in which we all train our bodies & even deny it comfort to compete for the prize at the end. We need to live with God's end in mind - not our own gratification.

In a transitory pilgrim church culture we cultivate - **A generous spirit in a stingy world...** Paul's life was lived in generosity. He emptied himself in service to Christ! In verse 17 Paul instructs the Philippians to imitate him in their own lives, to pattern their lives after the example they saw in Paul's life. That's Discipleship - as Jesus modeled to Paul, emptying Himself out for the world, Paul does the same for others & like Jesus, Paul expected the same of those he disciplined.

What example are we setting for others? Does leadership expect people to give & serve beyond the self-imposed limitations of our leadership & lack of godly example? Does leadership tell you to do this or that, but not do it themselves? Should people really do as we say & not as we do? The Christian life is to be lived in ostentatious generosity, which is fueled by love for God & a desire to see His kingdom come, more than to build a

name for ourselves. Living in this manner is both counter-cultural & also brings little tangible reward - at least in the ways we see in the present.

I told the workers downstairs last week, they have a great job - they get to see the end result of every job. A freshly painted wall. Upgraded kitchen. They see the end result, very satisfying. Christian Disciplers/Leaders don't have that luxury! Everyone's always a work in progress until Jesus comes back! But that doesn't mean the work isn't worth it! It very much is - it brings a lot of joy, mixed with all the necessary growth pains.

Let's pursue God's prize, let's strive forward with God, forgetting the past, for we know, God's got great plans for the future with us in mind! We hope for the future using the present moment before us with people to bring about a greater reality of the kingdom!

We're the people of God which live out of - **A growing hope that greater things are yet to come...** Paul's great statement in verse 20, '*...but our citizenship is in heaven...*' is something of which we need reminding. Of course, Paul contrasts this verse to the previous one where he establishes a contrast to those in this world, whose focus is incorrect & is leading them astray. Their glory is their shame - they've received their reward in full. God's the SAME yesterday, today & forever more. God's not only present in our lives today, but is ahead of us in tomorrow. As a result of His sovereignty in all matters, Believers can rest in this & be assured our present transformation is a deposit securing all that's yet to come when all things will be made new!

We don't yet know of a world where sin doesn't reign - yet it *will* come to pass & we see glimpses of the in-breaking Kingdom of God now all around us! We've not yet fully been transformed into His likeness - yet a day is near when we'll be like Him fully! How we all long for such a day, yet this is our hope in a hopeless world - Christ is always King!

That's why Romans 15:13 has been such a formative verse for our church, because it speaks right into this living life of hope in the moment, extending into our future: *¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Application - How do we lead with the end in mind?

(1) *As disciples & leaders, we must be primarily committed to the message of the Gospel & the process of transformation in our own lives first. We need to validate our message for people & live out the Gospel among people.*

This means pursuing Christ in spiritually formative ways, which takes intentionality & effort. God isn't against effort, He's just against earning. We have a group of people training to be spiritual mentors for us. Utilize them when they're announced. But don't wait until then, get on it now! Have a quiet time. Read some good books. Make it priority to come to church every Sunday. Go to a Community Group & engage, participate in the Kingdom Opportunities which is our avenue for reaching our

community. Pray with & for others. Share your praises & requests. Confess your sin to one another. Your spiritual life will be proportionately vibrant to the effort you put towards it.

(2) We need to embrace the humble, pilgrim attitude - where we're journeying & don't yet consider ourselves to have arrived! Always remember, there's more to learn, more to experience & more ministry to be done!

(3) We must challenge people to spiritual maturity without spiritual shortcuts. Leaders must be less driven by results & more focused on transformation of the inner man. Matters of the heart trump ostentatious acts of righteousness. You & I cannot reach fullness in Jesus cutting corners. Having a private sin we refuse to deal with, but hoping that Jesus just overlooks - He calls us higher than that, and went to the cross so we can have victory in all areas!

(4) Our culture's doomed for destruction as enemies of the cross - we are called to redeem our culture through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit from the inside out. Part of this paradox is the realization, God doesn't always work the way we desire or expect - yet His work is perfect in every way. Don't be discouraged by what you see out there, God's not losing the battle & He's already won the war! As it says in 1 Jn 4:4,the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. A promise you can take to the bank!

(5) Transformational ministry is resultant from Spirit-filled, God-honoring & Christ-centered ministry. Neither cultural surrender, nor Gospel anemia will be sufficient for a ministry which keeps the end in mind & trades off what's simply good for what's best! Phil Strout, our Vineyard National Director, asked, "Since when did we stop asking the question, 'What do the Scriptures say?'" Let your national director lead you in that! That's the question every Christian needs ask all the time. Remember, culture always fluctuates. It ebbs & flows in & out of various false convictions - just because it's hard in some ways now, that'll change. And it'll become hard in others ways later - never, never, never give up on the consistent good teaching of Scripture as the God-breathed authoritative Word from God in all matters of faith & life!

Be solid. Jesus upheld the Scriptures in Matthew 5:19 He says, whoever practices & teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. I loved what Phil Strout said this week at the National Conference, "God will not lead the Vineyard into the weeds! We just have to obey & pivot when God calls us. Being missional means we keep one foot grounded, but the other foot in the air. We do not pivot away from the Scriptures, and we do not pivot on OUR preferred outcomes. But we pivot on God's promise & God's command."

Amen to that, solid, grounded, moving forward on the promises & commands of God! Don't we want to be called great in the kingdom of heaven?