

One Central Objective For 2009

Text : **Philippians 3: 1-16**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Do you have one clear goal for 2009 ?

1. Not a list of resolutions that won't be kept; one clear object ?
2. What one thing do you want to accomplish with your life this year ?
3. If everything else failed in your life, what one thing would you want **not** to fail.

B. Each ask our self : What one thing will be the compelling reference point around which I will center my life this year ?

1. You may never have thought about it. (**or** at best rarely thought of it.)
2. We all have things we would like to accomplish :
 - a. Some just want to make it through the year.
 - b. Strengthen our relationships.
 - c. Get a better job.
 - d. Get out of debt.
3. These are worthy goals, but not compelling goals, not something you can wrap your life around.

C. In our text Paul sets a goal for his life.

1. It was the goal for his life. not a fixed time period. (*a year, old age, etc.*)
2. If the goal Paul set was good for his whole life, it must be a good goal for each of us in 2009.

TRANSITION :

With this lesson, let us ask ourselves four questions :

1. What is the goal of life ? **Therefore**, what is the goal for 2009.
2. What are some obstacles to achieving that goal ?
3. How does one overcome those obstacles ?
4. What's the key to your attaining the goal ?

I. What is the goal of life ?

A. Vs. 8 .. Paul says the one thing he wants above all others is **“to know Christ.”**

1. He did not say that he wants to read and study to know more about Christ.
2. If it is not the acquisition of knowledge, how does one know he knows Christ ?

We know that we are coming to know Christ when we see in our lives the evidence of His life working within us.

B. A couple of things involved in coming to know Christ are :

1. To experience Him.
 - a. To come to understand what it means to live by faith. (**to feel totally secure**)
 - b. To have your life transformed by having come to trust Him completely.
 - c. Knowing Christ involves a fellowship with Him even in times of suffering.
 - d. It is to feel a relationship with Him, not just with His church or with His word.
2. We get to know Christ after we **get** what He is all about. (*understand, not just ..*)
 - a. We understand that Jesus is the gift that brings salvation to us.
 - b. Realize that getting to be a part of His church is great, but not the greatest gift.
 - c. Getting to go to Heaven is fantastic, but it's not the greatest gift.
 - d. Jesus is what makes the gospel **“good news.”**

*** If you went to a place called Heaven and lived forever, but God wasn't there, it wouldn't be worth having.**

C. Paul said he didn't care what he had to loose to get to know Jesus.

*** Are you willing to make that your goal for 2009 ?**

1. If you have anything else as your ultimate goal, you are aiming far too low.
2. If you have anything else as your goal and something catastrophic happens, what are you going to do ?
 - a. Suppose you are on track to accomplish your goal of paying off your debts.
 - b. That's a worthy goal, one worth having.

(** We Christians usually get hung up in good, but small goals like)*

- c. So what happens if you get disabled or loose your job ?
- d. What are you going to wrap your arms around then ?
3. **Where do you turn when your world is turned upside-down ?
If your ultimate goal is to know Jesus, you're already there.**

II. There are obstacles to achieving this goal.

A. Sin is an obstacle to one coming to know Christ. **Vs. 17-19**

1. There is only one number one so everyone has to make a choice.
 - a. We can set our goal on earthly things or on knowing Christ.
 - b. We can't do both. (**Everyone make a choice every day, not just once.**)
 - c. **Read ... Rom. 8: 5-8**
2. This is not to say that other goals are necessarily evil within themselves. (**earthly**)
 - a. Becoming debt free is certainly a goal worth having.
 - b. Such goals are earthly, perishable, temporary. (**self-centered .. it please ME**)
 - c. **Anything** which comes above God becomes an idol.
 - d. Satan delights in getting us so involved with good things we neglect the best.
3. No one can have two centers to his life.
 - a. **Luke 16: 13 - No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**
 - b. One can tell if his priorities are earthly or seeking after God by :
 - 1) What he thinks about the longest each day.
 - 2) What he spend the most time on each day.
 - 3) What he allocates the greater share of his resources to. (**earthbound thinking**)

B. Self-righteousness is one of the largest obstacles to a Christian.

1. There are two ways to avoid having God in your life :
 - a. To be wicked
 - b. To be very, very good
2. Our text contains Paul's confession to the sin of self-righteousness.
 - a. I believed all the right things.
 - b. I did all the right things.
 - c. I now count all this a refuge to be flushed away. (**Relationship is based on heart**)
3. When Christians get to feeling too good about ourselves, we're like Paul was.
 - a. We believe all the right things.
 - b. We conscientiously try to do what is right.
 - c. In order to keep on receiving forgiveness, we must admit that we keep on needing it. **I John 1: 6-2:2 (humble heart)**

III. There are four steps to overcoming these obstacles and getting to know Christ.

A. First : We must identify the sin in our lives.

1. Vs. 4-6 Paul points out his own sin.
 - a. He admitted that he struggled with self-righteousness.
 - b. He was seeking to establish himself as righteous on his own merit.
 - c. He did not even consider that evidence that Jesus is the Christ.
2. Right now - Take a moment to identify one sin in your life that keeps hindering you from having the relationship you could have with Christ.
 - * a. If you can't think of one, you just identified one ... self-righteousness.
 - * b. It could be such things as : worry, fear, pride, judging, unforgiving heart, gossip, dishonesty, lust, not being contented with God has given you, etc.
3. Think of one area of your life where you have to deal with self-righteousness.
 - a. Self-confidence ... I don't need God as much as those sinners.
 - b. Feeling entitled ... God should give me special favor because I'm active, good, etc.
 - c. Feeling better than others ... I could NEVER do _____. (Judgmental)
4. Each should ask ourselves,

“What's in my heart that could hinder my spirituality in 2009 ?”

 - a. Feelings of hurt and resentment ?
 - b. Even if it is not sin, it could be baggage that weighs you down spiritually.
 - c. **ILL.** Ships have to have the barnacles removed from time to time.

B. Second : Call all these things what they are : (Vs. 8)

1. Paul called all those things in his life “**loss.**”
2. He called them rubbish ... when compared to Christ.
 - * a. Everything on earth pales in comparison to Christ.
 - b. Greek word *skubalon* = 1 any refuse, as the excrement of animals, ...
1A of things worthless and detestable.
3. Thus, whatever a person accomplished on the earth is so worthless as to be flushed.
 - a. When one comes to know Christ he devalues the achievements of this earthly life.
 - b. One does not try to retrieve the filth he has flushed away.

C. Third : We must let go of the past and reach for that which lies ahead.

1. Most of the things we hang on to were really good or really bad.

2. In the text Paul identifies his quest for righteousness as an obstruction to his faith.
3. What obstructs your drawing nearer to Christ, to your coming to know Him ?
4. Paul was not telling us to forget all our good memories, **just the obstacles.**
 - a. The wounds ... the resentments
 - b. The practice of sins and the memories of sins
 - c. Those feelings of personal goodness.
5. **Forgetting what lies behind (Vs. 13) does not mean to literally cease to remember.**
 - a. We cannot develop selective amnesia.
 - b. It means to stop caring about things of the past.
epilanthanomai = 1 to forget. 2 neglecting, **no longer caring for.**
2 forgotten, **given over to oblivion,** i.e. uncared for.
 - c. Stop allowing what happened in the past to be determinative of what happens in the future

* Don't let the past come between you and Jesus.

D. Fourth : Keep your eyes on the goal.

1. **Goal :** *skopos* = the distant mark looked at
2. No one can look backward and forward at the same time.
3. We must keep ourselves lined up and on course to intersect with Jesus.
4. **ILL. -** When hiking in the wilderness one must keep his landmarks lined up.
 - a. It's the same in Life.
 - b. If you keep on looking back you'll surely go astray.
 - c. One who constantly looks down at his feet will go in circles. (**Stay lined up.**)

IV. These are the steps, but what is the key.

A. Steps take one to the door, but he must have a key to open it.

B. Realize that Jesus is the one who justifies you.

1. You cannot justify yourself or earn God's favor.
2. No one's path has been perfect or ever will be.
3. In Christ, He erases your mistakes. (**The past is gone.**)

C. We must treat other believers as if they are also justified.

1. We can't physically forget what others have done.

2. We can “*turn it over to oblivion.*”

- a. Stop holding it against them.
- b. Stop allowing it to affect the way we treat them.
- c. Stop allowing it to affect the value we place upon them.

D. Vs. 12 Believe that God (*through Christ*) has adopted you.

1. We can see the world and those loved ones around us, but we can't see God.
How can we value something we cannot see over something we can see ?
 - a. We know God loves us, but we can't see Him.
 - b. We're glad to be a part of God's family,
but we can't feel the warmth of His embrace.
2. When I'm with my friends and with my earthly family, they make me feel good.
3. When I buy things that I want, it makes me feel good.

E. Be confident that the Lord really will return to take us to His home in Heaven.

1. Presently, we live by faith.
2. If that faith prevails, we will experience the reality.
3. Each day (*month, year*) we leave the past behind and press forward by faith, not on the merits of our past.
 - a. There is no seniority system in the spiritual realm.
 - b. Each day the past is left behind.
 - c. Each day our faith must be new and in control of our lives.

CONCLUSION :

A. Let each one of us make it our goal to come to know Christ more intimately this year.

1. Let us allow our faith to transform us into His likeness.
2. May it guide and to direct our lives.
3. May it be that which gives our lives cohesion and meaning.

B. What is the central goal of your life ?

May it be to truly know Christ.

INVITATION :

If you are not in Christ you can never come to know Him.