

Series Title: **'Fulfilled: experiencing joy in unexpected places'**

Message Title: **'Forward'**

Scripture Source: **Philippians 3:12-4:1**

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Irrepressible

'You can't keep a good man, or good woman down.' Illustrate: Bob Kempainen story. What inspires some people to keep moving forward when hardships, disappointments, losses and setbacks are part of their story? Why do some people quit...and others forge ahead with tenacious resolve? A resolve permeated with purpose that yields a deep joy. What makes the difference?

Why at times have you moved forward when the odds were stacked against you? Illustrate: What can we learn from the apostle Paul about moving forward even though life can be hard and painful? We can glean significant insights and specific instructions from his story and choices.

You and I can forge ahead and experience God's presence and power in 'ragged edge realities'. God has not left us without resources. You are not abandoned by God. What does Paul's life teach us?

At least four crucial truths...which one has your name written all over it currently?

1. Paul is fuelled by purposeful resolves: Philippians 3:12-16
2. Paul is sustained by inspiring and instructive relationships: Philippians 3:17
3. Paul is alert to destructive voices: Philippians 3:18-19
4. Paul is inspired by a God-promised future: Philippians 3:20-4:1

In short, Paul holds tenaciously to 'resolves, resources, and reality checks.' The man radiates a joyous resilience, a passionate sense of adventure, where does this mindset and heart beat come from?

Moving Forward: It Starts Here... Purposeful Resolve: 3:12-16

Paul is deeply committed to and engaged in a relationship with Jesus, rooted in faith. Remember his passionate declaration of 3:10? He yearns to experience more fully the presence and power of Jesus in his 'real time' life. He is resolved to cultivate relationship and then engage in ministry. He will serve the purposes of Jesus even though it will involve in suffering for Jesus' sake.

He honestly acknowledges that he is not a perfect Christian who has 'arrived.' He believes that Jesus has engaged with him for a purpose...to become more like Jesus, in character and conduct. He believes that to follow and serve Jesus faithfully will lead to a 'well done' from Jesus. That fuels the man. He uses athletic imagery to underscore his point. "I press on...straining toward what is ahead...I press on toward the goal..." For Paul, the image of a long distance race illustrates the need for clarity of purpose and tenacity of resolve. He must move forward. He admits that he is not perfect, but he is making progress. God doesn't demand perfection from you, yet he does look for progress, from you.

What purpose fuels you forward? Is your purpose worth the effort? Are you settling for a purpose that doesn't call out the best from you...the best thoughts, prayers, choices, and resolves?

A critical resolve of Paul in moving forward is the resolute decision to put the past in its place. "This one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead." Vs.13 For many people experiences or decisions in their past make it very hard to move forward with purpose, joy, and hope. How about you? We all have a past. We need to think of our past honestly and accurately. And, with God's grace and truth intersecting with our past...so that we can move forward with fresh purpose.

Your past, are there sins to be forgiven, failures to learn from, disappointments and losses to mourn and grieve? Are there achievements and experiences to give thanks for and remember fondly? Take responsibility for your past. Address what or who needs to be addressed, with much wisdom, knowledge, and support and guidance from others when necessary. There may be consequences you and I will live with, painful ones, yet we can still move forward with God's purpose infusing us with hope and energy...to become more like Jesus and live more fully as a servant who contributes to others along the way. Jeremiah 29:10-15. Isaiah 43:18

Paul exudes tenacity of focus...he has experienced the mercy, grace and forgiveness of Jesus, this enables him to put his past behind him. Friends, let us refuse to be defined by our past, let us embrace the grand purpose of Christ and move forward, fuelled by the power of the Spirit of Christ within us. See Romans 8:10-15

Paul challenges himself and others to hold to the purpose of Christ and not be distracted or deterred moving forward. Vss. 15-16. Be unflinching in staying true to the truth of God, and continue to be teachable!

Moving Forward: Sustained by Inspiring and Instructive Relationships: Philippians 3:17

Paul strongly encourages his friends to follow his example and the personal example of other devoted Christ followers. What a bold and gutsy challenge! Compare 2 Timothy 3:10-11 1 Corinthians 11:1. If we would sustain our 'forward' momentum we need to learn from others and with others.

Whose life inspires and instructs you? Choose your relationships carefully. 'Relationships of merit.' Whose character and behaviour challenges you? Whose irrepressible sense of purpose inspires you? What is it about that person you admire and look up to? Be specific!

And, are you maturing as one others can be inspired and instructed by? That's an 'ouch' question!

Moving Forward: Alert to Destructive Voices: Philippians 3:18-19

There are people whose lives revolve around personal agenda, selfish indulgence, and a marginalizing of Jesus and his sacrificial death. Stay clear of their toxic presence.

Moving Forward: Inspired by Future Reality: Philippians 3:20-4:1

Our true place of belonging awaits us...and new heaven and new earth. Yet, let us remember that Christians are currently 'citizens of heaven.' And we wait for the second coming of Jesus. He will do transforming things...including renewing our bodies and completing the character transformation within. His mighty power will 'pull off' this transformation project. Think of it! No more illness, suffering, disability, limitations and the list goes on. And we will reign with him forever. That future prospect can infuse the weary heart with hope and resolve. And we move forward, with purposeful resolve, with the support of maturing and encouraging Christ followers, until that day of Christ's triumphant return.

With these instructions given, Paul passionately encourages them to 'stand firm in the Lord.' To be rooted in the love, grace, and truth of Jesus. To refuse to give up, but rather to follow Jesus forward.