

## Philippians 10-08-06a

This is the 6th of August 2010 and we continue our study in the book of Philippians. We're at the threshold and knocking on the door of chapter 4. We'll take a moment at the outset to exercise the privilege of our individual priesthood and going before the Lord and ensuring that we are prepared for the work of the Holy Spirit to make God's Word understandable and meaningful to each one of us. Shall we pray? Father it is always a time of reflection to look back over a week and see all of the ways that you have blessed and provided and given us occasions to learn and to be challenged and to make application of the things that we have learned from your Word.

We are thankful for this time of fellowship and of mutual encouragement and the ministry that comes from the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of each one present. We thank you for this portion of your Word and the truth that it contains and we ask your blessing on us as we study it together. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

We continue as I said right at the end of chapter 3 and beginning of chapter 4 and this is what Paul says at the end of chapter 3. Philippians chapter 3 verses 17 through 21. Brethren join in following my example and note those who so walk as you have us for a pattern. For many walk of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping that they are enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame who set their mind on earthly things for our citizenship is in heaven from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself.

What is the example that Paul is specifically referring to? I can't be an apostle I really don't have a desire to travel around through Asia Minor and get myself stoned and locked up and shipwrecked and all the other things that happen to Paul. We are reasonably confident in thinking that Paul is talking about his daily prioritization of the things of God. For him it was to be an apostle.

He was as we like to say in full-time Christian service. He didn't really have a job. He did not have a family.

He dedicated himself to being the apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and he says just a few verses up, I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Jesus has also laid hold of me. Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren I do not count myself to have grabbed hold, to have apprehended.

One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. That's the example. If you like clarifying things by marking your Bible you can circle the word example and just draw a line back up to verse 12 through 14.

That's what he says, join in following my example. His example is to forget what lies behind, reach forward to those things which are ahead. Where are the things which are ahead? How far ahead? You know this is the whole low beam, high beam, headlight decision.

When you're on a certain kind of road and there's a certain lack of traffic coming toward you, you want to be able to see further, turn on your high beams and you can see further out. Other times you want to see more closely and if it's obscured because of fog or snow or rain or whatever sometimes at night, your low beams actually do a better job because they sort of cut down to the ground and don't highlight and illuminate things that are actually obscuring your vision. So when we are forgetting those things which are behind, what would that be? We like to think that it's our sins.

I'm going to forget all my sins which are behind and I'm going to reach forward, I'm going to lean forward, I'm going to incline, push to the maximum extent toward what is ahead. Well this is where hermeneutics comes into play. This is where interpretation and application both come into view because it kind of depends.

And one of the great things about the level at which God has written the scripture, the communication in the Bible, is that it flexes to meet various exigencies. I wondered if that lever was up, Patty, and it's not. I looked earlier and I thought I saw it up but it's down.

The clock chime cancel lever that Mr. Moto up the clock shop just fixed for us and now does no good if you don't push it. Those things which are behind reaching forward to those things are ahead, which are ahead. I would suggest two of the areas where this directly applies is first of all in personal experience.

There are things in my past I would like to forget. Even in my recent past when I mess up, and I know I've messed up, I would like to cease being burdened with that knowledge. I would like to not have my mistakes dog my steps, and I would like to forget those things which are behind.

There are other things, if I did a good job or worked hard and something came out okay, I would like to remember that. So when it says forgetting those things which are behind, well there's some selectivity there, right? We don't want to forget everything which is behind. We have fragrance of memories.

We have wonderful, if you now in the age of video, you can be transported almost instantly back 10 or 12 or 15 years ago. We watched a home video that was taken back in the early 90s a few nights ago, and those are things I love to remember. I didn't wouldn't want to forget those things which are behind.

When our daughters were, you know, two, three, and four years old, they're killingly cute. Then parents can watch that stuff ad infinitum. It could be a six-hour tape.

Patty and I would sit there. They get tired. They wander off, and oh dad, you know, can't we watch something? But I don't want to forget that.

So just as an example, you know that when he says forgetting those things which are behind, there's a certain kind of thing which is in view, right? And one of those things are these things that God has fixed. Our sins, our failures, our shortcomings, the dismal negative things, we are not only allowed to, we are encouraged to forget. God has fixed it.

The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has cleansed us from all sin. When we acknowledge, and you don't have to go back and dig through and say, well, did I miss one? And that one is still floating like a landmine that I'm gonna circle around and hit and blow up, and oh, this is the reason you had this horrible, you came down with cancer because back 19 years ago you didn't ever confess the sin. That's not going to happen.

If we acknowledge our sins, if we have a pattern and an ongoing lifestyle of going to God and saying, Lord, here is an occasion where I need to apply the work of Christ and claim the cleansing grace that you offer, because I messed up. I have sinned. I have sinned against you.

I've sinned against others in my periphery. I acknowledge that, and I thank you for the work of Jesus Christ that frees me from the power of that sin, frees me from the guilt of that sin, frees me from the defilement and the pollution of that sin, and the judgment for that sin. Father, thank you.

Give me the strength to learn from this failure. May your strength be manifest in my weakness so that I don't turn this into a pattern. Help me in the future to think up some new creative kind of failure and sin and not, you know, just be in some endless debilitating cycle.

Give me strength. If I'm blind, if there's an area of your Word that I haven't sufficiently thought about and hasn't become real to me, bring it to my attention. May God, the Holy Spirit, there's a lot you can pray more than, Oh God, I just sinned.

Thanks a lot. Bye. If you're dedicated to trying to live a better life, you want to find these things.

You want the light of the Word of God to shine. You want to get better. And it may be a long, tedious process, but we have a long, tedious history of being defiled, conceived in iniquity, and born in sin.

And it is one of the biggest miracles that God ever pulls off to regenerate us in practice as well as in position. And that we're not just positionally delivered, but we are delivered from ourselves and from our nature and from our proclivities and from our poorer self. There's a lot you can pray, and I would encourage you to think creatively.

If you're going to claim 1 John 1.9 or Psalm 51 or the other great grace passages, do it creatively. Put some thought into it. Think about, is there a way I can encourage God to do what He does

best, which is to work things together for good? God can work my sin together for good.

God can illuminate. God can strengthen. They say a bone is stronger where it mends.

And so if I've messed up, may God strengthen me. We want to do that. So forgetting those things which are behind, we don't want to forget things like, I've got a pattern of failure here.

I need to beef up. I need to get strong. If I'm continuing to fail repetitively in an area, I am failing to claim God's grace in some way.

I need to figure that out. I need to break the cycle. I need to interrupt that pattern.

I need to shuck off that sin that so easily besets me, as it tells us in Hebrews. And run my race and stop falling down. Nobody turns on the Olympics and the World Championship sports to watch people jump out of the blocks and fall down and then get up and fall down.

The only people that like that are like Monty Python fans. But anybody that is tuning in to see athletics, they don't want to see you trip and fall and get up and trip and fall. And God doesn't want to see it either.

And if we are doing that, it's because we are missing something. Try tying your shoe. Try facing the right way down the track and you won't be bumping into things.

So when he says forgetting those things which are behind, we need to think about that a little bit. There are certain things we do not want to forget. The work of Christ in saving us is something behind.

We all have been saved, right? Some of us for years, decades, more than a half century in some cases. And that's more than one person in the room by the way. I'm not just talking about one of us.

I know at least two people have been saved for more than 50 years. So I say all that to say this. When Paul says one thing, forgetting those things which are behind, what kind of things? He doesn't say forgetting everything which is behind.

That would be disastrous. You know, this whole idea of forgetting, people bring it up in terms of the kingdom when the promise is made that there will be no more pain, no more tears, no more sorrow in the eternal future. And they say, well see, the only way you could have no more tears and no more sorrow is you would have to forget about your loved ones that didn't express faith in Christ and have suffered eternal punishment as a consequence.

I could never be happy knowing that my dear family member, my dear loved one is in the classical view suffering conscious eternal torment. How could I possibly ever smile? How could I ever possibly enjoy the heavenly realms when just over my shoulder is the bubbling broiling lake

of fire with untold numbers of people in excruciating living unending torment? How could anybody have any sort of joy with that going on as a backdrop? Is the argument. So the only way I could do so is if God just wipes that knowledge from my memory.

I just won't remember that I ever had a loved one that I cared deeply about. Well, this is just utter nonsense. There are certain things we will not forget.

We're going to remember this life. God isn't putting us through all these things just so he can wipe them out and we have no knowledge of it. How much more do we appreciate the Lord Jesus because we remember and we know intimately what we are delivered from.

You remember our song, Glory Glory is what the angels sing and I expect to help them make the courts of heaven ring. But when I sing creation's salvation story, they will fold their wings. Angels never felt the joy that our salvation, our deliverance brings.

Well, we lose that privilege if our memory is wiped, if our knowledge is dumped. I'm here in heaven and isn't this great, but why are we worshiping Jesus? He's great. Why again? Apparently he did something wonderful but I just can't quite recall.

Nonsense. Don't let anybody tell you there's, we will have, if anything, total recall. You know, sometimes under hypnosis they can get you to remember things that you couldn't retrieve in a normal way.

You know why? Because it's all stored and it's all written as a record in heaven. And this life is no accident and God's not wasting any of the time or any of the experiences. They will be remembered.

So what does it mean to forget those things which are behind? Well, look at the beginning of this little passage in verse 12. Not that I have already attained, not that I am already perfected, but I press on to lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of as a purpose. He says, I know I haven't gotten there.

I know I fail. I know I fall short. But I am not going to let that slow me down.

That's what he is laying aside. That's what he is forgetting. Not in the sense that he never remembers that he had failures or he's not going to profit from the knowledge.

Paul says forgetting those things. Did Paul remember that he persecuted the church? Did Paul remember that he held the coats while Stephen was being stoned? Did Paul remember? Is there a reason why he says Christ died to save sinners of whom I am chief? How could he say he's the chief of sinners if he didn't remember all of his sins? And yet here he's saying I'm forgetting those things which are behind. There is a kind of forgetting.

If someone says, you know, I was doing my five-mile run. I fell and skinned my knee, but I just got

up and I forgot about it and kept on running. What do you mean? You do not let it impede your progress.

You inadvertently hurt someone's feelings or insult someone or commit some sort of social gaffe or inelegant behavior and the people say, oh, forget about it. What are they really saying? They're not saying, oh, feel free to do that again anytime you feel like it. What they're saying is don't let that be an impediment to our relationship or what we're about to do.

This forgetting is, make it a non-obstacle. It is not an anchor. It doesn't tie you to the past.

It doesn't drag you to the bottom. It is not a millstone around your neck. It doesn't mean that you have eliminated all remembrance and all knowledge.

It can't. Paul himself is a prime example. He knows full well where he came from.

He remembers being a Pharisee. He remembers coming up at the feet of Gamaliel. He remembers his pharisaical persecution and horrible maltreatment of Christians and the irony that he is now an apostle and is an avenue of great blessing to them where formerly he was one of the points of the spear aimed against them.

And what a great story that is. How could you appreciate what God did in the life of Saul, the Pharisee, if you didn't know what he was before? Forgetting those things which are behind, that means don't let it be an impediment. Now, here's the flip side of that coin, and I think everybody pretty much gets that.

Don't drag up your sins as an old bone and say, Oh Lord, I know I just can't ever get anywhere or do anything. It's not an excuse. It's not an excuse.

It's not a debilitation. It's not a handicap. Everybody sins, big, small, doesn't matter.

Forget it. Push ahead. God's grace is sufficient.

God's strength is manifest in our weakness. The hymn says grace greater than all our sin, and it is. So believe it, claim it, and move on.

It doesn't mean that you won't have any memory. But here's the flip side of that coin. Forgetting those things which are behind includes, in a similar way, the failures of others.

The failures of others. I am not going to let the failures of others become an impediment, or an obstacle, or an anchor, or a millstone, a wet blanket on the Spirit's fire, a source of chain sinning, and constant reigniting like one of these birthday candles that I dislike so much. You blow it out and it comes back to life.

People have got these birthday candle sins and birthday candle grudges, and just when you think it's out of the way, up it comes. Have you ever noticed how dirty those candles are? You look at

the icing on top of the cake and there's just all of this soot. I'm kidding.

I think it's funny every time you do it. Patty kept those things. We have burned those things down to the plastic holders and they still put them on because they're funny every time.

The funniest one though was the one that played happy birthday and we couldn't get it to stop and we drowned it in water and threw it in the trash and a few minutes later we heard this sick version of happy birthday floating up from the depths of the trash can, just like the last week effort of the battery and it was all off-key. It's like a demon candle. It just won't die.

But forgetting those things which are behind, you can think a lot about this subject. There are kinds of forgetting that we do and there's other kinds of forgetting that we don't do and some of it applies to us personally, some of it applies to other people. One thing of which you can be sure, Paul the Apostle did not let his prior behavior as a Pharisee, as Saul of Tarsus, stop him from being the great Apostle that the grace of God made him.

He still wrote his books. He didn't sit in a corner somewhere and say, you know, I'm just not worthy. I'm not worthy.

I could never speak. I could never encourage people. He's saying, look, follow my example.

How can he say that if he's all debilitated and wracked with guilt? He knows what he did and he also knows that God's grace was sufficient and more than sufficient and he has forgotten those things which are behind in the sense that, okay, that happened. I've learned from it. I can see the grace of God overcoming it and now I am pressing on.

I'm not going to sit around writing retrospective tales of all the people I persecuted. Paul didn't write, you know, third Thessalonians saying, now let me tell you about all the people I hailed in prison and where all their earthly goods went and let me tell you just all of the glory. Forget it.

Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. Now, what kind of things are they which are ahead? And again, I would submit to you that this is a multifaceted idea. Does God have things here in time, in this life, in the immediate future, in the next day, in the next week, in the next month, in the next year, in whatever time remains, maybe optimistic, you don't know how long you're going to be here.

Everybody assumes that they're going to live, you know, ad infinitum. Well, an awful lot of people have had that assumption betrayed and they had their life suddenly cut short. Statistically speaking, a certain number of people in every age group every year lose their lives unexpectedly.

I was just looking at an interview that was done with Dr. Criswell on video back in the late 1980s. There's a young pastor interviewing the very elderly Dr. Criswell, asking him questions, and it's very professionally done, and I thought, I wonder why I've never seen this video before. Well, as it

turns out, there were a couple of factors that played into that, but as I was investigating to find out why this was kind of on the back shelf and out of view and not really being used for anything, among other things, I discovered that Dr. Criswell outlived this young pastor by six years.

He died extremely young from an extremely unforeseen cause, and you just don't know how much time is left. Having said that, looking forward to those things, reaching forward, pressing forward toward those things which are ahead. What is it that's ahead? Well, there are things in this life that are ahead.

I expect the blessing of God. I have seen it throughout my life. I am thankful for it.

God's grace has been abundant. It has been profligate. It has been generous beyond anything I could have asked or thought just in this life.

I could fill any amount of time detailing blessings and things that God has done, and I look forward to Him continuing and doing more of those things. He's such a great God. We have such a tremendous Savior who has secured for us and vouchsafed to us so many great things.

It's wonderful to look ahead. If you're a believer and you think at all about what God has promised and about what God is capable of and what God has given to us by way of potential, you can't stay down for very long. We all get down, but you can't stay down for longer because you think, wow, what a privilege to be a believer.

What a privilege to be a believer at this time in history. What a privilege to be a believer with all of the vast insights and resources. I was watching some of these videos of the Logos Bible software and just where it has come in the last 20 years or so from its early beginnings.

I had an infinitesimally tiny part in its beginnings because I was a beta tester back in the in the late 80s when it was in its infancy and when part of it was still over here at Dallas Seminary and it got carried over to there. But seeing it grow, they thought it'll be amazing if we can provide a resource. This is back in the late 80s.

They thought, wouldn't it be great if you could put 12 Bibles all in one software package or eight Bibles and four cross-references and treasury description? Wouldn't it just be great if you had, instead of laying all these books out, you could have 12 of them all in the... Well, 12. Now in Logos there are over 7,000 books, all cross-referenced, all indexed, all searchable. Bob Pritchett, who founded the company, co-founded it and was the programmer for all the early releases and now he delegates that.

But he was talking about how they had to keep expanding their vision because at first they thought, well, 12 books would be great. And then they thought, wow, what if we could write it so it would hold a hundred? And right now the third-generation software is scaled for somewhere between 10,000 and 100,000 books. But they're looking even beyond that with ties to the web

and accessing everything.

Well, this kind of stuff didn't exist just 25 years ago. We live in an enormously privileged, blessed opportunistic potential age. Nobody has ever had access.

But the example he was giving in this interview was he said, you know, the thing about multiplying books is, suppose somebody came to your door and said, hi Sam, I've got a box of books for you. And you open it up and there's ten books inside. And you say, oh wow, this is great.

Here's Liddell and Scott and here's Dana and Manti and here's the Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich lexicon and here's all 12 volumes of Kylan Dalich. And here's this resource and that resource and this cross-reference and that commentary and this systematic theology. And you say, oh boy, that's great.

Well, then the doorbell rings and a guy comes up and says, look, I've got a bigger box. Here's a hundred books. And you think, oh wow.

And right behind him you see a guy coming up the walk and he's got another box with 500 books in it. And you quickly begin to realize that, well, you know, this is great, but I don't have time to read all these books. As Bob said, I don't even have time to read the table of contents of all these books.

And as you multiply resources, the real problem becomes, how do I find material of interest? Well, look at the age in which we live. Are you interested in something? If you look out your window and you see that your wife has planted a plant and it's called a variegated opsomomifron. And you say, what is that? What do you do? Tell me.

Google. Exactly. And within a matter of seconds, you find out that the variegated opsomitron, you know, is an Indonesian poppy that is illegal in six countries and, you know, whatever it is about it.

But we, it's that kind of access to information. When, you know, just a few years ago, most of us would imagine, wow, you know, I'm gonna have to go to the library and I hope that there's some kind of a book on poppies and it's not checked out. And, you know, it was just so laborious.

Look at the age in which we live. Looking forward, reaching forward to those things which are ahead. The first level where this is applicable is the blessings of God, the opportunities and the potentials that he has given us in this age, at this time.

I know that there are potentials for people in Luther's day and, you know, the Venerable Bede's day and the ancient prophet's day and so on. Everybody's always had potential. But the only one I'm interested in is mine.

That's the one I like. I like my potentials. I like this age.

I am down on my knees grateful to God that he planted me in all of human history right here. This, to me, is the most interesting time to be alive. I would rather be here talking to you than with the disciples at the feet of the Lord Jesus, honestly and truly.

And that might be a startling thing to say, but that was a short period of time. And that was the age of Israel. I don't want to be in the age of Israel.

I want to be here. I want to be now. I want to see the denouement of human history unfolding, the near approach of the Lord Jesus, have access to all of this information.

How much could the Apostles learn? How much New Testament Scripture was there? We wouldn't be in Philippians. There was no Philippians. The Church Age Doctrine was unrevealed.

I mean, don't get me wrong. It'd be a wonderful privilege to see that sight and have that experience. And in that day, that was the greatest thing there was.

But I would rather be here. I would rather be now. This is the place where God put me.

God knows best. If this is where he wants me, this is where I want to be. And praise God, this is where we are.

Looking, reaching forward. We want to exploit the potential. It doesn't just say looking forward.

It says reaching forward. We have a dog and sometimes, especially when we first got him, we could put food in his bowl and put it down on the floor and he would just look at it. He might even be hungry, but he's just looking at the food.

That doesn't help him. It doesn't make him fat. It doesn't give him energy.

It doesn't replace what he lost in his exertions of the day. Looking at it doesn't do anything. And we used to figure out reasons why maybe he didn't.

Is it the wrong food? What's the matter? And after many combinations, we finally found something that he not only looks at, and not only looks forward to, but he reaches for. He comes and gets it. When you reach for a thing, there's a book on the shelf.

You can sit there and look at it and that doesn't do anything. If you reach for it, do you just stop? Well, I've reached. I'm waiting for the content of the book to flow into my head.

Once you reach, you take, right? Reaching is a metonymy of the part for the whole, in a way. It's a figure of speech. It means reaching forward.

It means I am obtaining these things. I'm grabbing them for myself. I am not letting the past, mine or others, be an impediment.

I am looking ahead and I am reaching to lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of. He is doing just as much laying hold of these potentials. How much hold does Jesus Christ have on you and me? Is it a little bit of a hold? Is it just, you know, the earlobe, like Mrs. Stokesberry, my second grade teacher, just grab you by the ear? How much of a hold does Jesus have on us? Paul says, I want to apprehend just like I was apprehended by Christ.

That's how much I'm reaching for and grabbing for. So that's one level in this life, the potentials and the opportunities and the blessings and the grace expressions of bounty that God has put in front of us. All of us, young or old, sick or well, happy or unhappy, better or worse, richer or poorer, it's there.

All of us have potentials. God didn't say, oh sorry, I forgot to write some of you into my plan. It's all there.

Sometimes we have to look a little harder. Sometimes we have to think a little more creatively. What could God be up to? I used to talk about this with my grandmother when she got into her 80s and then into her 90s and she would say, you know, I just don't understand why God leaves me here.

I'm ready to go. Why am I still here? And we would sit and discuss that and pretty soon it became clear that there were many things, many of which my grandmother was unaware of, that explained why God had left her here. And as you all know, among other things, she has become a great illustration for a lot of things for me.

She was a great, great lady, a wonderful believer, and she stands as a great example of many things in my mind. And long after she's gone, I remember her as vividly as if she were still here. She made a profound impression on me.

And you just don't know what God is doing. She, I'm sure, was largely unaware and even though I told her she was at the point where by the next day she wouldn't remember that I had told her. But it made a big difference to me.

Small things about her, small things that she had no way of knowing that I could see and see what God had done. It made it made a big difference. These are potentials.

God is blessing. God is using. God is making things that we ought to be reaching out and embracing in this life.

That's level one. Now, level two, obviously, our experience is going to go beyond this life and going to go beyond time itself as it's measured in this universe. There are things we want to lay hold of that are a part of spiritual inheritance.

Where is the handle for those? There are blessings in heaven. There are rewards in heaven.

Okay, so I say, all right, fill in your name here.

Get yourself one of those spiritual heavenly inheritances. Your mission this week, by the time we come back next Friday, I want you to have secured for yourself one of these blessings in the heavenly places that are promised to us in Scripture. And you say, okay.

And then you ask yourself now, how am I going to do that? What is the means by which one lays hold of a heavenly possession? Well, all of you have been in Bible study and meditation and thinking through the claims of Scripture to know how this is done, right? Just nod your head even if you don't really believe it. Oh yes, we know how to lay hold of a treasure in heaven. We've seen abundant scriptures.

You have need of two things that you may receive the promises. What are the two things? Paul says, you have need of faith and patience that you may receive the promises, that you may lay hold of the inheritance. Those are two ways.

Build up your faith. Increase your patience. The trial of your faith worketh patience.

Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If you lack nothing, guess what? You've laid hold of spiritual inheritance. So this, by the way, ought to be something we think about from time to time.

I find myself, you know, looking at the economy and the dismality of the outlook. That's not a word, by the way. And I think I need to try to think about the future in terms of my investments and what might happen to my investments, quote-unquote, my vast holdings, my, you know, the material goods such as I have.

How can you preserve them when everything takes a big nosedive or some unexpected economic catastrophe? How can you not be left destitute? Well, this shrinks to insignificance. I mean, do I spend even a tenth as much time thinking about how to make sure my spiritual inheritance doesn't disappear, dwindle away to nothing? If most of us as believers were half as concerned with our heavenly possessions as we are with our earthly possessions, we would be able to quickly answer the question, how do I lay hold of and how do I preserve my spiritual inheritance? Those things which are ahead. I am reaching for those things.

I am grasping those things. I have confidence that there awaits in heaven for me treasure, inheritance. Not because I'm greedy, not because I'm graspy, not because I covet, but because I know that it is God's desire that His glory be reflected in our laying hold of righteousness by faith.

And that reward and that inheritance is nothing more than a giant reflective surface that shows what the grace of God can do for a fallen and depraved human being. It is all of God. It is all of grace.

We have nothing that we are not given. We have nothing that we have not received through

Christ and through the generosity of God. But the more He gives, the more God's glory is reflected.

And it is a legitimate objective to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And all of these things are added. There isn't any, you know, self aggrandizement involved other than recognizing that God wants us to be mature.

God wants us to be equipped and ready for righteousness. So we lean forward to those things which are ahead. Paul says, I press toward the goal.

Paul didn't make up this goal. Paul didn't map out this race course. Who established the goal? Who said push for eternal inheritance? Push for eternal life? Whose idea was that? It was God's.

God requires of us. God has set the goal in front of us. Do not set your mind on earthly things.

Now, it's kind of like this forgetting. When it says, do not set your mind on earthly things, if you took that literally and extensively, what would that mean? Well, there's no supper on the table, but that's an earthly thing. I'm not going to think about it.

That's probably because my wife wasn't thinking about the earthly thing of making any supper, because that's an earthly thing. And I don't have any laundry, because that's an earthly thing. I haven't gone to my job.

I don't have any money to pay my bills, because that's all earthly. And I don't want to set my mind on earthly things, so I'm just kind of sitting here. I mean, you couldn't last three days that way.

Obviously, we say, well, when he says do not set your mind on earthly things, he means don't make a goal and an objective and a preoccupation out of earthly things. We set our mind on earthly things all day long. You have to.

You can't survive without it. So we understand that. Well, we need to apply that same kind of understanding to forgetting those things which are behind and reaching and pressing forward for those things which are ahead.

To apprehend that for which we were apprehended. To lay hold of that for which we were laid hold of. Jesus Christ laid hold of you so that you could lay hold of things eternal.

That's what Paul is saying. And he says, get with it. Lean forward.

Reach out. Apprehend. Lay hold.

Get those things. It's not a memory dump. It's not a brain wipe.

And it's not a complete so-heavenly-minded-that-you're-no-earthly- good. It's a matter of priorities. It's a matter of practical recognition of the goal and knowing how to get to that goal.

This is the big advantage that you and I have that many, many, many, many, many believers living around us do not have. You know how to get to the goal. I defy you to find three believers somewhere else that you could walk up to and say, you know the whole thing about inheritance or reward in heaven? Do you know how to lay hold of that? Can you tell me, you know, in a couple of sentences how to ensure that you've got a big inheritance in heaven? Do you really expect that you're going to find anybody outside of maybe, you know, seminary or Bible college who could even begin to answer that question? Well, we have all things in Christ and we're overcomers in Him and I have saving faith, so is that it? You know.

We have had study after study after study, passage after passage. You know by now how to do what Paul says. He says, join in following my example.

What's his example? Lay aside the impediments. Reach out and grab the stuff that God has set as a goal. This is one of the reasons, by the way, that I think Paul is the author of the content of Hebrews.

Remember that? Laying aside every weight, the sin which so easily besets us. Let's run with patience. Upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Very same. The thoughts and concepts are all Pauline. He is just, I think, writing to the Hebrews.

He's couching it in language they will understand using metaphors and figures and forms of expression. That's why the style and the vocabulary is so different than his other Gentile-oriented writings. But for my money, Hebrews is Paul.

Same idea there as here. Lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets. Run with patience the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus.

He's the ultimate example. Paul is following his example. He says, do what I'm doing.

Follow the example of Christ. If you're looking at me for an example, you'll see that I'm looking to Christ for an example. Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and look where he is now.

He's seated at the right hand of the Father. Did Jesus go through the cross and all of the fulfillment of the plan of the Father just because he wanted the glory and the honor of sitting at the right hand? In sort of a selfish, greedy way, look at me. I'm sitting at the right hand of the Father.

Not at all. And it's just as ridiculous to suggest that it's illegitimate for us to recognize that we are called to inherit. We are called to possess treasure in heaven.

We are called to look to those things which lie ahead, both in this life and in the ages to come. That's why we're here. That's why Jesus saved us.

That's why he laid hold of us, so that we would follow his example and lay hold of eternal things. That defines life. It redefines every endeavor in our mundane existence.

Yes, we are doing our jobs. Yes, we are accomplishing our chores. Yes, we are carrying on the normal exigencies of daily life.

But it is in a context. It is reoriented. It is shifted.

It is transformed into something of eternal value, because it has this end in view. We do the very same things other people do. We dress.

We eat. We work. We play.

We converse. We engage in relationships. We do the same things everybody else does.

But because of that which is ahead for us, these things are dynamically transformed into avenues into eternity. Very same things. This is the gift that God has given us.

This is what Jesus Christ died to give us. Press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. That's the substance of it.

Well, I spent a little more time on my review than I intended, but this is a good place for us to break. We'll come back and skate rather quickly into chapter 4.