

Philippians 3:10-4:1 – Gospel centred goals

1. How important do you think it is to have a goal in life?
 2. If someone observed everything you did, said and thought in the last week, what conclusion might they draw about what your goal in life is?
- Read Philippians 3:10-4:1.
3. Verses 10-11 show us Paul's goal. What is it?
 4. What does it mean to know the power of Christ's resurrection in this life (i.e. before the Christian dies and is resurrected)? See also Ephesians 1:18-20.
 5. To know Christ's sufferings does not mean we are crucified. So what does it mean?
 6. How does suffering like Christ result in a 'fellowship' (or 'partnership') with Christ?
 7. Paul pictures the Christian life like a race.
 - a. Where did the race begin? (Look back at 3:7-9.)
 - b. What is the finish line (the goal)?
 - c. How far has Paul gone in the race?

- d. How does he run—which direction, what focus, what level of effort?
- e. What is his attitude to other runners?

8. Draw a picture or diagram of this race, using your answers above. Artistic ability is completely optional!
9. Compare this with the 'enemies of Christ'. What is their goal in the race of life? (v 18-20)

Think it through

Choose *some* of these questions to consider.

10. Sum up what we see about Paul's relationship with Jesus.
11. How well do you know Jesus? How do you measure this?
12. If you wanted to know Jesus better, how could you go about it?
13. Is your eye on the prize? How would you live your life differently if it were?
14. What earthly things or desires are you tempted to focus on?

Philippians 3:10-4:1 – Gospel centred goals
(with some answers)

1. How important do you think it is to have a goal in life?
2. If someone observed everything you did, said and thought in the last week, what conclusion might they draw about what your goal in life is?

Read Philippians 3:10-4:1.
3. Verses 10-11 show us Paul's goal. What is it?

4. What does it mean to know the power of Christ's resurrection in this life (i.e. before the Christian dies and is resurrected)? See also Ephesians 1:18-20.
It means to know God's power to give us new life and change us.

5. To know Christ's sufferings does not mean we are crucified. So what does it mean?
Other aspects of his suffering: misunderstood, humiliated, hated, tempted.

6. How does suffering like Christ result in a 'fellowship' (or 'partnership') with Christ?
We are sharing in his work. We know what Christ went through, and understand his sacrifice for us at a greater level.

7. Paul pictures the Christian life like a race.
 - a. Where did the race begin? (Look back at 3:7-9.)
Losing all things to gain Christ.

- b. What is the finish line (the goal)?

The resurrection from the dead (11). Made perfect (12). Prize of heaven (14).
But the Philippians are also his joy and crown (4:1)

- c. How far has Paul gone in the race?
He has started, but hasn't obtained his goal (12, 13). Yet he is mature (15).
- d. How does he run—which direction, what focus, what level of effort?
He presses on (12). Strains for what is ahead (13). Focussed forward, not on his past (13)
- e. What is his attitude to other runners?
He is ahead of some, i.e. mature (15). Does not look down on others but expects God to bring them to a mature outlook (15b). He is an example (17). He is sad about those who are not running the right way (18).

8. Draw a picture or diagram of this race, using your answers above. Artistic ability is completely optional!

9. Compare this with the 'enemies of Christ'. What is their goal in the race of life? (v 18-20)

On their fleshly desires. They glory in (i.e. admire) what is shameful. Not looking to heaven but to earthly things.

Has the goal of knowing Christ and becoming like him gripped your heart?
How does this show itself in your life?

Think it through

Choose some of these questions to consider.

10. Sum up what we see about Paul's relationship with Jesus.
11. How well do you know Jesus? How do you measure this?
12. If you wanted to know Jesus better, how could you go about it?
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Notes from Matthias study

But how do we know Christ better in the here and now while we wait for his return? Paul gives us an insight in verse 10—it is in knowing the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. The more Paul suffered like Christ suffered, the more he knew Christ.

The suffering of Christ here is not his redemptive death on the cross (different Greek words are used for that in the original Bible manuscripts), but the other sufferings that accompanied his redemptive death. He was rejected, mocked, beaten, insulted and spat upon by those for whom he was dying. And Paul was rejected, mocked, beaten, insulted and spat upon by those to whom he preached the gospel of Christ. They both shared in suffering for the salvation of others. Paul didn't think of his suffering simply as pain, but also as fellowship. Christ went through that and more for Paul and for those who were persecuting Paul. And so Paul experienced a partnership, a closeness with Christ.

Fellowship with Christ in his suffering is central to knowing Christ better. For the more Paul experienced the pain of rejection as he preached Christ, the more he knew just how difficult it is to love those who hate you, to suffer for those who don't deserve it. And so he became more aware of the depth of Christ's love for him, Christ's faithfulness to God, and Christ's determination to bring salvation to those who don't deserve it. Without experiencing something of the pain of suffering at the hands of those he laboured to see saved, Paul would have understood little of the pain Christ suffered at the hands of people to save him—and the same is true for us.

And it is in the midst of this suffering that Paul experienced the power of Christ's resurrection. In the midst of difficulties and weakness, Paul found that God's power sustained and transformed him. Like Jesus, Paul didn't do what mere humans would do, and go under. But he hung in there, empowered to love and suffer, to preach and serve. That is the power of the resurrection, and without the experience of near-death, Paul wouldn't have known it. (For Paul's explanation of some of these ideas, see 2 Corinthians 4:7-18.)

So how do we know Christ better? In suffering. Not just any suffering, but in particular the suffering that comes in the context of seeking to save those for whom Christ died. That is the fellowship of sharing in Christ's sufferings. We are not to be masochists, deliberately bringing suffering on ourselves. Rather, it will just happen when we get on with "striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil 1:27). As those who do not know Christ oppose you, you in fact know him better and experience his power. It is no wonder Paul could call suffering for Christ a gracious gift from God (1:29).

Philippians 2 – text (NIV)

¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

¹⁷ Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

4 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

Flow of the passage

Link words Repeated words. Finite verbs Non-finite verbs

¹⁰ [I want]
to know Christ
and the power of his resurrection
and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings,
becoming like him in his death,
¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

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or have already been made perfect,
but I press on
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¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.
But one thing [I do]:
Forgetting what is behind
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And if on some point you think differently,
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²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven.
And we eagerly await a Saviour from there,

the Lord Jesus Christ,
²¹ who, by the power that enables him to subordinate everything,
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