

Philippians 3:12-4:1 – Pressing on towards the goal

If you are a Christian, then what now are your aims? What do you desire, and what are you wanting to achieve? We can ask again – how do your goals for yourself compare with God's goals for you? In this passage we begin by seeing Paul's goals for himself – and for us.

Our aim (3:12-17)

We have not yet arrived. Being converted to Christ is only the beginning (1:6) – it is the *start* of his work in you, and not the end. Paul himself, as an apostle of many years, had not yet arrived (v12, 13). He saw some way ahead to travel. What he did was to “press on”; to push forward with all his energy and strength. He saw a “goal” and “prize” ahead (v14). He was called “upward”; to a changed, glorified, uplifted life in Christ. He pushed forward to Christ and to glory. God's desire is that his glory, which he has revealed *to* us, should be more and more revealed and known *in* us. Above all things we should certainly not backslide (v16). Maturity means understanding that we do not belong to this old age. We belong to the age to come – and we are to be changing so that we are ready for it and heading into it.

Our danger (3:17-19)

Paul has shown us what to do. Now he also shows us the danger to avoid. There were other leaders who were bad examples, and the believers should beware of. As a good shepherd, Paul wanted to guide his sheep away from danger. There were people who were “enemies of the cross”. They made Paul weep tears of sorrow (v18). The cross is about self denial – dying to ourselves, so that we can rise with Christ. These people did not believe in self-denial, but in living for the life here and now. Their hearts were set on earthly things. Their aim was to bring themselves blessings in this life. They boasted in themselves and their achievements, which were not impressive to Christ. Paul said “their destiny is destruction”. They are doomed. Their hopes will perish with them. We should pray for them, but also avoid them and not copy their ways!

Our hope (3:20-4:1)

Where is our hope? Paul was eagerly waiting for Jesus to return from heaven. We are citizens of heaven; it is the place we received life from. Our Saviour will come again from there to make this earth new and glorious. We are waiting for him to come and transform us too. He is already risen from the dead and has a transformed, glorious body; we will also receive one. Christians are not hoping to escape from God's creation, and leave their bodies and the world; they are working and praying for God to renew and glorify it. We can afford to give everything in our life and service for Christ, because we know that he will much more than repay us on that day. Therefore Paul told the Philippians to “stand firm”. Do not give up your hope; do not give in to the danger; keep on for Jesus!