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A Minute After You Get to Heaven

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Philippians 3:12-21
¹² Not that I have already
obtained all this, or have
already arrived at my goal,
but I press on to take hold
of that for which Christ
Jesus took hold of me.

This morning I'd like to share a passage about Paul's top priority and then make some comments about its message for us.

Notice that "this" is the new life in Christ he's been talking about in previous verses. He wants to fulfill God's purpose for his life.

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¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

What is the one thing Paul does? He forgets what is behind him. He doesn't get bogged down in his past failures. He doesn't rest upon his past accomplishments.

What is the direction of his life? It is heavenward. Don't think a physical destination as much as a realized reign. The Kingdom of God began with the coming of Jesus. It will be fully realized one day. Between now and that coming day of new creation, we put on display as much as possible the beautiful Kingdom.

Why are we here? To be a window for others into that Kingdom that has already begun and will one day come fully. Our job is simple: To build the Kingdom. How do we do that? By being like Jesus as persons and especially as a church. The church is being the church to the extent we're like Jesus.

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Are we living
for heaven or
for earth?

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¹⁵ All of us, then, 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.

If we're mature, this will be our view. To make our whole lives a means of putting on display the beautiful Kingdom.

And if we think differently, what do we do? Fight about it? Heavens no! – “God will make it clear to you”.

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17 Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Our lives should be ones that others can follow.

If someone followed you, would they get to Jesus? Good question, right? Once again, none of us have arrived – we stumble, and get up, stumble and get up. But are we on the road to becoming more like Jesus?

What does it mean to live as an enemy of the cross of Christ? The next verse gives us an idea of what Paul had in mind.

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19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Where's their focus? – earthly things. What is their real god? – their appetites. Having stuff. Money, sex, and power.

But we've changed citizenship. We were once part of that earthly country. But now our true country is God's Kingdom with its new ways, its new values. It's the place where the first are last, and the last are first. It's the place where it's not about "power over" others, but rather "power under" others in order to serve. It's the place of sacrificial serving love.

Notice Paul's perspective – the church is waiting for Jesus to return to earth. Why? To realize his rule fully here. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "And earth and heaven will be one", as the hymn says

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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.

And what happens when Jesus returns? New creation! Our bodies are transformed to be like his resurrected body – never more to get old, decay, and die. Besides this, all of creation will be renewed.

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“I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God and returning to God; just hovering over the great gulf, till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity.” – John Wesley

Just like we tithe and give sacrificially, not sure how we'll make ends meet, yet God somehow helps us make ends meet – in the same way, we tithe, give, and serve God sacrificially as a church. We invest in Kingdom ministry believing God will take care of our church.

Three years ago, developing the Karen ministry didn't necessarily make financial sense. Yet God used it to bless the Karen, and our overall church

Focus on things that glorify God - that put on display the beautiful Kingdom. **Be** the Kingdom and God will take care of the rest. Personally, if we try save our life, we'll lose it. Yet if we lose it for Jesus and his Kingdom, we find life.

Our churches are the same. If we focus on ourselves, on serving ourselves, on holding on to what we have, we'll lose it. As we give ourselves away in Kingdom ministry, we win.

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Imagine a Minute After You Get to Heaven

Most of us have seen loved one slip from this life to the next.

My first memory of this was by my grandmother's bedside as she slipped away.

Years later, my mother, brothers and sisters, surrounded the hospital bed of my father as he lay in a coma and we sang the doxology together. Then the nurse removed the life support and he slipped from this life to the next.

A week or so ago, I was with Sparky, our beloved Sheltie, as he slipped from this life to the next. (Yes I believe that dogs go to heaven. Romans 8 says "The whole creation groans in expectation for the children of God to be revealed – it groans for new creation.)

One moment he was with us in this world, peering into our eyes – the next moment he had crossed over that great divide that is yet so near to all of us. All of us are just one heartbeat away from making that journey.

When we make that short journey, what will we find on the other side? When we wake up in that bright new world, will we find ones who welcome us and cheer our coming because we gave ourselves for Kingdom matters that last.

Will they celebrate our coming, or will they be a bit sheepishly chagrined and

a little embarrassed because we wasted our time and resources in this life on things that will evaporate in that morning's mist.

A minute after you get to heaven how will you feel about your days here on earth? Scripture makes it clear,

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A minute after you get to heaven how will you feel about your days here on earth?

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For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9

All of us are saved by grace – there's nothing we can do earn salvation and eternal life. The question here is, "What did we do with that grace that touched our life?" Grace is given in order to touch our heart and transform our lives, so that we're a vessel of grace to others.

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“For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”
Ephesians 2:10

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“For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹ It is written: " 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' " ¹² So then, we will all give an account of ourselves to God.”
Romans 14:11,12

As we get older, we spend more time preparing for retirement and the golden years. We think about our retirement income and medical plans, and do everything to be as well prepared as possible.

Let's face it, we spend all this time preparing for the moments leading up to death. That's okay to be prepared. I get that. But what about the minute after death – do we prepare for that? That moment when all we've done in this life will stand out against the backdrop of eternity.

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So What Can We Do?

- Look at your datebook and your checkbook.
- Look at who you are – “God’s workmanship”.
- Pray and offer yourself to God.

Look at your date book and your checkbook. Are they preparing you for that minute after you get to heaven

We are God’s artwork, his craftsmanship. “God planned you as you are, to use you as He planned”.

Let’s pray and offer ourselves to God.