

Pressing on to the Goal

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 18th Oct 2009

Read Phil 3:7-15

Intro

- Nicky Gumbel- 'What are you doing on earth?'
- What is our aim in life? Where are we headed? Where is our goal? Paul was aiming for a goal in life- to both know Christ and also to become more like Him, living the Christian life to the absolute max so that he would not be ashamed when it was time to meet his maker and receive the 'well done good and faithful servant' commendation from Jesus. We will look at 2 distractions Paul avoided and then look at specifics that Christ has 'laid hold of us' to do.

Distractions to be avoided

1. Trusting in Our Own Ability rather than in Christ (Phil 3:1-11)

- Thinking we are something when we are not- film stars, 'top Christians'
- The circumcision group
- Paul before knowing Christ
- Our good works without Christ are filthy rags- dog's muck (literally v.8). If we could earn the right to get to heaven then Christ died for nothing.
- Grace alone- righteousness by faith- i.e. a gift

2. Trusting in Christ but but being lazy (Phil 3:12-4:1)

- Thinking we have 'arrived'. Paul acknowledged he was still a work in progress- so are we. Be patient God hasn't finished with me yet.
- 'Cruising' mentality- thinking the work is done by Christ, so I can relax. Paul preached grace and worked hard as a result (seems contradictory but isn't). 'Not in my work description', 'we're supernumerary'.
- Christ has done His work. He won't do ours for us- we have a race to run. We are God's workmanship prepared for good works which God planned in advance for us (Eph 2:10).

Work to be done

What is it that Christ has laid hold of us for, and how well are we doing?

There will be specific things we are individually gifted and called to do, but what are the main things? What are the things specifically that Christ has laid hold of us for?

Put another way- why are we on this planet? Spiritual health check:

- John 4:23-24

'But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'

God wants you to be a worshiper in spirit and truth-'Father is seeking such to worship Him'. David was a worshiper, known for extravagant, expressive worship and known as a 'man after God's own heart'. Are we hungry for intimacy with God, and expressing our love for Him in open, expressive, creative, lavish, sacrificial ways. Are we living a lifestyle of worship, not limited by a particular location, or formula? Jesus lived His life that the Father be glorified, even down to obedience to

go to the cross. True worship has a cost- are we experiencing that? Sing a new song- when was the last time we did something for the first time in worship? What are our personal barriers we need to break through in worship?

- Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

If you know Jesus, God wants to use you to bring others to Him. You have been empowered by Jesus, through the Holy Spirit to be a witness to Christ in your immediate vicinity and contacts and to an ever-increasing circle of influence. God's heart is to use you to see lives transformed, and even whole communities coming into a saving relationship with Christ.

- Matthew 28:19-20

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" Amen'

God wants you to be a dedicated follower of Jesus and to teach others to do the same. Phil 3:17 'brethren, join in following my example'. Are we being an example to others in how to follow Christ? What areas need improving? Who are the people that come to us for advice? Are we seeing new believers being baptised in water and the Holy Spirit, becoming part of the Church and learning how to follow Jesus effectively. Are we effective in bringing each person onto the next level of maturity? Are we growing in our knowledge of God through the Word of God? Are we living in integrity of character and lifestyle. Are we seeing holiness and the fear of the Lord amongst us?

- Ephesians 4:11-13

'And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;'

God wants you to receive, use and develop your spiritual gifts to serve God and others and build up the Church. Do we know our gifts and are we using them for the glory of God and the building up of His body. Do we have an attitude of humility and service for the benefit of others. Are we seeing the needs of individuals met through diverse ministries within the Church. Are we seeing the roles of apostle, prophet, pastor teacher, and evangelist received and developed.

- Acts 2:42

'And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.'

God wants you to be a lovingly committed member of His family

He wants His family to be such that people of all social backgrounds and ages feel loved, accepted and valued. Are we building strong, trusting, genuine relationships in the Church. Are we united internally and externally with others in the body of Christ. Are we speaking words of edification to one another and challenging any attitudes which in any way undermine the unity of the Church. Are we securing a safe environment for all. Are we showing warmth and hospitality to outsiders.

- 2 Chronicles 7:13-14

When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

God has ordained to work in accordance with your prayers -Are we fervently asking in faith for God's purposes to come to pass on the earth? Are we a people who intercede and stand in the gap for the lost. Are we desiring the presence of God manifest through continuous revival in the Church as people continue in focused prayer. Are we seeing the power of God unleashed through the Church

setting people free from demonic strongholds and destroying all the works of the evil one?

- Ephesians 2:19-22

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

We are individually and corporately the temple of God- the house where He dwells – Are we being filled and empowered by God's Holy Spirit? Is the presence of God everything to us? Are we experiencing the manifestation of God's presence when we meet and also on our own? Are we seeing an overflow- outbreaks of God's glory outside of meetings and in our community? Are we raising up a body of believers who are Spirit-led and Spirit-saturated so that the glory of God is made manifest to all and indifference vanishes?

- Micah 6:8

'He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly. To love mercy. And to walk humbly with your God?'

God has chosen to use us to demonstrate His justice and mercy to the world.

Are we showing practical love for the needy and hurting? Are we ministering God's love, help and healing to the lost, poor, sick, forgotten, unloved, bound, abused, and lonely, both inside and outside the Church? Are we being God's prophetic voice in our community, to see God's justice established? Are we feeding the hungry and comforting the grieving? Are we demonstrating faith by action? Are we known as a generous, giving people? Do we have Jesus' compassion for those who are captives and are we setting them free to serve the Lord?

Conclusion

- Where are we focussed?

Song: *All I Once Held Dear*