

## Philippians 3:12-4:1

### Joy is found on the journey of becoming more like Jesus.

Some background on the letter to the Philippians

The book is rich both theologically and practically. It's commonly referred to as a book of joy. The word joy is found 19 times in the 104 verses. Philippians is dictated by Paul while under lock and key (House Arrest). The Paradox of Philippians is that in a seemingly joyless situation, Paul writes to us clearly on how to walk in Joy as a follower of Christ. This is where we pull the differentiation between joy and happiness. Essentially, happiness is circumstantial and temporary, whereas joy is constant and eternal. God's ultimate desire for you is to become more like Jesus. "Rudy, You're a liar. God's ultimate desire for me is to share the Gospel! HERETIC!"

Let me get KJV on you: Chill Thyself Outeth. When you become more like Jesus, you will naturally share the Gospel more because you're exemplifying with your life the One whom the Gospel is centralized around! To share the Gospel is to experience new depths of Joy in Christ. (Philemon 1:7) Therefore, on our journey of becoming more like Jesus, we will naturally share the Gospel, and in so doing know deeper joys than before. Oh, and look at what the Bible says in Romans 8:29-30 and Romans 12:1-2.

This idea of **becoming more like Jesus** is seen all through the book of Philippians:

1:7-8 - The care of our leaders helps us become more like Jesus. 1:9-11 - The prayer of our leaders helps us become more like Jesus. 1:12-18 - The suffering of other believers should help us become more like Jesus. 1:19-26 - An understanding of the tension between our Kingdom work on earth and our Kingdom enjoyment in heaven helps us become more like Jesus. 1:27-30 - Our personal suffering helps us become more like Jesus. 2:1-11 - The pursuit of deeper, Christ-like humility helps us become more like Jesus. 2:12-18 - The pursuit of an attitude that reflects Christ in all scenarios helps us become more like Jesus. 2:19-30 - The examples of other servant-leaders help us become more like Jesus. 3:1-11 - An understanding of the root of our righteousness being found in the resurrection helps us become more like Jesus.

**...And the more we journey toward becoming like Jesus, the more solidified our joy becomes. We do not seek to become more like Jesus for the sake of attaining joy.**

We seek to become more like Jesus because He is worthy of our worship. A result of this understanding solidifies within us an understanding and a hope of this joy we find on our journey of becoming more like Jesus. The motivation isn't "joy" for the sake of pursuing Christ. The motivation for pursuing Christ is Christ – The increasing joy we can know is a by-product of understanding who Jesus is and what His finished work on the Cross means for us. **Therefore, Joy is found on the journey of becoming more like Jesus.**

Paul, in these verses, will outline his thoughts as to what it looks like to Journey toward becoming more like Jesus.

Verse 12

"Not that I have already obtained this..." Obtained What? There are 3 Possibilities

**Perfection** (*teleioō* – Root “To come of full age, fullness”) The more we understand perfection, the more its revealed to us how imperfect we are. This points to the glorious grace of our perfect God who uses imperfect people. Perfection is sometimes used in correlation with, or interchangeably with, “Mature” – and Paul likes to use these words. NIV: Colossians 1:28 “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. NASB: Colossians 1:28 “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man [a]with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.” (Footnote: Perfect) KJV: “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:” The nearer we come to perfection and maturity in Christ, the less we come to assume that we could possibly attain either of these things on our own. We need him, oh we need Him – the song is not worship, it’s the very cry of the heart of the Christ follower who seeks after God because God requires perfection (99 mentions in the Bible) and we can find it no where else but in Christ. “Meaning of Christ in His Life” (Life Application Study Suggestion) Essentially, after 33 years of following Jesus, he had not yet obtained the understanding of what it meant that Christ was in His life. Understanding = Education & Experience Education Alone: Pharisee (Rigid) Experience Alone: Mystic (Unfounded) Understanding: Christ Follower  
I would press against this: I think he did have an understanding of what it meant to have Christ in His life, and I think that’s clearly seen in the prior 11 verses. Understanding is not quantified in what you know but what you do with what you know. The scope of His understanding may not have been full, but no one’s is. It’s not fair to put this on Paul because it’s not fair to put this on anyone. In the same sense, the context doesn’t fully support this reasoning.

**Glorification** Basic Soteriology (Study of Salvation) Step One: Justification. We are justified by the finished work of Christ on the Cross. This is a better word than “forgiven”. Forgiven denotes the removal of the penalty of debt. Justification denotes the removal of the *record* of our debt. This is the truly clean slate that we have in Christ. Step Two: Sanctification. This is the “Journey to becoming more like Jesus”. This is the process of becoming progressively more like Christ // being set apart // Becoming Holy  
You could say that the focus of our evening is that “Joy is found in sanctification”, but 1) Sanctification is a word that deserves explanation and 2) I have to alliterate. It runs in my SBC veins. Step Three: Glorification. As a Christ Follower, the anchor of my hope is found in the reality that one day, upon death to this life, I will be perfect in Christ. I will, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:12 “know as I am fully known”. I’ll be with Him. I long for that day. (This is the tension of Paul in Chapter 1:21-26)  
Essentially, this is a combination of the two above plus so much more. Paul is referencing the claim he made in verse 11 “that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection of the dead.” Then says “Not that I already have!” In essence, he’s creating a common ground by saying “I’m not there yet either!” He makes it very clear that he understands what is stored up for Him in Christ (2 Tim 1:10), that he will have a new body in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:1-10), and the dead in Christ shall rise (1 Corinthians 15:35-55).

Next: “But I press on...”

I beg of you, when you read the Bible, please often ask the question “Why?” Why would Paul say this? What could Paul’s motivation possibly be for pressing on? We need to stop questioning the *action* and start examining the *motivation*. “**because Christ has made me His own.**” The flame of “pressing on” is fueled by the reality that I am already Christ’s!

I do not press on to become His, I press on because I already am!

Verse 13 Reinforces this point Paul is trying to make “I do not consider I have made it my own.”

**Justification/Salvation** I didn’t buy my way into this. I didn’t work my way into this. I didn’t earn my way into this. -- Jesus bought it. Jesus worked it. Jesus earned it.  
Ephesians 2:8-9 Romans 3:26

**The motivation for sanctification.** We do not will ourselves into becoming more like Jesus. We can be moral, we were created to be moral – in fact our moral code is a huge apologetic directional sign of creation of man by God. Moralism isn’t bad, but it’s not Christianity. Jesus didn’t die for us to be “good people”. He died for our salvation, which leads to our sanctification, which presses us into being on mission for Him. First, He’s made me His. Then in so doing, He’s given me the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:20-22). Now, I’m led and guided by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:25) and the Holy Spirit, by His very nature, guides us to become more like Jesus.

“But ONE THING I DO:” DON’T MISS THIS: Paul is about to give us the two primary elements of the work of sanctification. “Forgetting what lies behind...” Leave the past in the past. You may be positioned by your past, but you need not be a prisoner to it. (2 Corinthians 5:17) Your past does not define your future in Christ. (Philippians 3:4-7 1 Timothy 1:15-16) “Straining forward to what lies ahead...” BECAUSE NO MATTER WHAT IT IS, IT’S BETTER. This is exemplified in the next verse.

Verse 14 “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” “Upward Call” in the original language was indicative of the “Winner’s Stand” in an athletics competition. Essentially, this “Upward Call” is to none other than heaven itself. Which is only GOOD because of JESUS. Athletics, again, triggers this ideology of “working”. But Romans 8 gives us a sweet promise that slides so nicely into this context: Romans 8:37 “No, in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through him who loved us.” We aren’t conquerors: We’re more than that because Christ conquered for us! He has won the spot on the “Winner’s Stand” for us, and invites us to stand with Him. The Upward call to the winners stand, then, is just another way of saying that I’m pressing on in joy through this journey toward becoming more like Jesus. Don’t forget, he’s saying this while possibly shackled to a guard. He is experiencing a total loss of freedom and erased rights. And yet, He says that He is still pressing on. This is because joy is constant and eternal, and is found on the Journey to becoming more like Jesus. So we press on, no matter what.

Verse 15-16

Mature Christians will press on. Mature Christians will hold to what they’ve attained.

This also uncovers immaturity. There were three potential forms of immaturity revealed in Philippi. They are spiritual pride, legalism, and antinomianism. Each of these are pointed out in the next verses.

Verse 17-19 It is clear that these are not examples of Paul. They're enemies of the Cross. They're destined for destruction. Their god is their belly. (They have an appetite for sin.) They are unashamed of their sin. They are focused on things below. Then Paul flies in with this nugget to close the section of scripture:

Verse 20

Citizenship would have meant a lot in the Roman context of Philippi. Being a citizen was everything. It was your identity. In a similar, yet unimaginably higher way, the identity of a Christ-Follower is found in where their citizenship lays – Heaven.

Transform - Another press by Paul for glorification, where our perishable bodies are made imperishable.

Enables - The very same power that is His Divinity (allowing Him to subject all things to Himself) is what transforms us. This is to say that we will be transformed – but even now, Romans 8:11 shows us that the Holy Spirit is within us now. So on that day we will be fully transformed, but pressing on toward that day we are being transformed bit-by-bit as 2 Corinthians 3:18 would say “From glory unto glory.”

Verse 1 of chapter 4

...And all this so that we might stand firm. This is the push of Paul in this section.

**Stand Firm in joy on your journey of becoming more like Jesus.**

How can I know if I'm standing firm?

Seven Questions: The Litmus Test of Standing Firm on the Journey

Vs 13: Where is your focus placed?

Vs 14: What motivates you the most?

Vs 15: What is God revealing to you?

Vs 16: What are you holding on to?

Vs 17: Who are you imitating?

Vs 18-19: What are you indulging in?

Vs 20-21: Do we actually believe this?

The reality is that as we ask ourselves these questions, we run the risk of exposing an area of our lives where we fall short. It takes bravery to ask these questions But consider the benefit.

What if we all started to really chase after becoming more like Jesus? What if we stood firm in the midst of difficulty? What if we had a righteous, reckless desire to be generous with our resources? With the Gospel? With our time? With our influence? With our energy? Our focus? Our talents? What if we hated sin like Jesus hated sin? Forgave like he forgives? Taught like he taught?

This is what happens when we become formed into the image of Christ! This is what happens when we are deeply rooted in the Gospel