



## Philippians 3:1-14

**GOAL!** Football – the object of the game is to score more goals on the opposing team.

**IT JUST ISN'T BRITISH 1,2,3**

**Kelly Holmes 1,2** *So I run straight towards the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above. (verse 14)*

**JFK 1,2**

**WHAT GOAL ARE WE AIMING AT?**

**What is our goal in life? What do we live for?**

Depends on where you are in life. Different ages – different goals. Level of optimism. Level of expectation

**What about ETERNITY?**

Few people think about eternity – those most in denial of what they should do with eternity are usually the people closest to it.

Where are you goals – on yourself – Paul – all his zeal was fundamentally about him. He was religious yes, but only because he thought that he had to do all sorts of religious acts to get close to God. In fact, he was so religious that he became immoral – his actions actually worked against God – he persecuted God's people.

**Beware religion.** I say that as a Minister of a church! When religion becomes an end in itself, it starts to work against the nature and the purposes of God. Some of the cruellest, most unforgiving, immoral, unprincipled and hateful people I've ever come across personally have been people who purport to be Christians, and as Paul said outwardly righteous, outwardly religious, outwardly zealous – but as you scratch at the surface, you wonder whether they know Jesus at all because their words and lives don't reflect His beauty.

**So how do we become right with God eternally if it isn't about religion?**

**BECOMING RIGHT WITH GOD**

Religion was Paul's idea of what he should be as a young man. Then there are people think like that either strive to be good people all their lives to please God, thinking that God might accept them if their good things outweigh the bad and then there's a third lot who think that they are so bad, that they can never be acceptable to God. All of these try to make the best of life and live for what they can now if that's possible. Their attitude is I'm not good enough or I'm too bad for God so I'll not bother with God and faith at all.

**DON'T BOTHER!**

Actually the third group are realistic about one truth. They are quite right in thinking that their life and actions will never please God. It's bang on – they've understood that completely. All have sinned and have fallen short of God's glory – that's what it says in the Bible as well. I suspect that

anyone like that isn't here this morning because what's the point of going to church if you don't think you're good enough for God? It doesn't matter how good we are if our sin makes us fall short of God. Let me tell you a story.

#### JUST ONE MINOR BLEMISH

*Lillie Baltrip is a good bus driver. In fact, according to the Fort Worth Star-Telegram of June 17, 1988, the Houston school district nominated her for a safe-driving award. Her colleagues even trusted her to drive a bus-load of them to an awards ceremony for safe drivers. Unfortunately, on the way to the ceremony, Lillie turned a corner too sharply and flipped the bus over, sending herself and sixteen others to the hospital emergency room for minor injuries. Did Lillie, accident free for a whole year, get her award anyway? No, of course not. Here one blemish on her record lost her the award.*

However good we are, we all do things not pleasing to God – we are all sinners. But what the “I’m too bad for God brigade” miss (and most other people too) is that it is possible to be right before God, despite the fact that in truth no-one will never be good enough to deserve it. That’s why Jesus died – so that God can offer forgiveness of sins, and become right with Him. And how do we get that? By believing what God has said, by receiving the forgiveness God offers in Christ and by trusting and following Jesus. Here’s what Paul said in our passage this morning:

#### VERSE

*I no longer have a righteousness of my own, the kind that is gained by obeying the Law. I now have the righteousness that is given through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is based on faith.*

I’ve no righteousness of my own, but that which God has given me through faith, through trusting in Jesus. Are you trusting Jesus?

Being a Christian is about the realisation that our life is more than the sum of our years and that we live with eternity in mind. I talked earlier about goals in life. A faith in Christ means that one’s life goals now stretch into eternity. It’s a new game and new goals. That’s what Paul talks about in this morning’s passage.

#### OPEN GOAL – The goal of the Christian

VERSE Paul talks about the goal he’s heading for - **All I want is to know Christ and to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings and become like him in his death, 11 in the hope that I myself will be raised from death to life.**

- power of resurrection – new life
- share His sufferings – Jesus suffered because He sought to honour God in His life – not the popular option.
- Hope – hope is always about certainty in the Bible – it’s our hope that makes us positive about life and death in all circumstances.

How do these goals work in practice?

#### THE GOAL OF THE CHRISTIAN MEANS

#### TO TALK TRASH

*For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere refuse, so that I may gain Christ and be completely united with him. (verses 8-9)*

No, not talk rubbish most of the time. But to look into our lives for the things that we think are so important in our lives but actually do nothing. Paul threw away all the “important” things in life as trash so he may gain Christ. What do we need to throw out of our lives?

#### JIM ELLIOT

#### TO HONOUR GOD

Paul used to believe in being religious that he would please God. He was wrong. But in receiving Christ by faith, he realised he had to live in a way that honoured God – in a way that reflected who he was going to be eternally – one of God's children. For Paul it meant he would serve God in the amazing way he did. For us it means we need to live lives like who we are.

But how we fall short! But rather than give up, we reach out. Verse 12 is a lovely verse.

*I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. (The Message verse 12)*

Jesus reaches out to us. In our frustration, our failure, our sorrow, remember there's a hand already reached out to you, just reach out and take it.

#### TO GET THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

Today's session has been called Goal! Things are positive in lives when we have goals. Achievable goals, practical goals, life-changing goals. If we know that our lives here are just part of the race we are now in for eternity, then we have a goal.

*So I run straight towards the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above. (verse 14)*

So I strive for the prize. You'll remember the picture of the race and football match we had earlier. What do you do when you're in a race. Try not to look back because you lose ground when your mind is not in what's in front. So in life forget what's behind (why – because it's dead, left behind) and push for what's ahead. Why do so many Christians struggle in their spiritual lives? Perhaps it's because they spend more time looking back and not looking towards Jesus! Invest in what's ahead in the race – in your relationship with God, in seeking His power in your life; getting the right perspective.

When I was young, I was hopeless at ball games. When it was kicked to me or bowled to me or came my way, I'd always miss. Why? Because I didn't keep my eye on the ball.

#### KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL

Keep your eye on the ball. Winning teams and winning sportsmen aren't just well trained – but their lives are clearly focussed. To get goals, sportsmen and teams don't just come to the event, the whole of their lives are geared towards that objective. It affects every part of their lives. It costs them to do that. For the Americans to get to the moon in a decade meant that a whole load of resources were taken from one thing and put into the space project.

I've always seen church as a team game. We are all going for the same goal. Because playing together means you all strive to win as a team. Let's encourage and support one another – because that is what being part of God's fellowship here is about..

If something is important enough, then we invest the time, we go for the goal and to win the prize. How important is our eternal goal this morning. Is it something we just shrug our shoulders about – or is it something we think is so good, so amazing, that we want to invest our time building our relationship with God, throwing out the trash in our lives, seeking to honour Him in all ways. Perspective changes everything.

#### DR SANGSTER

*Margaret Sangster Phippen wrote that in the mid 1950's her father, British minister W.E. Sangster, began to notice some uneasiness in his throat and a dragging in his leg. When he went to the doctor, he found he had an incurable disease that caused progressive muscular atrophy. His muscles would gradually waste away, his voice would soon become unable to swallow.*

*Sangster threw himself into his work in British home missions, figuring he could still write and he would have even more time for prayer. "Let me stay in the struggle, Lord," he pleaded. "I don't mind if I can no longer be a general, but give me just a regiment to lead." He wrote articles and books,*

***and helped organize prayer cells throughout England. "I'm only in the kindergarten of suffering," he told people who pitied him.***

***Gradually Sangster's legs became useless. His voice went completely. But he could still hold a pen, shakily. On Easter morning, just a few weeks before he died, he wrote a letter to his daughter. In it, he said, "It is terrible to wake up on Easter morning and have no voice with which to shout, 'He is risen!' - but it would be still more terrible to have a voice and not want to shout."***

**Where is your perspective this morning. Easter is coming: how loud will we be shouting!**

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