

Hands: A Vision for Your Work

Vision #3 - Pastor Gary Combs - January 18th, 2026 - Philippians 3:7-14

INTRO: Good morning church! Before we begin, I'd like to say a word about **Sanctify of Human Life Sunday**. Today, we remember what the Word of God says about life in the womb:

Psalm 139:13-14 (NIV) For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

This is why we support the Choices Women's Center. So stop by their table in the lobby and pickup a baby bottle.

Now let's continue with our series called "**VISION: Seeing Your Place in God's Story**." Today's sermon is (above).

Need: This message is about getting God's vision for your work, for your service. People often find their identity in their work, in their resume or in their bio. Have you ever had to write a resume or a personal bio? Maybe you were applying for school or for a job? We try to put all the impressive stuff we can on there don't we? Our education, grades, previous employment and work experience... And let's not forget our level of expected level of pay. After all, isn't that the vision that most people have for their work: How much money can I get paid?

ILL: I've been watching the Netflix documentary: *Aaron Rodgers: Enigma* and in the first episode, Rodgers reflects on the aftermath of winning Super Bowl 45 in 2011. He had reached the literal pinnacle of his profession, the thing he had worked his whole life for. He was even named MVP of the game. But instead of total fulfillment, he describes an immediate "identity crisis." He says:

"Now what?... Who am I? I've accomplished this thing that I always wanted to accomplish and I'm not as happy as I thought I was going to be, so what is missing?"

He had made winning a Super Bowl his life's vision and goal, but it couldn't sustain his soul.

Trans: If a Super Bowl ring can't provide a lasting vision for your life, then a promotion, a bigger paycheck, or a prestigious title won't either. Whether you are an MVP quarterback or a manager at a local shop, if your vision for work is only about the "gain" on your resume, you will eventually hit that same "Now what?" wall. Two thousand years ago, the Apostle Paul showed us how to move past that wall.

BODY: Writing from a Roman prison, the apostle Paul testified to the Philippian believers how he had counted his past achievements as "loss" and redirected his vision toward pursuing his upward calling in Christ Jesus. We can redirect our vision for our work toward pursuing our calling in Christ Jesus. How can we redirect our vision for our work toward pursuing our calling in Christ Jesus? The text gives **three essentials** for redirecting our vision for our work toward pursuing our calling in Christ Jesus.

Read text: Philippians 3:7-14 (ESV) 7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

THREE ESSENTIALS FOR HAVING GOD'S VISION FOR OUR WORK:

1. A new perspective.

EXP: (7-9) Notice the phrase "I counted... I count" (7,8 - 3x). Paul used the language of a ledger. He did a mental audit putting his most prized personal and vocational achievements, his "gain," into the "loss" column compared to the "surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus" (8) as His Lord.

"Gain" (7, 8 - 2x) (κέρδος, *kerdos*) - gain, value. Paul gave his resume, a short description of his "gain" ...

Philippians 3:4-6 (ESV) ... If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

"I counted, count" (7,8 - 3x) (ἡγέομαι, *hēgeomai* - Mid.) - to consider, deem, account, think. The middle voice shows he is the one doing the mental audit. The Perfect Middle in v. 7 ("I counted"), shows that his conversion was a historical change of mind that hasn't been reversed. The Present Middle in v.8 ("I count"), shows he isn't just coasting on a decision he made years ago. He is currently, actively looking at "all things" and finding them inferior to Christ. He has a new and permanent perspective!

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“Loss” (7,8 - 3x) (ζημία, zēmia) - detriment; damage, loss

“Everything” (8) (πᾶς, pas) - all, the whole; everything. Not only his “gain” but “everything.”

“Surpassing worth” (8) (ύπερέχω, huperechō) - to stand out, above, overtop; superior in rank

“Knowing Christ” (8) (γνῶσις, gnōsis) - knowledge of, understanding

“Rubbish” (8) (σκύβαλον, skubalon) - any refuse, excrement of animals, of things worthless and detestable

“May gain Christ” (8) (κερδαίνω, kerdainō - Subjunctive) - to gain, acquire, the possibility of gaining

“Be found” (9) (εὑρίσκω, heuriskō - Subjunctive) - to see, learn, discover. Possibility of finding.

“Not...righteousness of my own” (9) (δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosunē) - approved of God; integrity, rightness

“Not...from the law” (9) (νόμος, nomos) - of the Mosaic law.

“But...through faith in Christ” (9) (πίστις, pistis) - faith, trust. Means of receiving Christ is faith, not works.

ARG: What do you value, what do you treasure most?

Matthew 6:21 (ESV) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

ILL: Recently, a member of our church asked me to pray for an opportunity he'd been offered. He didn't give any details. Later, he thanked me for the prayers and said he'd made a decision. He'd been offered a huge promotion, but it would mean moving. He said, “I've moved many times for more money, but this is the first time I've prayed about it. And after considering how me and my wife have grown in Christ in this church, and how much we love this church family, and our small group... well, I turned the promotion down. It's the first time I've ever put God first in a decision. I just want to be a better servant and witness for Jesus!”

APP: Wow! That's a new perspective isn't it? Putting Jesus first in your work decisions? Deciding to put spiritual things and knowing Christ and growing in the knowledge of Jesus has a greater “gain” than worldly wealth? This is the first essential in having God's vision for your work: Get a new perspective in Christ.

2. A sustaining power.

EXP: (10-11) Paul moves from accounting to power. And it isn't willpower, it's “resurrection power” (10).

“Know Him” (10) (γινώσκω, ginōskō) - verb form of gnōsis in v.8. Not facts about Him, but intimacy.

“Power of his resurrection” (10) (δύναμις, dunamis) - strength power, ability; inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature. (ἀνάστασις, anastasis) - a rising from the dead

“Share his sufferings” (10) (κοινωνία, koinōnia) - fellowship, joint participation. (πάθημα, pathēma) - suffering, affliction, passionate or emotional pain.

“Like him in his death” (10) (συμμορφίζω, summorphizō) - conformed to, same form as. Die to old life.

“By any means possible” (11) (πῶς, pōs) - how, by what means, that

“I may attain the resurrection” (11) (καταντάω, katantaō - Subjunctive) - to come, arrive, to attain to a thing. “Paul is not expressing doubt about his resurrection, but rather a humble realization that he had not yet reached the goal. His language is that of a runner who, while certain of the finish line, is still straining every nerve to reach it” (MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Philippians*. 235).

ARG: The power for living the Christian life is Christ living in us!

Galatians 2:20 (ESV) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

ILL: In the 2025 Boston Marathon, a runner named Pedro Arieta was near the end of the grueling 26.2-mile race, but when he saw a fellow runner collapse just feet from the finish, he stopped his own race, helped him to his feet, and walked him across the line.

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APP: Jesus has already finished life's race and He lives to empower us to finish it too! Therefore, let us look to Jesus, as the author of Hebrews says...

Hebrews 12:2 (ESV) ...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...

The 2nd essential in having God's vision for your work: Depend on Christ's sustaining power! The 3rd is...

3. A focused pursuit.

EXP: (12-14) Circle "I press on" (12, 14 - 2x). Paul was focused on Christ being fully formed in him. He knew he wasn't there yet, but he pursued it to "make it [his] own."

"Not that I have already obtained this" (12) (λαμβάνω, *lambanō*) - to take, lay hold of. "This" = v.10-11.

"Perfect" (12) (τελειόω, *teleioō*) - perfect, complete; to accomplish, finish. Paul hasn't finished life's race.

"I press on" (12, 14) (διώκω, *diōkō*) - to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing, to run after.

"To make it my own" (12) (καταλαμβάνω, *katalambanō*) - lay hold of, obtain, attain, to make one's own.

"Jesus has made me his own" (12) - same as above. KJV says, "I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." "At his conversion, Paul had been apprehended by his Lord" (Spurgeon). Paul was arrested by Jesus.

"One thing I do" (13) (εἷς, *heis*) - one; one thing. Paul was focused on one thing: Christ.

"Forgetting what lies behind" (13) (ἐπιλανθάνομαι, *epilanthanomai*) - forgetting the past.

"Straining forward to what lies ahead" (13) (ἐπεκτείνομαι, *epekteinomai*) - stretching for the future.

"Toward the goal for the prize" (14) (βραβεῖον, *brabeion*) - the award to the victor in the games, a prize.

"Upward call" (14) (ἄνω κλήσεως, *anō klēseōs*) - upwards, of heaven; calling, invitation. "The 'upward call' is God's sovereign summons to the believer to come home and receive the prize" (MacArthur, 248).

ARG: Paul's pursuit is an echo of David's. Both are focused on being with the Lord.

Psalm 27:4 (NIV) One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

ILL: Remember the story of Martha and Mary? (Tell the story). Jesus said only "one thing is needed."

Luke 10:41-42 (NKJV) ⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. ⁴² But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

APP: Paul says, "One thing I do." Not ten things. Not everything. One thing. Our culture tells us to multitask, to chase everything, to keep all options open. But spiritual growth does not happen through divided attention, it happens through focused pursuit.

CONCLUSION: Paul teaches us that God's vision for our work is not about building a better résumé, it's about building a deeper relationship with Christ. Whether you work in an office, a classroom, a hospital, a home, or a shop, God is not just interested in what you do, He is interested in who you are becoming while you do it.

Allow me to give you some practical steps to consider. Our church has three "heart" statements: Heart for God, Heart for Each Other, and **Heart for Our World**. We say a Heart for our world is expressed in...

Intentional evangelism. Do you see your workplace as a mission field, as a platform for telling others about Jesus? If Jesus is your "one thing," then tell others about Him!

And **Sacrificial service**. Are you serving? Are you following our "attend one / serve one" strategy? Sign up!

This week, take your hands: your work and service, and place them in the hands of Jesus. Because when Christ is your vision, you have ... a new perspective: Christ is our greatest gain, a sustaining power: Christ is our strength, and a focused pursuit: Christ is our goal. Let's pray.