

Philippians 3:12 (NASB 2020)

¹² Not that I have already grasped *it all* or have already become perfect, but I press on if I may also take hold of that for which I was even taken hold of by Christ Jesus.

15) Okay, let's take a minute and try to define what Paul has NOT grasped.

16) He mentions several things that could fall into this category of “things not (completely) grasped”.

As you read these attach a percent complete Paul as he writes this.

- a) He wants to gain Christ and be found in Him.
- b) He wants to have a righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, NOT one of his own derived from keeping the Law.
 - i) To say this a little differently, how completely away from the “checklist mentality” are we?
- c) Then he mentions the three we discussed a moment ago...
 - i) Wants to know Him (Christ) and the power of His resurrection.
 - ii) Wants to have the fellowship of His sufferings.
 - iii) Wants to be conformed to His death.
- d) And finally, he wants to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

So, how did Paul do?

Now, read them again – this time attach a percent complete you personally.

Which one did you personally rate yourself the worst on?

Which one did you personally rate yourself the best on?

17) The end of Verse 12 is difficult to translate.

- a) I think the phrasing of the NIV does a better job of capturing what is intended.

Philippians 3:12 (NIV)

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.

18) Personally, I think this ties back to the “working out our salvation” statement that we dealt with a week or so ago.

- a) It is not “working to be saved” – it is instead figuring out with God’s help exactly how we are to live our lives because we are saved!

Philippians 3:13–16 (NASB 2020)

¹³ Brothers *and sisters*, I do not regard myself as having taken hold of *it yet*; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Therefore, all who are mature, let's have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that to you as well; ¹⁶ however, let's keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

19) There are several things in this that we really need to take special notice of.

- a) First – Paul is absolutely trying to let these folks know that he does not feel like he has reached the ***final*** place Christ intends for him to be.
 - i) When Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus He laid out for Paul what his purpose for him was.
 - ii) Paul has been on that journey from that day until the very moment he writes this letter.
- b) Next, and this is something we must not just pass over. Paul clearly says he is forgetting what was behind and pressing on.

20) The word for “forgetting” here carries the sense of disregarding or putting out of one’s mind.

- a) There is a conscious effort involved. That is not always easy!!!!

21) So, the question we must answer is what “was behind”?

- a) There are several big items this could refer to –
 - i) the life he had prior to meeting Christ and his persecutions of the Church.
 - ii) all of the bad things that have happened to him since.
 - iii) or perhaps, not just the bad, but perhaps some of the good things as well.
- b) Now that might seem a little odd, however, if we look at what “was behind” as anything that would cause him to not press forward with all his might,
 - i) then even accomplishments – if they were a distraction – could be something he makes a conscious effort to forget.

22) I have always had what I personally consider a poor memory.

- a) You can rest assured I am far, far, away from being one of those folks who have “total recall”.
- b) I have known a couple of them and if I were going to envy someone I would definitely envy them.

23) But again, this is not a matter of “oh no, I don’t remember that” in the sense of “I can’t recall.”

24) Instead, it is a matter of forcing ourselves not to be distracted by whatever the “that” is that is keeping me from being what Christ wants me to be.

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25) It is that that I am NOT going to dwell on – I am going to push it out of my mind and focus on the end target result.

26) And, of course, that end target result is living the life Christ has called us to live – “upward call of God in Christ Jesus” as Paul puts it here.

27) Paul calls it a prize.

Think about this for a minute - what is that prize?

- a) I don't think one can be sure from the context.
- b) However, I do think that in this context, there is a strong argument to be made that it is more than eternal life.
- c) I personally can see Paul considering the perfection he is striving for to be a prize as well because it would please God.
- d) In fact, there may be, based on his words here, an idea that each step he takes forward toward the goal might be considered a prize.
- e) Again, not being prideful or boastful, but instead being grateful for the strength and help given by the Holy Spirit to make progress toward being what Christ wants.
- f) As we said earlier, as God was pleased with the Life of Christ, as we mature and become more and more like what He wants us to be He will be pleased with us – that in my opinion is absolutely a prize of great value!

28) Before we move on from this passage, we need to also consider verses 15 and 16:

¹⁵ Therefore, all who are mature, let's have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that to you as well; ¹⁶ however, let's keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

29) The first part of verse 15 is obviously pretty clear – if you are mature, then have the same attitude about all this “maturing” and “pressing on” as Paul does.

- a) This does set a sort of benchmark doesn't it? If you are mature then have the same attitude and all is good.
- b) Paul is truly saying – and I think without boasting – that even though he is not “all the way there,” he is mature and that can be the benchmark if they are willing to consider it that way.

30) However, the next phrase here is perhaps not so clear.

- a) I really like the Baylor Handbook translation of this...

And if you think anything differently, God will also reveal this to you.⁸

⁸ Lidija Novakovic, [*Philippians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*](#), ed. Lidija Novakovic, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020), 90.

31) Now, we really have to talk at least a little bit about this.

Does this mean that God will open your brain and automatically change your attitude or way of thinking?

a) I think the answer here has to be NO!

So then, how do we deal with the things that come up from time to time that we disagree with? How do we let God reveal the right way to us when we think differently?

- 1) Blind trust in elders?
- 2) Go along to get along?
- 3) Throw up your hands and move on to some place that hasn't changed?
- 4) Ask questions, pray, study, look for God's guidance.

32) Then lastly, Paul says: "let's keep living by that same standard to which we have attained."

a) Other translations are:

Philippians 3:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Philippians 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Philippians 3:16 (CSB)

¹⁶ In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained.

So, if we are going to live up to, hold on to, or hold true to, I guess we have to ask then –

What is the truth, or the standard, or "what" we have attained?