

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.

- 1) The first part of verse 15 does set a sort of benchmark doesn't it?
 - a) 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.
 - c) Of course, the attitude is that of “forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead” and all that entails.
- 2) The next phrase here is perhaps not so clear.
 - a) As I said last time, I really like the Baylor Handbook translation of this better than the NASB.

And if you think anything differently, God will also reveal this to you.⁹

- 3) God will not open your brain and automatically change your attitude or way of thinking.
- 4) It is our responsibility to ask questions, pray, study, look for God's guidance.
 - a) It is through that process that He will reveal things to us.
- 5) 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)

⁹ 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.

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

6) Which brings us to the question we left you with to think about...

So, if we are going to keep “living by”, “hold true to”, or “live up to whatever truth” we have attained, I guess we have to ask then –

What is this truth, or this standard we have attained?

7) In a way, Paul is tying this to our moving forward.

- a) The key word is ***attained*** – what we have attained is what we already know and are living by.
- b) Maturing is always adding on things, working toward new things we are learning from our study and from teachings.
 - i) Once we have a new “thing” it becomes a “thing we have attained”.
 - ii) Sometimes, when we learn a “new thing” it may take a while before it moves to the attained column.
 - iii) This can bring us to what we were discussing about handling change a bit ago.
- c) The other side is of course, we all fall short at times even of the things we know because we are human and, let's face it, some things are hard.
 - i) Neither of these conditions should be an excuse for not living up to what we have attained.
 - ii) So, part of maturing is improving in these areas where we do fall short.
- d) Of course, there are also things that we sometimes think we have attained that really turn out to be not so great.
 - i) Things we think are right and proper but it sometimes turns out that we either misunderstood or in some cases were even taught incorrectly.
 - ii) Those we have to let go of which moves it out of the attained column – but – we keep pressing forward!
- e) Dan Wallace made the comment once that (I paraphrase):
 - (1) People often take indefensible stances on “things” as a way of protecting preconceptions. He further said (again I paraphrase):
 - (2) We are all heretics with a small h meaning we all have things that we believe that are in some way or another wrong but, when we see error and thus the correct way, we change.
 - (3) Some are heretics with a capital H meaning that the things they have wrong they will protect with any indefensible or illogical position they can and in doing so will not accept change.'

(4) They continue in their wrong ways to utter destruction.

Philippians 3:17–19 (NASB 2020)

¹⁷ Brothers *and sisters*, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even as I weep, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who have their minds on earthly things.

1) In this first verse we have two key words – example and pattern.

a) Paul claims the example for himself – “my example.”

i) Literally, this says “become my fellow imitators”

b) This is not boasting it is simply pointing back to many of the things that he has said in this letter thus far about what he is and how he lives.

i) 1:1 Bond servant

ii) Many verses He is Thankful

iii) 1:6 Confident in Christ

iv) 1:12-18 All about sharing Christ and the progress of the gospel

v) 1:18-20 Rejoicing in the Lord’s goodness

vi) 2:1-2 Not selfish, looking to the interest of others

vii) 2:14-18 Rejoicing in all circumstances

viii) 3:8-11 Considers everything to be a loss in comparison to knowing Christ

ix) 3:13-16 Presses on to the ultimate goal of being like Christ

2) Who among us would not want to follow that example?

3) As I compiled this list, it occurred to me that all of this really defines the “pattern” to which he refers.

a) BDAG gives another definition for the word translated pattern here – “in the moral life *example*^{10,9)}”

4) So, what about the “us”? Who is the “us” who have this pattern?

a) By definition it is Paul and likely his fellow workers and the other apostles.

b) I think the example “us” are those who fit the pattern but also are not the false teachers being described in verse 18.

i) Enemies of the cross of Christ.

ii) Their end is destruction.

iii) Their god is *their* appetite (they are selfish and gluttonous).

iv) Do not press on to the goal of knowing Christ – their minds on earthly things.

¹⁰ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1020.

Philippians – Notes – 2024

- v) Glory is in their shame – they glory in thinking they are right.
- 5) To use Dan Wallace’s term, these are heretics with a capital “H”.
- 6) The people whom Paul is talking about that do not fit the pattern.
- 7) So, here’s a couple more of those ***“personal contemplation”*** questions for us.
- 8) If drop back into the “checklist” mentality for a moment and we look at the pattern again:

- Bond servant
- Being Thankful
- Being confident in Christ
- All about sharing Christ
- Rejoicing in the Lord’s goodness
- Not selfish, always looking to the interest of others
- Rejoicing in all circumstances
- Consider everything a loss in comparison to knowing Christ
- Pressing on to be like Christ

Think about this – on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being best), how would we rate ourselves on each of these 9 parts of the Paul’s example pattern?

(everyone scored all 10’s right?)

What kind of follower would a new Christian become if he or she imitated us?

- 5) The idea here is to try to get us to bring ourselves into and make connection to Paul’s challenges.
- 6) The real question is not how we rate on these items or how others necessarily see us but how we are working toward being the imitator and follower of Christ’s that we should be.
- 7) After all, that is what the pattern is – **being like Christ!**
- 8) And to add one more hard perspective here (at least it was hard for me) ...

Is there anything in this list that we should not have attained by now?