

>>>>>> *Philippians - Lesson 08* <<<<<<<

- 1) Sorry some folks missed last time – lots of great discussion.
- 2) We finished up looking and talking about verse 12...

Philippians 3:12 (NIV)

¹²Not 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.

- 3) We discussed several aspects of things which Paul might not have “grasped or obtained”.
 - 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. This is the “checklist mentality”
 - c) Wants to know Him (Christ) and the power of His resurrection.
 - d) Wants to have the fellowship of His sufferings.
 - e) Wants to be conformed to His death.
 - f) And finally, he wants to attain to the resurrection from the dead.
- 4) We spent some time talking about where Paul might be in obtaining these items.
- 5) Some of them we decided he had obtained 100% some, maybe not all.
- 6) Paul continues talking about his situation and his attitude in order to give the folks at Philippi an assurance of where he is going and where they should be as well.
- 7) So, as we continue, Paul begins by talking about attitude and in the next passage he will talk about following examples.

Philippians 3:13–16 (NASB 2020)

¹³Brothers *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, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Therefore, 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; ¹⁶however, let’s keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

- 8) Paul begins vs. 13 with a continuation or a restatement of vs. 12.
- 9) Additionally, there are several things in this passage that we really need to take special notice of.
 - a) First – about the restatement, 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 and shortly thereafter, He laid out for Paul what His purpose was for him.
 - ii) Paul has been on that mission journey from that day until the very moment he writes this letter.

- iii) I think he is also on a personal journey to be exactly what Christ wants him to be.
 - iv) Additionally, I think he is saying to them and us that we should be on these two journeys as well.
 - (1) Fulfilling the work(s) that God has laid out for us and at the same time maturing and progressing in our obedience and relationship with Christ.
 - b) Next, and this is something we must not just pass over. Paul clearly says he is forgetting what was behind and pressing on.
- 10) The word for “forgetting” here carries the obvious sense of disregarding or putting something out of one’s mind.
- a) There is a conscious effort involved. That is not always easy!
- 11) So, the question we must answer is what “was behind” that he might be forgetting?
- a) There are several big items this could refer to –
 - i) On the good side, the life as a “Hebrew of Hebrews” he had prior to meeting Christ was probably an accomplishment that might be a distraction.
 - ii) At the same time, his persecutions of the Church which he regrets could be a guilt that would be a distraction.
 - (1) We know that he struggles with this because he mentions it in other places.
 - iii) Perhaps all of the bad things that have happened to him since.
 - iv) Or perhaps, not just the bad, but perhaps some of the good things as well.
 - v) Now that might seem a little odd.
 - (1) However, if our definition of “what was behind” means anything that would cause him to not press forward then ...
 - (2) In that case even accomplishments – if they were a distraction – could be something he felt he must make a conscious effort to forget.
- 12) 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.
- 13) Of course that is not what Paul is saying here,
- a) This is not a matter of “oh no, I don’t remember that” in the sense of “I can’t recall.”
 - b) Instead, it is a matter of forcing himself not to be distracted by whatever the “that” is that is keeping him from being what Christ wants him to be.
 - c) Simply he is saying, I am NOT going to dwell on this – I am going to push it out of my mind and focus on the target!

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- d) The phrase we might use here is “letting go.”
- e) We mentioned – his persecution of the church before meeting Christ as perhaps being one of those things.

What are some other things that might be considered as distractions – things behind?

- f) Relationships, family issues, failures in these areas.
 - g) Persecutions, fears of what was going to happen to him
 - h) Being thwarted in plans he had made and directed by God to somewhere else.
- 14) But of course the end target result of his “pressing on” is living the life Christ has called him to live.
- 15) As Paul puts it here – “ the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”.
- 16) Paul calls it a prize.

Think about this for a minute – what is that prize? – is it just one thing?

- a) I don’t think one can be sure.
 - 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 can personally 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 is pleased with us as well.
 - i) That in my opinion is absolutely a prize of great value!
 - g) To Paul, I think none of this was a burden.
 - i) As it seems always, Paul’s attitude was one of joy – joy in service to his Lord.
 - h) We should consider all our steps to maturity as prizes and be thankful for the help the Holy Spirit is giving us to reach them.
- 17) Now let’s 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.

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18) I’m going to make a strong statement here.

19) This verse may be, in context, the key for them and us to following Christ.

20) 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?

i) 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.

21) However, the next phrase 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.¹³

What are things Paul may be referring to that they may be “thinking differently” on?

b) Things they have been taught.

c) Things he has been saying about attitude or maturity.

22) When Paul says “God will reveal this to you”...

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, what are some ways we allow God to reveal the proper way to deal with things that come up from time to time that we disagree with?

b) Ask questions, pray, study, look for God’s guidance.

23) Finally, Paul says:

Philippians 3:16 (NASB 2020)

“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)

¹³ 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 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 by, live up to, or hold true to, I guess we have to ask then – What is the truth, or the standard we have attained?

24) What Paul is getting at here is that we must try to always be moving forward.

- a) The key word is **attained** – what we have attained is what we already know and are living by.
- b) Simply put, we cannot stop doing what is right just because we are tired of it or for some other reason.
- c) Maturing is always adding to things (truths or standards) that we are working toward and finally perhaps get right.
- d) Things that we discover in our study and from teachings that become new “things we have attained”.
 - i) Sometimes, when we learn a “new thing” it may take a while before it moves to the attained column.
 - ii) Sometimes it may take a while for us to assimilate that “new thing” and make it a part of our life.
- e) 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 we become aware of and try to put into our lives 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.
- f) 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 turns out that we either misunderstood or in some cases were even taught incorrectly.
 - ii) Those, we have to let go of – but – **we keep pressing on!**