

Phil 3:12-21

Series on Philippians

- Paul to dear friends and fellow believers
- Under house arrest – uncertain outcome looming
- Last time:
 - watch out – dogs, evil-doers, mutilaters
 - pedigree means nothing – look at me
 - knowing Christ is everything – righteous because of faith in Him, not from my resume or heritage

“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. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” 3:12-21

1. Keep Going – 12-14

- Paul has planted churches, seen miracles, is in Prison for the gospel – ‘not that I have attained all this or have already arrived’
- A W Tozer “How tragic that we in this dark day have had our seeking done for us by our teachers. Everything is made to center upon the initial act of 'accepting' Christ . . . and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls. We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found Him, we need no more seek Him. This is set before us as the last word in orthodoxy, and it is taken for granted that no Bible-taught Christian ever believed otherwise. Thus the whole testimony of the worshiping, seeking, singing church on that subject is crisply set aside. The experiential heart-theology of a grand army of fragrant saints is rejected in favor of a smug interpretation of Scripture which would certainly have sounded strange to an Augustine, a Rutherford or a Brainerd. (pp. 16–17)”

a) Press On

- look at language – press on to take hold of, straining
- he is persevering – going forward towards the goal
- clear that he has not ‘arrived’ or ‘attained’
- our culture suggest we give up in face of difficulty
 - relationships, jobs, business, finances
- Paul exhorting them to adopt a posture, mindset that presses on through circumstances with the goal ahead
- suggest we adopt a holy dissatisfaction with the status quo of our growth in Christ – and press on – not there yet, more to gain and participate in

b) One thing that's Key:

- forget what is behind

i) Failures – Paul had a past

- 1 Tim 1:13-15 ***“Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst”***

- Isaiah 43:25 ***“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”***

- Jeremiah 31:34 ***“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”***

ii) What Has Gone Well

- ‘forgetting what is behind’

- if we focus on the ‘good old days’ or ‘remember when this happened’ or ‘it was better when’ – hard to see what is happening in the present

c) Be Clear on the Finish Line

- Paul talks about the goal, prize, reward, finish line

- there is eternal life with Christ – we will be accepted in heaven because of what Jesus has done, God will reward faithful servants – focus in clear for Paul – the why in persevering, keep going

2. Keep Learning vs. 15 – 16

a) 'all who are mature'

- in age and in growth spiritually
- should have this view of things
 - no early retirement, no drifting, no lazy life
- need to guard against the 'we have arrived' or 'I have done my time'.

b) 'if you think differently...God will make it clear..'

- listen to His word and the Spirit's work in you
- will become clear as His heart is Duplicated in you
- love the trust in God – He will show you

c) 'live up to what you have already attained'

- sanctification – living up to who I already am in Christ

- vs 9 ***“and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.”***

- you have full adoption as sons and daughters, you have full inheritance as a child of God, you are forgiven, cleansed, accepted, holy – now act like it

3. Keep Perspective 17-21

- easy to lose our perspective on heavenly truth living in earthly challenge

a) Live in Community vs. 17

- 'join together in following our example'
- do this corporately not just individually
- cannot follow an example without seeing it - real values are modeled and caught not just taught
- there is great value in the witness of others – how to handle failure, disappointment, be faithful in trial, etc
- incredible encouragement to learn from those who have gone before and have been faithful
- important to realize others are watching and emulating you – your choices and responses matter

b) See and Love the Lost vs.18-19

- clearly recognizes some are enemies of the cross, and their pursuit of self will lead to destruction
- set their minds on earthly things, glory in what is shameful, headed for destruction
- 'often told you before and tell you again with tears'
- passionate for them, heartbroken – evident care

c) Citizens of Heaven vs.20-21

- benefits of being a Roman Citizen
- belong to all powerful King, citizen with full rights
- end is written, He is able, we eagerly await the goal

So What

1. Keep Going – this life is to be invested

- Leave the Past

 - don't rely on past accolades or accomplishments

 - don't let failure in past determine your future

- Press on – Persevere

 - break the cultural model of abandonment

- Strive for the Goal – while you have life

2. Keep Learning – you have the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, and the Bride of Christ – you don't arrive this side of heaven

- the mature in the faith are to be an example

3. Keep Perspective

- get into community – share your life, be impacted by others
- see and love the lost – know them, be disturbed by their choices and lives, be devastated by their future
- remember where your citizenship lies – and be expectant