



Sunday School- January 27, 2013

GAINING THE PRIZE

Unifying Topic: STAND FIRM

Lesson Text

I. Pressing On (Philippians 3:12-14)

II. Let Us Live Up To What We Have Already Attained (Philippians 3:15-16)

The Main Thought: Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. (Philippians 3:16), KJV).

Unifying Principle: Sometimes it is difficult to sustain energy to achieve goals that have lasting value. What motivates us to press on toward a goal? Maintaining a strong relationship with Christ now prepares us for the relationship we will have

with Christ in eternity; Jesus stressed that planning and being prepared would help people reach important goals.

Lesson Aim: To impress upon students that even so great an apostle as Paul did not consider himself to have achieved perfection.

Life Aim: To encourage students to preserve in faith and in good works in light of their heaven-ward calling.

3:12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

3:13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

3:15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

3:16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

HISTORY:

Philippians 3:7-11 ¹All such things were considered rubbish in relation to the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus (7-8). Therefore Paul had as his goal to be found in Christ, having that righteousness which is by faith in Jesus, knowing Him and the power of His resurrection, and even sharing in His sufferings, that he might by any means attain to the resurrection from the dead (9-11).

LESSON:

Philippians 3:12-14 Pressing On

HAVE NOT ATTAINED

3:12 *"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."* When Christ saved Paul, that was just the beginning, not the end. He had been saved to live for Christ and to serve Christ, and as long as he was on this earth he was going to live for Christ and do all he could to serve Christ. Paul did not count himself as having yet attained. He was not yet perfect. He had made great progress in Christlikeness, but the goal is still before him and not behind him. The goal absorbed all his energy; this is an example of us. We should not let anything take our eyes off our goal—Christ!

1. Paul followed after perfection, after his God-given purpose. The word "*follow after*" (*dioko*) means to press; to pursue just like a runner in a race. There is no such thing as a genuine believer sitting still after he has been saved. The believer must not...
 - a. become comfortable, complacent, lethargic, or lazy;
 - b. waste time and lose opportunity;
 - c. begin to think he is safe and secure forever, doing do what he likes and giving into his own desires.

The believer must follow, run, and press after perfection—the perfection for which Christ has saved him. The believer must be active in living for Christ. Paul is encouraged, not discouraged, as he keeps up the chase in pursuit of the goal. Christ had laid hold of Paul on the Road to Damascus, and Paul's desire was to lay hold of Christ's purpose for his life. God desires to reveal His Son in Paul (Gal.1:16). Therefore, Paul ran the race

¹ http://executableoutlines.com/phil/phil_03.htm

to grab hold of the one who grabbed hold of Him at Salvation. If there is no following after Christ, no desire to gain Christ, to lose for Christ, to die for Christ, then there is no relationship with Christ.

HAVE NOT APPREHENDED

3:13 *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,"*

2. Paul does not want the Christians at Philippi to believe false doctrine, so he strongly repeats what has been said:
 - a. ²He has not reached the place of completion of the race, the goal, but he's running to it, and the goal is Christ. The finish of the race is death, and the reward is the resurrection.
 - i. Paul had reason to feel guilty: he held the coats of those who stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Act 7:57, 58). We have all done things for which we are ashamed and we all live in the tension of what we had been and what we want to be. It is especially difficult if others are not forgiving and willing to let the believer put his failure behind him.
 - ii. ³Some of the Christians in Philippi said that they were already perfect. They denied that people needed discipline in the Christian life. But Paul himself had not completely succeeded in the work that Christ had given him to do. And Paul knew that. He had only one aim. He uses the picture of a runner in a race. The runner must not look behind him. So Paul must not look back to his old life before he became a Christian. He must forget all his past failures and successes. He must not allow them to affect what he thought or did now. He must not lose his courage or become satisfied with himself. A runner makes every effort to look ahead. And he runs straight towards the line at the end of the race. Paul was making every effort to become perfect, that is, being mature as a Christian.
 - b. Paul worked at forgetting the past. *"This one thing I do. This is the single common denominator and sum of my life. I press for the greater and forget the lesser. I don't allow myself to be sidetracked from the goal and the prize so whatever attempts to infringe itself upon me, to stop or to hinder me I forget it."*
 - i. It's good to forget all that hinders and to remember all that helps.
 - ii. But note: Paul tells us how to deal with the past. How? By concentrating and controlling the mind, by reaching forth to those things which are before us. In one focused act, we are to forget and reach and the next verse says then press toward (putting your back into it to go forward).

I PRESS TOWARD

3:14 *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*

3. Paul pressed on toward the goal, toward God's purpose in Christ Jesus. And the purpose is to be conformed to the image of Christ—to be perfect even as He is perfect.
 - i. A runner who reached the line at the end of the race received a reward from the judge. After the race, the judge 'called up' the runner to receive his prize.
 - ii. Paul's prize when he has finished his 'race of faith' will be with Christ. It is compared to no other reward received.
 - iii. It is *"prize of the high calling of God"* or the upward calling. It was a call from heaven and a call to heaven; to be like Christ and some day to be with Christ. God will call him to enjoy the glory of heaven for ever.

Philippians 3:15-16 Let Us Live Up To What We Have Already Attained

SPIRITUALLY MATURE

3:15 *"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you."* Paul is saying, as many as are spiritually mature and full grown. The word *"perfect"* speaks of spiritual maturity; having our minds on what Christ has done at the cross, not of sinless perfection. And even if you think you are perfect, *"God shall reveal even this unto you."* There are three stages of perfection:

1. *First*, there is positional perfection or justification (Heb.10:14; Col.2:10).

² <http://www.fotbc.org/commentary/50philippians.htm>

³ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/philippians-lbw.htm>

2. *Secondly*, there is progressive perfection, or sanctification (2Corth.7:1; Eph.4:11-12; Gal.3:3).
3. *Thirdly*, there is ultimate perfection in heaven or glorification (Eph.5:27; 1Jh.3:1-2).

The Philippians were not all mature; some were satisfied with low attainment and others with a medium attainment. But Paul says God will reveal this to them. God will not let the genuine believer rest unless his mind is on righteousness and purity. God pricks our hearts, and reveals that we are falling and coming short. God stirs us to get our minds back upon living like we should—upon pressing for perfection.

NEVERTHELESS, HOLD TRUE

3:16 *"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."* *"Nevertheless"*, meaning on the other hand Paul lets them know that what they have already attained, walk by that rule; all having the same mind. Paul is using 2 different Greek words. In verse 12, the word attained means—to take hold of something, whereas in verse 16, it refers to—arriving at a specific point, progress, if you please. Paul maintained the growth he had already achieved. Too many live up and down lives. We gain some discipline and some growth, then before too long, we slip right back. There are interruptions and the *"new man"* and *"new growth"* are forsaken and we slip back into being the *"old man"*, living just like we used to live. We need to continue in the same straight path in which we have been walking, guided by the same divine truths and the unchanging principles of faith. We need to hold on to what we have and what Jesus has shown us, then He will give us more so we can strive to go higher. ⁴When a group of Christians is growing in the faith and are all in unison about walking in the Spirit and thinking the same thing, then there will be a strong group of Christians. When each one begins to think differently, there will be disharmony in the group, only when there is Christian unity is there strength. The rule we walk in is the grace of God and that will always be our standard.

SUMMARY:

⁵Jesus' love reaches out to us, and we respond in reaching closer to Him. As we are drawn closer to Him, we are continuously transformed. Paul says even for him this process is not finished. He is straining towards the goal as to win the prize. Paul says this attitude should be in every mature Christian. Even for those who do not have it, the Lord will teach them. That means EVERY Christian should have this attitude of continuous letting God to transform him. However, Paul notes at the end that no matter at what stage of maturity, one should live out the Christian life from what he has already learnt, so there is no excuse of slacken off.

APPLICATION:

Tell God about it first. Whatever you are striving for, especially if it's Christ, He is there to take you all the way to the finish line. Even if a time that you're about to give up. Tell God about it. This is not something you are left to do on your own. He's always there to give strength and help every time.

⁴ http://www.scionofzion.com/philippians_3_16_21.htm

⁵ http://askchansir.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=75:summary-of-the-book-of-philippians&catid=34:philippians&Itemid=57