

PHILIPPIANS

LESSON TEN

JOY IN FAITHFUL LIVING

(3:12-19)

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**

- A. Paul emphasized that he had not yet reached his goal.
 - 1. In verse 11, he wrote of attaining the resurrection of the dead.
 - 2. The Greek word in that verse meant to arrive at or come to.
 - 3. Now, he writes that he has not attained.
 - 4. This is a different Greek word meaning, “to take hold of, to take by force; to seize; to procure (for one’s self); to receive.”
 - 5. Though Paul’s goal was to reach the resurrection unto eternal life, he had not taken hold of that reward yet.
- B. Even though Paul was “in Christ” and knew Him, he did not mean to say that he had reached the end of his journey – he had not arrived.
- C. In fact, he wrote, “Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect” (ASV).
 - 1. He had not attained his goal in the past and, even in the present, he had not reached perfection.
 - 2. The Greek work literally means “to make perfect, to complete; to carry through completely; to finish or fulfill.”
 - 3. Paul had not reached a place where his spiritual growth or maturing had stopped.
 - 4. In spite of all that he had done, the goal was still before Paul, not behind him.
 - 5. Keep in mind that Jesus was made perfect through suffering (Hebrews 5:7-9) and Paul was enduring suffering himself.
- D. Thus, he continued to “follow after” or to pursue, to press on toward the goal.
 - 1. This word means “to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing; to press on [as] one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal.”
 - 2. So, Paul has introduced the imagery of the Christian life as a race that is to be run unto the end.
- E. His goal was to apprehend (to grab or lay hold on) eternal life.
- F. This same eternal life was the reason that Jesus had apprehended Paul in the first place.
 - 1. This is a beautiful concept.
 - 2. God wants all to be saved so He, through the Gospel, grabs hold of those with honest, good and submissive hearts.
 - 3. In turn, they strive to grab hold of God’s desire for them through faithful obedience.
 - 4. The two work together for the same goal – eternal fellowship in Heaven!

5. In contrast, the darkness is unable to grab hold of the light of Jesus and His truth (John 1:5).

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**

- A. Again, Paul emphasized that he had not yet reached the goal.
- B. Though he was not there yet, Paul's goal was the single focus of his life.
 1. Notice that the words "this" and "I do" are in italics in the KJV, meaning they were supplied by the translators.
 2. Literally, Paul says, "But one thing." There is no verb in the Greek.
 3. The one thing Paul focused his life on was pressing toward the mark.
 4. It is important to understand that true joy is linked to one's single-minded focus upon salvation and Heaven.
- C. In order to focus on his goal, Paul chose to forget the things which were behind him.
 1. This would certainly include those things he counted loss in order to win Christ (3:7).
 2. Someone wrote: "Looking back is sure to end in going back (Luke 9:62; 17:32)."
 3. Again, the illustration is of one running a race.
 - a. A runner does not look back to consider the ground he has covered.
 - b. He does not look back to see how others are running.
 - c. Instead, he is focused on his goal – the finish line.
 4. So, Paul means that he would not allow himself to be turned from his course by anything – especially those things he had already experienced and passed.
 5. This does not mean that Paul never thought about the past; but, that he did so in a healthy way (cf. Ephesians 2:11).
- D. As he focused on his goal, Paul stretched forth to reach what was before him.
 1. Again, this word reminds us of a runner in a race stretching his body forward to cross the finish line.
 2. In Paul's future was the crown of life and the victory of Heaven.
- E. We must learn from Paul that in order to finish our course, we must not dwell on the past or on any obstacles, but keep our focus on our goal.

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

- A. The word "press" is the same as "follow after" in verse 12.
- B. The word "mark" literally refers to a goal or end one has in view.
 1. The Greek word is *skopon* or *skopos*. {Think of the word scope.}
 2. The goal is the mark to which one looks and on which he sets his sights.
- C. Thus, Paul ran swiftly and surely toward the goal of life – Heaven.
- D. The word "prize" refers to the award given to the victor in a race or in the Olympic games (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24; Hebrews 12:1-2; 2 Timothy 4:7-8).
 1. The prize was presented after the victor was called up to stand elevated in triumph.

2. The Christian receives the “upward calling” of God when we are called up to Him in Heaven.

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

- A. Consider the use of the word “perfect” in this verse.
 1. In verse 12, Paul stated that he was not perfect.
 2. Yet, here, he writes of himself and others as being perfect.
 3. The word in verse 12 had to do with the final state of perfection one has in Heaven.
 4. Here, it refers to a relative perfection – a different form of the Greek word that often refers to maturity or completeness (cf. Matthew 5:48; 19:21; 1 Corinthians 14:20; Colossians 1:28; Hebrews 5:14).
- B. Paul stated that those who were spiritually mature and complete in Christ should have the same mindset that he did.
- C. All Christians should have one single-minded focus in life – Heaven.
- D. If they had not yet reached this understanding, God would reveal the truth of Paul’s words to them.
 1. This indicates God’s longsuffering toward His children as they run the race toward Heaven.
 2. There is room for growth and maturing as we journey.
 3. In a sense, Paul is saying that if they would not learn it from him, there was nothing more he could do – it was in God’s hands.
 4. Yet, God revealed His truth through His Word – thus, Paul’s admonition to “walk by the same rule.”

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

- A. The idea is that not every Christian has reached the same level of maturity or spiritual growth.
- B. But, wherever we are – what degree we have attained – we should be encouraged to continue running the race.
 1. Paul uses a different word for “attain” in this verse.
 2. It means, “to arrive at, to come to, to reach” (cf. 1 Thes. 4:15).
- C. As we run the race – however far along on the journey we may be – we must continue to walk by the same rule.
 1. Literally, we are to keep step (march) by the same standard.
 2. The Greek word for rule is *kanon*.
- D. Furthermore, we must have our minds set on the same thing – faithfully running that we may reach the goal.

3:17 **Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample**

- A. As we run this race, we should not become discouraged when we see those who are ahead of us, farther along in their journey.
 1. Comparing ourselves to Jesus or Paul may cause us to think that we will never attain their level of maturity.
 2. Yet, they should be our encouragement – a goal to strive for.
- B. We should follow (imitate) the example of Paul and those like him.
- C. We should set our eyes on them and regard the example set before us.
 1. The word “mark” is related to the same word in verse 14.

2. Compare with 2:4; Galatians 6:1; 2 Corinthians 4:18

3:18 **(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ**

- A. The good example of Paul and others like him was to be followed by the faithful Christian.
- B. However, there were also bad examples who were to be rejected.
1. Obviously, the Christian is not to follow the example of those alien sinners who remain in the world and in their worldliness.
 2. Yet, there is an implied warning here against imitating those who claim to be Christians but continue to live like the world.
- C. Notice that there were many whose lives showed them to be enemies of the cross.
1. The majority follow the broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14; Exodus 23:3).
 2. It is easy to be swayed or overwhelmed by the numbers who stand against truth and righteousness.
 3. Yet, we must seek out a follow good examples.
- D. Notice that the warnings against these enemies were numerous and frequent.
1. Paul did not try to ignore, excuse or hide these sins or sinners.
 2. Understanding their danger and deadly influence, Paul warned others of these individuals.
- E. Notice that these warnings were accompanied with weeping.
1. Paul did not rejoice over the sins of another, especially when the sinner was a brother in Christ.
 2. He wept because the sinner's soul was in danger of eternal death.
 3. He wept because the sinner's influence had the potential to harm the church.
 4. He wept because of the heartbreak these sinners brought to God.
- F. Notice that these warnings were specific and pointed – these people were enemies of the cross of Christ.

3:19 **Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things)**

- A. Paul revealed four important facts about these sinners.
- B. Their god was their own fleshly appetites (cf. Romans 16:18; 1 Cor. 6:13).
- C. Their heart was fixed upon physical and temporal earthly things.
1. The Christian is to be focused on heavenly things (Col. 3:2).
 2. Because they were so attached to this world, these individuals cared little for the things of God (cf. Romans 8:5).
- D. Their pride and glory was centered upon their sinful practices.
- E. Their end was destruction – eternal separation from God.
1. The word for “destruction” means “ruin, loss, perishing; perdition.”
 2. If they continued walking as they were, there was only one destination at the end of their journey – Hell.
- F. It is sad for men and women to live (and die) in such a condition.
- G. It is sadder still when the faithful child of God leaves the race and begins following one such as this.
- H. We must keep our eyes always on the prize!