

# *Striving Together: Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*

## **Lesson 8: Philippians 3:12-16**

*Pressing On* (vv. 12-14) - These verses continue the section which begins with 3:1...

- Three key word groups in these verses:
  - *lambanō* – attain, obtain; *katalambanō* – lay hold of, apprehend (root word)
  - *teleioō* – perfected (verb); *teleios* – mature (noun) – in verse 15
  - *diōkō* – press on, run after
- What has Paul not attained or laid hold of? (vv. 12a, 13a)
  - One clue is that it is related to Paul not being “perfected” (v. 12a)
    - A synonym for “perfected” in Scripture is “completed”
    - This is not to be confused with “perfectionism” (1 John 1:8)
    - From last week: progressive sanctification – 1:6; Eph. 4:11ff
  - Another clue is that Christ has obtained it for Paul (and us)
  - There’s no object in these verses, so the answer is in what has already been written in the previous verses
  - Commentators generally believe that Paul is referring to the future when he is in the presence of Jesus Christ
    - This is a logical conclusion of the intimacy with Christ Paul longs for as described in 3:10-11
    - Our glorification will usher in an even closer relationship (1 John 3:2-3)

*What do believers (you) value about the afterlife?*

- So, Paul presses on to attain what Christ has already attained (v. 12b)
  - Common theme with Paul: already but not yet
  - This speaks to our salvation, but also to three aspects of sanctification
    - Preparational sanctification – salvation in Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:10-14)
      - This includes God’s plan since before the foundation of the world
    - Progressive sanctification – maturing in Christ (Romans 12:1-2)
    - Prospective sanctification – our future (Romans 6:22; 1 Thess. 3:12-13)
  - Paul wants to honor what Jesus has done for Him by living for Him and serving Him fully each day of his life (“work out your own salvation”)
- Paul is single-minded in his pursuit of holiness (vv. 13b-14)
  - Dwight L. Moody: “It is better to say, ‘This one thing I do,’ than to say, ‘These forty things I dabble with.’”
  - Paul chooses to not dwell on the past
    - He obviously has not “forgotten” the past, since he recalls it on occasion
    - Think of this more as neglecting or having no care for his past
    - His victories (and defeats) will not hinder his future

*How does/can our past affect our service to the Lord?*

- He uses athletic imagery to bring home his point
  - “reaching forward” – stretching out; a runner leaning forward
  - “press toward the goal” – focused on the finish line
  - The prize for the victor is the “upward call” of God in Christ Jesus
    - Though debated, this may simply be a reference to heaven
    - But the prize is much more than the place...it’s JESUS
    - Since salvation Paul has desired to be with Jesus
    - Heaven, the rewards, everything else pales in comparison to the excellence and joy of being in the presence of our Savior and Lord

*How do we become more single-minded in serving the Lord?*

### *Mature Believers Challenged* (vv. 15-16)

- “mind” shows up three times in these two verses, which should trigger the ideas of unity (2:1-4) and servanthood (2:5-8)
- Default setting: mature believers should have the same motivations as Paul
- He allows that if there’s a disconnect, God will show those with a difference of opinion the error of their thinking

*What is Paul assuming with this statement?*

- Not everyone will be in the same place at the same time (v. 16)
  - While this is true, Paul expects that wherever we are on the maturity spectrum we should be pressing toward the goal **as we understand it** at that point in our Christian walk
  - Interesting word for Christians here...
    - “rule” (*kanōn*) = a rod used to keep something straight; a measuring rod or tape. Basis of our word “canon.”
    - Less than a command but more than a suggestion

*What duty do the mature Christians of verse 15 have to the verse 16 group?*

*Next week: Philippians 3:17-4:1*