

Phil 3:12-16

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

In 1896 an American from Boston by the name of James Conolly lost his savings and scholarship to participate in the Olympics:

Paul wrote in Phil 3:7, what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

The day we decided to follow Christ is the day we decided

- that everything else would become secondary and we were willing to lose it.

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended (*attain, obtain*); but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

13b -but one thing *I do*, The words “*I do*” are in italics and were not in the original.

We’ve seen these words “one thing” elsewhere in scripture.

Examples:

The rich young ruler in Mark 10

Mary and Martha Worship and serve, Luke 10

Healed man excommunicated, John 9

Phil 13b but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

Christians tend to beat themselves up over their past:

Paul says, forget those things.

To emphasize his point about the past Paul used the Greek word *epilanthomai* which means to “disregard” or “put out of mind.”

Paul was referring to all of the garbage of his past,

- the things he'd done out of pride,
- in his arrogance,
- all of the blasphemy and heresy.

James 1:24

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

Paul mentions some of those things he'd like to forget:

1 Tim 1:13

13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

We can't change the past, but we can certainly work on the future.

So Paul says we should be reaching forward to those things which are ahead.

For the believer the best is yet to come.

Paul says to reach forward to those things which are ahead.

The Greek verb for *reaching* (*epekteinomenos*) denotes an athlete who runs without swerving off course and who strains his entire body to cross the finish line.

- Paul consciously lets go of his past,
- and turns his attention to the future.

What awaits us in heaven?

Rom 14:12

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

2 Cor 5:10

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Eph 6:8

8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

1 Cor 3:11-15

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort

it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Some fish are transparent:

And so it will be when we stand before the Lord.

- He will see right thru us.
- He will see the motives
- of why we did what we did.

What are some of the rewards we'll be given.

Victors Crown:

1 Cor 9:25-27

25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Crown of rejoicing or Crown of soul-winners:

1 Thess 2:19

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

Crown of Righteousness:

2 Tim 4:8

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The Crown of Life:

James 1:12

12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Rev 2:10

10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

And finally there is the Crown of Glory:

1 Peter 5:4

4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Paul said it so eloquently in **Rom 8:18**

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Phil 3:14-16

14 I press toward (- to follow or press hard after, to go after with the desire of obtaining) the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul said in the previous verse to reach forward to those things which are ahead.

Here in verse 14 he says, I'm pursuing the goal for the prize

But in:

Phil 3:6 he says:

6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; (see, he was pursuing the church, going after the church)

He once went after the church with the same energy as he did when he was pressing toward the goal as a believer.

We see the same word again in **1 Thes 5:15** but in a different context:

1 Thess 5:15

15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. (He's saying, do what is right to others as unto yourself.)

Rom 14:19

19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

We should use the same amount of energy

- or even more in pursuit of Christ
- as we were in pursuit of sin in our life.

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind;

The Greek adjective “*téleios*” for the word “mature” is (to be full and wanting in nothing.)

I love what Paul said to the Corinthians in **1 Cor 13**, When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

15b and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

- If athletes take too much time away from training,
- they wouldn't be as competitive
- as if they trained daily.

And so it is in our Christian walk.

In the spiritual marathon of the Christian race,

- some will finish in a sprint,
- some will be far behind and still others
- will have to be pulled along by their friends.

16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

- Paul focused on himself as the example in verses 12-14
- then in verses 15 & 16 he includes all Christians
- in the journey by saying, "let us."

Yes, we have to maintain our own walk with the Lord,

- but we are to encourage one another as well.

Phil 3:17-21

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. 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: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame – who set their mind on earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

Paul was saying, look, you have me, Timothy, Epaphroditus and others for a pattern.

This isn't the first time Paul tells a church to follow his example.

- And he always does it in a humble fashion.

So Paul comes out and says what the Holy Spirit told him to say

- by telling the church to follow his example.

In 1 Cor 4:16 he urged the church to follow him.

In 1 Cor 11:1 he said, Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

And in Gal 4:12 he urged the brethren to become like him, he says, for I became like you.

Certainly Paul didn't mean for the church to imitate him

- in every area of his life.

He said in verse 12 that he had not already attained nor was he perfected. But he pressed on.

But he was relentlessly pursuing after Christ

- with everything he had and that's the example he set.

Why would the Lord have Paul point us to himself in this case instead of to Jesus?

Because He wanted us to know that there are people

- that have the same Holy Spirit as us
- that are striving to serve Christ
- in the midst of this corrupt
- and twisted sinful world.

Toward the end of his life Paul wrote in 2 Tim 3:10-11

2 Tim 3:10-11

10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra — what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Some may say, well yeah, Paul was an apostle. He had something special.

- He didn't point only to himself as an example,
- he pointed to others such as Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Our goal should be to imitate Christ and when we're doing that, others will see.

But there will be wolves, this was very real in Paul's life and so he says:

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:

19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame — who set their mind on earthly things.

This verse is confirmation that Paul isn't speaking of followers of Christ in verses 18 & 19 because he says they set their mind on earthly things.

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul is referring to the Christians by reminding us,

- the whole of Christianity,
- that our citizenship is not on this earth
- but is in heaven.

Our citizenship is in heaven.

As Christians, don't dig your heels in too deep,

- because this isn't your final stop.

Paul uses the word "citizenship"

- which is derived from the Greek word "politeuma"
- which is where we get our English word
- "politics or political affiliation."

Paul in a sense is saying that our political party is in heaven.

20b we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

- our hope is not in the coming of the Lord,
- our hope is in the Lord who is coming!

Knowing the Lord is coming should be enough motivation

- for every believer to live his/her life for Christ.

1 Jn 3:2

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

21 who (speaking of Christ) will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Do you all realize that the typical answer

- if you ask people what they'd change about themselves in heaven,
- they say they'd change their appearance.

One day every believer will get a glorified body,

- one that will never see corruption according to 1 Cor 15:50.

We will be permanently transformed: *metaschēmatizōē*; - to cause something to change form.