

TAKING HOLD - PHILIPPIANS 3:12-21

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own.

- 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.
 - This is what I believe Paul has in mind - the resurrection of the dead. It is only at this point Paul will have obtained his goal or be made made perfect.
- Acts 9:5-6 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."
 - (NASB) I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
 - Yes, Jesus had "taken hold" of Paul. Because Jesus took hold of Paul, Paul was committed to taking hold of Jesus and what He offered - eternal life.
 - Do you remember when the Lord took hold of you? I think I shared this in the past, but my father encouraged Jordan and I to take off our rings from time to time, look at them and remember. So, do you remember when you became His? When He became yours? Were you forced into that relationship or did you enter it willingly? But, we don't stop there, do we? We think about the days that followed. We think about His goodness and patience. We think about the good days and difficult days, but how through it all, He's changed us. Or, maybe we think about the days He waited around while stubbornly stayed our own course. We think about His mercy. We think about His grace. Yes, He took hold of us. He made us His own.
 - But He hasn't only made you His own, but a host of others. That continues to say something about Him, doesn't it? So many people who you and I could do without, but Jesus felt differently. These truths are multi-layered. They are multi-faceted. The reality is that they are too deep for even the deep thinkers around us. His love is too big. Too wonderful. It's a deity kind of love. We've not seen this kind of love until He introduced it into our world by coming as Himself . . . yet like us, so we could somehow, to an extent, understand it. This is too wonderful for me to talk about or understand, but one thing we know: Jesus love has been taking hold of people for a long time . . . and you're part of that story.
 - Listen, I don't know how we can comprehend this statement, but I know how we can respond.

¹³⁻¹⁴ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- Until that time when Paul would be made perfect, he sought to know Jesus more and more. This life is more than simply waiting for Jesus to return. I'm not a country fan, truly I'm not

(haha), but there's a Garth Brooks song back in the day. "Standing Outside the Fire". The chorus is "Life is not tried, it is merely survived If you're standing outside the fire." Pulling off the principle. This life is not meant to be purely survived. We're to live, in the Kingdom of God, learning, growing, maturing from mistakes, serving others and seeking to help. I deeply believe that God is training us now for the life to come.

- However, that requires us to look forward . . . not backwards.
 - I do not believe this is taking about past failures.
 - I'm not sure he's referencing his comments in vs. 5-6. Some may see in this passage the same principle found in Luke 9:62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."
 - However, he may have in mind his past success as a Christian. There's always room for growth. There's always more to know about Jesus. We're not talking about what you know about Jesus, but knowing Him through our lives: in how we think, how we act, how we serve, how we love, etc. It's Christ living in us - and we'll never reach perfection, though that's a goal we seek. We continue to grow and mature until we die or the Lord returns - at which point we will be perfected. We will obtain the resurrection of the Lord.
 - Regardless, we know that looking back at our past "success" is not the end of the story. Consider Ezekiel 18:21-24.
- The upward call. Yes, that's the origin. Called by God through His Son. Called by the gospel.
 - 1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.
 - What "calls" you today? What's your goal? It's very hard to hit a goal when you never have one, isn't it? The world can tutor us at times. Jesus even acknowledged how shrewd they can be with money, didn't He? The world will ask you what your goals are: what's your 5, 10, 15 year financial plan? What's your physical fitness plan? What's your career plan, etc? How can you meet a goal you don't have? How much more important is it to make a spiritual plan?

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

- Paul hopes that the brethren will be mature (meaning of perfect) in their way of thinking like he is, but if not, he trusts they will come to understand.
- Meanwhile, they are to follow what they understand and know to be true. I find in this a comforting principle. There may be things I don't always understand at the moment. Many times we simply need more time, but that should never hinder us from doing what we do know is right and from God.

¹⁷⁻¹⁹ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with

tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

- Yes, being humble didn't mean you're unaware. Paul knew he was an example. He was supposed to be . . . and so are you, brethren. You are supposed to be a Christian others can look up to and I believe we have that here. God's has people like you all over the world. However, not all are like Christ.
- Some are religious, yet they struggle and rebel. They'll not receive the prize at the end of the race. They'll meet a goal and I'm not sure they were aware they had. Their downfall was their own wants, not God's. What they take pride in should cause them to blush. Their minds were taken captive by the wrong prince. They played in the wrong kingdom . . . and this broke Paul's heart.

²⁰⁻²¹ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

- So, I'll tell you what my long term plan regarding my family, home and health.
 - A home with God and you all.
 - A home that cannot be destroyed.
 - A body that cannot wear out.
- 1 Corinthians 15:35-41, 50-58