

Contagious Joy

Part 14 – Finishing Well!

Philippians 3:12-16

July 19, 2009

We are in the last week of a 3-part mini-series called *Leaving a Legacy That Lasts*. Last week we discovered that **finding Christ** and really knowing Him was the most important thing in life. This week we see that **finishing well** is part 2 of that equation!

Proposition: How do we finish well? **A determination that will affect your destiny** (v. 12-14)

I. Press on! Never give up. (v. 12a)

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on

A. The doctrine of sinless perfection?

1. Some in Philippi might have mistakenly assumed that, having gained those marvelous benefits, Paul had reached spiritual perfection. The Judaizers may also have taught the Philippians that spiritual perfection was attainable through being circumcised and keeping the Law. There were also heretics (forerunners of the second-century Gnostics) who taught that spiritual perfection awaited those who attained a certain level of knowledge. To counter such false ideas, Paul quickly added this passage, which is a forceful disclaimer of spiritual perfection.
(MacArthur)
2. Paul was not perfect. Perfectionism is the teaching that believers can reach a place of spiritual and moral perfection in this life. Perfectionists teach that in a second work of grace, believers may instantaneously be made sinless. Some even go so far as to teach the

eradication of the sin nature. But Paul, undoubtedly the most committed, dedicated, spiritually mature Christian who ever lived, confessed gladly that he had failed to reach spiritual perfection thirty years after his conversion. (MacArthur). Despite the false teachers' claims to the contrary, spiritual perfection is not attainable in this life.

3. For the Christian, nothing short of the moral perfection of God is always the absolute standard of conduct, but Scripture recognizes that Christians do not attain sinless perfection in this life (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 1 Jn.1:8-10).

B. God is more interested in your progress than your perfection

1. Or in your direction not your perfection!
2. *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).*
3. At the same time reject complacency and apathy!
4. Ex. – Pressing on is like the marathon runner vs. the sprinter. The "rabbit" goes out fast and dazzles the crowd for 5 or 10 miles, but the marathon runner keeps the pace for the entire race! Or The Tour De France
5. Winston Churchill's address – "Never give up"

II. Take hold of Christ Jesus (v. 12b-13a)

To take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.

A. Who has a hold of whom?

1. To take hold of; catch, seize, to run or follow after! Paul wanted the same thing. He was passionate about serving God and in essence being captured and captivated by the cause of Christ!
2. Let go and let God wasn't even in his vocabulary! Hang on to Jesus, when there is nothing else to cling to!

B. What Has God done for us?

1. We are a new Creation (2 Cor. 5:17)

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2. We have a new heart (Ezek. 36:26)

"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

3. We are renewed from the inside out (Cor. 4:16)

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

4. We identify with Christ (Gal. 2:20)

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

5. We know where we stand before God (Rom. 8:1)

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

6. We have been justified (Rom. 5:1)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

7. We have been forgiven (Eph. 1:7)

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

8. We have the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16)

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you;

C. Think in terms of eternity not expedience.

1. Is what I'm doing have an eternal impact? Do you wake up in the morning asking God how he can use you to further His kingdom work?
2. What lasts for eternity? The word of God and people.
3. Don't make short term decisions and expect long term results. Don't take shortcuts in your life spiritually...
 - Skipping Q.T...you really don't have time?
 - Hurried prayer...slow down
 - Lack of solitude and reflection
 - What disciplines in your life are you developing?

III. Forget the past (v. 13b)

But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead

A. A running analogy

1. He isn't saying that he has forgotten about what he had done in his past, or refused to remember; he just isn't resting on his heritage!
2. A runner who looks back risks being passed. Nor does a runner's performance in past races guarantee success or failure in present or future races. The past is not relevant; what matters is making the maximum effort in the present so as to sustain momentum in the future. Perfectionists and legalists look to their past achievements to validate their supposed spiritual status.

B. Dealing with your past

1. Don't let guilt, broken promises, inferiority, lack of perfection keep you from the foot of the cross! Let go of guilt, grief, and grudges! *"No one after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of*

God” (Luke 9:62). The clearest vision belongs to those who forget the past.

2. Isa 43:18 Don’t dwell on the past! Satan likes to paralyze us with our past and manipulate us with our memories! We tend to remember the things we should forget, and forget the things we should remember!
3. Paul couldn’t wallow in his sorrow about having been a persecutor of Christians. He would like to erase that part of his past, but he couldn’t! Some of us want to erase some of our past. We must move beyond it!
4. Also forget your successes. What are you doing today for God?

C. Be an influence, not an impediment to the gospel.

1. Live it, don’t just talk about it. Be a doer not a hearer. Your life can affect others.
2. Dads: To your kids, be an example not a warning!

IV. Win the Prize (v. 14)

¹⁴I press (strain) on toward the goal (what is ahead) to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

A. What is the prize?

1. Gr. (*Skopos*) goal marker; He would only reach that goal when he entered the Lord's presence and saw Him face to face (1 John 3:2-3) *²Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.* For Paul it was longing to be with Jesus!
2. The finish line is the threshold of heaven, where the rewards will be handed out
 - Matt. 5:12 *"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great*
 - 1 Cor. 3:12–15 *¹²Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man's*

work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

3. The prize probably refers to the reward faithful believers will receive at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10)
For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
4. It sees in the expression *tesano kleseos* ("the upward call") an allusion to the fact that the Olympian games, which included foot-races, were organized and presided over by agonothetes, highly respected officers called *Hellenodikai*. 'After each event they had a herald announce the name of the victor, his father's name and his country, and the athlete or charioteer would come and receive a palm branch at their hands' (Constable)
5. Strain: Like lifting weights?

B. How do we win it?

1. **Do** the right things, not just talk about the right things. Stay focused. I Cor. 9:24 Only one wins the race!
2. **Don't** be educated beyond your obedience.
3. **Depopulate** hell by taking as many people to heaven with you! Keep your eye on the prize! Invest and invite!
4. What are you willing to sacrifice in order to win the prize?

V. Have the right attitude. (v. 15-16)

¹⁵Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; ¹⁶however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

A. The mark of spiritual maturity. Perfect?

1. Means mature not sinless. What is the right attitude? Keep pursuing Christ-likeness! Live according to the pattern!
2. Paul is using a play on words. Not only were the false teachers not perfect practically, they weren't positionally either! If you don't agree, he is not too worried. God would adjust their attitudes.
3. All Christians, but especially the immature who are in view here, need to maintain a consistent life in harmony with our understanding of God's truth. We should not wait until we have a complete knowledge of what God has revealed to put into practice what we do understand. (Constable)
4. God will reveal: Stay teachable! Story?

B. Is your life marked by consistency or compromise?

1. "keep living by the same standard."
2. Your decisions will determine your destiny! Living for Christ is a direct reflection of the choices you are making?
3. The Christian life isn't a new year's resolution diet. It is a lifestyle change!
4. At the foot of one of the Swiss Alps is a marker honoring a man who fell to his death attempting the ascent. The marker gives his name and this brief epitaph: "He died climbing."
5. The epitaph of every Christian should be that they died climbing the upward path toward the prize of Christ likeness. Will you die knowing that you never gave up on the pursuit of becoming an authentic Christ-follower?

Table Talk:

1. What changes in your life do you need to make in order to finish well?
2. How would you refute the heresy of sinless perfection?
3. Review the list of things that God has done for you. Which one are you most grateful for? Why?
4. According to Paul, what was the "one thing" he did? (v. 13-14)
5. What is the attitude, or mind, of those who are "mature"? (v. 15)
6. How should the Christian walk? (v. 16)
7. Share a time when you were tempted to give up, but God sustained you.
8. Is there something in your past (that God has forgiven), that you need to let go of?

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