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Philippians Lesson 11: Philippians 3:12-19

Paul once again uses himself as an example of the mindset we ought to have. Remember that he has just finished the discussion about putting confidence in the flesh. This next section flows directly from that. Now would be a good time to go back and read the whole book, or at the very least all of chapter 3.

Read Philippians 3:12-14

How does Paul describe his Christian walk in these verses?

What is the prize Paul is striving for?

How does this attitude stand in stark contrast to some of the selfish pride they were dealing with?

This passage is one of my favorites in all of Scripture, it was read at my grandmother's funeral because it encapsulated who she was so entirely. I pray that at the end of my life this is one of

the verses people think of when they characterize the way I lived my life.

The word Paul uses for perfect in verse 12 is TELEIOO. This isn't perfection in the sense that we often think of it. TELEIOO carries with it the idea of becoming fully mature or completely fulfilling one's purpose. This verb is in the perfect tense meaning it is something that happened with permanent results. Paul is emphasizing the point that he has not reached the point of complete and total maturity. Sometimes he still falters, but he still presses on.

Here in verse 13 Paul mentions that he forgets what is behind and looks toward the ultimate goal. Not only does this idea apply to dwelling on his past successes that puff up, it also applies to the failures and mistakes he has made along the way. It is so easy to get caught up in our faults and failures and forget that the Christian walk is one where we are constantly growing and learning. None of us are fully mature, not even Paul himself. The important thing is to keep striving.

I absolutely love the word for "press on" in verse 14. It is the word DIOKO and it means to relentlessly pursue or chase after something. No matter what has happened in Paul's life before, he is relentless in his focus on the goal of heaven. A focus he is



Finer Grounds Bible Study

hoping to exemplify for the Philippian brethren, and all of us as well.

Do you struggle with getting caught up in your past? How does it hinder your spiritual growth?

How would the church change if entire congregations embodied this mindset?

What are some practical ways that you can forget what is behind and press on this week?

Read Philippians 3:15-16

How does Paul describe those he is addressing in verse 15?

What attitude is Paul referring to when he says “have this attitude”?

What does Paul say God will reveal to them?

In verse 16, how does Paul ask them to live?

At first glance, verse 15 seems to contradict verse 12. Paul just finished saying he wasn't perfect and now all of the sudden he turns around and says let us who are perfect have this attitude. This word for perfect is the noun form of the same word used in verse 12 (TELEIOS). Remember it carries the idea with it of maturity and completeness. If you remember though, the word in verse 12 is a verb in the perfect tense, implying this was an action completed once and the results were permanent. This doesn't mean that Paul was never mature, it only means that he did not exist in a permanently perfectly mature state. So when he addresses those who are mature, these are those striving like him for that maturity.

If we look in the context, the attitude he is asking them to have is the one where they continually press on toward a common goal while forgetting what was before. Here is the great part, Paul makes it clear this isn't a guessing game. God will make it clear when we aren't sharing in that attitude. If we truly live lives steeped in God's word,



Finer Grounds Bible Study

and are continually applying scripture to our lives, we will be confronted with all of the ways we can improve our attitude and our lives in general. This is great news for us because we can know exactly what God expects, but it does require work and effort on our part to be willing to conform to God's will.

Read Philippians 3:17-19

What is the example that Paul tells them to follow in verse 17?

What reason does Paul give for them to follow his pattern in verse 18?

What emotional response does Paul have to those he mentions in verse 18?

What description does Paul give about these people in verse 19?

Once again, Paul emphasizes the importance of following the example of those that are exemplifying godliness in their lives. It is so incredibly important that we surround ourselves with those that have

their primary focus firmly fixed on Christ. The company we keep has a greater influence on our hearts and minds than we would like to believe, and this isn't the only time in his letters that Paul warns us to protect that company.

The reason Paul puts so much emphasis on the type of examples that they should focus on is because there were plenty of people surrounding them that are not adhering to these standards. It is so easy to get caught up in the selfishness and gossip of the world around us. This is absolutely detrimental to the church.

Paul describes these people as those "whose god is their appetite." Whatever they desire they seek after, these people are completely engulfed in selfishness. Another phrase he uses is "whose glory is their shame." This is the person that seeks to glorify themselves and exalt themselves among their peers. If you think back to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was very clear that if you are doing things for the glory of men you will have no reward with God (Matthew 6:1). The final way Paul describes these people is that they are those "who set their minds on earthly things." Think about how big of a contrast this is to the rest of the book, the entire Philippian letter is focused on setting your mind in a godly direction and here these people are described in the exact opposite way.

The end for these people is complete and utter destruction. Paul calls them enemies of the cross of Christ. Those are



Finer Grounds Bible Study

some pretty harsh sentiments. It is important when we read passages like this that we don't simply skim past them thinking of all of the people we know that need to hear that and do better. To really maintain the type of attitude Paul is describing throughout this letter, we have to truly examine these traits and make sure we aren't guilty of some. If we do see ourselves reflected, even in the slightest, we don't need to beat ourselves up and turn on the pity party; it's simply time like Paul says to "press on" and forget what is behind.

Which of these areas do you struggle in the most?

What is one way that you can work to be more selfless this week and put off that type of behavior?

Have you ever seen or been a part of a situation in the church where bad attitudes of some were infectious to those around?

How can this cause harm to the church?

How can surrounding ourselves with spiritually mature people help us in dealing with these attitudes?

Who are some of those spiritually minded people that you know? How can you make sure that you are spending more time with them this week?

Next week Paul will get to the heart of the specific problem that the church in Philippi was having. Some of the most well-known (and often misused) passages in all of Scripture come from Philippians 4, so before we dive into that chapter, it is a great time to read through Philippians several times. By now you should be able to trace the main ideas and keywords throughout the book. This will help enormously when we tackle some of those familiar verses. Knowing the context will help us understand what Paul was really saying.