

(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.

(13) 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. 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.

(17) 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!

(20) 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. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Think on these things:

- 1) What had Paul NOT already obtained (v.12, also see 3:10-11)? As dedicated a Christian man and follower as Paul was, did he believe he lived perfectly as a Christian?

He had not attained perfection as a Christian. No, he didn't think he lived perfectly....

- 2) Why should we press on to be "perfect" if this is not truly possible? Paul gives us his reason in v.12b. Consider Matthew 5:48, Ephesians 1:4, Hebrews 12:14 and 1 Peter 1:15. (For some encouragement, see also 2 Corinthians 12:90.)

We are to rise above human/animalistic behaviors to rise to the higher standards of God. God the Father wants us be perfect (Mt.), holy (Heb./1 Pet.), and blameless (Eph.). God's grace is strong in my weakness.

- 3) V.15 says, "Let those who are mature think this way," referring to how Paul approaches rising to meet God's heavenly calling. Christian living is an "ascending" Pilgrim's Progress to Paul. What is his two-fold approach to becoming a "better" Christian (v.13)? Not for sharing, but what is it that you need to forget about your past to move on in Christ? (This could even be a matter that happened after becoming a Christian, something in your more recent past, rather than before salvation. Why? Because Christians sin, too!) Paul told the Philippian church that if they disagreed with him, he was comfortable with them praying about it (v.15b).

Two-fold approach: 1) Forget my past (failures, other ways I've lived); and 2) Strain and press on to achieve the high, lofty calling of being God's child in attitude and behavior.

The second part of this Q is fairly personal, but, if anyone is willing to share, allow for this. What do they need to leave behind so they can move forward in life with Jesus...?

- 4) V.16 is a simple, yet powerful truth. As Mark Twain mused, “It’s not the things I don’t understand about the Bible that trouble me, but the things I do...!” How would you describe your knowledge of the Bible and ability to live according to what you know? Consider what James says about those with a good knowledge of the Bible in James 3:1.

Personal disclosures. Some members would have a lot of biblical knowledge, and others may be fairly new to the faith and lack knowledge. The key to this discussion is how well do they live up to what they “do” understand?! James says that the more knowledgeable of us in our churches will be held to higher judgment standards.

- 5) In v.17, Paul advises the Philippian believers to do two things. What are they?

Action 1 – **Imitate me (i.e., Paul)**

Action 2 – **Keep watching those in church who walk according to the apostles’ examples.**

- 6) Paul says that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. While we could easily apply that to the world, the context here points to a church matter. These people within our churches focus on what makes them feel good (‘god’ is their belly), and, shamefully, getting attention and self-glory. In truth, these people are not saved, and their influence taints us all. Paul, again, calls them enemies...! Where is the mind of such people (v.19b) and what is their destiny (v.19a)?

Minds? **Their minds are set on earthly things and goals, not heavenly.**

Destiny? **Their destiny is destruction.**

- 7) Where does Paul say a Christian’s citizenship is (v.20)? **Heaven**

- 8) We (all) now eagerly await Jesus’ return. Where is He coming back from (v.20)? What will He do to our bodies (v.21)?

Coming from? **Jesus is coming back to earth from heaven.**

Our bodies? **Jesus will transform our earthly (dying) bodies in heavenly (immortal) ones.**

- 9) Paul concludes this passage in 4:1, stating, “Therefore...that is how you should stand firm in the Lord.” Looking back over the lesson and passage, what do you think he means?

Rise to meet God’s standards by putting the past in the past, and strive to live in a perfect and godly way in our minds and actions!

People and situations I want to pray for this week: