

Looking Back, Leaning Forward

12.27.09

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, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

“Not...already obtained this...already perfect” Paul is referring back to the previous verses

to clarify that he does not believe that he is fully spiritually mature. It is also possible

that this false idea of ‘spiritual perfection’ was at work in Philippi.

“but I press on to make it my own” Word used for a sprinter. Aggressive, energetic action.

“because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” The basis for his holy discontent.

P: Spiritual growth is spurred by a holy dissatisfaction and recognition that we belong to Jesus.

Do I have these today? If not, why not? What steps do I need to take to see change take place?

Putting Feet on It:

1. Realize that this is our spiritual destiny (Rom. 8:29).
2. Surround yourself with other growing Christians who can encourage you.

“*Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own...*” Restatement of previous idea.

“*But one thing I do...*” But I have figured this out...here’s how I am going to get there.

“forgetting what lies behind” Not erasing the memory, but not ‘dwelling’ on the past and

allowing ourselves to be controlled by it. This includes our hurts, sins, or wins.

P: The past can be the enemy of the present.

Is my past affecting my present in an unhealthy way? If so, what needs to change?

Preaching the Gospel to Our Past:

1. A sin you committed – Jesus died as a ‘propitiation’ (a payment for our sins.)
2. A sin committed against you – Jesus died as an ‘expiation’ – to cleanse us from sin.
3. A hurt from the past – the Gospel brings healing.
4. A past success – restrains our pride, allows us to keep perspective.

P: The pursuit of spiritual growth includes both ‘forgetting’ what

lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

“*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.” Strong words from an athletic contest, to be straining forward with every fiber of his being. Unclear if Paul is talking about heaven, eternal rewards, or Christ Himself. In any case, the principle is the same.

P: What lies ahead should motivate us to push ahead.

Am I motivated by what lies ahead? If not, why not?

“*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.”*

P: Paul’s perspective should be shared by all maturing Christians.

Is this my perspective today? If not, what needs to change

Putting Feet on It:

1. Immerse yourself in the Word—Sundays, personal study, group, etc.
 - a. Focus on particular Scriptures that keep these things before you.
2. Surround yourself with others pursuing the same perspective.

P: We should live out what we know—as individuals and as a community.

Are we? If not, what needs to change?

The Gospel allows us to look back and lean forward simultaneously.

Works Consulted: MacArthur Study Bible, Bible Knowledge Commentary, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, NIV Application Commentary, New Bible Commentary, The Bible Exposition Commentary