

22S16 Philippians 3:12-16 Straining Toward the Goal

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I hope everyone is doing well. Today I want to continue our study of Philippians with Philippians 3:12-16. Straining Toward the Goal.

Before we start, let us remember this short letter was most likely written by the Apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome. Paul had first visited Philippi during his second missionary journey, and he has great affection for the church in Philippi. This letter is sometimes called “the Joy Epistle” because of thankful and joyful tone. But remember Paul is in prison in Rome, not very happy circumstances.

I’m reading from the New King James version (NKJV) today. But of course, you can use whatever translation you choose.

Let’s read Philippians 3:12-16 (NKJV) *¹²Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. ¹⁶Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*

Let’s pray. Dear heavenly father, guide our discussion today such that your message is clear to each of us. As we read your word from Philippians, help us see why Paul is so thankful and joyful despite his situation. I pray that you help me stay out of the way so your hope and peace can be shared with us. I pray this in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

So, before we start studying today. This section in many of our bibles has a heading. Of course, these headings are not part of the original letter Paul sent. But I do find these interesting. I like to see what the many translations say to round my understanding and prepare me for the text, Like this title “Pressing Toward the Goal” (NKJV& KJV & NLT), or “Straining Toward the Goal (ESV). Regardless of your translation title, Paul is about to tell us about the effort required to follow Jesus.

So, let’s break these verses down a little more. Starting with Philippians 3:12 (NKJV) *¹²Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*

Don’t miss this point. The is the Apostle Paul talking and he says he has not attained it yet. The “it” is full knowledge and obedience to God. But he is working on it. He is working hard to become more and more like Christ.

Let's look at what else Paul says. Philippians 3:13-14 (NKJV) *¹³Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Paul is again telling us despite all the things Paul has done, He is telling us to focus forward on Jesus and what Jesus wants us to do. Don't waste your time looking to the past or the things you used to do. Stay focused on Jesus, Paul knows it will be a challenge. Remind yourself of the "prize" which is the "*upward call of God in Christ Jesus:*" or the call to eternal life. Only Jesus matters.

Let's continue reading. Philippians 3:15-16 (NKJV) *¹⁵Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. ¹⁶Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*

Paul is urging us to continue growing as followers of Jesus. Read our Bibles, study God's word, pray and fellowship with other believers. Serve others in the name of Jesus.

Let's review.

- 1) Paul's Goal? To be more and more like Jesus. Paul says forget the past, the past you and focus on the new you and future with Jesus.
- 2) Is it Easy? Of course not. Anything worthwhile takes work. If we want to grow in our relationship with Jesus then we have to work at it. Read and study the Bible, pray, fellowship and serve.
- 3) Why press on? Yes, it is tough at times but the prize is worth it. The prize is worth more than anything else we can ever receive. It's Jesus and eternal life with our King. We need to stay focused on Jesus. Who He is. What He's done. And What He wants us to do.

Let me leave you with this, even the apostle Paul knew it was hard work following Jesus. He believes he needed to keep working. He did not think he had attained it yet. Paul wants us to keep working on our relationship with Jesus. Don't think you have arrived. You haven't yet and neither have I. Paul is stressing that as long as we are living, we need to continually work to grow closer to Jesus so we can get the rewards that Jesus has promised His followers. But remember my friends, those rewards are for followers, not bystanders. Jesus has called each of us to follow Him. In action and truth, not thoughts and contemplation. Strain on toward the Goal.

Let's Pray. Heavenly Father thank you for this letter from Paul. Help us to read and meditate on this letter so we can hear the message you have for us. Help us to remember who you are Lord. You are our king, king of kings. You are our Lord, Lord over everyone. We can trust you, Lord. Help us to do what you ask and not worry about what others are doing. I pray this in your Name Lord Jesus. Amen

I hope you will join us for the rest of our study of Philippians. Please email me comments or feedback. Thank you for joining me today. Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.