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Read Philippians 3.13–21. I will print the Net–2 translation.

KEEP GOING FORWARD

12 Not that I have already attained this—that is, I have not already been perfected—but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have attained this. Instead I am single-minded: Forgetting the things that are behind and reaching out for the things that are ahead, 14 with this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let those of us who are “perfect” embrace this point of view. If you think otherwise, God will reveal to you the error of your ways. 16 Nevertheless, let us live up to the standard that we have already attained.

17 Be imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and watch carefully those who are living this way, just as you have us as an example. 18 For many live, about whom I have often told you, and now, with tears, I tell you that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is the belly, they exult in their shame, and they think about earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven—and we also eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body by means of that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself.

COMMENTS:

In v. 12 Paul is telling us, even though you have been saved fully and completely, you have not yet received all the blessings of salvation. God’s plan is to restore all of creation to the sinless uncorrupted state. Read Revelation 21:1–27 for a glimpse into our future. Hear of the new heaven and the new earth, plus the new Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:4 summarizes the best of it all in my opinion. “He (God) will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” What do we do while we wait for the final blessings?

Our goal is the same as Paul. He is striving to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus laid hold of him. The ESV translates it, “I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus made me his own.” We desire others to know membership in God’s family is not limited. Jesus himself said in John 6:37, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”

Paul is single-minded, forgetting the past, we look forward, striving toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ. strain against our own sinful nature and against the world and the devil, even while our soul is at peace under God’s promises and grace.

Jesus said that those who believed in him were begotten from above (Jn 1:12–13). Paul commands us to set our minds on things above (Col 3:1). God draws us through His Word toward the way of life that He intends for us, a life with purpose and meaning that endures.

I don’t care for the translation of the Gk. word, teleioi, as “perfect” in the Net–2 translation. The word means ‘complete,’ ‘finished.’ The ESV uses “mature.” Perfect is understood by many to imply moral perfection and Paul is very clear here he doesn’t claim perfection. I think the use of “mature” better captures Paul’s thought here.

To have Christ’s mind firmly enough in one’s own consciousness to see matters as he does (Eph. 4:13). God will reveal that. Our human nature habitually perverts our thinking. God must, by his Word and through circumstances, teach us the truth.

V. 16 is an excellent summary of how we should live the Christian life. “Let us live up to the standard that we have already attained.” God through his love, mercy and forgiveness has called us again as members of the family of God and made us holy by cleansing us of unrighteousness. Let us show love, mercy and forgiveness to all and abstain from sin as best we can.

Paul felt his desire to live for Christ was something he could use as an example. He also encouraged them to be watching others who were single minded about Christ. But he also warns there are many who live as enemies of the cross of Christ. They satisfy their appetites and they are proud of their sins.

The people of Philippi were proud of being Roman Citizens and enjoyed special privileges just as many people in America do today. The apostle said his citizenship was in heaven. We are eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus from there because that is when the full blessings of salvation will come to us.

We know we will have a glorified body, but when people see Jesus entering locked rooms or apparently being able to travel quickly between two points, we can't say that is what our glorified bodies will be able to do. The Bible does not tell us if these were done by his godly power or if they are examples of our glorified body. I can only say, wait and see!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: How single-minded are you? Do you live as a citizen of heaven or a citizen of earth? What is the most important question you ask yourself when you are making a decision? How often to you ask God for guidance? Do you consult with other Christians to get their input and also to check out your thinking?