

Philippians 3:12-21

Philippians 3:12-21 is a passage where Paul emphasises the importance of pressing on towards the goal of knowing Christ. Here's some background context:

Context

In Philippians 3:12-21, Paul continues his letter to the Philippians church, a community he founded during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:9-40). Paul is writing to them from prison (likely in Rome or Caesarea).

Pressing On

Paul emphasises the importance of pressing on towards the goal of knowing Christ (3:12-14). He uses the metaphor of a race to describe the Christian life, encouraging the Philippians to run with purpose and determination.

Not Perfect

Paul acknowledges that he has not yet attained perfection, but he is pressing on to grasp the prize for which Christ Jesus grasped him (3:12). He encourages the Philippians to join him in this pursuit.

Citizenship in Heaven

Paul reminds the Philippians that their citizenship is in heaven, and they eagerly await a Saviour from there, Jesus Christ (3:20). This emphasises the importance of living as citizens of heaven while still on earth.

Key Themes

1. Pressing on towards the goal: Paul encourages the Philippians to press on towards the goal of knowing Christ, using the metaphor of a race.
2. Not perfect yet: Paul acknowledges that he has not yet attained perfection, but he is pressing on to grasp the prize.
3. Citizenship in heaven: Paul reminds the Philippians that their citizenship is in heaven, and they should live accordingly.

1. Pressing On (Philippians 3:12-14)

- Paul acknowledges that he has not yet attained perfection.
- Paul presses on to grasp the prize for which Christ Jesus grasped him.
- Paul doesn't consider himself to have already attained perfection.
- Paul focuses on moving forward, straining towards the goal.
- Paul presses on towards the goal, motivated by God's calling.

This section emphasises Paul's determination to press on towards the goal of knowing Christ.

2. Maturity and Unity (Philippians 3:15-16)

- Paul encourages mature believers to share his perspective.
- Paul acknowledges that there may be differences in perspective.
- Paul encourages the Philippians to live consistently with what they have already learned.

This section emphasises the importance of maturity, unity, and living consistently with what we have learned.

3. Warning Against Enemies (Philippians 3:17-19)

- Paul encourages the Philippians to follow his example.
- Paul warns against those who live as enemies of the cross.
- Paul describes the characteristics of those who live as enemies of the cross.

This section warns against those who live in opposition to the cross of Christ.

4. Citizenship in Heaven (Philippians 3:20-21)

- Paul reminds the Philippians that their citizenship is in heaven.
- Paul emphasises the importance of eagerly awaiting Jesus' return.
- Paul describes the transformation that will occur when Jesus returns.

This section emphasises the importance of living as citizens of heaven, eagerly awaiting Jesus' return and the transformation that will occur.

Application

This passage encourages believers to:

1. Press on towards the goal: Pursue a deeper relationship with Christ with purpose and determination.
2. Be humble about perfection: Recognise that spiritual growth is a lifelong process, and we are not yet perfect.
3. Live as citizens of heaven: Prioritise living according to our heavenly citizenship, even while still on earth.

This passage provides insight into the Christian life as a journey of growth and pursuit, with a focus on knowing Christ and living as citizens of heaven.

Questions

1. What does it mean to "press on" (Philippians 3:12) in the Christian life, and how can we apply this principle in our own spiritual journeys?
2. How does Paul's acknowledgment that he has "not already obtained" (Philippians 3:12) perfection or the prize impact our understanding of spiritual growth and maturity?
3. What is the "prize" (Philippians 3:14) that Paul is pursuing, and how can we identify and pursue our own spiritual goals in a way that honours God?
4. How can we balance the pursuit of spiritual growth and maturity with the recognition that our salvation is a gift of God's grace, rather than something we earn through our efforts?
5. What does it mean to be a "citizen of heaven" (Philippians 3:20), and how can we live out this identity in our daily lives?
6. How does the promise of Christ's return (Philippians 3:20-21) shape our perspective on the present moment and our priorities in life?
7. What role does the "transforming power" (Philippians 3:21) of Christ play in our spiritual growth and maturity, and how can we yield to this power in our lives?
8. How can we cultivate a sense of heavenly citizenship and perspective in the midst of earthly challenges and difficulties?