

Sermon Discussion

1 November 2020

Read Philippians 3:12-4:1 together.

Dig Deeper

Paul's salvation experience had taken place about 30 years before he wrote to the Philippians. He had won many spiritual battles in that time. He had grown much in those years, but he candidly confessed he had not "already obtained this," nor was he yet made perfect (v. 12). He still had more spiritual heights to climb. This testimony of the apostle reminded the saints at Philippi- and it serves to remind believers today- that there must never be a stalemate in their spiritual growth or a plateau beyond which they cannot climb.

The word "**perfect**," as the Bible uses it, does not refer to sinless perfection. Old Testament characters described as perfect were obviously not sinless (see Genesis 6:9; 1 Kings 15:14; Job 1:1, 8). Although a number of Hebrew and Greek words are translated "perfect," the thought is usually either completeness in all details, or to reach a goal or achieve a purpose.

Three stages of perfection are revealed: **(1) Positional perfection**, already possessed by every believer in Christ (Heb. 10:14). **(2) Relative perfection**, i.e. spiritual maturity. Maturity is achieved progressively, as in 2 Corinthians 7:1, and is accomplished through gifts of ministry bestowed 'for the perfecting of the saints' (Ephesians 4:12). And **(3) ultimate perfection**, i.e. perfection in soul, spirit, and body, which Paul denies he has attained (Philippians 3:12) but which will be realized at the time of the resurrection of the dead (3:11).

1. What is the prize that Paul pursues in verse 14? How would you describe it?
2. Why do we need passion and discipline to grow in spiritual maturity?
3. Paul was a "one thing" guy (v. 13). What would people who know you well say is your "one thing"? What one change could you make in order to pursue the one thing that matters the most?
4. What are some characteristics of the "enemies of the cross" in verse 18?

Application & Prayer

- Do you use past victories and successes as an excuse not to make every spiritual effort in the present? Pause and ask the Lord for freedom from this sin.
- Consider the ways God has encouraged you to press on toward the goal. Thank God for these and share them with someone.