

My Notes—Philippians 3:12-21

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.

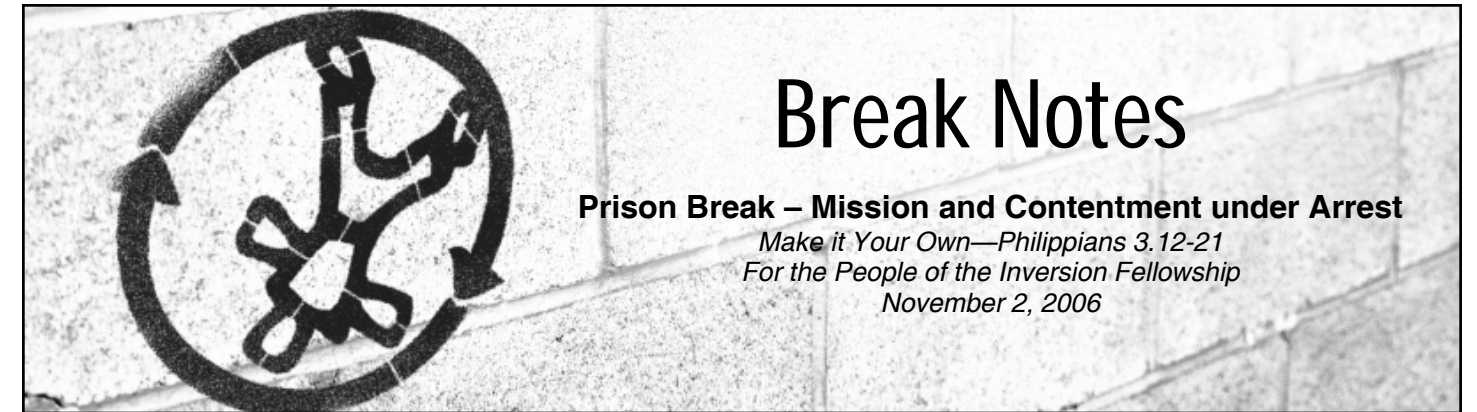
13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

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.

17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.



Philippians 3:12-21—Holy Bible, English Standard Version

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Three Things To Consider

Make what my own?

Knowing Jesus and sharing in his experience is a continual process we must vigorously pursue in this life. We do this not for the purpose of earning God's favor, but out of gratitude for what He has done for us.

Imitate those who are worth Imitating

In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul says that he should be imitated as he imitates Christ. It is a worthwhile endeavor to imitate the Christ-like qualities you see in mature men and women of the faith.

Be a Citizen of Heaven

Let's just say that it would not be cool to be considered an enemy of the cross of Christ. While this has severe consequences, those who know Jesus have much to look forward to.

The Junk Drawer

Press on to make it my own, v. 12- This verb is the same as that used in 3:6 when he described himself as a persecutor. Paul is pressing forward in the faith with the same zeal that he persecuted the church. An allusion to the public games, to obtain the prize with the idea of eager and strenuous exertion, to grasp, seize upon. See 1 Cor. 9:24.¹

Forgetting what lies behind, v. 13 - Does this mean that we are to forget our stories or to neglect our past? I don't think so. Paul here is referring to the problem of resting on the spiritual heritage or successes or failures of the past. He has just recalled what Christ did for him, so it is clear that he did not totally disregard the past.²

Straining forward to what lies ahead, v. 13 - **ἐπεκτείνωμαι** - "Stretch out"- It is particularly graphic, bringing to mind the straining muscles, clear focus, and complete dedication of the runner in his race to the prize. Both mental and physical discipline were necessary.³

Press on toward the goal, v. 14 - This is a repeat of v. 12, σκοπὸν - goal, a mark on which to fix the eye. The goal is the finish line, God's eschatological conclusion of things. The prize is Jesus.

Prize of the upward call of God, v. 14 - the call of the resurrection, not of initial salvation.⁴ This implies that we are looking past death. The prize is knowing Jesus.⁵ This is what Paul would gladly die to gain (1:23).

Mature, v. 15 - The NASB reads "perfect" - This is the same Greek root as that used in the word "perfect" in v. 12. This has been the subject of considerable debate and was even used by Wesley to argue for Christian Perfection. However, this reading does not fit the context and the idea of maturity is much preferable. A Reformed understanding of sanctification is that we are in process, and that "perfection" occurs when we cross the finish line. See Romans 7.

Hold true, v. 16 - Another reading is keep living by that same *standard* (NASB). To stand or go in order, advance in rows or ranks, disciplined walk. Advancing like military. They were to remain true with a collective discipline that was to characterize the entire church.⁶ What was attained? See 1:6, 9-11, Acts 16 and progress of the church.

The Junk Drawer...Cont.

Keep your eyes on, v. 17 - Compare with v.14 (same root skopos, contemplate) of looking at goal. Contrast with v. 2 of Looking out for dogs. This literally means "to consider something critically and then to hold something before one as a model on the basis of the inspection."⁷

Walk according to the example, v. 17 - Walk - (**περιπατέω**) - to live or pass one's life, always with an adjunct of manner or circumstances. Example - (τύπων) - prototype, example, pattern.⁸ Paul would probably be referring here to Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Enemies of the Cross, v. 18 - Who is Paul referring to as the enemies? Some see these as the Judaizers from earlier in the chapter. However, many feel that this is not descriptive of what the Judaizers would have been like. "The enemies of the cross denounced here are described in different terms from those people against whom the Philippians are put on their guard in verse 2 and need not be identified with them. It is useless to insist in this connection that 'entities must not be multiplied beyond what is necessary' (the principle know as Occam's razor), as though that dictated the identification of the two groups: real life is more complicated than logical argument. It is evident from his general correspondence that Paul at times had to wage war on at least two fronts..."⁹

Citizenship in heaven, v. 20 - The particular nuance in view is active and dynamic: the state as a constitutive force regulating its citizens.¹⁰ With Paul, we don't just wait, but we press on. This had special significance because Philippi was a Roman Colony.¹¹

References

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