

Perfectionism

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- [0 : 00] Well, please, before the preaching of God's word, turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 3. Philippians chapter 3. I'll be reading the first 16 verses.
- Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil. Those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.
- Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more. What is more?
- Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law of Pharisee.
- [1 : 04] As for zeal, persecuting the church. As for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my prophet, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.
- What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.
- I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ.
- The righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.
- And so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this or have already been made perfect.
- [2 : 10] But I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do.
- Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which Christ has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
- All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.
- Well, exactly a week ago at this time, I was in Turbana, Colombia.
- And the electricity was out for the day. There's no air conditioning in the church building. There were fans all over the ceiling, but those were not operating.
- [3 : 23] And windows were opening. Different bird sounds than I've ever heard were chirping. And it was my privilege to preach to a hungry audience of God's people who hungered and thirsted for his word.
- And sweat was just dripping off my nose the whole time. So I thank God for air conditioning. And I thank God for you. It's one of my choice privileges to belong to a church that is a praying church.

And to know that behind me were those prayers. And I indeed found the Lord to answer so graciously. I look forward next Sunday night to sharing some pictures, some testimonies of what God's doing there in Bogota and in Turbana.

But this morning we're in Philippians chapter 3. Our God is the real joy giver. He is himself joyful, full and overflowing with joy.

And he wants his people to experience that joy as well. And the key of joy, the key to joy is knowing him. It's being in intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

[4 : 39] And so Philippians 3 begins, finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. What immediately follows then are warnings for the rest of the chapter.

Warnings against heresy and false doctrines. Because nothing will kill real joy like false doctrine. In fact, it will kill unity and the mission of the church as well.

These three major themes that we find in this letter. So we're warned against, in the first place, those false gospels. Christ plus something for salvation.

As some were teaching in Philippi. Yes, you must believe on Jesus. Of course. Everyone needs Jesus. But you must also be circumcised in order to be saved. And Paul counters by saying that the only gospel that will save you is a Christ plus nothing gospel.

That you must rest the entirety of your trust upon what Jesus has done for helpless sinners. His perfect life.

[5 : 44] And his atoning death and glorious resurrection. Putting no trust in any works of your own. And so to be found righteous with the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Now today, he's still pursuing those themes of joy and unity and mission of God's people. And so he addresses another false teaching. This time it's the false teaching of perfectionism.

A sinless perfectionism is the teaching that it's possible in this life to reach a level of perfect holiness to where you no longer sin.

I once met a couple holding to this claim of sinless perfection. We were down at the park and pushing our kids on the swings. And there was another couple there doing the same with their child.

And our conversation turned to spiritual things. And they shared with me their burden was for. Their concern was how many people in the churches are professing to be Christians and on the way to heaven.

[6 : 48] But their lives are just like the world. They're still serving the same sins that they've always served. And I shared with them my similar concern.

Yes, and you know what the Bible says about people who are only in name Christians. That they need to be born again. They need a new start, a new heart. And conversion really does change the people of God.

But the more I listened to them, the more I came to realize that they actually believe that they never sinned anymore. Now some actually claim that all true Christians never sin.

And that if you sin, it just proves that you're not a real Christian. Because all true Christians have stopped sinning. Others believe that certain Christians in their pilgrimage to heaven can reach such a level to where they never sin again in this life.

But once I realized what this couple was claiming, I turned to the wife. And I said, do you mean to tell me that this man, your husband, has never been impatient with you? And lost his temper and spoken in less than kindly words to you?

[8 : 00] And she said, well, yes, but I deserved it. Well, does that make it okay for him? You see, the only way to maintain the claim of sinless perfection is to redefine sin.

It's to lower the standard. The Bible's definition of sin is any breaking of God's commandments. The Westminster Confession of Faith has a shorter catechism question that asks, what is sin?

And the simple answer is any lack of conformity to or transgression of the law of God. Coming short of what God's commands require in thought, word, action, motive, or transgressing against some commandment of God.

It's sin. It's sin. And that is true of both of what we do and what we leave undone. Sins of commission and sins of omission.

150 years ago, the London preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon met a brother claiming sinless perfection. And the story goes that Spurgeon leaned all the weight of his portly frame forward and stepped on the brother's toe.

[9 : 24] What are you doing? He responded. And Spurgeon said, I'm just wanting to check to see how perfectly sanctified you are. So today we're asking the question, what does the Bible teach about this claim to sinless perfection here and now in this life?

And then we'll see what Paul says about it here in our passage in chapter 3 of Philippians. The first thing I want to say from the scriptures is that there is such a thing as sinless perfection.

That's how God created our first parents, Adam and Eve. They came from God's creating hand, righteous and without sin, though they were capable of sinning.

Yet they had no sin. Ecclesiastes 7:29. This only have I found. God made man upright. But men have gone in search of many schemes.

So their sinless state didn't last long, did it? As first Eve and then Adam fell into sin, disobeying God's commandments.

[10 : 34] And since then, every son and daughter of Adam and Eve have continued to do the same. You see, we don't make our start in life like they did.

They started perfect, sinless perfection. We come into the world, on the other hand, not righteous, but sinners with a sinful heart. And that's why from the womb we go astray speaking lies.

So, yes, there is such a thing as sinless perfection. It's the state in which Adam and Eve were created.

But since then, we're all sinners and there's none righteous. There's only one exception and that's Jesus Christ, the perfect man.

He's called in scriptures the righteous one. The righteous one.

[11 : 34] Because he's the only one who's perfectly righteous. He's the only one who's ever lived his life in perfect obedience to all God's commands all the time.

Though he was tempted in every way as we are, the Bible says, yet he was without sin. Holy, blameless, and pure. And that's why he's able to save us sinners.

You see, it's his sinless perfection that qualified him to be that spotless, sacrificial lamb on the cross dying in our place. So when he died, his death under God's infinite wrath was the punishment that our sins deserved.

But if Jesus had one sin, when he died on the cross, he would be paying for his own sin. And therefore, his death would have no value at all for us.

He wasn't dying for us. If he was a sinner, he's only dying for his own sins. Oh, but it's because he was without sin himself that he qualifies to die in our place.

[12 : 43] The just for the unjust. The righteous one for the unrighteous one. And so his death does take away the punishment for my sin as I'm trusting in him.

Because he bore my sins on the cross and received its punishment. But also, his sinless perfection has brought about a perfect righteous record in heaven.

To be given to every believer. Credited to their account. When a sinner trusts in Jesus alone for salvation. In the record books of heaven. Our sins are taken away.

And righteousness is put on our record. The very righteousness of Jesus. So this sinlessness of Jesus is all important to the plan of salvation.

By which we find ourselves here this morning. As sons and daughters of God. We who have trusted in him. So there is such a thing as sinless perfection. The Bible says.

[13 : 46] Adam and Eve as they came from God's hand. And the Lord Jesus Christ. Not just for a while, but forever and ever. Sinless. But then I want to go on to say that there are many others who have reached this state of sinless perfection.

The Lord graciously gave me a wonderful wife for 42 years. She was not perfect. And would be the first to tell you that. Her husband was even less perfect.

But on good word, I can tell you that she is sinlessly perfect now. Hebrews chapter 12, 22 to 24 takes us right into the new Jerusalem.

And who's there? God, the judge of all men. Christ, the mediator of the new covenant. Thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly.

And the spirits of righteous men made perfect. The moment my wife died, she was done sinning. And her spirit returned to God and was made perfect.

[14 : 57] The spirits of righteous men made perfect. Perfect. So sinless perfection is not only true in the eternal state after the resurrection of the body. When Christ returns, it's also true now of the intermediate state.

Before the resurrection. As to the spirit. It is made perfect. Incapable of sinning. So in salvation, God is out to restore all things that sin has cursed and marred in this perfect world.

And God would take things even to a higher state than the Garden of Eden. Because though Adam and Eve were sinless as they came into the world, they were capable of sinning.

But for any who are found trusting in Christ, the moment of their death, their spirits are made perfect and unable ever, ever to sin again.

There is, there are many others who have reached this state of sinless perfection. So believers, to be done with sinning is no small part of the joy of heaven.

[16 : 04] Do you think of it that way? When you think about heaven, what is it that really gets you excited about? Do you think about the fact that I'll never, ever sin again?

Can you imagine a world without sin? How different and wonderful life would be? Not only to be in a place where no one would sin against you, but even more precious, to be in a state where I will never again sin against the one who loved me unto the death of the cross and took God's wrath in my place.

And this is what Paul is teaching us in our text this morning. Believers, lift up your heads. Full redemption is drawing near.

Sinless perfection is on the way for you who are in Christ. You will experience this joy through the endless ages. Isn't this what bothers us most in life?

That we continue to sin even as Christians? Against the one who has saved us. Well, this is no small part of the promised rest of heaven to be done forever then with sin.

[17 : 23] To be forever out of the reach of all temptation. Whether it's coming from the devil himself. Or this alluring world that would tempt us.

Or from within our own evil desires. No, once we're with the Lord, we're out of reach of all sin and temptation. Can you imagine a sinless relationship with another human being?

A sinless relationship with God. Sinless worship without any wondering thoughts. Cold affections. None of it. Well, that's part of the salvation won for us by the Lord Jesus.

Notice how Paul puts it in this text. He's spoken in verses 10 and 11 of still wanting to know Christ. I want to know Christ. And I want to know the power of his resurrection.

And I want to know the fellowship of his sufferings. And I want to be conformed to his image. The image of his death. And I want to attain to the resurrection of life. And then he says this in verse 12.

[18 : 25] Not that I have already obtained all this. Or have already been made perfect. But I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Now before we look at Paul's disclaimer that he's not yet arrived at perfection. I want you to notice the purpose for which Christ took hold of him. Twice in this verse, Paul uses the word for take hold.

To lay hold of someone. I press on to take hold of that for which Christ has taken hold of me. So he's wanting to take hold of this very same thing for which Christ took hold of him.

So we must ask, well, what is this purpose? Why did Christ Jesus take hold of the Apostle Paul? He's thinking back to that day on the road to Damascus.

When he's traveling 130 miles from Jerusalem to Damascus. To find some Christians there. Arrest them. Bring them back. And persecute them in Jerusalem. And he's almost there.

[19 : 31] And suddenly a bright light from heaven and a voice. It's none other than the risen Christ. Christ. And he's arrested the Apostle Paul. He takes hold of him.

With his grace and power. And it's a different Paul from that moment on. He's not the same. He's a new man. Christ took hold of him.

Now that's what conversion is. And that's what happened to you, believer. You were going your own way. Granted, it might have not been to persecute Christians. But your back was still toward God.

Your back was still toward Christ. Your face was still toward your way. And you were going straight to hell. And Jesus Christ took hold of you. In grace.

And he turned you around. He gave you the grace of repentance and faith. And brought you to himself. So that you belong to him. You're saved. That's conversion.

[20 : 27] Christ taking hold of us. And now we have this glorious reality. To think that the son of God. Has taken hold of me. And he's got an omnipotent grip on me.

So that no one can snatch me out of his hands. But now why? What was the purpose? What was the aim? Why did Christ lay hold of Paul?

Why did he lay hold of you, believer? Well. Well. To make you like himself. We see this in Romans 8.

28 to 30. Paul says we know that in all things. God is working for the good of those who love him. Those who are called. The called according to his purpose. God's effectual call is Christ laying hold of us.

Well. Why did he call us? You have been called according to his purpose. What is that purpose for which he called you? Well. Verse 29 goes on to say in Romans 8.

[21 : 32] That those he foreknew. He also predestined. To be conformed to the image of his son. We saw it in Sunday school. The reason Christ laid hold of you.

Is to conform you to his own image. That you might be like him. Not just in. A little bit. But perfectly. As to his sinless perfection.

He laid hold of you. That you might be sinlessly perfect. Like he is. And verse 30 goes on to say. This is what it means to be glorified. Sharing in his glory.

A glory that's to be revealed. Not just to us. But in us. So we are to bear the likeness. The perfect moral likeness. Of Jesus Christ. That's why.

Jesus Christ. Laid hold of the apostle Paul. And of you and me. Who know him. And that. Purpose fulfilled. Will be glory indeed. So.

[22 : 31] His purpose. In laying hold of you. Is not just to save you from hell. As glorious as that is. But think with me. What kind of a heaven. Would it be. If we kept on sinning. Through all eternity.

That wouldn't be much of a heaven. Would it? No. Jesus laid hold of us. With saving power. For the purpose of making us. Sinlessly perfect. Like himself.

He came to deal with our sin problem. Not in part. But the whole. Completely. Sin's penalty. Paid for by Jesus Christ. Sin's power.

Broken. At the cross. So that. Though I continue to sin. I am not its slave anymore. And. Sin's very presence. One day. To be delivered from.

That's what. He laid hold of us for. That's. No small part. Of the rest. And joy of heaven. So this sinless perfection.

[23 : 28] Like Christ. Is. Most assuredly. Coming for the Christian. Don't let that ever be lost. Or overlooked. In your. In the believers. Blessed hope. The glorious appearing.

Of Jesus Christ. What are you looking forward to? That when we see him. We will be made. Like him. Sinlessly. Perfect.

That work. That he's begun. In us now. Will one day. Be. Completed. Philippians 1. 6. The total transformation. Of our. Moral character. Into the likeness of Christ.

But now. Paul makes. Two important. Qualifications. And these words. Were needed. It seems. That there. In the church. At Philippi. There were those. Who were teaching.

That sinless. Perfection. Was attainable. In this life. For the Christian. Here and now. And some. Perhaps. Actually making that claim. That they had arrived. Arrived.

[24 : 22] At sinlessness. And so. Paul meets. Their claim. With a necessary. Disclaimer. He says. Not yet. Not yet. Verse 12. Not that I.

Have already. Obtained all this. Or have already. Been made perfect. Again. In verse 13. Brothers. I do not. Consider myself. Yet. To have taken hold of it. I'm wanting.

To take hold of it. But I've not yet. Taken hold of it. Three times. For emphasis. Paul says. Not yet. Not yet. I'm not there. And if their dearly.

Loved apostle. Had not yet arrived. Well then. None of them had either. Whatever their claim. So it's coming. But it's. Not yet here.

The teaching of sinless perfectionism. Is. Due to. An over realized. Eschatology. And by that. I simply mean.

[25 : 18] It's claiming now. What God. Has said. Is coming later. At the return of Christ. We're wanting. What. Christ.

Promised. Is coming. But we're wanting it. Here and now. In this life. That's the air of the. The health. Wealth. And prosperity. Gospel. Do you know.

There's great. Health. Coming for the Christian. Psalm 103. Who. Who heals. All their diseases. That's going to happen.

In the return of Christ. Yes. And our bodies. Will be. Without sickness. And sorrow. Death. Wealth. Prosperity.

It will abound. Psalm 72. Tells us. But not now. Those things are not promised. To us now. It's coming.

[26 : 14] At the end. And that's the same. Matter with sinless perfection. It belongs to the not yet. Though some claim it.

Already. As ours. Here and now. No. No. It's. Yet. Future. The apostle. John. Teaches the same thing. In his first epistle.

He says in. Chapter one. In verse eight. If we claim to be. Without sin. We just. Are deceiving ourselves. And the truth. Isn't in us. But he can say.

Later. A couple chapters. Later. In chapter three. In verse two. That. That when. Christ. Appears. We will be like him. We will be like him.

For we will see him as he is. It's coming. But it's not yet. And that means you must wait. You. You here in the church. Must wait for me. To become sinless.

[27 : 12] And that means that I. Must wait for you. To become sinless. That we must learn. To deal with each other's sins. In a patient. And a gracious manner. Looking forward to that day.

When Christ returns. And there will be no more sins. In us. Or to us. That whole new world. Of perfect.

Christ like love. It's coming. But it's not yet. And so it's critical. For the Bible student. To distinguish. Between the already.

And the not yet. To distinguish. Between what is here. And now. And what is later. Sinless perfection. Belongs to the not yet. But Paul goes on. To give us another. Qualification.

Not yet. But secondly. Not complacent. Not complacent. Now the attitude. That Paul is attacking. Here. Goes something like this. Well if sinless perfection. Is impossible.

[28 : 05] Here and now. Then why should I even try. I'm just going to get discouraged. And disappointed. And I can think of several reasons.

And the first is. That it's commanded. It's commanded. The Lord Jesus. In Matthew 5. 48. Says. Be perfect. Therefore. As your heavenly father. Is perfect. And he's talking about.

Loving your enemies. Who mistreat you. God shows love. And kindness. To his enemies. Now you be perfect. Like your father. In heaven is. And show love.

And kindness. To those who are your enemies. And mistreat you. The apostle Paul. Says in 2nd Corinthians. 13. 11. Finally brothers. Goodbye. Aim. At perfection.

If perfection. Is impossible. Now. Why should I even try. Because God commands it. The apostle John. In 1st Peter 2. 1. Says. My dear children. I'm writing this to you.

[29 : 03] So that you will not sin. That's the reason. Why this is in our Bibles. It's there. So that you will not sin.

You say. But doesn't John go on. To say. If anybody does sin. We have an advocate. With the father. Jesus Christ. The righteous one. Yes. It does go on.

To say that. But don't let the advocacy. Of Christ. In heaven. Become an excuse. To abandon. Your aim. Not to sin.

Here and now. Think how wrong this is. To say. Well my aim today. Is to just not sin too much. My aim today.

Since I can't be perfect. I'm just hoping. To not steal too much. To not lie too often. To not do too much coveting. That's the devil's logic.

[29 : 58] That turns the grace of God. Into a license for sin. No. No. I'm writing these things to you. So that you will not sin. That needs to be our aim.

Each day. The apostle Peter. First Peter 2. 21. Christ left you. An example. That you should follow. In his steps. Well what kind of an example.

Did he leave you? Well a perfect one. A perfect obedience. To all of his father's commandments. All the time. And in the context.

It was. The way that he responded. To mistreatment. That had been done to him. In his crucifixion. And in his trials. And it's that example.

That you're commanded to follow. You see God doesn't lower. His standard of holiness. Down to our ability. Oh so you're having trouble forgiving?

[30 : 57] Oh. Well. Just do the best you can then. No. No. Forgive. Just as God in Christ. Has forgiven you. The standard stays there.

Wherever you're at. He doesn't lower the standard to you. He but rather calls you. To rise to the standard. Of Christ likeness. That's what perfect holiness is.

It's to be like Jesus. The standard cannot move. It will not move. And so we're to be ever progressing. Pressing on.

Wanting to lay hold of it. The very reason for which Christ. Has laid hold of us. So that's the first response. To the question. Well if I can't be perfect here and now.

Why should I aim for it? Well. God commands it. But a second reason why we should aim at perfection. Is that God has so created us. And made us.

[31 : 54] That those who aim for perfection. Come closer to it. Than those who don't. So. Here's two archers. And one's aiming at the center.

Of the bullseye. All right. The other's just. Aiming in the general direction of the target. He's just firing. Like that soldier did.

That hit Ahab. He just. Letting her fly somewhere in the. The general direction of. Where the whole target has been set up. Henry. You're an archer. Which one will.

Likely. Get closer to the bullseye. The one who's aiming for the center. He's a teacher in our tree. Listen to him. Isn't that make sense?

And it's the truth in our spiritual walks as well. If you are aiming. To be like Christ. And your eyes are on Jesus. And that's your.

[32 : 53] Your standard for today. I want to be like Jesus. I want to love like he loves. I want to serve like he serves. I want to care like he cares. You're going to get closer to that.

Than if you just say. Well you know. I can't. I can't hit that. Center of the bullseye. So. I'm just hoping to not sin too much today. I guess. No.

No. The aim. Must be. To be like Jesus. And those who do. Are the ones who are growing in grace. The most.

And who are closer. Coming into closer likeness. To the Lord Jesus. You want to hear a holy heartbeat. On this matter. Put your stethoscope on the writer of Psalm 119.

Verses 4 and 5. This is what we hear. Beating on the psalmist's heart. Oh Lord. Lord. You have laid down precepts. Excuse me.

[33 : 56] I need to see that. You've laid down precepts. That are to be fully obeyed. Not partially obeyed. You've laid down precepts. To be fully obeyed.

The next verse. Oh that my heart. Were steadfast. In keeping. Your commands. That's. That's what I want. That's what I'm aiming at.

That's how I'm starting my day. Lord. These commands are to be fully obeyed. And oh. That my heart. Was. That steadfast. To be always obeying. Praying for it.

But then you get down to verse 11. And he says. I've hidden. Your word in my heart. Why? What? Why would you ever take all that time to memorize. The Bible.

Bible verses. Oh. I've hidden your word in my heart. That I might not sin. Against you. That's. That's the worst thing about life. On planet earth.

[34 : 52] That I sin against you. After you have been so good to me. So. So I'm memorizing your word. I want your mind. To be filling my mind. I want Christ.

And his holiness. His obedience. Before me. I want to see what it looks like. That I might. Please you. And obey you. That I might not sin.

Again. Against you. So just because sinless perfection. Is not possible yet. In this life. That's not cause for complacency. It's not cause for sinful satisfaction.

With your present state. Just settling in. For the status quo. Not striving after greater likeness. To Jesus.

Now just happy to be on my way to heaven. This is Paul's emphasis. In dealing with this error. In the church. He first says. It's not true.

[35 : 45] It's not yet. Whatever you're claiming. But he hastens on to say. No complacency. Allowed. So this waiting for sinless perfection.

Is no passive thing. Is it? We're not just biding time. Until heaven. Paul says in verse 12. I've not already been made perfect. I've not already been made perfect. But I press on.

To take hold. Of that for which Christ. Has taken hold of me. It was to perfect me. That he took hold of me. And that's what I'm pressing on.

To take hold of. The word there. Press on. Means to pursue with vigor. Like a hunter. Hot on the trail. Of some game. Paul says.

Sinless perfection. I'm pressing on. To lay hold of it. It's still out of my reach. I still haven't grasped it yet. But there is a holy dissatisfaction.

[36 : 40] Within me. That will not rest. Until I am like Jesus. And until then. I'm pressing on. To become more like him. Would anyone who knows you well.

Say. She's pursuing holiness. Like a hunter. Closing in on his game. Could you say that of yourself? Can I say that of myself?

That I am so earnest. To become like Jesus. That I'm hunting it down. Every day. Like a hunter. Closing in on. His prey. You see.

These words expose. The lackadaisical attitude. Of so many. Professing Christians. Who do not make. Every effort. To be holy. Hebrews 12. 14. Who are not.

Perfecting holiness. Out of reverence. For God. Second Corinthians. Seven. One. Who do not actively. Put off the deeds. Of the flesh. Do not mortify.

[37 : 39] Sin. By the power. Of the spirit. And do not. Put on the fruits. Of the spirit. The graces. Of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Christ. They're not. Pressing on.

The upward way. New heights. To be gaining. Every day. Still praying. As they onward. Go. Lord. Plant my feet. On higher ground. I want to know you. I want to be like you.

I want to come closer. And closer to you. No. They're just smugly. Satisfied. Happy to have escaped. Hell. Thankful for what Jesus.

Has done for me. Just biding my time. Enjoying the world. Waiting. For heaven. These were the complacent.

In Israel. That the prophets. Over and over. Rebuked. In the Old Testament. And Christians living. In the prosperous West. Are too easily contented.

[38 : 34] And I'm putting myself. In that category. Too easily contented. With our. Our sanctification. So that we're not hungry. And thirsting. After greater likeness.

To Christ. But notice. How. Is Paul pressing on. To take hold. Of sinless perfection.

Christ like perfection. Verses 13 and 14. Brothers. I do not consider myself. To have taken hold of it. But one thing I do.

This is my single minded aim. In life. Forgetting what's behind. And straining toward what's ahead. I press on.

There's that word again. I'm hunting it down. What? The goal. To win the prize. For which God has called me heavenward. In Christ Jesus. That's the same effectual call. God has called us heavenward.

[39 : 29] In Christ Jesus. As. Same thing as Christ. Laying hold of us. To make us like himself. Now here. Paul uses the picture. Of a runner. In a race. Forgetting what's behind.

Straining toward what's ahead. Pressing on toward the goal. To win the prize. We're in a race. And brothers and sisters. As long as we are alive.

The race is not over. Is it? And so we must. Whatever our age. Press on. After greater Christ likeness. How? First of all. Forgetting.

What is behind. Now this passage. Has been used. To teach many different things. It could include. Our past sins. As well as our past victories. Forgetting it.

Now. There is a right way. To remember our past sins. And that is. If it is used. To make us all the more. Thankful and humbled. Under God's.

[40 : 29] Blessing of salvation. That he's forgiven me. The whole mess. Of my sin. And it makes me. Run after him. All the faster. That's the right use. Of remembering. Our past sins.

Paul never forgot. That he was a blasphemer. A violent man. And a persecutor. That only made him run. All the faster. You see.

Pressing on. Thankful. That God had. Had. Had. Canceled that sin. Had put the blood. Of Jesus over it. And washed it all away. And now he's. All the more.

Eager. To. Become like Jesus. That's the right way. But. When. The remembrance. Of your sins. Is used to. To paralyze you.

In guilt. And. And just to. Think. Well what can I do. For Jesus. Look what I was. Look what I've been doing. No. That's. That's when you need to forget. What's behind.

[41 : 24] That is under the blood. Of Christ. And so we. We press on. Forgetting what is behind. But I think it's not only a reference. To. To. To past sins. I think perhaps the context would bear out.

It's more. A. A forgetting of past successes. And victories. Remember these are people who are. Claiming perfection. Claiming. Like the Corinthians. Some higher state of achieved.

Christianity. And experience. And. And that tended to look down their noses. As if everybody else. That wasn't quite up to snuff like me. Up here. I'm. I'm. I'm almost perfect.

Or perfect. And they were boasting about their spiritual achievements. And Paul says. Oh no. Forgetting. What's behind. Not fixing our eyes there.

To look behind and say. Wow. Look. Look what I've done. I've served the Lord all these years. And I remember. When I had problems with this sin. And. Well. I've. I've mortified that now.

- [42 : 25] I'm doing pretty well. In all these categories. And. I think the Lord ought to be happy. To have me in this church. And. We're. We're. Remembering past victories.
- And successes. And successes in a wrong way. There's a right way. To thank God. For what he's done in us. That. I'm not what I used to be. And it's all due to his grace. That's the right way.
- As Paul can say. It's the grace of God. That's made me to differ. From what I was. But this is that. Resting on your laurels.
- Yeah. I've achieved all this. In the Christian life. And. So I. I really don't need to be all that urgent. To press on. Because we're looking back. At what we've already accomplished.
- So here's a runner of the mile. Four laps around the track. Half a lap to go. On the last lap. And she's thinking.
- [43 : 21] How well she's run all season. I've had a good season. And she's thinking. How quick she was. At the beginning of the race. And got out in front of everybody else. And. And she's thinking.
- Yeah. The second lap. Was almost as fast as the first. And now. Here I am. I'm. I'm ahead of all those losers. And. Look how well I've run. She's not.
- Through the tape. Yet. And. Many races. Can be lost. In the last. Half lap. And. Paul's saying. You need to be forgetful. Of what's behind. I don't care.
- How far you've run. In the Christian life. How fast you've run. Forget what's behind. You've got a half lap. To go. You need to finish.
- All out. And Paul says. That's what I'm doing. I'm straining. Every nerve. Of the runner. Leaning forward. For the finish line. The prize.
- [44 : 14] The goal. For which Christ. God has called me heavenward. In Christ. For which. Christ has laid hold of me. That I might see him. And become like him. It's all out.
- To the finish line. No backward look. That. Makes us complacent. And to coast in. No. Paul says. Straining.
- Toward. What's ahead. So. Seeing Christ. And being. Perfectly like him. That's the goal. That's the prize. To be with him. And to be perfect.
- To never sin against him again. Well. We're still on this side. Of the finish line. Folks. There's more to be gained. In likeness to Christ. There's no.
- There's more to know. Of Christ. And there's more to show. Of Christ. In our lives. And so. So it's straining forward. For what's ahead. And how.
- [45 : 13] Well. And how fast. We run the rest of the race. Depends on where we've got our attention. Our eyes. Are we looking behind us. At what we've already accomplished. Are we. Looking at the race.
- That we still have to finish. And at Christ. And his word. How we run the race. Depends on where our eyes are. Behind or before.
- Keep your eyes. Ahead. At the finish line. We'll see Christ. Face to face. And then be made perfectly. Like him. Now. I would be surprised.
- If there's anyone here. Who holds. Formally. To the doctrine. Of sinless perfection. You know your Bibles. Too well. You don't believe. That you're sinless yet.
- Your wife surely. Doesn't believe it. So. We're probably not. Claiming. Sinless perfection. But I do need to warn you. About a practical. Perfectionism.
- [46 : 10] That when. For all practical purposes. We live. As if we don't sin. And here. The litmus test. Is our confession. Of sin. Or lack thereof. That shows.

Whether we believe. We're still sinning. Or not. That's the true test. Of. Of what we believe. About sinless perfection. When did God. Last hear you. Confessing your sins.

To him. What was the particular. Sin. You confessed. To him. In detail. You know. We don't sin. In general. We sin. In particular. Ways.

Against particular. Commands. And so. All of our. Confessing of sin. Should not just be. Forgive us our sins. Forgive me my sin. But. To name them. And when have other people.

Last heard you. Confess your sins. Against them. Or. Or would the lack. Of confessions. Show this practical. Sinless. Perfection. Idea. I say.

[47 : 09] Confession. Is the litmus test. And if the Lord's prayer. We ask for daily bread. Is followed by asking. For forgiveness of sin. Then this too. Is a daily. Request.

From our Lord. To forgive us our sins. And oh. What encouragements. We have in God. To bring our sins. To him. For. For. For forgiveness.

What. What a character. What. Attributes. Are found in God. His love. His mercy. That he not only gives. Mercy. He delights in mercy. We have his promises.

To. To encourage us. That if we confess our sins. He's faithful and just. And will forgive us our sins. And purify us from all. Unrighteousness. What does confession of sin show?

It shows our sorrow for sin. It shows that we are not smugly satisfied. With our present. Level of sanctification. It shows that no. Not until I lay hold of that.

[48 : 10] For which Christ laid hold of me. Will I be absolutely satisfied. And until then I'm pressing on. Lord forgive me for that sin. That was an unkind word. That was a nasty thought.

We confess it. And he is gracious. To forgive us. Confession of sin shows sorrow for sins. Shows dissatisfaction. Shows the straining after likeness.

To Jesus. To Jesus. And what does confession of sin do? It brings us once again. To our savior. And to the cross. And there.

No sin. Seems small. Apart from the cross. I can belittle my sins. But when I come to Christ. And his cross.

No. If that's what it took to forgive that sin. John. This is not small potatoes. This is something serious. And I need that. For my humbling. And it's at the cross.

[49 : 06] That I receive the kiss. Of forgiveness again. And I need that. For my joy. The joy. Restore unto me. The joy. Of thy salvation. David cried.

As he confessed his sin. To the Lord. So we have every reason. To come. To this forgiving God. And lost person. Let me just say. A new world is coming. And all those who are found in Christ.

In that day. Will be made new. They will be made like. Jesus Christ. Perfect. And everything in this world. Will be perfected. There will be nothing wrong. In the world. I would simply say.

What a sad thing. To have lived your whole life. Here. In this world. Under. The sin. And curse. When sin. And the curse. Is having its sway.

In the world. To have only lived. In this world. Then. And to miss. This whole new world. That Jesus is bringing in. He offers it to you. The right relationship. With God.

[50 : 02] Through faith. In Jesus Christ. Receive him today. He turns none away. Let's cry. Thank you father.

For. Calling us heavenward. In Jesus Christ. Thank you Lord Jesus. For laying hold of us. On our way to hell. And turning us around. And. Heading us toward that day.

When we'll see you face to face. And be. Sinlessly. Perfect. Like you. Keep that aim before us. And keep. Us pressing on.

Until we. Do see you face to face. Draw others today. To yourself. And gather them into your loving presence. And thank you for the help you give us along the way.

In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.