

What is a Christian?

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- [0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn to the third chapter of Philippians.! New Testament Philippians chapter 3.
- ! Let us hear the word of the Lord. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh.
- For it is we who are of 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.
- Circumcised on the eighth day of the tribe of Israel, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee.
- [1 : 25] As for zeal, persecuting the church. As for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit, 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 attained 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.
- [2 : 51] 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 God 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, in our world of polls and questionnaires, everyone is always trying to classify and organize and categorize people.
- Stan talked about being anxious for the election to be over. I think I've had it up to here with how many polls they tell us about. But they are always trying to categorize and understand and organize people.
- They're trying to understand and organize and classify Christians. So 40% of Christians think this, or 23% of evangelicals support him or her.
- [4 : 19] And on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning and the week after that, they're going to be giving you lots of data about how Christians voted, how evangelicals voted.
- So for them, for the watching world, we really are misunderstood. They don't really see what we are.

For them, Christians are just another cultural block, another demographic to understand, just like white, non-college voters or Latino voters in the suburbs.

just another demographic, just another social category. And is that all we are?

Is that what it means to be a Christian? What does it mean to be a Christian? Well, it doesn't simply mean that you are getting really serious about religion or going to church.

[5 : 24] It does not mean that you simply say, I'm going to be, or try to be a nicer, kinder person. It doesn't simply mean that I'm going to somehow get some new, or I have some new, warm, religious feelings.

Something's happened to me. It's not living in the realm of the church. You know what I mean, where you're just the people that you know, or they call themselves Christians.

They generally go to church. Mom and dad go to church, or I go to church. I believe the Bible. I believe generally what every other Christian thinks.

I vote that way. I live that way. Just sort of like everyone else. It is something so much more than that. It is something profoundly more than that.

Christian, my Christian brother, my Christian sister, what are you? What has happened to you? What has happened to your life?

[6 : 28] Philippians 3.12 tells you that, and I want to direct your attention to that verse. Philippians 3.12, Paul says, not that I've already attained all of this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on.

I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. This is the verse we're going to look at this morning, and we're going to look at it under three headings, and the first one is the glorious or a glorious fact.

A glorious fact. You do have the verse right in front of you. I see so many of you looking at it. What is the best thing about that verse? What is the best thing about that verse?

What is the joy-producing, comfort-giving, hope-encouraging, hope-growing, glorious fact that you see in that verse?

Well, it's the end. It's the end. It's the very last little phrase there. The best part is the end. Christ Jesus took hold of me.

[7 : 36] Christ Jesus took hold of me. That's the glorious fact that we're going to look at first of what happens to Christians. Well, he apprehended me. He arrested me.

He obtained me. He grasped me. He seized me. He took me for his own. That's what that verb means. It's making something yours.

Obtaining. So last night, some of the kids, if you went trick-or-treating, I don't know if that's what you do, but if the neighbor holds out a bucket of candy and says, you can take what you want and right at the very top is not a regular or a little bite-sized candy bar, but it is a full-size Snickers bar or a full-size Butterfinger and all the rest are bite-sized.

What do you do? Kids, if you're smart and if you're normal, I think you grab it, don't you? Other people might be after it, but you grab it.

You seize it. You obtain it. You grasp it. That's what this means. And that's what Christ Jesus has done to you, Christian. He grasped you.

[8 : 49] He took you. He took hold of you. Paul says, he took hold of me. That was the defining moment in the Apostle Paul's life was when Jesus came and took possession, took a hold of Paul.

Paul says, I was on the road to Damascus. You read this story three times in the book of Acts because I think Luke, the author, is saying this is one of the pivotal moments in this early church history.

This particular moment is how the Lord broke the church out from just being pretty much a Jewish phenomenon to going worldwide. It was this moment when Jesus took a hold of Paul.

And Paul says, I was on the road to Damascus. I was fighting the Lord. I was fighting Christ. I was at war against him. The leaders, remember down in Jerusalem, the leaders had sent me up against those Damascus believers like a wolf on the lambs.

I was after them. I was ready to seize them. I was ready to grab them. I was ready to trap them. I was ready to imprison them, carry them off. Paul, it says, he was breathing out threats.

[10 : 02] Imagine a wolf, growling, panting, wanting to destroy, wanting to seize and grab. That was Paul. He's saying, I was at war.

I was a berserker. You know what a berserker is? It's one of those old, ancient, out of the dark northern woods Germanic soldier that before battle would strip himself naked, cut himself, so he's just bleeding.

And he would rush into battle. And people were terrified of him. They thought, these kind of people are not normal. They're something, obviously they're not normal. And they were terrified. And that's what the church's perception of the Apostle Paul was.

They were terrified of him. But outside of Damascus, the church's king came forth to battle.

And with one stroke, he threw Saul of Tarsus to the ground. And with another one, blinding light, Saul went blind.

[11 : 12] And Jesus then didn't begin negotiations. Jesus doesn't negotiate with those he takes hold of. He said three things.

He said, get up, go into the city, and then get ready because you're going to hear what you're going to be told to do next. This is just the beginning of me telling you what to do.

Get up, go into the city, and get ready to hear more. Jesus took hold of him. If we had time this morning, I would ask you to take your hymns.

I'm not going to. And look at hymn number 404. And it's not a hymn we sing, but it goes like this. I have no idea what the tune is, but these are the lyrics.

We sing the glorious conquest before Damascus gate. When Saul, the church's spoiler, came breathing threats and hate. The ravening wolf rushed forward full early to the prey.

[12 : 14] But lo, the shepherd met him. and bound him fast today. And the second verse goes on. Jesus grabbed the wolf by the scruff and then made him his pet.

That's what Paul is saying. He took hold of me. Now, Christian, that is what has happened to you. Now, none of us has had something so dramatic as a vision from heaven, but substantially, that is exactly what has happened to you.

Jesus has taken hold, took hold of you. And that's how you became a Christian. It wasn't you taking hold of him so much as him taking hold of you.

Jesus arresting you. Arresting you. Bringing you under his control and his power and his possession. I've been watching a spy crime TV show on Netflix.

And in every show, every episode, someone is getting arrested. And they come in all different kinds and shapes and forms. Sometimes it's after a violent fight. You know, the gun, the shootout, and the car crash, and there's bodies everywhere.

[13 : 23] And the cop throws the bad guy to the ground and throws the handcuffs on him. And he's arrested. And sometimes, the Lord arrests his people that way.

He does. They put up a fight. They wall themselves in. They barricade themselves in. Some of you, that's how it was. Because you, in your pre-Christian state, you were beginning to have inklings that things were not right and he was after you and he was hedging you in.

And you felt him breathing down your neck. You saw him sort of surrounding your house. And you didn't want any part of him. You didn't want to do anything, have anything to do with him.

And so you shut the curtains tight. Didn't you? You didn't want his light getting in. And in the night hours, you began pounding on the door.

Thuds that shook your whole house. And yet you still didn't let him in. And you didn't want him. But in the name of God, open up.

[14 : 35] And the door falls down and splinters. You ran out the back. You ran into the woods, desperate to get away.

And he followed you. And he cornered you in some place. And he threw you down. You were sick with your sin, mad with your sin. And he threw his handcuffs on you.

So there you were, your stomach full of sin, hating him. And he puts his handcuffs on you. And he gives you medicine. And you throw your sin up. And just like someone who's throwing up poison, you throw up your poison.

And your eyes began to clear. And you start to see him. And the new light flooded in. And then you look down at your handcuffs.

You realize that he loved you. And nothing looks so beautiful as those handcuffs that he had on you. That's how some of the arrests go. That's how some of your arrests went.

[15 : 41] It was a lot of resistance, a lot of fighting, and him moving and moving and moving and confronting and breaking down barriers until he had you exactly where he wanted you.

But finally, he took hold of you. Now, there's other arrests in this show that I'm watching that are not like that at all. They're very quiet affairs. The criminal is sitting there.

The criminal is dejected and hopeless. And he has no desire to run at all. And the police officer just quietly slips the handcuffs on him. And the criminal almost breathes a sigh of relief.

Finally, this is over. And that's how Jesus arrested some of you. It was not this big, long, drawn-out affair. Maybe you were young. Maybe you hadn't gone very far.

Maybe your heart hadn't been so hardened yet. But Jesus just sort of sat down beside you and he whispered, You're mine. You're mine.

[16 : 38] And he arrested you. To be a Christian, to be a Christian, is to belong to Christ Jesus.

It's for him to take you. No one has ever, I've said this multiple times, but I think it's something that we need to hear again and again. No one has ever foisted themselves, imposed themselves on Jesus.

He wanted you. And he took you. That's what it means to be a Christian. He took you. What comfort? What comfort is there?

There is no sweeter words that we can say to ourselves, that we can read in the Bible, than, I am his. We're called to belong to him.

There's no sweeter words to say than to say, I belong to him. That's exactly how the Heidelberg Catechism began. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

[17 : 42] Oh, that I am not my own, but I belong, body and soul, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus took hold in me.

He made me his. That's serious comfort. That's serious comfort. But it's also a serious calling. Do I belong to him? Is the one who called me to himself and took possession of me holy?

Yeah, then be holy as I am holy. Then be holy as he is holy. We aren't our own anymore. And so we don't, we don't have any room to negotiate.

We don't have any room to corner off. We don't have any room to say, you know what, this part of my life is going to still be mine and I'm just going to keep doing what I want. No, Jesus didn't negotiate. He took it all.

He took all of it. And there is no part of your life that Jesus doesn't say mine over. And so that sin, whatever sin that is, and I don't have any idea, too many people here, but that sin that you've been harboring, that sin that you've been sort of dallying with, if you belong to Jesus, it has to go.

[18 : 55] It has to go. So, it's a serious calling, but here's the good news. It's, that sin is going to go. It is absolutely going to go.

Jesus has taken ownership and he's not going to be satisfied. He is not going to be satisfied with his possession until it is, and you are sinless. Until whatever that sin that you've been wrestling with is now trampled under your feet, he will have you perfect.

That's what it means to belong. This is, if you belong to him, he is going to make you holy. You're his. And so, he's going to give you every grace that you need.

It might be grace of patience to just wait for you to catch up, to catch on, to understand what he's putting his finger on. It might be the grace to resist temptation and the grace to understand the sin for what it is.

I don't know what it is, but he is going to give you every grace that you need until you stand in glory perfect. Until you stand in glory perfect.

[19 : 59] perfect. Because you belong to him. Until he is perfectly formed in you. Until you are his mirror image.

Jesus is going to look into the waters of life and see your face reflecting back. To look at you will be to look at his own perfection.

That's what it means to belong to him. And so, warm your heart. Warm your zeal at this fire. Jesus took you.

He took you for himself. Now here, second, that's the first. That's a glorious fact. Here's the second. You see, it's the glorious reason. There are a lot of reasons that Jesus took a hold of you.

There's lots. We could have a whole sermon on just why Jesus saves people. We could have multiple sermons about that. But look at what Paul says. Jesus seized you.

[21 : 00] He took a hold of you for a particular reason. I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Now you see, there's this connection between Jesus taking hold of me and me taking hold of this other thing, this thing. There's a connection between what Paul is trying to take hold of and Jesus taking hold of him.

He says, he took hold of me. He made me his. He seized me. And Christian, that's what he did for you. He seized you. And that, Paul says, that's why I'm pressing on to take hold of this, this thing.

He took hold of me so I could take hold of something. Now what is Paul trying to take a hold of? Well, you have to read the context. The context tells you what Paul is trying to take a hold of.

And it really begins up in verse 8 and 9 and 10. It's this. What is Paul trying to, what is Paul pressing on?

[22 : 05] What is Paul grasping after? He's trying to get it. He's trying to wrap his arms all around it. He says this, I want to know Christ. I want to know Christ.

I want to know the power of his resurrection. And not only that, I want to know and share in the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. And so somehow to attain to the resurrection of the dead.

And then he says not that I've already obtained all this, but I press on. So brothers and sisters, why? This is good news. This is wonderful good news.

Why did Jesus take a hold of you? So that you could know him. so that you could take a hold of him. He took a hold of you so that you could take a hold of him.

He took a hold of you so that you can know him. And you notice, Paul is not talking about knowing something or someone at arm's length. Not at, this is the farthest thing from that.

[23 : 07] So that you can press into him as close as can be. That's why Jesus took a hold of you. so that you could press into him as close as can be.

And that, so that you see these words, so that his very righteousness becomes yours. And you share in his sufferings, and you share in the power of his resurrection, that you might know him so perfectly, so completely, and it's going to grow in this life, and it's going to be perfected in the next life, but you'll know him so perfectly that your life, you, become an intimate echo of him.

That you would be an intimate echo of him. You would know him so completely so that you can know him.

So what is Paul trying to take a hold of? Christ himself. Christ himself. And that's what Paul is pressing on to. And so he says, I've forsaken everything else.

I've forsaken everything else that I might gain him. And that begins, this gaining Christ, this obtaining, taking hold of Christ, it begins with Christ righteousness.

[24 : 28] That's where Paul begins talking about this. The Christian life is not about the Christian doing righteous things things. So God gives the law and says, now you do this and if you do it all and well and good then you'll be righteous.

That's not what the Christian life's fundamental reality is. The fundamental reality is it's getting into Christ. So now it's not my righteousness that we're even talking about. We are talking about, and that's what Paul says, not having a righteousness of my own.

Do you understand what that means? Have you understood that in your life? What it means to, I have a righteousness, righteousness, but it's not my righteousness, not having a righteousness of my own, but a righteousness that comes through faith in Christ.

So faith is taking hold of Christ and his righteousness. So now that I have his righteousness, I've made it my own. And so now I have this perfect spotless righteousness that God himself cannot fault.

Paul says that's the very righteousness of God. So before God could condemn you, if you have this righteousness, he would have to condemn himself. That's what we're talking about.

[25 : 41] And so this is better than anything that we could ever work up, this righteousness. And so do you have that righteousness? If you have Christ Jesus, you have that righteousness.

That's where you get, that's what it means to lay a hold of him and take a hold of him. That's what it means to know him. So that you have the righteousness of Christ.

And so if we have this, we can sing so bold I approach the eternal throne. Can you imagine that? We sing that Charles Wesley hymn of us boldly approaching the eternal throne and taking the crown for my own.

Where do you get that kind of boldness? Where do you as a little person, me just a little person and nobody get the boldness to go to the eternal throne and lay a hold of God's promise and lay a hold of all of his promises?

Where do you get the boldness to say to God, just as we've sang, my father, to say with Jesus Christ, I'm a father and to feel that and to know that intimacy and to say, you know what?

[26 : 54] I always have someone who will listen to me and understand me. Where do you get the boldness to say my father? Where do you get the boldness to say to Satan himself, silent snake?

You don't have anything to say to me or against me. Where do you get that? You get that boldness when you are wearing and you are in Christ and have his righteousness.

And so when you have in him, that's what Paul talks about, found in him. And so now you're not looking at your own goodness, now you're not trying to defend your own righteousness, your own actions, your own goodness, you're robed in Christ himself.

That's what knowing Christ is. That's what Paul is saying. This is what I'm striving, to live in that righteousness. That's knowing Christ.

And that's why Jesus took a hold of you, that you might have that righteousness so that you could stand before God, that boldness, that freedom. That's the kind of knowing that Paul is talking about so that the spirit of Christ is in you and you say, Abba, Father.

[28 : 06] So he took a hold of you that you could stand the test of the final judgment. He took a hold of you so that you can experience the power of his resurrection.

So that you don't only read and believe in Easter around Easter time and the resurrection, and that's just an interesting fact, so that it's very power, the very power that raised Christ from the dead, that Christ possesses within himself, that very life now becomes your life.

That begins with the new birth. That's actually how the Bible talks about the new birth. When we are born into Jesus Christ and his life fills us. And so when the resurrection life is born in me, that's when we become new creations.

That's living in resurrection power. That's where it begins. And so you're not having a different power, not a different resurrection, but Christ's own resurrection life in you.

That's why Jesus took hold of you so that you could experience that, not only the new birth, but then living out that reality that I am a new creation to know Christ.

[29 : 17] Christ, but it's also to share in his sufferings. I think we'd say, boy, I'd like the others. I'm not so sure about this one.

To share in his sufferings. But that is what Paul says again and again. He loves Jesus so much that he wants to share.

He wants the fellowship of suffering for him. And I think Paul understands that in this fallen world, there is no resurrection.

In this world of sin, there is no resurrection without suffering and death. There's no resurrection life without death to sin, without death to self, without self-denial.

I think Paul is indicating that for me, he says, I expect that this self-denial and this suffering is going to end up costing me my very life.

[30 : 29] There is no resurrection without self-denial. And Jesus took hold of you so that you can know him in both. So that you could know him and love him and live with him not only when it's resurrection power, but when it's suffering.

Now, suffering and resurrection is all over this book of Philippians. But it's not just Christ's sufferings and resurrection.

It's us joining him in that. You can look over at chapter two and verse one. We're not going to read this whole thing, but just look at how chapter two begins.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, again, do you see what we're talking about? Being united to Christ. If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the spirit, those are all relationship words.

Paul is saying, if you have a real, living, vital relationship with Jesus Christ, then what? Then what? Well, verse five, then your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, or then the mind of Christ Jesus should be in you.

[32 : 01] Who what? What did Jesus do? Well, he humbled himself and suffered. That's what he did.

He humbled himself and he suffered, and he suffered for sinners, and he suffered pain because he loved sinners. He loved others.

So he humbled himself to love and help others, and he committed himself to self-denial for the sake of others. Jesus, that's the suffering that we're talking about.

That's the suffering that Paul is saying, that's what I want to enter into, that kind of suffering where I am denying myself. I am denying my sin. I am denying my selfishness.

I am denying myself in order to love and to serve others. That's the suffering. But then Jesus says, Paul then goes on in Philippians 2, then what happened?

[33 : 01] Well, God exalted him to the highest place. Then there was resurrection. But there was not resurrection before that suffering. It was as Jesus entered into that suffering that God then raised him.

And the very same thing happens for us. You see, the Christian life is this story being written into our lives where we are being now conformed to this death and this resurrection.

And so as we know Christ, as we live in Christ, what happens? What does it mean to know him? Well, you join him in humbling yourself.

You join yourself, join him in humbling ourselves for others. Christ took a hold of you for that very reason.

This is why he took a hold of you, so that you can know him. Not just in resurrection power, but also in suffering. And that's how Paul is saying that's how you should live.

[34 : 15] That's now in this life. that this spirit of I have to deny myself. This is what it means to know Christ.

This is what it means to actually live with him, be united with him, and meet him. I have to live in this suffering and this resurrection power. And that's for now.

For these very days. Extremely contentious. Everyone seems to have an opinion. and for us now, maybe the greatest self denial would be to say, I am not going to share my opinions with others.

I'm not going to correct. I don't know about you, maybe it's just me, but I feel this terrible temptation to tell everyone what I think.

as if what I think is so important. You know, I feel this terrible temptation to correct and to teach, and maybe in some way that is what I'm called to do, but I feel a lot of self in there.

[35 : 31] To say, well, here's where you're wrong, or here's where you're right. to exalt myself. To get you to side with me.

So, really, what do I want is I want you to do what I think you should do. How can I get you to do my will? That's the self. That's the pride.

And so far as it's good and necessary for me as a pastor, and I have to be extremely careful. I suppose it's okay to tell others what I think.

But in so far as that is not necessary, then that is pride. And that is not living in the suffering and the humiliation of Christ.

That's trying to make myself better and look better and feel better. That's not looking not only to my own interest, but also to the interest of others.

[36 : 37] And so if I'm going to join Jesus in suffering and humiliation over this coming week and months, then maybe instead of talking, I should just listen and withhold judgment.

Maybe instead of feeling like I have to get people to go along with my opinion, I just need to die to myself and not voice my opinion as Christ died to his self.

because Jesus Christ didn't die so that I could get my way. He didn't die so things could go exactly how I want and other people will think and feel exactly as I want them.

He took a hold of me so that I could meet him and know him. And the places that I meet him and know him is in the self-denying acceptance and bringing in the cross. where I say, okay self, you're just going to die.

You're not going to get what you want. And that's where I get to know him and self-denial. Now maybe the whole election and pandemic thing, maybe that's not exactly what you need this word of self-denial.

[37 : 50] Maybe for you it's just if you're a mom and you're serving your kids and it's hard and you really wish it was a little easier, that's self-denial. Maybe it's with your husband or your wife or maybe it's at work, maybe here it's at church.

You know where the spirit is putting his finger. Where it says, you know, Jason, there's a little too much of you in this and there's not enough of me.

But it is as I live in that self-denial, that suffering for love's sake, that I find Christ's resurrection life in me. That's the thing.

I meet him in self-denial and I find him giving me power and he helps me and he exalts me. He encourages me. And so then I have a resurrection life in me that is unexplainable to myself and even to the world.

And so his peace, his joy, his love, his glory begins to fill me. And so it's more of him and less of me. So knowing Christ and suffering and resurrection, actually living in it, that's why Jesus took a hold of you.

[39 : 03] That's why he took a hold of you. In order that you could grab onto him in these things. So it's not just now, though. So we're talking about now, but there is this later.

There's always this late now, some now and some later. And that's what we need to talk about now next. So we've talked about now, but what about later? Paul is clearly focusing on that there is something at the end that I am going to obtain.

I'm not perfect yet. I'm still growing in all of this, but there is an obtaining at the end. So not just now, later. And there's a later death.

I think for Paul, in his mind, he was clear it meant martyrdom. That's not necessarily going to be the case for us, but we all have our own death. to go through. And you know what?

In some ways, all death is common. You have to say goodbye to this world. You have to say goodbye to what you wanted. You have to say goodbye to everything you worked for. You have to say goodbye to what you hoped and what you dreamt about.

[40 : 11] You have to say goodbye to certain relationships, at least for the time being. Everything I want and hope for this life, and I will join Jesus in dying to this world.

Where it's not going to have any grasp on me and I'm not going to have any grasp on it. And that's really how you die well, is when you with Jesus die in the will of God and you surrender to him.

And so you're not fighting to keep a grip on this world. Doesn't that seem to be so much of what the world is doing? why do people want to live longer? And not to serve the Lord, not to even serve others, but just so that they can have more of this life.

Why is there so much plastic surgery and exercise? And it's because they're trying to hold on as if this world is all there is, but humbly letting go of this world to gain glory on the other side.

That is dying well. And that's what Paul is talking about. That's how Christ died. He died in faith. And that's how we can die as Christians. And then, and then, resurrection.

[41 : 33] Resurrection. We die with Christ. And then on the last day, we live forever. with Christ. Forever perfect.

Christ formed in me. That's why Jesus took a hold of you. So that at long last, you will completely take a hold of him. He arrested you so that in the end that you can arrest him.

He seized you so that in the end you will perfectly seize him and you will be like him and have him forever. That's why he took a hold of you.

It would do us so much good if we would just fast forward to those days where we realize I'm going to live with him forever. And perfect love and I'm going to know him and he's going to know me.

But what now? And here's our third heading and this is very brief. It's this, it's a glorious call to action. So we've seen a glorious fact. Jesus took hold of me, the glorious reason so that I could take a hold of him.

[42 : 42] Now, three, what do you do about it? The glorious call to action is this. Press on. Press on to lay a hold of him. Press on to know him in these things.

Press on in these things. Press on to share more of Christ's sufferings. Press on in self-denial. So moms, can you go further? Husbands, can you go further?

Coworkers, can you go further with them? Church members, can we go further with each other to share in Christ's sufferings, to die to self, to die to sin, to press on to share in his resurrection?

Press on by faith, that's power now, but press on to at last, he says, to attain the resurrection of the body. That's the future hope we are looking forward to.

So forgetting, that's the goal, that's the mission, that's the call to action, so forget what's behind. However far you've gone, you know what, you're sitting here, you haven't gone far enough. If you're, however far you've gone, whatever you've left behind, it's time to press on.

[43 : 49] Some of you have things in your pre-Christian life that you need to forget. Paul had a lot of things behind him, a lot of things, but he wasn't going back.

You notice what he calls all that stuff, all this pre-Christian faith, pre-Christian hopes, pre-Christian things that he was trusting in, he calls it rubbish, it's street filth.

If you have the picture of a medieval city and you know how they just dump the garbage and the food scraps and the toilet out in the street, that's what we're talking about. Paul says that's what that stuff is.

when you're hiking, when you're going somewhere, you don't go back for the garbage, do you? When we were flying to pick up, going to Ethiopia, I had to make, like, we got started and we had to turn around four times to go back to the house because I forgot something.

Four times, it was terrible. But you know what? Never a single one of those times did I say I got to pick up the garbage and take it with me. That's what Paul is saying. Some of you have that stuff.

[45 : 02] It might be sin, it might be self-righteousness, it might be bad ideas, I don't know what it is, but now it's time to forget it and press on to what Jesus Christ, so that you can lay a hold of him.

So some of you need to forget what's behind your old pre-Christian life. And if you've been a Christian for a long time and you're saying I hardly even remember my pre-Christian life, it's been so long ago.

Okay, that's good. If you've been a Christian a long time, Paul says it's still forget what's behind. Now that's not saying, oh, we're not thankful for what's behind, and there's a lot of things that we need to remember, but what he is saying is whatever you've obtained so far, whatever level of holiness, whatever level of maturity you have gained, you can't focus on that.

you can't take pride in that. You have, however far you've gone, have you arrived? And again, you're sitting here, you're not in heaven, you're not in resurrection bodies, and so there's more to go.

Who drives two thirds of the way and then stops? So you're driving to Florida and you get to northern Georgia, do you just stop? No, you say it's time to go.

[46 : 21] It's time to keep going. So are you perfect in self-denial? No, you're not, and I'm not. These rhetorical questions can be kind of silly, but we need to ask ourselves, are you perfect in self-denial?

If not, then you need to keep going in it. Are you really living in perfect resurrection life? Well, we say not yet. Not yet. Not yet. So what? You press on. You press on to know Christ, to live in Christ, to live in faith and obedience to him.

And so that's what Paul is saying. You press on to win the prize. Press on to win Christ. If you fall down, you know, David fell down and he kept running.

Peter fell down and he kept running. I'm sure there were days that Paul fell down and he kept running. Every good Christian falls down, then it's time to get up and you keep running. Jesus Christ took a hold of you, not so that you could get two-thirds of the way there, but so that you could make it all the way home so that you could know him perfectly.

So if you're like, I don't think I can go anymore, remember why he took a hold of you so that you could take a hold of him. He took a hold of you so that you could stand up and keep running and at long last grab him.

[47 : 41] Are you slowing down? I know that feeling. You've been at it a while. Well, a few more years.

Brothers and sisters, a few more years. A few more years and we will be there and you'll be home. Christ took hold of you. Why?

So that you can take a hold of him. So if you're slowing down, now's the time to hurry up because you don't have much longer to go. So press on. Press on to take a hold of him more and more.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you for your wonderful act of grace of coming and finding us, stripping us of our sin and robing us in your righteousness, forgiving us that boldness, for letting us live in that freedom, forgiving us your Holy Spirit, that we might be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, that we might live in suffering now and self denial now and self killing now in order that we might live in resurrection power even now.

But even more than. So I do pray that you would warm our hearts with this truth.

[49 : 13] And warm our zeal. For you, warm our zeal for doing what we should do, for saying no to ourselves and yes to Jesus.

To live in him and in his power. We do want to know him. Holy Spirit, give us more desire for him.

And I do pray that every inkling and urge that we have to pray to move toward the Lord Jesus, that you would help us to say yes to those things.

And that every urge that we have, inkling to pray, to deny ourselves, to press into Jesus, that we would not refuse that, but would accept it.

So that we might become people who are moving, moving in mass, moving as a group, moving together toward our Lord Jesus. Pray that you would take a hold of sinners today and save them.

[50 : 19] In Jesus' name I do pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.