

Live the Journey

Living on Purpose

Leader Guide

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. ¹ Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Context

Becoming like Jesus and attaining the resurrection of the dead. That's what Paul is seeking according to the passage read last week, and that is what he is talking about here. He goes on to argue that the Philippians should follow his example, and stay away from the influence of those that try to force the commandments of the Mosaic law upon them. He tells them again about the hope of resurrection and new life, and admonishes them to stand firm in the Lord.

1. What is the prize he is talking about here in vs. 14? What do learn about this prize in vs. 16?

The prize is to become what we have been called by God to be. It is to become like Christ in his

attitude, his love, his mind, as Paul mentions in many occasions. The beautiful thing is that we will become like Christ in his resurrection, and we will still be ourselves in what makes us unique and special. John says in revelation that God has reserved for us a 'white stone' with a new name written on it, a name that now only he knows, and has chosen for us.

In verse 16 Paul states that this prize is something we already attained in Christ. It has been given to us by grace, and it cannot be taken away. Thus, although we are not yet in possession of the prize, we should rely on that certainty as we walk through life.

2. Paul clearly states that he is not perfect, that he does not consider himself to be like Jesus just yet. But he still asks the Philippians to follow his example. What is he emphasizing here?

He is not asking them to be perfect, blameless, neither does he expect it from them. He is asking them to keep seeking the likeness of Christ. This means a few things. First, it is putting your heart, your deepest security in the right hope, which is the hope of resurrection. It also means following the example of Christ in his attitude of love for others, service and humility, so that we can become like him. We cannot forget that this is the ultimate goal of our salvation, to be transformed (back) into the image of God.

3. Again Paul mentions the contrast between the followers of the Mosaic law and the followers of Jesus (vs. 19-21). What separates these two groups?

The followers of the law are the ones that think they can find redemption and security by adopting exterior behaviors of piety and religiosity. They expect to gain the favor of God by bargaining their rule-following behavior for blessings. They think that God can be controlled, and even coerced by their exterior performance.

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Paul says that they will one day discover that they are serving a different god, because that is not the way of Jesus. Ultimately, they are serving themselves and their hope is set on earthly rewards, things that can be acquired and exchanged here, and one day will become dust. The followers of Jesus are the ones that know where the true rewards are. They know that there is no better thing than to have their hearts molded and transformed into the image of Jesus, and in this they hope and rejoice.

4. Can we also follow in the trap of focusing on 'earthly things'? How does this take form in our lives today?

Anytime our sense of security, value or joy is rooted on earthly things, we are bound to be disappointed. As we rely on 'flesh' (to use Paul's language here), we become more like 'flesh' and less like Spirit. Sometimes this is a very tempting state of mind for us, as we become pressed by the values and the ways of the culture around us. It is easy to forget what really matters, to forget where to put our dreams, desires and aspirations.

The born-again Christian sees life not as a blurred, confused, meaningless mass, but as something planned and purposeful.

God created us in His image, He created us and loves us so that we may live in harmony and fellowship with Him. We are not here by chance. God put us here for a purpose, and our lives are never fulfilled and complete until His purpose becomes the foundation and center of our lives.

Billy Graham

