

Committed to Serve

Philippians 3:12-16

As you study the life of Paul, you realize the opportunities he once enjoyed. As far as men were concerned, Paul once had it all – power, position, and prestige. He was a rising star with a bright future within the religious elite in Jerusalem. All of that changed in a moment when he met the Lord in salvation. His coming to Christ and commitment to the Gospel cost him much of what he had acquired. Many would have become depressed, but Paul saw life as it truly was. He realized all he had obtained prior to Christ was worthless when compared to the eternal weight of his position in Christ. He would gladly trade it all again if given the chance. He had learned true contentment in Christ and sought to instill that peace within other believers.

He modeled genuine servitude to Christ, and yet Paul knew there was room for improvement in his life. His hunger for growth in the Lord never waned, and he lived his life in pursuit of complete, spiritual maturity. Having shared the realization of loss being gain, Paul now sought to challenge to Philippians to follow his example. He offered details of what a committed servant's life should resemble. Let's examine the [characteristics](#) of such a servant as we consider: [Committed to Serve](#).

I. A Servant's Attitude (12) – [Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus](#). Paul revealed his attitude and heart toward ministry. Notice:

A. His Position (12a) – [Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect](#). Bear in mind the many accomplishments he had already enjoyed in ministry. God had used him mightily following his conversion, and yet Paul admits that he had not attained spiritual maturity. He admitted there was room for continued growth in his life. While he enjoyed his position in Christ, he longed to know the Lord more intimately. Paul was not complacent or satisfied with his life and ministry. He always sought ways to grow and mature.

- That is very humbling for me, and it ought to be for everyone who seeks to follow Christ and serve Him. If the great apostle knew he had not arrived, and saw room for improvement, how much more should we sense our need and strive for continued growth? I am thankful for all the Lord has done for me and the opportunities I have enjoyed, but I know there is much yet to accomplish. I desire to know Christ more intimately as well.

B. His Pursuit (12b) – *but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus*. Paul continued to desire a deeper knowledge of Christ. He followed after the Lord, seeking to take hold of that which was available in Christ. The Lord had taken hold of his life, miraculously transforming him, and Paul wanted everything that was available. If there were any unrealized blessings or wisdom to obtain, Paul was determined to strive for those.

- I have said many times that we live below our means spiritually. The Lord has much for us and yet we are often content with a meager supply. We need the attitude of Paul in striving to obtain everything available in Christ.

II. A Servant's Ambition (13-14) – Here Paul discussed the zealous ambition he had in pursuing Christ. Such an ambition stood as a strong example for the church to imitate. Consider:

A. His Admission (13a) – *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended*. Again Paul emphasizes his need for continued growth. He admits that he had not arrived spiritually. There was still much work to be completed. He desired a closer walk with the Lord and increased wisdom. Simply, Paul was never content or satisfied with his current position. He always desired more in Christ.

- If we are honest, complacency is the plaque of the modern church. Most are content with things as they are. They are content with their current spiritual standing, being as close to the Lord as they care to be. They are content with the state of the church and those who attend our services. They are content with the ministries the church is currently pursuing. There is no desire for anything more than what is currently present. (I am certainly thankful for all the Lord has done and is doing, but I am in no way satisfied with things as they are. I know there is room for personal growth in my life and growth within our church. I pray the Lord will shake us from our state of complacency and place a committed resolve to follow after Him!)

B. His Approach (13b-14) – *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this one thing I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ^[14] I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. Sensing the need for continued growth, Paul reveals his approach to ministry. There were three phases to this approach. First Paul resolved to:

- **Forgetting the Past (13b)** – He had a varied past in ministry. There had been seasons of great victory and struggles that lead to defeat. Paul refused to live in the past. He knew the victories of yesterday were not sufficient for the needs of today, and the defeats of the past could

not dictate his future. He sought to learn from his past, but refused to allow the past to direct his course of action for the Lord. (We would do well to learn this great truth and develop this approach. Far too many churches are living in the past. We must be willing to let it go for the sake of our future!)

➤ **Embracing the Present (13b)** – *and reaching forth unto those things which are before*. Paul was committed to reaching forth unto the things that were currently before him. He had not time to live in the past; there were too many wonderful opportunities for today. He couldn't worry too much about the future and neglect present needs. Paul knew he had to live in the moment, embracing every opportunity the Lord provided. He longed to make an impact for the Lord every day. He wanted to be faithful in service in that moment, even though he was imprisoned.

I would never encourage a lack of planning, but I fear we often miss wonderful ministry opportunities that are presented in day to day living. We look for the grand events and places of notoriety, and yet the Lord is often working behind the scenes, in less obvious places. We should wake each day, expecting the Lord to present opportunities to be of service, right within the realms of our personal influence. The church's greatest impact comes through intentional, one on one interaction in ministry.

➤ **Anticipating the Future (14)** – *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. Paul kept his eye on the prize. He was committed to serving the Lord, and he refused to allow the distractions and disappointments of life to cloud his vision. He started well with the Lord and he was determined to finish well. There was no place to abandon the work. There was much yet to do, and Paul remained focused on the work he had received. (We must make good use of our time, but we must also maintain our perspective. We cannot forget the assurance of our Lord's return. I want to be found faithful when He calls for me. I started well, and I am determined to finish well for Him!)

III. A Servant's Austerity (15-16) – Finally Paul spoke of the committed resolve necessary in the heart of a servant of Christ. Consider:

A. The Admonition (15a) – *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded*. Paul had revealed his committed resolve and approach to ministry. He then admonished all mature believers to share the same attitude and resolve. He had set the bar high in Christian service, and yet they were expected to exhibit the same level of commitment.

- This is challenging, but it applies to us as well. Every mature believer should be likeminded with Paul in regard to committed service for the Lord. We must be willing to forget the past, embrace the present, and anticipate the future, while being effective in service to Christ.

B. The Illumination (15b) – *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.* Paul knew the Lord would speak to the hearts of His people through the Spirit and the Word. As they sought to follow Christ, they could rest assured of the guidance and conviction of the Word and the Spirit. He rested knowing that the Lord would deal with any who sought to create division or spread false doctrine.

- Committed service to Christ can be a daunting task, but we are not without guidance. We too can rest in the direction of the Spirit and the guidance of the Word. He has provided the resources necessary to faithfully and effectively serve Him. One thing is certain – God will never lead you in an area of service contrary to His Word. He will illuminate the hearts of those who genuinely seek Him.

C. The Continuation (16) – *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* Paul affirmed his commitment to steadfastness in the faith, and challenged the church to remain steadfast as well. They were all born again in Christ, placed within His body, and commissioned to share the same Gospel. They were one in the Lord. Every believer had a personal obligation to continue in the faith, pursuing a closer walk with the Lord.

- This needs to be stressed in our day. We too are obligated to continue in the faith, remaining committed in service to Christ. We must stand together, united in faith, seeking to proclaim the Gospel and advance the Kingdom. There are no limits to what our Lord can accomplish through a local body of believers who are united in Him!

Conclusion: This has been another challenging passage. Surely we all agree there is room for improvement in our lives as we strive to serve the Lord. I pray we all will seek a closer walk with the Lord and remain steadfast in the faith. There is too much at stake for us to abandon the effort or cease our pursuit of continued growth. If the Lord has revealed a need in your life, bring that unto Him. He has the solution you need to be productive for Him. If you are unsaved, respond to the call for salvation today!