

“The Right Attitude”
Philippians 3:15
(Preached at Trinity, April 9, 2017)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verses 12-14** Paul used the ancient athlete as an example of the Christian life. The athlete gave himself to vigorous training. He continually had his eye on the prize. Only one could take home the prize and he pressed toward the finish line in order to win.
2. The Christian has begun the race but we haven’t yet reached the finish line.
Philippians 3:12 NAU - "Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on"
Philippians 3:13-14 NAU - "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize"
3. God’s sovereignty in our salvation does not take away our human responsibility. Our life must be characterized by vigorous discipline.
William Hendriksen – “Paul was a firm believer in the doctrine of election . . . but not in election apart from human responsibility, in salvation apart from human effort, or in assurance without constant recourse to the promises.” ¹
4. The earthly athlete strives for a temporary prize. The Christian has as his goal an imperishable prize. The Christian keeps his eye upon eternity, upon heaven and the perfection it will bring; of knowing Christ in His fullness. We persevere through every hardship. We give careful attention to our life and strive to maintain holiness as we press towards the goal.
5. Those who are pressing towards the goal must maintain a particular attitude.
Philippians 3:15 NAU - "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you"
 - A. The word for “attitude” is φρονέω which refers to a mindset.
 - B. It is the same word used in Colossians 3:1-2
Colossians 3:1-2 NAU - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."
 - C. We also see it in **Romans 8**
Romans 8:5-8 NAU - "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds φρονέω on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Philippians*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 5:171.

6. Notice Paul qualifies this mindset.

Philippians 3:15 NAU - "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude" - τέλειος

A. This is one of those verses that leaves us pondering what the apostle meant as he addressed it to the Philippian church. The Philippians would have understood it clearly. Was he addressing a particular group who were claiming perfection? He made it clear in **Verse 12** that he had not yet arrived at perfection.

Or does Paul have something else in mind?

B. This adjective is used in various ways in the NT. It carries the idea of completion, of full measure.

C. In moral terms it can be used to describe perfection.

Matthew 5:48 NAU - "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Notice, however, that Paul includes himself among the perfect in this verse – “Let US therefore . . .”

Paul used the verbal form of the word in **Verse 12** where he states emphatically that he was not yet perfect.

Philippians 3:12 NAU - "Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on . . ."

D. It can also refer to maturity which is how the ESV translates it.

1 Corinthians 14:20 NAU - "Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature."

Ephesians 4:13 NAU - "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

E. It can also be used to describe the nature of genuine faith, a true follower of Christ. Jesus told the Rich Young Ruler

Matthew 19:21 NAU - "Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

F. This is the best way to understand it here.

I believe Paul is referring to all of the saints at Philippi. God has begun a good work in them and is progressively bringing them to perfection.

(1) Paul is once again setting the “already, not yet” aspect of Christianity before us.

In **Verse 12** Paul declares the “not yet” but in **Verse 15** he declares the “already.”

(2) Paul opens **Verse 15** with “Let us therefore” – Paul is including himself among those he is labeling as “perfect.”

7. When Paul says, “as many as are perfect” he is not implying that there are some Christians who are not. Paul uses the same understanding in **Romans 8:14**

Romans 8:14 NAU - "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

Paul is not saying that there are some Christians who are not led by the Spirit.

8. We are far from perfect, yet in Christ we are complete. We have been changed. We are citizens of a different realm.
- A. As Christians, there are many things of which we disagree. We are different in many ways. But we are all pressing towards the goal. Every Christian is pressing towards heaven. We've set our sights on things above. Holiness is our aim.
- B. Having not yet arrived we hunger for eternity. We hunger for holiness. We hunger for more of Christ – to know Him more.
9. Our minds, our attitudes have been changed. The Christian is spiritually minded. Paul says that in those areas of our life that are still fleshly God will convict us of it with a goal of keeping us charging forth in the race.
Philippians 3:15 NAU - "if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you"
- I. Christian conversion has a powerful effect upon the mind—our attitudes. It has resulted in the transformation of our minds – how we think.
- A. With our minds we willfully seize control over our flesh.
Romans 8:5-6 NAU - "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace"
1. We willfully seek those things above. We set our sights upon eternity. We keep our eye upon the goal.
Philippians 3:13-14 NAU - "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."
2. This was always Paul's focus:
Romans 12:2 NAU - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
Colossians 3:1-2 NAU - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."
- B. The lost man has his mind fixed upon earthly things which satisfy the flesh.
Ephesians 2:1-3 NAU - "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."
Romans 8:5 NAU - "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

1. Human beings are rational creatures. God has given us minds. This is an aspect of being created in the image of God. When Adam sinned he died spiritually. His mind became clouded in blindness.
2. The lost man has a depraved mind.
Romans 1:21-22 NAU - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools"
 - a. He became futile in his thinking
 - b. The lost man is incapable of thinking right thoughts about God. He is incapable of thinking about spiritual matters.
 - c. He might become religious but he will find it impossible to keep his sights fixed upon eternity. He is glued to this present world.
2 Timothy 4:10 NAU - "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me"
 - d. We'll see it again in **Verses 18-19**
Philippians 3:19 NAU - "whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things."
3. The lost man sets his mind on fleshly things – he is captivated by this world. In contrast, the believer sets his mind on spiritual things
Paul is saying that just as he was pressing towards the goal it must also be the attitude, the mindset of all of us.

II. When Paul said that he was “pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God I Christ Jesus” he was saying that his every thought which controlled his every action was focused upon eternal matters—things of the Spirit, things of the Kingdom.

- A. The Christian must maintain this mindset
 1. The Christian mind must be one of humility, of meekness, of faith, of gentleness, of selfless-sacrifice
Philippians 2:2-5 NAU - "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, φρονέω maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this attitude φρονέω in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,"
 2. The Christian maintains a mindset of joy, in spite of earthly circumstances. The fruit of the Spirit is joy – **Galatians 5:20**
Matthew 13:44 NAU - "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."
Lloyd-Jones – “Unhappy Christians are, to say the least, a poor recommendation for the Christian Faith; and there can be little doubt that the exuberant joy of the early Christians was one of the more potent factors in the spread of Christianity.”

3. This is a way of thinking that is radically different in this world where everyone is looking out for themselves, where they keep their minds on earthly things.
- B. Ours is also a mind fixed on holiness.
1. Those who have their sights fixed on eternity seek the holiness of the heavenly kingdom. This is the mindset we must maintain.
1 John 3:2-3 NAU - "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.
³ And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."
 2. But we have not yet arrived. And so we strive; we press on; we reach forth. This is the attitude we must maintain.
Philippians 3:12-14 NAU - "Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."
 3. This demands continually having the mind renewed by the Word of God
Romans 12:2 NAU - "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"
 The word for "transformed" used by Paul here is substantial:
 μεταμορφώω – it is a present passive imperative.
 - It is present which means it carries durative action – it depicts an action that is continuing
 - It is passive which tells us the transformation is outside ourselves. Paul is not saying "Transform yourselves"
 - It is imperative which tells us our responsibility is not removed. We must allow the Holy Spirit to do His perfect work giving ourselves fully to the means of grace
 4. Our minds are continually renewed as we fill them with good things
NAS **Philippians 4:8** – "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."

Conclusion:

1. Oh how we need to have our minds conformed more and more to Christ. Our gaze must be fixed upon our goal, the prize. The things of this world must be in their proper place.
2. We must recognize that our struggle is at the level of the mind. We must strive to maintain a heavenly attitude.
1 Peter 1:13 NAU - "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
3. We must fix our minds upon our eternal goal.
Colossians 3:2 NAU - "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." The Christian sets his mind on spiritual things.
4. Upon what do you set your mind? Where are your thoughts directed? What are you filling your mind with? How much time are you spending filling your mind with God's Word?