

Bible Studies for Life: August 20

Set Apart for the Journey • Philippians 3:12-21

By Don Hicks



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Paul clearly tells us that Christ seized the initiative when He took hold of us and made us His own. As always, when we seek to study the meaning of these key passages about Jesus taking hold of us and loving us, we need to know the background to enrich our understanding of Jesus' love.

Our study guide author in the introduction page for this session closes by writing, "Our world values what is seen and immediate, but some things – like... Christian maturity – can't be rushed or easily quantified. Spiritual growth isn't instant (or microwavable). As we will see, sanctification takes a lifetime, but the results are worth the effort."

Paul refers to the speed of his growth in Christian maturity this way: *I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out to me (Philippians 3:12 MSG).*

Notice the apostle gave credit for his progress in Christian maturity to Christ, "who has so wondrously reached out to me."

While Paul is excited about his growth in Christ, notice he quickly admits he hasn't yet arrived: *Friends don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning me onward – to Jesus (Philippians 3:13 MSG).*

If you consider yourself an expert. you may want to check to see if you are moving to "where God is beckoning... to Jesus."

Paul explained to the young preacher, Timothy, that as he matured in his understanding of God's love, he also grew in his appreciation for the importance of God's forgiving sin. *This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" – and I am the worst of them. But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life (1 Timothy 1:15-16 CSB).*

Paul tells the Philippian Christian in verse 15 of the third chapter to think maturely and in verses 16-17 to live up to *whatever truth we have attained... and pay careful attention to those who live according to the example you have in us.*

Answer this question: If Paul was writing his letter to you and gave you the same warning he just gave the Philippians – “pay careful attention to those who live according to the example you have in us” – who lives in the example Jesus gives you? Who is watching your example today or this week?

Paul describes two possible results in today's study text. The positive result of faith in Christ Jesus: *Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, The Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20 CSB).*

Negative result from rejecting Jesus the Christ: *For I have often told you, and now say again with tears, that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction; their god is their stomach; their glory is in their shame; and they are focused on earthly things (Philippians 3:18 CSB).*

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