

Teaching from the NLT again: Verses 10-16

Coming out of verse 9 last week:

- God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.

Here is what we need to see in this text:

- Even though the Christian life starts in total dependence of what Jesus has done for us and not anything we can do for Him or ourselves
- And even though it always continues with that same bedrock foundation—Christ's performance and not my own
- The Christian does find his or her self wanting and needing to **press on** and **reach forward** to experience an ever increasing measure of Christ and what He has done for us
- That, wherever we are in terms of growth, there ought to be a sort of '**holy, gospel discontentment**' that says, "**I want more of what I have in Jesus!**"

<sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death,  
<sup>11</sup> so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

There are 3 things that Paul wanted in light of having experienced the Gospel

- 1. To know Christ
- 2. To experience the mighty power that raised Christ from the dead
- 3. To suffer with Christ

### 1. To know Christ

- He has known Jesus for about 30 years at this point
  - The idea is to know Him even more
- The word denotes **personal knowledge** not just knowing facts or intellectual knowledge
- Paul is not willing to stagnate
- **A holy discontentment** = I want more of Jesus
  - The Gospel says we have everything we need in Jesus (Paul wants to experience all that that entails)
    - 2 Peter 1:3-4<sup>a</sup>

<sup>3</sup> By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this **by coming to know him**, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.

<sup>4</sup> And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises...
    - **Coming to know** = **epignosis** = more intense than gnosis; clear and exact experiential knowledge. It expresses thorough participation in the object on the part of the subject
  - **We have all we need in Jesus—but we need to get into Jesus!**

## 2. To experience the mighty power that raised Christ from the dead

- It's not that Paul is power hungry or wanting to become powerful
- Rather he wants to **experience** God's power and be **changed** by it!
- Ephesians 1:18-20

<sup>18</sup> I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

<sup>19</sup> I also pray that you will understand **the incredible greatness of God's power** for us who believe him. This is **the same mighty power**

<sup>20</sup> that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

- Ephesians 3:14-19

<sup>14</sup> ... I fall to my knees and pray to the Father,

<sup>15</sup> the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.

<sup>16</sup> I pray that from his glorious, **unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength** through his Spirit.

<sup>17</sup> Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

<sup>18</sup> And may you have **the power to understand**, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.

<sup>19</sup> May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

- Religion says, "Try harder, be better and you may reach God"
- The Gospel says, "God has reached you in Jesus and is now changing you with the same radical power that raised Him from the dead!"

## 3. To suffer with Christ

- Paul wanted to suffer with Jesus (not masochistic)
- But the point is "**with Christ**"
- Jesus was "**a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering**" (Isaiah 53:3)
- Paul had discovered that when he suffered he **experienced more** of Jesus
  - v. 10 in the NASB = **the fellowship of his sufferings (Christ meets us in our brokenness)**
  - Paul had suffered a lot in his life (**See 2 Corinthians 11:23-28**)
- For Paul his suffering had to do with persecution and things that happened in the course living life on mission for Jesus
  - But any suffering can bring us **closer to Jesus**
  - When we make Him **the source of our joy** (we move closer to the source = **joy increases**)

### All of this with the result that:

- **... one way or another** I will experience the resurrection from the dead
- Whether in death, or life or by being caught up (See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

<sup>12</sup> I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But **I press on to possess** that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.

Paul states what ought to be obvious—that he is **in process**

- **I'm not there yet** (perfection = mature, complete)
- **But I am pressing on to possess all that Christ has for me**
- **I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own** (ESV)

Paul had one consuming passion: **To get hold of that for which Christ had gotten hold of him.**

<sup>13</sup> No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but **I focus on this one thing**: Forgetting the past and **looking forward** to what lies ahead,  
<sup>14</sup> I **press on to reach** the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

## Forgetting the past

- This is not a blanket statement
- We are told throughout Scripture that there are things we are to remember
  - Ex. Psalm 103:2  
 Bless the Lord, O my soul, **and forget none** of His benefits
- **What we are supposed to forget is anything that would hinder us from pressing on to possess all that Christ has for us**
- Forget anything in the **past** that might **rob our present pursuit**
  - 1. Past Victories
    - Yesterday's battles were won with yesterday's grace
    - We can rejoice over them, but not rest in them
    - 1 Corinthians 10:12-13
      - <sup>12</sup> If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.
      - <sup>13</sup> The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, **he will** show you a way out so that you can endure.
    - God is willing to give you grace for today
    - Yesterday's battles were won with yesterday's grace
    - Don't count on them for past success for present struggles
  - 2. Past Losses
    - 1 Timothy 1:12-16
      - <sup>12</sup> I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him,
      - <sup>13</sup> even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief.
      - <sup>14</sup> Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus.
      - <sup>15</sup> This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all.
      - <sup>16</sup> But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.
    - Paul didn't let his dark past paralyze him. Rather it propelled and emboldened him!
  - 3. Past hurts
    - Hebrews 12:14-15
      - <sup>14</sup> Work at living in peace with everyone...
      - <sup>15</sup> ... Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.
    - We need to forgive and extend mercy and grace or we become stalled
    - An unwillingness to forgive what happened to us in the past keep us in bondage to the past (lock us into the past) and so not **pressing on**/moving forward

## Looking (reaching in the NASB) forward to what lies ahead

- What does lie ahead?
  - Eternity with Christ and all that entails—Things really will get better... way better!!!
- How do we look forward to it?
  - Colossians 3:1-3
    - <sup>1</sup> Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, **set your sights on** the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand.
    - <sup>2</sup> **Think about the things of heaven**, not the things of earth. <sup>3</sup> For you died to this life, and **your real life is hidden with Christ** in God.
  - **The realities of heaven** = That God is in control; that you are forgiven; that you are accepted; adored; etc

## Press on to reach the end of the race (Cf. Press on to possess in verse 12)

- Action language
- The Gospel says we have all we need in Christ—we need to **press in to possess** it!
- Christianity is never passive
  - It is a relationship
  - Any relationship you are passive about will be less than it could be
  - 1 Timothy 4:7-10
    - <sup>7</sup> Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Instead, **train yourself** to be godly.
    - <sup>8</sup> "Physical training is good, but **training for godliness** is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come."
    - <sup>9</sup> This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it.
    - <sup>10</sup> This is why we **work hard** and continue to **struggle**, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers.
  - 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
    - <sup>24</sup> Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? **So run to win!**
    - <sup>25</sup> All athletes are **disciplined** in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. <sup>26</sup> So I **run with purpose** in every step. I am not just shadowboxing.
    - <sup>27</sup> I **discipline my body** like an athlete, **training it** to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

## • Godliness doesn't just happen!

- In this we perhaps gain some insight into why Paul was so full of joy even though he suffered so much...
  - He was always **pressing in** to Jesus and **looking forward to** all that he had in Him
    - Jesus was Paul's source of joy
    - The more He pressed in and looked forward the more joy he had
    - The more he had **Gospel Discontentedness** the more he was satisfied!

<sup>15</sup> Let all who are spiritually mature agree on these things. If you disagree on some point, I believe God will make it plain to you.

<sup>16</sup> But we must hold on to the progress we have already made.

Don't slide backwards... **hold on to the progress you've already made**

**And then:** (1) Develop a holy gospel discontentment; (2) **forget** about anything in the past that would hinder your present pursuit of Jesus; (3) **Reach forward** and **press on**—go for more of Jesus!!!