

The Struggle

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No, we're not in the last chapter. We're in the second to last chapter, chapter three. We did turn the page, though, in my Bible, which is an accomplishment. Okay, so we're in chapter three, verse 12 of Philippians. Now, if you remember, we had been talking, if you were here last week, about the resurrection, that glorious hope of the Christian, that the trials and bitterness of this life will one day pass away.

Jesus will come back and bring us with him into an inheritance, undefiled, uncorrupted, that will not pass away. That glorious appearing of Jesus Christ will come one day and we will be with him forever. It will be a source of joy and peace, an absence of all pain and suffering that is not comparable to anything anyone has ever experienced on this earth. It is a moment in eternity that no one wants to miss. No one should miss.

And the grievousness of those who have forsaken the avenue of. Of entering into that eternal bliss will be evident. But in this life, there is also a struggle that we are aware of that affects us, and we're going to be talking about that today. This struggle that confronts every believer while occupying this carnal vessel that you and I possess. Anyone recognize that you possess a very limited, a very weak, a very temporary, a very influenced by ugliness vessel that you walk on here in this earth.

If you've been alive long enough, you recognize there are some very severe limitations to what you have been given you, right? But that is what we have. That's what we have to walk in. There is a purpose in it. So we're going to look at that today.

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We're in chapter three of Philippians, verse 12 and 13, Philippians 3, 12 and 13. Not that I have already attained or am already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold. For which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do. Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.

Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. Okay, we're going to start off in verse 12. Not that I have already attained or am already perfected. We mentioned just, I think. I'm not sure if it was last week or not, but the rich young ruler, right?

And he came to Jesus, and Jesus plied him with some questions regarding whether or not he had kept the law of Moses. That young man thought that he had done that, right? He Says all these things I have kept from my youth. I don't know if you've been around people, especially young people before, and some people believe in the doctrine of sinless perfection. Anyone been there before that you've reached a state where you've stopped smoking, stopped drinking, stopped doing the things that you used to do, and now you feel like you've achieved a point of sinlessness.

Anyone been there? I think young people may especially fall into this trap a little more. And then you become an older person, maybe you have a little bit more experience been churned around in that washing machine called life a little bit more. Got to see that carnal nature put to the fire just a little more hot than you were accustomed to. And you recognize that those things, like those exterior, those acts of sin are nowhere near as sinful and evil as the things that are in a person's heart.

That those things make smoking look like playing with Barbie dolls, that those things make drinking look harmless. That the evilness of a person's heart is so much more corrupt and ugly than anything a person ever did. And we wonder how is it that these things still exist and can operate in my heart below the surface? Paul says, not that I have already attained or am already perfected. I do not believe that he is talking about having just about reached, almost achieved that state that the Buddhists call nirvana,

right?

He's almost come to a place of sinlessness. No, he came to a point. He's saying that I am the chief of sinners. It says back in Romans, it says, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law which is in a law of sin, which is in my members. He says, o wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin. And it is as it were, like those dogs, you know, you've heard the story maybe of a dog that got into a chicken coop, right? And they kill chickens. We had chickens.

We used to have chickens. Something got into. And I came out the morning and there were all of my children picking up chickens and putting them in bags, I don't know how many, 60 chickens. And it was kind of a traumatic experience. But we've had experiences of dogs getting into our chickens before.

And they don't get into, eat the chickens, they kill the chickens like they're playing, right? And so some people have taken that form of therapy by taking a dead chicken to solve this problem, and they tie it to the dog's neck, right? And the chicken rots and stinks and it's still tied to the neck. And the thought is, now, I've never tried this, but it cures the dog. Some people have said it worked.

I don't know, said it cures the dog of ever wanting to kill another chicken, right? And you and I, unfortunately, are dragging around this body of death, hoping and looking, knowing that our inheritance is something better, but dragging around a carnal nature that is decaying, dying, filthy and stinking. If anyone has lived very long and seen the nature of your heart, I think you could say with Paul, I have neither attained nor have been perfected. That it is not something that the closer we get or the longer we live, the closer we get to it. I think truthfully, the longer you live, the farther you realize you are from it, as more and more of that nature is revealed to us.

Paul says, not that I have already attained or am already perfected. I hope Paul is not saying this to discourage you and I. But he says, look, as a result of this or this point of view drives a person towards something. He says, not that I have already attained or am already perfected, but I press on. There is a kind of perseverance in the light of carnal ugliness that accomplishes something spiritual.

Those things which are revealed to our mind and heart that are not even appropriate to talk about are not necessarily the enemy of God's work in our lives. Everyone tracking that which you and I are ashamed about would never say anyone that the depravity of our temptation are not the things that hinder us from that relationship with Christ has for us. They are a normal part. I'm not saying they're good, but a normal part of individuals travel in this carnal body. It is sicker and more depraved than you and I realize.

I'm not justifying it. I'm not glorifying it. I'm saying it's a true thing. The truth is, what you have experienced is probably not the limit of what exists inside of you. Even though you may have been horrified to display your thoughts on a screen from yesterday, it's probably not the worst that you'll ever see about your heart.

God will still probably bring you into a situation where you recognize how much even more wicked your heart is than what you have currently seen. It is not the enemy of true spirituality. It is actually an enhancement, an engagement to move us forward into what Christ has for us. More. I'm growing potatoes right now, and I like growing potatoes, I really do.

But I grow them right now in a way because I enjoy growing potatoes. And I went out potatoes this morning, I see a weed and I pick it and it's fun. I love growing potatoes. But if my family's dependence was on potatoes like my great great grandparents was, I would grow potatoes differently than I'm growing them today. I grow them because I like to.

But if my life depended, like my great great grandparents, life depended on potatoes. I would put a whole lot more effort into those potatoes than I do. I wouldn't treat them

as a flower garden, but as a means of life. Right? When we recognize the danger of the situation confronting us if next winter becomes apparent, how much we're going to need the life of that food, we would put more effort into cultivating it if we recognize the destruction that was coming.

And so these things in our hearts motivate us to move towards that thing which can rescue us from. From what we see in our heart is called I press on. Now, I played basketball in high school and there was a thing called a full court press, right? And that was when situations became so desperate because maybe you were behind and you needed to do something desperate to try to change the tide of that game. And so you would, knowing that there's a good possibility that your press could result in being defeated.

Right? You did it in the hope of trying to turn things around. We see in a couple places what this looks like. Press on, press on. Let's see.

Where am I?

What's that?

It says in chapter 10, verse 34 of Matthew, do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, A daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves his father more than me is not worthy of me.

And he who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. He who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it. He who loses his life for my sake will find it. There is an urgency in the kingdom of God to press on.

Our carnalness shows us the need to press on. It says the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, but the violent take it by force. There is an urgent urgency in a Christian's life to Press on to move forward. It's compared also in the Gospels to a man, a

householder, a steward, right? And the steward was unjust.

And this unjust steward was going to be relieved. He was going to be fired because he was abusing his master's good. When he recognized that he was going to be fired, he said to himself, this is what I'll do. I'll make friends for myself. So he went and unjustly reduced the individuals who owed his master resources.

And he cut their bill in half. Now your bill said 100. Now you only owe 50. It says the master commended the unjust steward. He recognized that he was in a difficult situation.

Situation. And he did whatever he could to turn the situation around for his own benefit. That seems strange, but the Bible said this is what it is in the Christian's life. They truly recognize the situation they're in and do whatever it takes to find spiritual victory. It is the press.

He presses on. Philippians, chapter 12. But I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has laid. For which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me. Here we see an idea that that which we're pressing into is already something which God has ordained for us through Jesus Christ.

He has opened up a door because of the work of Jesus Christ, for us to walk in the fullness of what he has for us.

In Genesis, of course, in the first chapter, we see that these questions are completely dealt with. It says, chapter one, verse 27. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them.

Then God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. God has a very real plan for all of his creation. We see that everything in nature moves according to that plan that God has for them.

We see the stars, the heavens, the moon, the sun. They all operate. They're all called out at his beckoning. We see all animals, all his creation, all doing what they are supposed to do. Sometimes I wonder, why don't they take a break?

You know, it seems strange. You know, these swallows, they used to nest on our. On our meter box, under our porch. And I always wondered, here they are working themselves to death to provide. Catching how many mosquitoes a day?

Because they got these little ugly things in that nest. They're working themselves to the bone, you know, bringing these mosquitoes back. And then they Put the mosquitoes in their mouth. I'm just like, man, why don't they just take the day off and decide, you know, this month, this year, no more, I'm going to sit in my nest and get fat. I always wonder why the bees, when they have enough honey, why don't they just decide to take the night off and go to the casino, say, finally, this is enough.

I'm not going to do this anymore. I'm going to spend the night and just get drunk. I always wonder why they don't make rational decisions like you and I.

They continue on in the plan that God has for them. And they don't stop. There is no end. They continue on pressing forward for that which they are designed to do. But you and I, on the other hand, being much more intelligent, having determined by our own wise counsel and those who are around us, stimulate us into decisions that are different than the rest of God's creation, come to different conclusions for our lives.

We come to conclusion that it's actually much easier not to walk in God's plan and do what we want for our own lives. Anyone hear me? We say, you know, that may be good for other people who have more energy, who are younger, who live in another country, are willing to sacrifice more. Me, on the other hand, the best decision I have is just take a break and remove myself from what he has plan for me. He says in an encouragement to you and I, that I may lay hold of that which Christ has laid hold for me.

There is an earnest desire to take part in the fullness of what Christ has already purposed and planned for you as an individual, for me as an individual. That the

fullness of our being does not come in maximizing our rest or physical pleasure.

An animal's fullness is made complete when they walk in the plan that God made for them. You and I are most satisfied. Not when we are most lazy. We are not satisfied when we are most oblivious to problems. We are not most satisfied when we remove ourselves from difficulties.

We. We are most satisfied when, as a result of strenuous seeking, accomplish that which Christ has purposed for us.

I'm not saying that when it says be fruitful and multiply, that he's talking just about breeding.

Christ has opened up for us a door to walk in the fullness of God's commandment to our ancestors, to Adam and Eve. He has opened up a door for us to walk in it fully. That does not just mean that to have lots of children, though. If I were to encourage people, if I were strong and it was a good day. I would definitely try to encourage people to raise godly children, but there is a passing on of our faith to other people that is superior than to just having children.

There is a calling which you and I are called to. To be fruitful and multiply. To maximize the use of our life for the benefit of other people, to disciple them, encourage them in some way, even if it's only giving them a cup of cold water, even it's only helping an individual who is engaged in the Word. We are called to make disciples of those people around us somehow. Many different ways to do that, many different ways.

But we are called to be fruitful and to multiply, to subdue the earth and everything in it that you and I are to use our spiritual influence to benefit the place that we dwell in.

I was kind of moaning and groaning about a common situation that I've moaned and groaned about for a number of years regarding this beautiful place called Cupaylis Beach. We have been passed over because of several things.

Our lot size, no sewer, no water, and our beach access taken away, right? And here we see communities benefiting because of, you know, whatever benefit they may have. And Kapelis, I was driving through it, we got the apartments right down around the corner. We got that someone was occupying the little neighbor, the little house next door, the mother in law, the manager's office, and caught the thing on fire whenever they were burning in there. And so now that's on fire.

And then you come around and we have the bar and the church and the old chili bowl is in a big pile across the street. And here we are in Kapelis, right? And I was moaning about that. And the truth is God has called us to be a light and a blessing no matter where we are, to be an influence to subdue the areas around us, not to put them under some sort of control, but that God's light would shine through us in those areas. Okay, we're going to move to verse 13.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.

I do not count myself to have apprehended. This is that word that reckon it is a taking an account to gather the numbers and really understand what they're saying to us. I do not count myself to have apprehended. He recognized that those that place that he should be spiritually, he has not arrived at yet, right? That God has actually called him to A fuller purpose than he has arrived at.

I always marvel at people who look at hard work as some sort of maybe a curse in some way. And I just. I'm just amazed. I was like, has there been anybody who has ever lived who could keep up with Jesus if he were here walking, if he were here working? Is there anybody who could keep up with him and his plan for you?

No. He is engaged in his work now. I'm definitely not saying it would be like you and I, but he would be working. His parents thought he was out of his mind. The disciples tried to shield him.

And he says, no, I have a purpose. I have three more years left to accomplish all that God has given me. I have to be working. He said, my father has been working until

now, and so am I. He recognized I have.

Paul recognized I have not been able to. To accomplish all that which God has called me for. But so we're going to look at two things really quick that help him apprehend, that help him gather as much as possible, that help him accomplish and bring him into an eternal inheritance with as much crowns as possible, having made as much difference as he could. But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind. There are individuals like you and I that sometimes do not forget what is behind.

There is a reason or a way to forget things that are behind. And there are other ways that never do. If you remember that old lady, you know, that grumpy old lady who said, you know, I always forgive, but I never forget, right? She may think that it didn't weigh on her, but it actually was pressing on her. There is a remembrance of sin which directly impacts our current walk.

Because of past sin. Some people like you and I are negatively affected by that because we cannot forget it. There are things in our past that people today are still carrying because they cannot forget them. They wake up in the morning and they're still there. They wake, they eat lunch, and they're still weighing on their shoulders.

They go to bed and they're still hurting their heart. How can you say those things don't affect you? How can you say they don't affect how fast you run or what you can accomplish? They are a burden on your shoulders. Paul says, no, I can't let past things affect me because they manipulate, they skew, and they take away from my current performance.

I can't accomplish what God has called for me today. Still worrying about what I did yesterday. One of the major tenants of Christianity is that Jesus allows us to forget what's in our Past. It is an absolutely legal thing. It is not something that is accomplished by mental stimulation, activity, endurance.

It is a legal thing. I mentioned the other day that I got a ticket, right? And good or bad judge me, I am not sure myself, I hired a lawyer. The lawyer tried to relieve me of that ticket, but could not. I have a cdl.

And they said, no. The judge says, no, no, he has to pay. And so the lawyer went back again and tried one more time. And the judge said, okay, I'm getting tired of you coming here. We'll lower it to a non moving violation, right?

And so I have a non moving violation on my record, right? And if I were to come to that judge and I go there, you know, tomorrow, and I'm just like, I'm so sorry for that ticket, you know, I'm so sorry for what I did, it would be ridiculous. The judge would tell me to get out of the court. And then the next day, next week, I'm there again, you know, like I was going too fast. You know, I've been trying so hard and, and I didn't mean to.

And the judge is like, you know, that's already been dealt with. And the next Monday I'm there back in court and I'm like, look, I'm really sorry. I really, I shouldn't have been doing it. I had my kids in my car, it was tired, I was misty, it was coming down a hill. And the judge is like, you know, get out of here.

And the next Monday I'm back in his court and I'm just like, this was really a mess. I want you to understand that I was really in the wrong. I. I've been hurting myself. I've been doing things to myself that make me feel bad. I've been kind of.

And the judge is like, you know, what are you doing? We can forget sins only because a legal representation of one who can deal with the sin. Everyone tracking with me. Sins can only be forgotten when they've been legally paid for. Some people here have sins that they are still carrying and are trying to deal with them through self flagellation.

That is the hurting of yourself. That is the trying of paying a penalty. Asking forgiveness over and over, repeating the same thing over and over, which can never take away sins. But there is a lawyer who brings our case before the judge who has already paid the fine and can successfully take our cause before the one whom we have actually wronged. He has 100% record.

Everyone who has hired him as a lawyer has come up with a victory I hired a lawyer and they said on Google that they had a 96% success record. Jesus has never failed to take a sinner and not come out of the courtroom without a favorable outcome, without

a complete dismissal, without a saying was, your sins are separated from you as far as the east is from the West. They no longer come to a remembrance. Do not say in your heart who will ascend to heaven or who will descend to the abyss. Don't try to work on your own when there's a lawyer who will take your case and will come successful with the outcome.

An individual like that, when you trust that that lawyer can say, I forget those things which are behind me. My lawyer, the one who loved me more than his own life, the one who was willing to pay my debt for me, has successfully negotiated an outcome in my favor based on the purchase of his life for mine. He redeemed me, he saved me, he adopted me, he brought me into his family. I don't have to struggle anymore.

It's time for some of us to get off the road of remembering our past sins. It's time for some of us to stop spending our life trying to accomplish something we will never be able to accomplish, no matter how long we live.

It's time for some people to hire a better lawyer than the one that you have. It says, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. In my personal opinion, it is time for some of us to stop reliving the things of the past and start reaching forward, start accomplishing and gaining. So I would just like to encourage us, before we're done here, how do we reach forward? Number one, to reach forward, you have to hire the right lawyer.

Jesus has already paid the cost. This lawyer that I hired had already gained a success rate. He had already come in to prove in some degree his, you know, his worth in the judicial system. But he could not represent me until I did what I picked up the phone and I called him and gave him legal authority to represent my case. You and I, if we want to reach forward, if we want to start making improvements, if we want to get off of the road of self inflicted misery, we got to pick up the phone and make a phone call.

It says that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, if you will reach out to him with your voice and your heart, it says you will be saved. There cannot be any other

outcome. The worth of his work was so valuable in the sight of God, that anyone who would pick up that source of mediation will come out victorious. Number one, we have to hire the right lawyer. We have to be willing to say, christ, I want you to represent me legally.

I give up the rights to it myself. Number two, we have to be willing to submit ourselves to his authority. If I hired that lawyer to represent my cause, and I got this text and says, you know, your case is rescheduled for Wednesday the 13th, but you do not need to be there. We are going to represent you ourselves. And I'm like, oh, the 13th.

Nice. Lewis County. All right. And so I go. And I go there, I park my car, I get in there, I go into the courtroom, there's my lawyer, and says, okay, now Richard versus the state of Lewis county, right?

And I'm like, hey, I got something to say. And my lawyers like, no, sit down. We got this cover. I'm like, no, I got this. We have to be willing to release the case to the lawyer, Release the case to Christ.

And in that, that means a letting go of whatever he asks us. Letting go, a releasing to him. It says, take up your cross and follow me. There is a yoking ourselves with him when we bring him into our lives as our representative, our lawyer. And then the last thing is a desire to obtain what he has for us.

He is not just freeing us from the load of sin to free us. He is freeing us from a load of sin so we can walk with him fruitfully. And we're going to close there. But I can't help saying just one more time, if you are burdened with your own sin, if you have been in the process of trying to come to a place, of hurting yourself, of bruising yourself, of mentally manipulating, and you can't be free, then my desire, if I could say anything to you, it would be that Jesus takes sinners and he represents them successfully before the Father so that we can forget about our sins forever and walk in fullness.

Oh, Father, we thank you for what you do on our behalf, Lord, that you are that lawyer ready to represent us before the Father, to take the filthiness of our flesh and pay for it completely.