

# Memory Verse

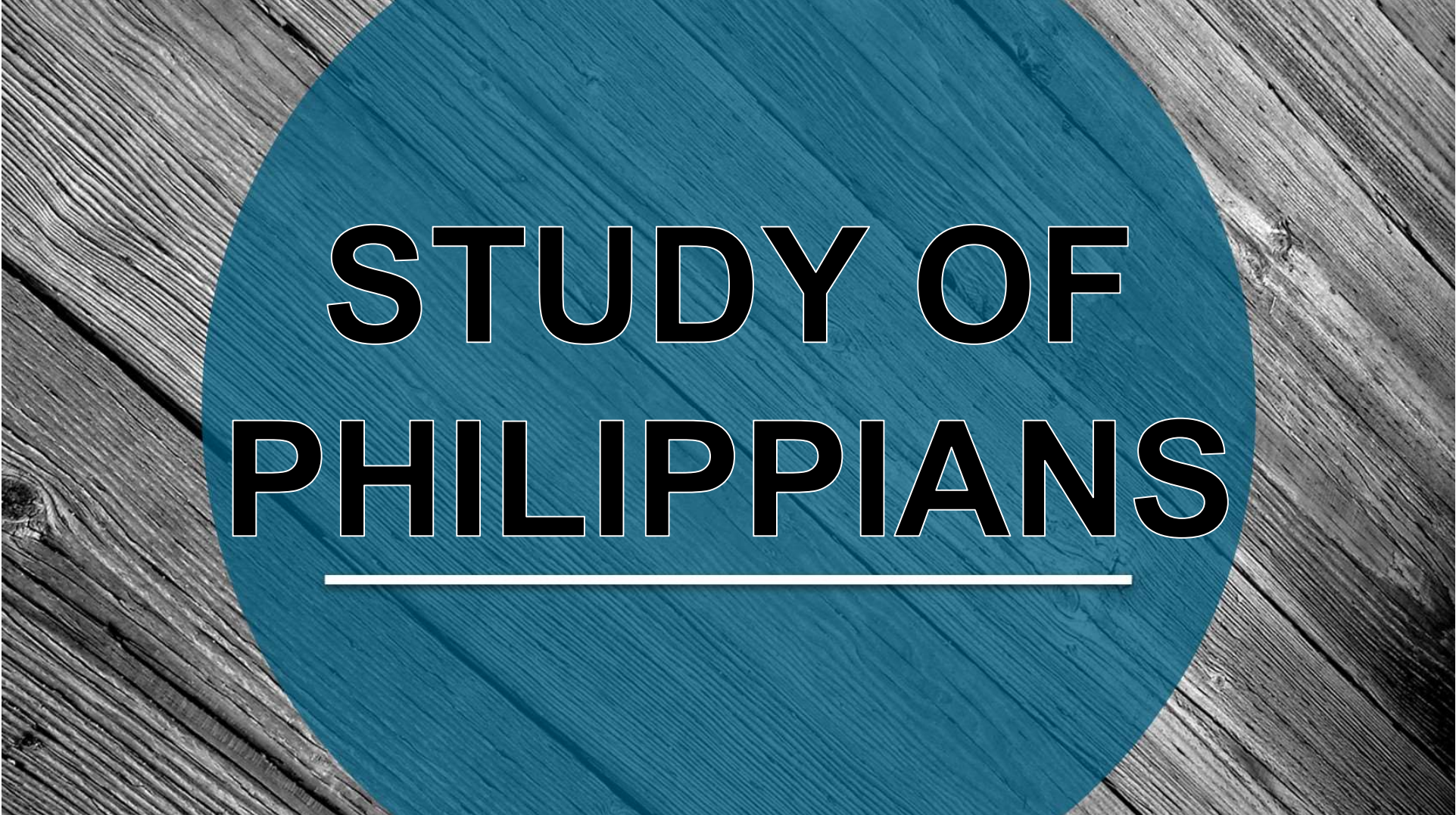
**Philippians 3:13-14**

**Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own.  
But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and  
straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward  
the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ  
Jesus.**

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# STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

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# PHILIPPIANS

## Part 15

### Running for the Prize

Philippians 3:12-16

## **We have learned...**

- Paul thanked them for their financial gift, probably confronted disunity, and discussed many issues in chapters 1-2
- In chapter 3, he shifts his discussion and warns them of a group who said Gentiles needed to obey the Law in addition to faith
- Paul's past spiritual resume was nothing compared to knowing Christ by faith
- Paul's goal was to know Jesus

## Philippians 3:12-16

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

## Philippians 3:12-16

Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

## A. 3:12 – Pressing Forward

Paul says he has *not already attained, obtained, gained possession of, laid hold of* this. **Question:** What is "*this*?" This goes back to the *previous verses about knowing Jesus, fellowship of His sufferings, resurrection* and perfection or completion in the next part of this verse. Paul's focus *in this passage* is he has not attained *the close, intimate fellowship with Christ in His sufferings and power of His resurrection yet.*

## A. 3:12 – Pressing Forward

The word "*perfect*" means to: "consummate, reaching the *end-stage*, i.e. working through the entire process (stages) to reach the *final* phase (*conclusion*). [This root (*tel-*) means "reaching the *end* (*aim*)."] It is well-illustrated with the old pirate's telescope, unfolding (extending out) one stage at a time to function at full-strength (capacity effectiveness).] or "to bring to an end, to complete, perfect."



## A. 3:12 – Pressing Forward

It can also mean, "*to bring one's own character to perfection...*"

Paul *aggressively pursued* the end Christ wanted for him, because Jesus made him, Paul, His own. Christ *laid hold of or grasped Paul*, and Paul wanted to grasp what Christ had for him in his resurrection. The reason is *because Christ made him His!* The phrases "*make it my own*" and "*made me His own*" are similar.

## A. 3:12 – Pressing Forward

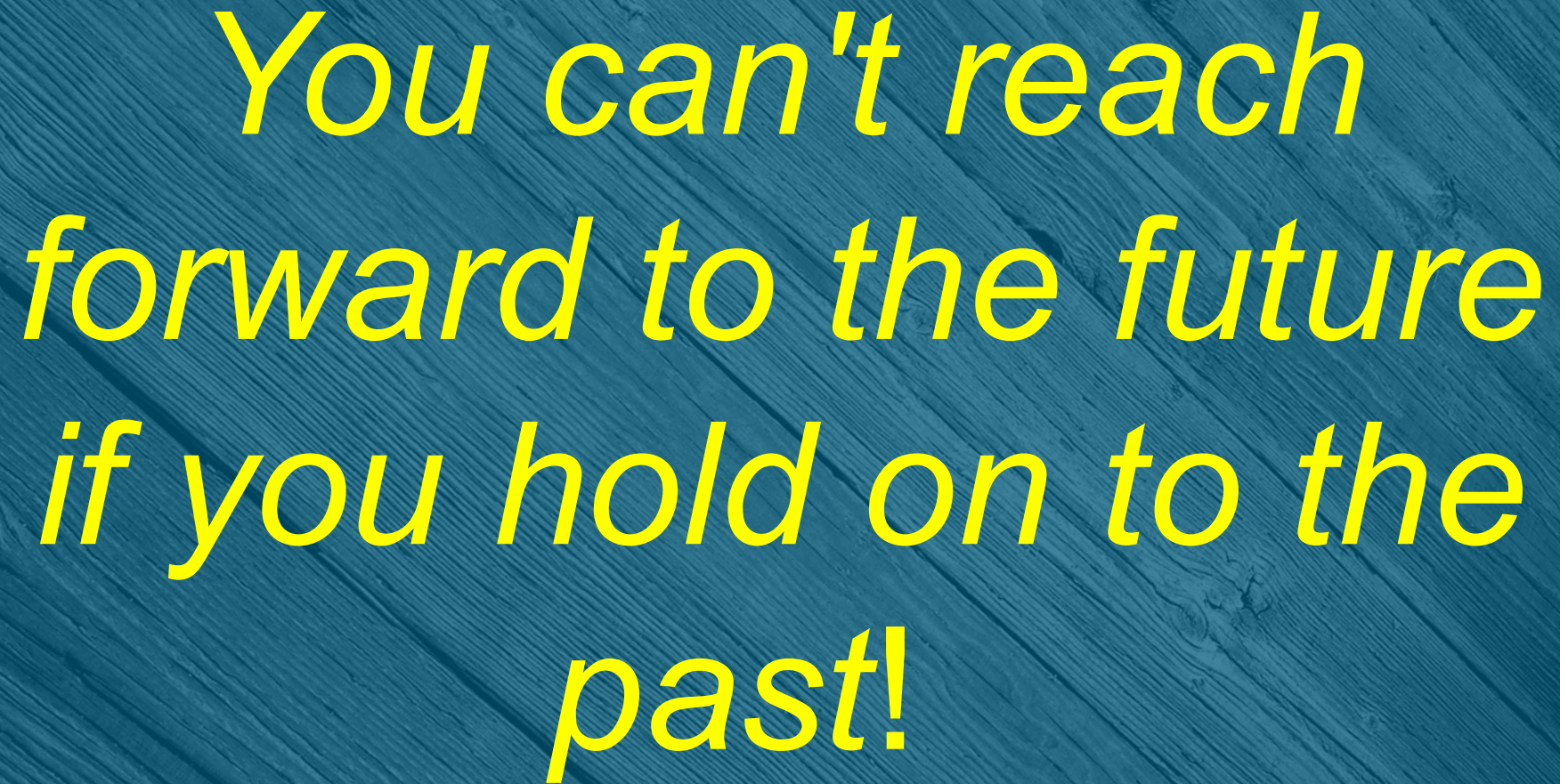
Bible.org - "The word "lay hold" is an intensified word that means to apprehend or seize something after a pursuit. It is used of a demon seizing a boy and throwing him to the ground (Mark 9:18). If a policeman chased a robber and apprehended him, he would have a firm grip on the man, so as not to let him get away. Paul says that the reason he runs in this race is because Christ Jesus chased him down, seized him, and put him in the race. On his part, Paul was headed for Damascus to persecute Christians. But the Lord seized Paul and turned him around so that he began serving Jesus."

## B. 3:13 – Forgetting the Past

- Paul has *not yet arrived at perfection, or completion* at the end of the age when Christ returns and he receives his reward for his faithful service. Until he finishes his race, he does one thing. He *forgets what lies behind...* or forgets the past. It is *letting go, or not focusing on something*.
- He *let go* of his attempt to reach up to God, because *God reached down (laid hold of) him*.

## B. 3:13 – Forgetting the Past

*Forgetting the past*, does not mean we won't think about it. It means we **don't** let it control us, defeat us, or hinder us from *running the race*! The word translated as "*straining forward*" is **only used here** in the New Testament. It is an **intense word**. The *HELPS Word Studies* says, "It refers to the believer *straining forward* to reach "*the full-impact resurrection*" out from the realm of death given to them at Christ's return."



*You can't reach  
forward to the future  
if you hold on to the  
past!*

## C. 3:14 – The Goal is the Prize

Because of what Jesus did, we *run towards the goal for the prize*. A runner runs for a medal, but Christians *run for a prize that will never fade away*, that is incorruptible and laid up in heaven for us! He **presses on**, or *aggressively chases something like a hunter!*

What does he *aggressively hunt* for? **The heavenly or upward calling of God in Christ Jesus...**

## C. 3:14 – The Goal is the Prize

Paul *runs the race* or the *Christian life*, for **Christ**, by His strength, for the **things that are ahead**.

Paul was *striving for*, *running as hard as he could* towards the *prize*, *a close relationship with Christ*, without anything hindering that relationship.

*Christ is the One he runs for, runs with and runs to*. He is our **focus**, and we run the race for Him and with Him, as we *run towards Him*. **The prize is Christ and His purpose!**

## C. 3:14 – The Goal is the Prize

*Galatians 6:9* - And let us **not grow weary** of doing good, for in due season we will reap, **if we do not give up**.

*2 Thessalonians 3:13* - As for you, brothers, **do not grow weary** in doing good.

See also *1 Corinthians 15:58* and *Hebrews 12:3*.



## D. 3:15-16 – Forward to the Future

Paul says to *let those of us who are mature think this way*. Another way to translate *mature* is: *perfect*, which does not mean to be completely without sin, but *complete in all its parts, fully grown* when it comes to Christian character. Paul may be using a **word play here** to confront the opponents he mentioned and mentions again in 3:18-19.

## D. 3:15-16 – Forward to the Future

Another possibility is Paul is saying those of us who are *mature*, will think the same way he is thinking. Paul uses a different form for the word translated "perfect" in verses 12 and 15.

Verse 12 is the *complete perfection* he and we **will have** in eternity with Christ. Here, it is a *maturity level* we **can presently have with Christ**, though not free from sin.

## D. 3:15-16 – Forward to the Future

The *mature*, and the *maturing* (all of us), are to *hold on to what we have attained*, or arrived. The NET translates this: “Nevertheless, to what we have attained, to the same hold fast.”

The NASB translates this: "however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained." That is, *hold fast, hold true, hold on to the truth, standard, doctrine, or measure to which we have arrived at the present point in our lives.*

"Paul had been converted for at least 25 years when he wrote Philippians... Yet over and over he reveals his mind-set, that he was still in the process: "Not that I have already obtained it" (3:12), meaning, "I have not yet come to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity to His death in a complete and total way." "I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet" (3:13). Twice he says, "I press on" (3:12, 14); the word literally means to pursue, and by way of extension, to persecute (Paul uses it of himself in this way in 3:6). He's still "reaching forward" (3:13) as a runner stretches toward the finish

line. He's been at it for 25 years, but he doesn't view himself as having arrived!

The Christian life isn't a 100 yard dash; it's a lifelong marathon. You need the mentality of a long-distance runner if you're going to make it. You may have been a Christian for 40 or 50 years, but you can't start thinking, "I don't need to grow any more" and stop running. Long distance runners have to complete the entire course; they can't decide after many miles that they've run far enough.

This attitude of viewing Christian growth as a lifelong process is crucial for at least two reasons. First, we all have the human tendency to *want quick fixes and easy answers to difficult problems*. ...[Many] emphasize instant, miraculous deliverance from any problem. I wish it was that easy!

Another form of this teaching is that you need to just “let go and let God.” If you struggle against sin or wrestle with stubborn emotional problems, you’re told that it’s because you’re in the flesh. The implication is that life in the Spirit is effortless and easy once you’ve discovered the secret of “the exchanged life.”

But both of these views go against the clear teaching of Scripture, that the spiritual life is a continual battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are instructed to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7), which also is an athletic metaphor. There is no quick, easy, instantaneous way to get in top physical conditioning. You have to work at it every day, and the day you stop is the day you start going downhill. Olympic champions who retire do not stay in shape the rest of their lives because of their former training. They have to keep working out all their lives. It is the same spiritually.

The second reason it's important to maintain this attitude, that Christian growth is a lifelong process, is that it *enables us to be gracious and patient with one another*. If you view Christian growth as an instant experience where you're delivered once and for all from all problems, then if you've got problems, obviously it's because you haven't had this experience. So, get with it! Stop having your problems! This view makes us impatient and intolerant toward people who are struggling.



But if we remember that growth is lifelong and that even Paul admits that he hasn't arrived after 25 years, we can bear with one another and be gracious to those who are still struggling with problems even after many years of being Christians. The analogy of how we grow as humans is helpful and applicable to us as children of God. It takes years for children to grow to maturity. You don't expect more of them than they're capable of at their stage in life. You expect babies to dirty their diapers and to burp in your face and to cry in the middle of the night. If your teenager is still dirtying his diapers and burping in your face and waking you up with his crying in

the night, you've got a problem! If a brother or sister is growing, we need to be patient and gracious, realizing that it is a lifelong process. We need this long-haul attitude. Spiritually, the important thing to ask yourself is, "Am I actively involved in the growth process?"

[Bible.org](https://www.bible.org)

# Prayer

**“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6**

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