

Philippians 3:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Analysis

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus (Οὐχ ὅτι ἥδη ἔλαβον ἢ ἥδη τετελείωμαι, διώκω δὲ εἰ καὶ καταλάβω, ἐφ' ὃ καὶ κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ], Ouch hoti ēdē elabon ē ēdē teteleiōmai, diōkō de ei kai katalabō, eph' hō kai katelēmphthēn hypo Christou [Iēsou])—Ouch oti ēdē ("not that already") corrects potential misunderstanding of vv. 10-11. Elabon ("I attained") and teteleiōmai ("I have been perfected") Paul denies—he's not claiming arrival. Diōkō ("I pursue, press on") uses athletic/military metaphor. Katalabō ("I may lay hold of") balances pursuit with goal. Eph' hō kai katelēmphthēn hypo Christou ("that for which I was laid hold of by Christ")—Paul pursues what Christ purposed in arresting him (Acts 9). Divine initiative (Christ's apprehending) precedes and grounds human response (Paul's pursuing).

Historical Context

Paul's balance between 'already' and 'not yet' refutes both perfectionism and antinomianism. Against perfectionists claiming sinless arrival, Paul confesses ongoing pursuit. Against antinomians presuming grace without growth, Paul demonstrates passionate striving. The Damascus Road 'apprehending' by Christ (katelēmphthēn) reordered Paul's entire existence toward Christ's purposes. His life became quest to fulfill Christ's call.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you balance confidence in Christ's finished work with recognizing you haven't 'already attained'?
2. What has Christ 'apprehended' you for—His purpose in arresting your life's trajectory?
3. How does recognizing Christ's initiative enable rather than eliminate human pursuit?

Interlinear Text

Οὐχ	ὅτι	ἢδη	ἔλαβον	ἢ	ἢδη	τετελείωμαι
Not	as though	I had already	attained	either	I had already	perfect
G3756	G3754	G2235	G2983	G2228	G2235	G5048

διώκω	δὲ	εἰ	καὶ	κατελήφθην	ἐφ'	ῷ	καὶ
I follow after	but	G1487	also	I am apprehended	that for	which	also
G1377	G1161		G2532	G2638	G1909	G3739	G2532

κατελήφθην	ὑπὸ	τοῦ	Χριστοῦ	Ἰησοῦ
I am apprehended	of	G3588	Christ	Jesus
G2638	G5259		G5547	G2424

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 138:8 (Parallel theme): The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (Parallel theme): Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Hosea 6:3 (Parallel theme): Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

Isaiah 51:1 (Parallel theme): Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

Ephesians 1:4 (Parallel theme): According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Hebrews 13:21 (References Jesus): Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Philippians 3:16 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Hebrews 12:14 (Parallel theme): Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

2 Peter 3:18 (References Jesus): But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

James 3:2 (Parallel theme): For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.