

9

Perseverance

Philippians 3:7-16

After an accident at work, Lloyd Hotaling was told that he would never walk again. Yet in time he discovered that he could take a few steps if he leaned on two canes. Every day he would walk as far as he could, moving ever so slowly. His grandchildren recall seeing him inching along just blocks from home, and they knew it had taken him a painfully long time to get there. Yet over time his muscles were restored and he walked without any support.

Perseverance is often regarded as the quality required to reach a goal. When we work hard at something, we keep the expected reward in sight. Yet the central goal of our spiritual lives is one we will never fully achieve in this life. We must continue to move forward, growing in knowledge of Christ and becoming more like him, in confidence that the day will come when we will be made complete in heaven.

GROUP DISCUSSION. In what ways are you tempted to become complacent or discouraged about your spiritual lives?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Who is a model for you?

In Philippians Paul offers us encouragement and inspiration to persevere in the most important part of life. *Read Philippians 3:7-16.*

1. What words and phrases in this passage characterize us as people in process?

2. In what ways do you see your own struggle to follow Christ in this text?

3. What advantages has Paul lost (see vv. 4-6)?

How does Paul's loss help him to gain Christ (vv. 7-9)?

4. How do verses 8-9 define *rubbish*?

5. What “things” in your life could be considered “rubbish”?

6. Note the things that we are to pursue in verses 10-11. How do these pursuits contrast with the rubbish in our lives?

7. What is a person who is pursuing Christ like (vv. 12, 15)?

8. Verse 13 tells us to forget what is behind and “strain toward what is ahead.” Why are both aspects of this instruction important?

Which is more difficult for you? Explain.

9. What has Christ done for you that you would likely “take hold of”?

10. What does it mean to “live up to what we have already attained” (v. 16)?

11. In what area do you need encouragement to press on?

Tell God of your need for encouragement and your desire to persevere in following him. Allow yourself to receive his reassurance and love.

Now or Later

How will you persevere in your Christian life by taking steps toward growth? Set a goal.