

Not As Though I Had Already Attained

Php 3:12 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.

1. You May Be Saved, But You Have Not Attained

The most important thing in a person's life is to be saved by the grace of God. God does not save us part of the way; he saves us all the way—totally. We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (1 Peter 1:5). We are secure in him, saved to the uttermost (Heb 7:25). Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). Paul says in . . .

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Psalm 37:23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

I am glad to know that I do not have to keep myself saved; I am happy to know that Jesus saved me, keeps me, and will deliver me from the body of this death (Rom. 7:24).

But, even though you may be saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ and are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, you still have not attained.

We have much to learn, much to do, much to understand, and blessings to receive in Christ Jesus. We have not attained to perfect salvation. Sanctification is a process throughout our lives. He sets us apart as we surrender our lives to him. We are saved, but we have not attained.

2. You May Be Baptized, But You Have Not Attained

Many people are so excited to be baptized. Children await the time when they can go into the water of baptism. Adults many times surrender to faith in Christ and are followed by baptism, but they have not attained.

Baptism does not save us nor does it help to save us. Baptism is a “like figure” (1 Peter 3:21), so it only pictures our salvation in Christ; it does not produce salvation in Christ.

Yet, though you may surrender to obeying Christ and following him in baptism, you still have not attained. After baptism, there is much to do: many souls to witness to, many passages of scripture to understand, much church work to be done, many prayers to be offered, much temptation to overcome—you have not yet attained.

3. You May Be A Church Member, But You Have Not Attained

Church membership comes after baptism. Everyone who was baptized in New Testament times in one way or another affiliated himself with a local church, and this is what we are to do in our day. We here at First Baptist Church do not baptize people and just let them go out into the world to pick up membership in just any kind of church. When we are baptized, we affiliate ourselves immediately to a form of doctrine, a faith and order that we agree with. This is biblical church membership.

Baptism is a beautiful picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is one of the most beautiful things that we do here at First Baptist Church; but just because you have been baptized does not mean that you have attained. Baptism is a first-step entrance into the service of Jesus Christ. It is a pledge of honor and obedience to Jesus. It is a step forward in his

service, but through it we have not yet attained.

4. You May Learn Much About Christ, But You Have Not Attained

Paul the Apostle was one of the most learned men of his time. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, blameless (Phil. 3:6). Yet he is the very one who said, “Not as though I had already attained.”

You may be the best Sunday School student in history or the greatest Sunday School teacher that man has ever known. You may attend Bible college and make straight A’s. You may be a biblical scholar and have learned about biblical archeology, criticism, Bible geography, Bible history, hermeneutics, apologetics, homiletics, Christology, Soteriology, Hamartiology, Eschatology, Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, Bibliology, Psychology, and Sociology, but I will tell you one thing today that you must know: you have not attained.

5. You May Be A Preacher, But You Have Not Attained

I believe that preachers should be respected. I do not say this simply because I am a preacher, but I say this because I believe it in my heart, that everyone who is a preacher, called of God, and serving the Lord in that capacity deserves by the very nature of the supreme call of God and the Holy Spirit’s leadership and guidance to the office that this office should be highly respected unless there is some reason why some individual may be doubted.

To be called to preach is the highest calling in the world, and preachers should not take their calling lightly. We should take with the strictest severity our calling and work out the Lord’s calling in our lives as preachers of God’s word.

Yet, though the respect of the world should be placed upon preachers, they have not attained. They are not perfect. They are not above mistakes, sins, errors, prejudice, haughtiness, and other kinds of dishonor. We have not attained. We must go farther.

6. Though You May Be A Scholar, You Have Not Attained

Education is important in every person's life, but education in itself is just a stepping stone to where Jesus wants us to be. It is the first steps to spiritual growth. Before we can read God's word, we must know the alphabet. Before we can understand the King James Version, we must know a few archaic words. Before we can analyze the meaning of certain passages of scripture, we must know something about grammar, syntax, etc. It never hurts to know a little Greek and Hebrew.

There are many scholars who have stunned the world with their learning. When Charles Spurgeon used his pen for the last time, after having written millions of words in regard to the many subjects of Bible texts, he had not attained. When John Gill wrote his Commentary On The Entire Bible, his Body of Divinity, and his Cause of God and Truth, he had not attained. John Wesley thought he had attained; but after he had come to America and preached blazing sermons on sin and salvation, he returned to England a lost man and was saved after he returned. He had not attained and did not attain even after his salvation and after all the contribution he made to the Kingdom of God.

Charles Finney, who was converted in the Presbyterian Church, became a licensed minister in that church, but later he turned from that persuasion to that of emotional religion. He pastored the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City. He also became president of Oberlin

College in Ohio, which became the groundwork for what is today called the Charismatic Movement. With all of this, Charles Finney, the great revivalist, had not attained.

I have been preaching, teaching, studying, and writing for 46 years, and I am here to tell you today that I have not attained.

7. You May Be Ready To Die, But You Have Not Attained

I hear people all the time saying that they are ready to die any time. That is very easy to say; but when the time comes to die, I wonder if these same people will be ready to die. But even if they are sincere and are truly ready to die, they have not attained.

When a person gets to the place where they are ready to die, they seem to become complacent in their spiritual lives. But they must remember that they have not attained. As long as they are here on the earth, there is still something for them to do. There is never a proper time to sit on our stool of “do nothing” and sing “I shall not be moved.”

8. You May Attend Church Regularly, But You Have Not Attained

I appreciate people who attend church all the time. I see a sturdy and a gracious character in those people. I see a determined mind and a dedicated heart in those people.

But just because a person has determined not to ever miss a church service does not mean that they have attained. No, they have not attained. They must continue to attend church regularly, but there are others areas in their lives which need attention. God is never finished with his servants until they are in heaven—and even then he must have much for us to do.

9. You May Know Your Bible, But You Have Not Attained

I am a little jealous of some people who can memorize long portions of scripture, because it is not easy for me to memorize, especially since I have become an old man. Some people have the kind of brain that allows them to store Bible verses in a strategic order so they can simply go to them and regurgitate them at will. My, what I would give to be able to do that!

But just because people can do that does not mean that they have not attained. Neither those who know all the Bible stories, its history, its chronology, etc. They have not attained.

10. You May Have Suffered, But You Have Not Attained

Boy, we don't like suffering, do we? Some Christians have suffered much. We can remember reading in 2 Cor. 11:23-28

2 Cor. 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren²⁷ In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

This is the Apostle Paul, who is the one who said, "Not as though I had already attained."

You and I must suffer for Christ. That is God's design. Romans 8:17 *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with [him], that we may be also glorified together.* Paul also said in Phil. 1:29 *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*

We have missionaries today who are suffering great physical and mental pain because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Around the world we are hearing the alarms of Christians' being killed for their faith. Notice what Paul says in 1 Cor. 13:3 *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

I know he is speaking here about love, but he implies very strongly that he is willing to give his body to be burned. That is what we usually call the ultimate sacrifice. But if one gives his life for his faith, he still has not attained.

11. Though You Give All Of Your Money, You Have Not Attained

I don't have money, so I don't worry much about this. But some people have money that they can give to special church projects and programs. They have extra money that they can give to missionaries, and this is honorable to men and to God. But to give money, even if it were as the woman with the two mites in the New Testament, is not to attain.

Millions and millions of dollars have been given to orphanages, schools, colleges, and other institutions in the United States and around the world, but those who give these millions still have not attained.

Conclusion

Whatever we do in this life, wherever we go in this life, to whatsoever we may surrender in this life to please God and to honor his name, we still have not attained.

Then, if we have not attained, what is it that we are to do? Paul answers this question in our

text (Phil. 3:13-14). There are three things that he tells us to do.

First, we are to “forget those things which are behind.” We spend too much time thinking about the past and not enough thinking about today and tomorrow. We must forget and forgive the past, focus on today, and plan for tomorrow.

Secondly, our text tells us that we are to forget yesterday. Another scripture tells what to do today: Heb 3:15 *While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.* Then Paul instructs us in the book of Philippians what we should do tomorrow.

Thirdly, Php 3:13 says, *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,*

We are to reach forth to those things which are before, or in front of us. These are the things that we cannot see now but that we can see only prospectively, but these are things that will bless us as we live our Christian lives: a greater love for Christ, a better understanding of his word, moderation in all things, a maturity that we do not have at this present time, the coming of Christ, and the resurrection of our bodies.

Do you understand that you have not attained? Do you understand that there is still much to do in the Lord’s kingdom? Do you understand that you are not to stop but to continue on in the Lord’s work? Do you have a desire to reach forth unto those things which are before? Are you ready to live for Christ and to, if necessary, give your life for him? John 15:13 says, *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* Christ laid down his life for us; are we willing to lay down our lives for him?

But God may not want us to lay down our lives in death; he may simply want us to present

ourselves to him in service. Notice Rom.12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* It looks like we could at least do this for the Lord.

We need to re-open our Bibles and read them again, renew our vows to the Lord and keep our vows to him, revive our hearts toward him, and repent of our sins and serve him. Do you need to reach forth to the things that are before you? May God give us the grace and strength to be dedicated to him more than ever before.

One day you will have attained. What are we going to attain? Php 3:11 says, *If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* Are you saved? You will not attain if you are not saved; and if you are not serving the Lord Jesus faithfully, how do you know you are saved? How can you be sure and have confidence in your salvation? John 8:31 says. . . *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;* Are you continuing in his word? If not, then how do you know that you are his disciple?

Don't wait another day; get this thing settled once and for all today. One day, if you continue in his word, if you are truly born again, if you really are saved, then you will attain to the resurrection of the dead, that time when you will receive your new body that will be "like unto his glorious body." As for now, we have not attained, so we must keep on keeping on for the Lord.