

Discovery Hour

June 14, 2009

Philippians 3:12-15

Spiritual Perfection

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. 15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

- 1) What does it mean to be “perfect”?

- 2) Matthew 5:48 says “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” In what way(s) are Christians expected to be perfect?

- 3) In verse 12, Paul says he hasn’t been “made perfect”. In the original Greek, this action of being made perfect comes from the verb “teleioo” (adjective “teleios”). Other verses that use the same word include Romans 12:2, 2 Cor. 12:9, and Hebrews 2:10.
 - a. To what kind of perfection are these verses referring?
 - b. The adjective translated as “mature” in verse 15 above also comes from this same Greek word. How is this different from being made perfect as described in verse 12?
 - c. Augustine suggested the difference between verse 12 and verse 15 as a difference between a “perfect wayfarer” and a “perfect possessor”. Which description best applies to which verse?

- 4) What prize in verse 14 does Paul hope to win? See 1 Cor. 9:24-25 (and its reference to the Olympic games), Philippians 3: 8, and Luke 13:31-32. (The “goal” referred to in Luke is again from the same Greek word for perfection used in verses 12 and 15 from Philippians. Is martyrdom Paul’s goal?)