

# Caught

*Phil 3:2-4*

**1**

**2** Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; **3** for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, **4** although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:

Paul warns the Philippians of evil workers, the dogs who are the false teachers, the evil workers, and he does this by comparing those false teachers to those who have put their confidence in the flesh, the wisdom of this world, the teachings of man. Paul then expands upon this idea of confidence in the flesh, by pointing out that if anyone should have a confidence in the things or teachings of this world, the flesh, then it should be he, Paul, this is his point in...

*Phil 3:5-6*

**2**

**5** circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; **6** as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

Add to that his comment in...

*Acts 22:3*

**3**

**3** "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today.

The picture that Paul is painting for us of himself is one that indicates a man who is highly educated, a Jew of preeminence, educated not only in the science and teachings of the world, but also in the Law, God's Law through Moses. He was a man well thought of among the Jews, a Hebrew of Hebrews. Paul was so confident in himself, in his righteousness according to the Law and his standing in the eyes of his people as well as in the eyes of God, that he considered himself to be blameless in his persecution of the Church.

Paul was always a man of purpose, a man who was so secure in his convictions that he had the strength to stand for them, regardless of what that took in terms of sacrifice or burden.

In his unbelief he was sincere. He thought of Christ as an impostor and therefore set out to Damascus with the purpose of imprisoning Christians in order to silence the voice of this Nazarene.

*Acts 23:1*

**4**

**1** And Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

While it is difficult to know the exact time line, it would seem that for some two years after Pentecost, Christianity was quietly spreading its influence in Jerusalem and surrounding areas. At length Stephen, one of the seven deacons from Acts 6, preached a public and aggressive testimony that Jesus was the Messiah, and this led to a lot of excitement among the Jews and debate in their synagogues. Persecution arose against Stephen and the followers of Christ in general, in which Saul of Tarsus took a prominent part. Saul became an active leader, if not the active leader, in the furious persecution by which the Jewish rulers sought to exterminate Christianity and he was determined to see it crushed.

But the object of this persecution also failed.

*Acts 8:4*

**5**

**4** Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

The anger of the persecutor, Saul, was kindled into a more furious flame. Hearing that fugitives had taken refuge in Damascus, he obtained from the chief priest, letters authorizing him to proceed with his efforts of persecuting the way of Christ. This was a long journey of about 130 miles, which would occupy probably six days, during which, with his few attendants, he steadily went onward, **"breathing out threatenings and slaughter."**

**Acts 9:1-2**

**6**

**1** Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, **2** and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

At this point we begin to see the character of Saul emerge. He had dedicated himself to eradicating what he thought to be a threat to his beliefs, his way of life, and I think most importantly, the structure of his faith in God. But instead of succeeding in his goal, Paul was converted, he was captured, by Christ Himself

**Acts 9:3-6**

**7**

**3** And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; **4** and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" **5** And he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, **6** but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do."

In the blink of an eye, Saul's purpose of life, his conviction, his faith was torn from him, this would cause many to react defensively, to lash out, trying to justify their previous actions. Saul chose to have a different reaction. He responded, "who art thou Lord?" The real impact of his reaction is revealed in...

**Phil 3:12**

**8**

**12** Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

In his writing to the Philippians, Paul again exhibits his character in his testimony when he succinctly states: **"I am apprehended of Christ Jesus"**. I'm **9**

The Greek verb used here is...

NT:2638 Katalambano (kat-al-am-ban'-o);

**10**

From NT:2596 and NT:2983; to take eagerly, i.e. seize, possess, etc. (literally or figuratively): KJV - apprehend, attain, come upon, comprehend, find, obtain, perceive, (over-) take.

Paul states that because of his attitude towards God and his great desire to do what God wants, he had no choice in the matter, Christ took "Hold" of him. He was captured by God through Christ. This is what every believer should be able to say, "I was taken possession of; I was seized." The verb is in the aorist passive, which means that at a specific time in the past, I was seized by a power greater than myself. That power is the risen Christ who appeared to Saul, the persecutor, and changed him into Paul, the fervent saint. Saul did not seek God in Christ, but God sought Paul through Christ and changed him.

The reverse could not happen. Saul could not catch Christ to put Him out of commission, even though that was his stated purpose.

**Acts 22:4**

**11**

**4** "And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons.

But when presented with the evidence that Christ was exactly who He claimed to be, Paul responded fervently to Christ's call. As we saw in Phil 3:12, Paul states,

**12** *"...I follow after, if that I may apprehend.. . ."*

The NASB states it this way,

**13** *"In order that I may lay hold of."*

What is Paul saying to us here?

**14** 1) Being seized or captured by Christ is not the goal of the Christian life

You see, if that were the case, then the Christians goal would be over at salvation, but it isn't. That is just the beginning of the march down the road that stretches before us. That is not to minimize the importance of Christ taking hold in our lives, that concept is vital to our relationship with God through Him.

**15** 2) Paul's statement indicates that there is a constant effort required on the part of the believer.

The Christian life is not passive but full of activity. This verb comes from...

NT:1377 Dioko (dee-o'-ko);

**16**

A prolonged (and causative) form of a primary verb dio (to flee; compare the base of NT:1169 and NT:1249); to pursue (literally or figuratively); by implication, to persecute: KJV - ensue, follow (after), given to, (suffer) persecute (-ion), press forward.

This verb, "dioke," is in the present continuous tense, meaning that I strive until such time as I reach the goal. This is as opposed to the verb katalábœ, "that I may lay hold", which is in the subjunctive aorist tense, and means at a particular time once and for all. Now note how that defines Paul's statement in Phil 3...

*Phil 3:12*

**17**

**12** Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold (striving until such time as I obtain) of that for which also I was laid hold (One time for all time) of by Christ Jesus.

We can see the plan of God at work here. Christ died once for all never to have to die again to give man the opportunity to pursue the hope that is laid up for him in heaven. That is the goal that Paul was striving for.

This should be the goal for every Christian's life?

*Phil 3:8-11*

**18**

**8** More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, **9** and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, **10** that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; **11** in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul says that his goal is to "attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Everyone, at the end of their earthly lives, will obtain a resurrected body, an immortal body.

**1 Cor 15:42-44**

**19**

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

But that isn't all that Paul is referring to, he also expects to receive a home in heaven with Christ

**Phil 1:23**

**20**

23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

Paul knows that the time will come when all men will have an immortal body, that when Christ comes again all the dead will be raised, the difference is that only those who are in a covenant relationship with God will be taken to a home in heaven, while all others will be condemned to hell.

Now there is a sense in which believers will experience different rewards, according to how successful they are putting into practice the talents that God has given them.

**Matt 25:15**

**21**

15 "And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

God has made an investment in each one of us, and we have a responsibility to set our goals in accordance with His expectations of us. Paul refers to a prize to be won.

**Phil 3:14**

**22**

14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Observe that he calls it "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This comes from the Greek...

NT:507 Ano (an'-o);

**23**

Adverb from NT:473; upward or on the top:  
KJV - above, brim, high, up.

This doesn't refer to the direction that we move in, the NASB says "upward call" and the NIV "heavenward", rather it is the origin of the call. The prize at the end of the road for each of us will be in accordance with our heavenly calling from God and how eagerly we have pursued it. Read this as,

**24** ***"How has God's call through Christ captured us and taken over our very being?"***

At no time must we think that we have reached the goal. As we saw earlier, realizing that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is the Christ, who died to pay the price for our sins, and believing that He is and is a rewarder of those who seek Him, is not the end of the goal. The goal is to follow that faith through diligence to partake of the ultimate reward, the goal of eternal life.

Observe that Paul says in verse 12,

**25**

***"Not as though I had already obtained. . . ."***

Or the idea in the second part of his statement,

26

***". . . or have become perfect."***

Perfection, completion, can ever only be found in Christ...

***Col 1:28-29***

27

28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. 29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

Completed in Christ. In other words, Paul is saying that he has not, that he cannot, bring to completion his heavenly calling. He can only continue to strive towards it.

A Christian's life must have purpose, however that purpose manifests itself becomes based on the talents God has given us. Verse 14 begins,

28

***"I press on toward the goal..."***

In the Greek this is...

29

***"Katá, skopón, diôkæ, "***

This means ***"With a target in front of me,"*** or saying the same thing as...

30

***"I pursue with intent."***

In the phrase "I press toward the mark" the Greek for "mark" is skopós and is only found here. It is derived from sképtomai, to think, to figure out. Skopós is an object set up in the distance at which one looks and aims.

Have you ever driven a tractor? When driving a tractor pulling a plow, it is important, especially early on, to make sure that you pick a target at the end of the row to focus on, this will help to keep you on target, focused on maintaining a straight row, not veering to the left or right. That is the meaning of what Paul is saying. Be serious in your focus on the goal, and strive with all your mind and body to reach that goal.

As Christians, we must intelligently assess and pursue our God-given talents. In so doing we need both purpose and perseverance.

That is the real impact of Paul's comments in Philippians. He had been caught by Christ, hooked as surely any fish or husband that has ever been reeled in. He had no choice in the matter, just like the fish must follow the hook and line to his inevitable netting or the husband who is entranced by the beauty and intelligence and charms of his wife to the certain outcome of matrimony, the Christian who has been captured by Christ, must follow the Word and fulfill his God given talents.

The danger is that like the fish who fights to break free, can, or the husband who loses sight of his responsibility to his wife, strays, the Christian can lose their focus on the goal and fall away.

The real question is whether we were caught by Christ in the beginning or not?