

Paul's Secret for Changing the World: Laying Hold of Christ

By Kameel Majdali

It was enough to take your breath away.

Not long ago, my daughter and I chose to ride on the appropriately named roller coaster called "California Screaming," which is part of the California Adventure, right next to the Disneyland complex in Anaheim, California. Some parts of the ride go several stories upwards and, within meters, several stories downward. There is at least one part of the track that is a "corkscrew."

While the car on the roller coaster was stationary, we sat calmly and peacefully. But when it began to move, it shot forth like a bolt out of the blue. Not only did it speed at 300 kph but it quickly ascended the ramp. Then, like lightning, it started to roll around bends and curves at frightful speeds. Not only did the women scream with gusto, but so did the men. With our stomachs in our throats, it seemed like the experience was everlasting. Truth is, the whole thing lasted less than two minutes.

QUESTION: what does one do with their hands?

ANSWER: take hold of the safety bar so tightly that your knuckles turn white!

Life in today's world is in the fast lane, especially a place like Singapore. How do you keep your head above the waters? Well, the answer is surprisingly simple.

RECIPE FOR CHANGING THE WORLD

Secular historians affirm that the Apostle Paul was one of the top five most influential people who ever lived. Not only did he through his apostolic ministry turn the ancient world upside down, but he still continues to influence today's world through the New Testament books he wrote.

What was the secret of his success? How did Paul change the world?

You can find the answer in Philippians 3:7-14.

Paul was a very gifted man. His credentials were impeccable. He was a full – Hebrew, born in the Diaspora at Tarsus, but trained under the venerated Rabbi Gamaliel in the Holy City of Jerusalem. He spoke several languages, had a good profession, and held Roman citizenship.

Which of the above traits help him to change the world?

ANSWER: none of them.

He says, Philippians 3:7-8

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss

Amazingly, in order to gain success in Christ, Paul had to lose everything. Not just the bad, derelict, sinful, unregenerate things, but also the good, valuable, and profitable things. **Paul had to lose everything ... the good, bad, and ugly ... in order to gain Christ and change the world.**

Like the terrified rider on the California Screaming roller coaster, Paul's secret of changing the world is disarmingly the same: learn to let go of everything so that you can take hold of the most important thing. For the rider, it is the safety bar. For the believer, it is Jesus Christ Himself. .

Until now, we had the preparation. Here is Paul's secret itself. Philippians 3:12 (NKJV) says:

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

The word for "lay hold" is also called *katalambano* (Greek), which means "to lay hold, to possess, to seize, overtake, attain, come upon, comprehend, perceive, find, to appropriate, to obtain the prize." It is what a policeman does when he apprehends a criminal.

If your going to be a champion, winner, and overcomer ... then **let go** of everything else and **lay hold** of Christ.

"Laying Hold" In Scripture

Jacob is a superlative example of *katalambano*. He had secretly fled from his uncle Laban in order to return to the land of Canaan in Genesis 32. His wives, handmaidens, children, and all his possessions, were with him. Soon, he has a pursuing Laban on his back and a confronting Esau in his face. In desperation, he chose to wrestle with the Angel until the breaking of the day. Such a contest of strength would have seemed more suitable to macho Esau, the huntsman and "man's man," than to a "sensitive new age guy," like Jacob.

Yet it was Jacob, not Esau, who demonstrated the greatest strength of all. Despite the attempts of the Angel to shoo him away, Jacob sunk his fingernails deeply. "I will **not** let you go until you bless me!" he declared. At one point, the Angel injured the hollow of Jacob's thigh. Even in pain, he continued to lay hold. At the end, the Angel had no choice but to bless him. Part of the blessing was the changing of his name from Jacob, which means "supplanter" or "heel catcher," to Israel, "Prince of God." Jacob's descendants have been ruling ever since.

Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, also demonstrates *katalambano* or laying hold in I Samuel 1. Though happily married, she unable to give her husband children. His second wife was very fruitful in this area; she was also very nasty. Her taunts and insults caused Hannah to fret to the core of her being. In extreme anxiety, she went to the one and only place that could answer her deep need: The House of the Lord. In her day, it was the Tabernacle of Moses at Shiloh. So she entered into the sacred precincts, went as far as she was allowed, and there she parked herself in prayer. Like Jacob, Hannah was not going to let go until God blessed her ... and He did. Unlike the anonymous children of Elkanah's second wife, Hannah's son became the greatest prophet Israel had seen since Moses. His name is Samuel or *Shmu'el*, 'heard from God.' Those who lay hold of Christ are assured of answered prayer, no matter what the size of the request.

Practical Side:

Like any teaching, there has to be a practical component with the theoretical. Remember to apply verses 13-14 to Philipians 3. It tells us:

1. **Forget** what is behind you. You cannot lay hold if you are always holding on to old memories, both bad and good.
2. **Reach** out to what lies ahead. Be people who are future-minded and forward looking.

Most importantly, you need to:

3. **Press** toward the mark of the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus. Without this final step, you will not seal your victory. Focus on Christ and His vision to the exclusion of all else and love God with all of your being.

(Concluding statement) God has called us to nothing less than making a difference in our world. This becomes gloriously possible when we relinquish everything else and let Christ be our sole—and soul—focus.

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