



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR FEBRUARY 17, 2012

LAYING HOLD OF GOD

No one...strives to lay hold of you. (Isaiah 64:7, NIV)

GOLF BEGINS IN THE SAME WAY FOR EVERY PLAYER. Whether the grip is good or bad, the player must take hold of the club. From there the wonder (or the grief) begins!

Most endeavors in life are the same. They must begin somewhere, with a “laying hold,” a firm commitment. So, a chef searches the pantry and puts his hand to the ingredients that will comprise a delicious meal... a qualified prospect makes the call to an employer seeking a new general manager... a driver clicks on the seat belt and puts her foot to the pedal—the beginning of a fabulous road trip.

But in truth, life is made up of so much more than the beginnings. In our biggest projects, we must “lay hold” of the day’s work again and again, reprising our initial commitment with the acts that demonstrate our desire to reach the goal, whatever it may be.

In the apostle Paul’s life, the goal was to “take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” In Philippians 3, Paul explained what that was: heaven ahead. Christ had taken hold of Paul for eternity; Paul made it his endeavor to take hold of that eternal life as well. Indeed, he “pressed on” in this regard, “straining toward what is ahead.”

At least indirectly, Paul was responding to the troubling observation of Isaiah 800 years before. Isaiah looked around at the people of God and saw that they were in no way seeking the very goodnesses that God had awaiting them. “No one,” he wrote, “calls on your name. No one ‘rouses himself to take hold of you’” (ESV). Part of this was God’s own doing. In his exhaustion with his people’s disobedience, he had left them to the consequences of their sins. But Isaiah drew lines of blame right to the people and asked, “How can we be saved?” The answer came in his observation: we should be laying hold of God.

It’s not popular to talk about the work we should be doing in working out our salvation. But let’s be certain neither Isaiah nor Paul was amiss in their words: one work we must never forsake is laying hold of our Savior.

A strong act

The Hebrew word Isaiah used to convey the idea of laying hold has much to do with strength. This was no light grip or gentle hand he was talking about. In assessing your current place of faith, what are one or two practical ways you could “strengthen your hold” on God? (You might refer to 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 for additional perspective.)

Grace and fortitude

Read Philippians 3:12-4:1. What two mindsets are portrayed as conflicting in this passage (v. 19-20)?

How do we move from the one to the other (see verse 9)? How does this kind of striving fit under the dominant truth that all we need for salvation has been accomplished for us in Christ?

What great goodness of God significantly motivates you to lay hold of him?
