



2/26/26

The more I learn from the words of the Apostle Paul, the more amazed and challenged I am by his example. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, he said, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." Follow my example... this is how Jesus lived. Wow. His example is absolutely impossible to follow if we're not letting the Holy Spirit lead and transform us. Paul's example... even more, Jesus' example... is impossible to even WANT if we're not letting the Holy Spirit lead us. I pray that you and I will never try to do this in our own strength, but we'll completely rely on the Holy Spirit. It's like those commercials with crazy drivers that say in the small print, "Professional driver... do not attempt this on your own." The Holy Spirit is our professional driver.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Philippians 3:8-21

Just in this letter to the Philippians, which was written from PRISON, Paul spoke of how he was totally fine that some people were preaching the gospel in order to make things WORSE for him. He said, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed. And in that, I rejoice." Wow! He said, "My imprisonment has really served to advance the gospel" and "It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Wow. This is the example I'm called to follow.

Here, in Philippians 3, Paul gives me more to see of his example... My prayer is that God will make this true in my life. I'm not there yet, but as Paul said in the beginning of his letter, "I am sure that He who began a good work in me will carry it on to completion at the day of Christ Jesus." And his words in chapter 2, "Work OUT your own salvation with fear and trembling, FOR it is GOD who works IN you both to will and to work for His good pleasure." His pleasure is good... and He is at work in me. O Lord, please help me to cooperate with You.

Vs. 8-11 ~ Paul said, "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." This is a lot of loss for Paul. He had prestige, position, and power... and he gave it all up because knowing Jesus was worth immeasurably more to him. Before coming to Christ, I had no prestige, position, or power... and yet, how often have I fought for those things, not recognizing that knowing Jesus is the only thing that matters? What do any of those things matter if I don't have Jesus? Is this an example in Paul that I'm willing to follow?

Paul said he counted all his power, position, and prestige as garbage if he could just know Jesus better and be found in Him. Before Christ, Paul was a Pharisee... he was regarded by all as being more righteous than most. He recognized that his righteousness that came from the law was NOTHING. The only righteousness that matters is the free gift of righteousness that comes through Jesus. The only thing Paul was responsible for in that righteousness... the only thing I'M responsible for in that righteousness... is putting my faith and trust in Jesus. Why would I... who had NO perceived righteousness apart from Jesus, still try to gain the approval and respect of others rather than welcoming the righteousness that Jesus freely gives? It's pride! If I RECEIVE His righteousness, I don't get the credit. Oh, but Paul had it right!!! Getting the credit is so overrated!!! Peace, security, joy, and hope come in releasing that need for the respect of men and embracing the free welcoming, generous love of God.

Paul said, "I want to know JESUS and the power of His resurrection. It changes everything!!! I even want to share His suffering, becoming like Him in His death, that by ANY means possible, I may attain the resurrection of the dead." Paul is NOT saying, "If I don't share His suffering, I lose my salvation." He's saying, "No suffering on this earth is worthy to be compared with the glory of being with Jesus. I'm willing to face any trial because I will never face the suffering Jesus went through for me." He said in chapter 2, "Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all." Am I WILLING to follow THAT example? To be poured out as a sacrificial drink offering for the faith of others? Am I so convinced of the hope I have with Jesus that I'm willing to say, "Not MY will, but YOURS be done... no ifs, no buts, no limits"? O Lord, please make it so! How much it must grieve You when I'm unwilling to say, "Your will be done." Not because You are a tyrant who just wants my worship... but because You know that Your will is good, perfect, and pleasing both to You AND to me. You don't want me to miss out on the massive blessings You have for me... even when those blessings come through suffering. Father, please help me to comprehend Your heart.

Vs. 12-14 ~ I'm so thankful for Paul's honesty. He recognized that he had not obtained a perfect, sacrificial mindset. To be fair, he was way closer than I am. But he said, "I press on to make it my own." Then he gave the best reason that exists... "because Christ Jesus has made me HIS own." No matter what, I belong to Jesus. Is that enough for me? Is Jesus as my prize enough to run the race with everything I've got? O Lord, You ARE! Please help me to embrace that even when the blessing of Your presence is coming through suffering.

Paul said, "One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies

ahead..." For Paul, that meant, "Forget the power and prestige I had and strain ahead to seeing Jesus face to face." For me, that means, "Forget all the shame I had and strain ahead to see the smile on Jesus' face as He welcomes me home." He does NOT have a scowl on His face when He looks at me, though if He were merely human, I'm sure He would. But he welcomes me with open arms. He commends me for my feeble faith!

What was Paul straining forward to? "The goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." He was running home to the Lord. He was continuing to strive in this race to the finish line of our faith when Jesus calls us home. Am I following his example? Is my finish line faith my focus, or am I getting caught up in what lies behind and what's on the side of the road? O Lord, please help me to follow Paul's example as I run home to You... because You have made me Your own. Let me never forget that.

Vs. 15-16 ~ Paul called out the mature to think like he thinks, to follow his example (as he follows Christ's). And he said, "If in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that to you also." I love that. Paul didn't stress over whether or not they were in agreement. He trusted that God had it all safely in His loving hands. But he did have one challenge... "Hold true to what you HAVE attained."

"Hold true to what you HAVE attained." That sounds kind of like a "no duh" statement. But I don't think it IS "no duh." I think it's very easy to use questioning of what we don't understand as an excuse to drift from what we do understand. Paul is saying, "Wherever you are in your walk with the Lord, even if there are things you don't understand, don't let go of what you do understand." So what do I understand? I understand the gospel. I understand that God loved the world so much that He sent His Son to do for us what we could not do. I understand that God wants me to surrender my life to Him and let Him be in charge. I understand that He has made me His own. What do I NOT understand? I don't understand how He's going to accomplish His purpose. I don't understand why He allows some things and doesn't allow others. But... do I have to? No. So... my goal is to hold true to what I do understand and TRUST that He will help me understand what I don't in due season. But I need to trust Him even in the waiting.

Vs. 17-21 ~ Paul said, "Join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you see in me and the other missionaries with me." Why? Because I will always be tempted to drift from the Lord. The enemy is actively involved in using my distractions to make me ineffective for the kingdom. Many people walk as enemies of Christ, and they want to tear down others who walk with Jesus.

Paul said, "Their end is destruction." Don't be deceived. They will make it look like they have it all together. Looks can be deceiving. "Their god is their belly." They fill themselves up with anything that makes them feel good in the moment, but it won't last. "They glory in their shame." They take pleasure in doing what God hates. This is why we need to not just look at the examples of faithful followers of Christ, but also FOLLOW their examples. Otherwise, we won't hold to what we have attained. Instead we will get caught into the lies of people who want

to drag believers down with them. Their minds are set on earthly things, not on the things of God. Don't follow THEIR example. Follow Paul's example.

The fact is, because I am in Christ, my mind doesn't need to be set on earthly things. I have better things to think about... Let everything I do be done with eternity in mind. This world is not my home. My citizenship is in heaven where there is no destruction. There is no need to glory in anything or anyone but Jesus. There is only one God, and He loves me. He will take this earthly tent that is my body and make it like His glorious body. Wow. The Greek transliteration says He will take my body of humiliation and transform it to the body of His glory, splendor, and majesty. That is amazing and wonderful. By what power does He do this? By the power that puts Him as ruler over everything.

So... forget what lies behind. Whether it's good or bad, it's earthly... humiliation. Press on to what lies ahead. Jesus has made me His own. I'm going to be called home to heaven someday. Until then, I press on by following Paul's example. I don't follow Paul's example because HE is awesome. I follow Paul's example because he points to the LORD who IS awesome. O Lord, please grow my resolve to live all my days on earth like this.