

The Attitudes and Patterns of Following Him

Prayer:

Father in heaven, how we thank You. We thank You that You have given us Your Word. Thank You for Your Son who has sent the Holy Spirit that Your Word might be alive to us, that we might come to know the Lord Jesus Himself in reality, that what He has made known to us will become who we are and what we believe. Father in heaven, have Your way. Open Your Word to us today. Lord, speak through this vessel with Your anointing. Holy Spirit, come down like a fire. Anoint each of us to hear what You are saying, and allow Your Word to do the work that it is sent to do that we might be a people after Your own heart. Lord, we give You this time and ask You to use it in Jesus name. Amen.

I had some time over the last few years to gather with some brothers in a Bible study, and not that long ago we went through Philippians. As we went through chapter 3 it was very living, and the Lord opened my eyes, and I read it in a way that I had never seen it before. I had not done an in depth study specifically before this time, even though I had read it and gone through it. However this time there were some things that were made alive to me. And the first of those things is that Paul tells us to have an attitude or a mindset. The King James uses the word 'mindset.' The New American Standard uses the word 'attitude,' and this attitude is one that we should inculcate into our lives by keeping it front and center.

The other thing he shared was a pattern of walking, and he used himself as an example, except that in this particular chapter he did not give us a whole lot of examples. The Philippians said that they had seen him for a couple of years when he was there. So he said, "Use me and the brothers who work with me as an example for how to walk." So we are going to talk a little bit about that, and I will share some of the things that I saw, that we might really come into.

Before we get into the verses themselves, I had an object lesson. Suppose somebody I knew who comes to the fellowship here told me that he was going to give the lottery winnings to everybody who is here, but he told me, "You cannot tell anybody." Being an honorable person I would not tell them because that would not be honorable since I told him I would not tell. But he did not tell me that I could not tell them what to do to be the beneficiary. So what I would tell them was, "You need to be at the fellowship every time we meet until you find out why."

Paul's Attitude After Seeing Christ

So let's think about our brother Paul. He had an encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, and after that encounter his life was changed. He started preaching immediately that Christ was the Messiah. Of course, that got him kicked out of Damascus real fast, and he went out into Arabia and came back. When he came back to Damascus, he got kicked out again, and he ended up in Tarsus for a number of years. While he was there, something amazing happened, and it is revealed in II Corinthians chapter 12 where he described the man who was called up into the third heaven and saw things unspeakable. He could not tell us what he saw, but I truly believe that from that revelation he told us what we needed to be ready. So that is what really gave me this focus. I realized that I did not see Paul specifically, but I saw what he wrote, and I knew that

what he wrote was fully related to what he had seen. So that future state is so great and wonderful for us and him that he described what is needed for us to walk rightly in the Holy Spirit to follow that pattern, but also to have an attitude. The chapter is concerned with maintaining an attitude that the past is mostly irrelevant compared to pressing on to know our Lord.

The attitude or mindset that he is talking about is that we really need to press on to know our Lord Jesus. This became the most important thing that he was sharing about this attitude.

A Gain of Christ

The second part is that we are to walk abiding in the Lord Jesus and in what He has made alive to us Himself, the discovery of our Lord Jesus as revealed by the Holy Spirit as we go through life. Christ working in us lets us go through things in which we come to see Him in a reality that our brother had shared previously as divine assurance. If we have divine assurance that the Lord has given us something, it has become ours. We have what Paul would say is a gain of Christ. That gain of Christ is the focus of this chapter on maintaining this attitude. It is that we really understand that we need to go on every day not thinking about what we have gained, not thinking about where we have failed, not thinking about anything other than today is the opportunity to gain Christ, to know Him. While we are walking in this attitude of gaining Christ, each of us will have the cross made available to us that we might enter in fully. In order to do this we are going to have to die to things that are keeping us from gaining Christ because there are things in our lives that we consider more important than what Paul described as 'the surpassing value of knowing Christ' in a way that we will find liberating.

The Prize of the High Calling

In this area of attitude there is a pursuit of a goal, and he calls it the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is the goal to gain Christ, to know Him, and in Him to see the Father and know His will and ways. We can never consider that we might have arrived at any level, but it is to have the attitude that knowing Him is to be our focus. In the area of walking Paul shares that we are to maintain the standard to which we have attained which is the pattern that we demonstrate to others. So as we gain our Lord Jesus, as we gain Christ, our life begins to look to others as a changed life. We know the old man can pop up at any time, but that is not the point. The point is that knowing Him is to know His life, and what has been made real to us becomes our life. It is His life living through us because He has made it known to us in such a way that we cannot walk any other way. Knowing Him is critical for us to really come into the fulness of the life of Christ. And that knowing is done by the Holy Spirit in us when we spend time with Him, pressing on to know Him. Never forgetting that our walk is in agreement with the Spirit and not done by keeping a list of 'do this and do not do that.' I just need to emphasize that because those of us who tried that found that it was not very successful. The true way of walking in the light of the Word is to allow the life of Christ to become our life.

I will go through these Scriptures starting at verse 7 and going through them one at a time with some points I would like to share rather than just preaching. But I want to share some of the light that I have seen.

Counting Things as Lost that I May Gain Christ

Philippians 3:7: "But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss because of Christ."

Education, calling, position, all of which he had rightfully earned by studying. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews, he was of the tribe of Benjamin, and all of this he counted loss because of Christ. The finished work ended the value of this world's attractiveness. We have been transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son, and that transformation is where the value is, and it shows that the value of this world is lost to us because we have His Son and because we know His Son.

In verse 8 he even goes further. He says, "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 mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ."

Now here is Paul writing a prison letter, and he is still looking to gain Christ. I believe that is informative for us that no matter where we are, there is more to gain and there is benefit in maintaining an attitude of saying, "I have to press on." Nothing owned, earned or gained by any measure in this world has any real value nor any effort or thought about them has the substance, and he counted it loss compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord. I think of the time and energy maintaining, taking care of, and investing in things that are all going to either be given away at the end or are going to be thrown in a dumpster. And I have spent a lot of time taking care of things. The Lord has spoken to me in this chapter that He has touched something, and there is something changed, and I am working through it. But for all of us to take the time to just think. Have things, position, title or money become more important than spending time knowing Him? I really want to see what Paul saw that I too may know Jesus Christ my Lord. Will I have to be arrested before I let go of things which have no eternal value, and add nothing to our increase in the kingdom? Would I suffer the loss of all things even seeing them as rubbish that I may gain Christ?

Christ, My Righteousness

Verse 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."

Would I count all things loss that I might be found in Him? Will I be found in Him? If I meet a person that I do not know, will Christ be found in me? Will he find Christ in me? Is the Christ-life revealed? Do I have a righteousness of my own making? Have I worked hard to look good on the outside? Am I really careful to make sure that I will not say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing when somebody is looking? Do I have a pride of life driving me to be something, do something or to be a somebody? All these things reveal a heart that we can take to the Lord. We can ask Him, "Touch my heart, Lord. Let me have that heart seeking You."

That new life is righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith in our Lord Jesus, that life living through me abiding in Christ. Will I agree with His will and His way and choose His life to be my life?

The Power of His Resurrection Life

Verse 10: "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

Are we willing to agree with the Holy Spirit and surrender the things of the world that are so attractive in order to really know Him? To know the power of His resurrection life that has been made available to us to live in victory. Getting rid of the bondages that have held us down, getting rid of the sin that besets us, the things that we have been unable to let go of that keep us from knowing the Lord Jesus in fulness. He set us free, and we need to know Him and allow Him to reveal to us the victory that is in Himself and in His resurrection.

The fellowship of His suffering is a deep relationship of suffering as He suffered. And when we suffer, He suffers with us. That fellowship of suffering enables us to weep over the loss of a friend, to become heart-broken over the condition of the testimony, to hurt when others hurt, to walk through loss in this world with Him, that in so doing we become conformed to His death. There is a reward for walking with Him through suffering, to fellowship with Him in the things that we go through because as He is working in us, this is one of the ways that work is worked out in us. Those who have little have not suffered much. I did not suffer much for a while, and I did not have a lot. I did not share a lot. I did not participate a lot. But the work that He does in us is life-changing, being conformed to His death.

Attaining to the Resurrection

Verse 11: "If somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

If somehow I may ...That 'somehow' to know Him is connected to suffering with Him, giving up our worldly ways that we walk in, in order to walk in His resurrection life. Paul may have called it resurrection from the dead, but as I studied this and I had brothers who were telling me that salvation is not secure, I just could not accept that. There is a difference. One of their verses is that you have to make it to the end to prove your salvation, but the issue is not salvation. This is to attain to resurrection life in your own experience, to have that victory in your own life over the things that have caused you to stumble and fall. I am still going through it. Don't think I have attained anything just because I am here talking about it. I am a work in progress just like all of us, forgetting what has happened in our past and pressing on to know Him. In knowing Him we become more like Him because we are being changed from glory to glory. We cannot live any other way when we have seen and have that divine assurance. I appreciate so much that teaching of divine assurance. That was so liberating for me to know that I know. It is the confirmation of the Holy Spirit in the revelation of His Son. So that is not a bad verse; it is a great verse.

Verse 12: "Not that I have already grasped it all or have already become perfect (mature)." It means that we have not arrived; we do not have it all. "But I press on if I may also take hold of that for which I was even taken hold of by Christ Jesus."

The Lord Laid Hold of Paul for a Purpose

It is an interesting verse; it is unusual. But after you dig into it a little bit, you realize that each one of us have been taken hold of by Christ. We have been taken hold of. Our lives were changed the day He got hold of us. For me drinking and drugs went out the window the same day. Other things have taken longer, but that day there was freedom. But I press on if I may take hold of that for which I was taken hold of. There is a purpose for which you were taken hold of. Paul had a purpose, and we have a purpose. And we find that he was still pressing on that he might take hold of that purpose even though he had already preached the Gospel in many places. Then there was a new purpose, a greater purpose in writing letters that he did not know would become the foundation of the New Testament. Yet he did not consider that he had gotten it all even though he was in the midst of doing what the Father had called him to do. He kept pressing on that he may lay hold of the reason. And as it turns out he shares with us the glorious life of walking with our Lord Jesus, of allowing His life to become our life.

Laying Hold of the On-High Calling

Verse 13-14: “Brothers and sisters, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul had his mind set that even at this point in his life he did not regard himself as having reached the goal, but he pressed on for what lay ahead. He did not know what lay ahead, but we know from reading what lay ahead of him, and in this world it was not good. But as we see how the Lord used him, the price he paid to have the revelation he had to be able to write the things he wrote, came from a life that was completely given to the Lord Jesus. He had this goal in view, and we too should have this goal before us.

My question is this: what is the upward call of God in Christ Jesus for us? I believe that the process in seeking to know Him is the answer to that question and it will lead us to the whole point. But if I told you a straight-up answer it might be a fact that you would accept as the truth, file it away, and you might even believe it, but I cannot. I believe the point is different from having an answer that is tangible. I believe that the process of discovering to know our Lord Jesus and gaining Him, actually becomes the prize. That discovery of Him is the prize. Each discovery in our journey is an increase of Him, an increase in the kingdom and the personal increase in knowing Him to the very end may be the actual substance of the prize for each of us.

Verse 15: “Therefore, all who are mature, let us have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal it to you.”

What a promise! He shared the attitude, and then He gave us this assurance that if we do not have this attitude, God will reveal it to us that we might repent. Some move along quicker than others, some get started earlier than others, some of us got started early, but as our brother John would say, “We drifted for a while.” We may not have gotten it very quickly, maybe we needed to go through some life events to wake us up, or maybe our need for the Lord became really essential. It does not have to be that way, but most of the time I think it is our human nature that if we do not go through things, and if everything is just roller coaster easy, we will

not really move ahead. But when we are cast on the Lord, such as being available to share, He does work, and He gets our attention. We understand our dependence upon Him, and it is amazing! Think about that verse in your heart. It will yield much fruit for us.

The Pattern

Verse 16 is kind of the transition from the attitude to the pattern, but this is a critical, critical verse that I want us all to understand.

“However let’s keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.”

There are many standards in the Bible, many covenants, many things to do and things not to do, even in the New Testament. But the point of the matter is some of those describe the pattern so that we can know what to agree with, and some of those are the things that He has made so real to us that we recognize that is who we are. So this verse says, before we start talking about a pattern that is set before us, he says, “Look, keep living to what you have attained while you press on to know Him, and as you know Him, that gain of Christ will become the new standard. And the new standard is more like Him which is really what He is after. Each discovery of Him, who He is, what His ways are, what He has done, even in what He is doing now, when we gain that knowledge of Him, it becomes the standard to which we have attained.

In verse 17 we are now going to begin talking a little bit about the pattern. “Brothers and sisters, join in following my example and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”

Our brother has set before us the history recorded in the Word of God, a living example for us to observe and imitate. By following the example of those who have gone before us, we may know the walk that is acceptable in His sight. But do not try to do it alone. Do not try to do it in yourself because the verses after that talk about some who have missed the mark, but they are still talking as if they know something. When our behavior is not in line with the pattern that is described, it is the opportunity for us to pray and seek the Lord as to the problem. The problem is going to be found in the self-life and that is when the cross gets to work in our lives that the problem might be removed. So whether it is a bondage or whether it is a recurring habit, there is need for repentance. If you smash your thumb the old man is going to come out if you have had a habit of saying things you should not say. He is going to show up, so you repent, you apologize and say, “Lord, I did not mean that,” and you move on. In general you know that certain language is unacceptable, you know it, and so you are walking in it. But do not be discouraged that the old man might show up, and it is always at the wrong time in front of the wrong people. Just say, “I am sorry. I do not know what happened. That was not right.” Ask the Lord for forgiveness and move on because it is the pressing on and not being defeated by the fact that we are not finished yet, that is the point. So we have a pattern.

The next two verses are kind of a warning, and I am just going to briefly cover them because they are not so much the pattern to walk, but more of a pattern not to walk.

Enemies of the Cross

Verses 18-19: "Many walk of whom I often told you and now tell you even as I weep that they are enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction, whose God is their appetite and whose glory is in their shame, who have their minds on earthly things."

The one thing in here is that the heart of our brother was weeping over these ones who have missed the mark, who have denied the cross, and who are walking in ways that are shameful, and they think they are good. Their minds are on earthly gain, their end is already determined.

When Paul wrote this book, obviously he was writing to the Philippians who knew him well. He did not go into a whole lot of examples of the pattern, so in the balance of Scripture we find the Holy Spirit has given us examples of what it looks like to be an abiding follower of Jesus. I will read these Scriptures, but I am not going to comment on them. You know that Paul writes, "And I pray this so that you can do this and I pray." I am going to leave out the results that he is asking for but I will mention what he has actually prayed. But these prayers do have a result, and you can look in these verses so that when I read them, some of them will be full, but some will not.

Real Knowledge and Discernment

In Philippians 1:9: "And this I pray, that your love may overflow still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may discover the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ."

How we need real knowledge and discernment in discovering the excellent.

Colossians 1:9-12: "For this reason also, I have not ceased to pray for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, strengthened with all power, joyously giving thanks to the Father."

We see here that Paul had a desire for us to come into something. Is it because of what he saw that he was praying for the most important things that we could be praying for each other? Is it that we truly come into a love that is overflowing, that we would have real knowledge, that we would have spiritual wisdom and understanding, and be strengthened in His power? And Paul always does one more thing that is important.

He says in Romans 1:8: "First, I thank my God through Christ Jesus for you all."

In all of his prayers Paul had such a gratitude to the Father through His Son. This is a pattern that we see in his prayers, and so there is a revelation of something that he did that could be emulated that is in the Word. In our corporate prayer gathering we could be lifting our prayers to the Lord in the heavenly realm that the church might come into what the desire of our Father in heaven would have for us in His Son.

Prayers are of a specific tone that is useful for turning our focus away from the things of this world to the things of eternal value, more specifically the full knowledge of God in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:17: "Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of our Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

The framework of the attitude in the pattern that we are given is to position us to really see what His life will do in us and to be ready. Our brother Stephen told us to be ready, but practically I think our brother Paul has given us instructions that will help us to be ready. The main thing is knowing the Lord Jesus in experiential reality. Then we are to walk in that which we know and have gained, and continue to press on that we would have the fulness of what He would have for each of us, where we are and where we are going. If we do this it will probably not lead to earthly gain. However, we are looking for that gain of Christ that has eternal value.

Then we are to continue to press on to know Him, doing what you know to do now. If you know it is the right thing to do, not doing it is sin to you. Living by the standard, reading and meditating on the Word, being active in the functioning of the fellowship assembly, but not limited there. When we are given the opportunity, we are to recognize brothers and sisters in the body of Christ outside of the assembly. There are many of us who have been given things that when shared with other believers in other places brings life to them. So do not be afraid to go to a Bible study with your neighbor because you might be the one bringing life. We have life, and we have been shared life by others. Many of us have His life, and it is ready to be shared with those who are hungry. There are those who are hungry to hear, and many of the things that we have heard have not been heard by others, such as the changed life, living by another life, Christ in me, me in Him. These are in the Word, and even if they have read them, there is no reality. Therefore, they need to see a living reality expressed by the Holy Spirit through His people who are seeking to know Him and are entering into that purpose for which they were laid hold of by our Lord Jesus. Pressing on. Pressing on.

If you search the Word for the purpose for which Paul was laid hold of, it will yield a wonderful revelation to our hearts, and we will begin to understand how Paul was able to endure all he went through to the end without throwing up his hands and quitting. He saw something; he saw something.

And we need to see our Lord Jesus. We need to see enough of our Lord Jesus that we press on no matter the circumstances because we have come to know that everything we go through leads to more of Him. Therefore, we cannot get discouraged, we cannot give up. We are to press on, and we have to keep pressing on to the very end whether we get raptured or whether we pass away. This is the issue: are we pressing on? Are we continuing on every day?

I know my father-law is unable. So do it now why you are able. Dementia is a horrible thing. All the things that he learned are there; they are in his heart. It is his life, and he will have a glorious reunion and wisdom to pass on. But it is a hard thing.

Paul had to let us know that we would be able to make it through. Something he saw and knew but was unable to share caused him to give us letters of instruction on how to make it to the end, living in resurrection life. We cannot earn resurrection from the dead, but we can live in resurrection life now. Having that life alive in us now somehow makes our glorious actual resurrection reunion with Him a celebration of victory that has been worked into us. Words

cannot convey the glory revealed upon our being fully conformed into His image on that day. Pressing on.

Let us pray:

Father in heaven, may we truly be a heavenly-minded people who come to a real and living fellowship with Your Son and walk each day more and more in the knowledge of Him that we would truly become living examples of Your life manifested through us so that everyone who knows us will be able to see in some new measure the glory of God having a people who are like His Son. Thank You, Father for Your Son. Thank You for Your Word. Lord, may Your Word run and accomplish the work for which You set in each of us, that that glorious reunion will be what was on Your heart when Paul wrote these words. In Jesus name. Amen.