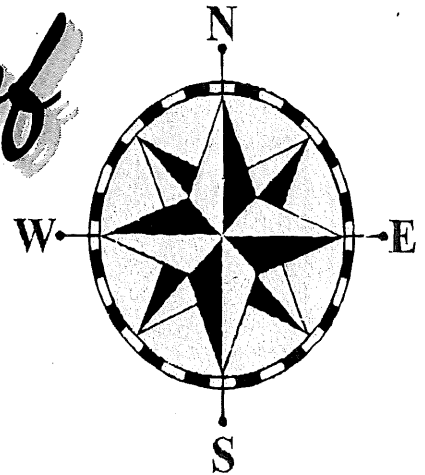


Arton Rich

The Journey of
Paul



*The Spiritual Journey of the
Apostle Paul*

Annual Bible Study Retreat
January 22-24, 2004
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
Beach Colony Resort

A Bible Study By:

Charles Wilson, Richard Wilson
Larry Scott, Richard Sanders
and Michael Sims

with Michael Meadows as The Apostle Paul

Myrtle Beach Bible Study Retreat
January 22-24, 2004
The Journey of Paul: The Spiritual Journey of the Apostle Paul

Thursday Evening

6:30 PM

Welcome
Worship
Theme Interpretation- "Meet Paul" Rich Wilson
Drama- "Before the Damascus Road"
Lesson 1- "Drama on the Damascus Road" Larry Scott
Lesson 2- "Basic Training" Rich Wilson
Lesson 3- "Paul's Growth Through A Thorn" Charles Wilson
Worship

Friday Morning

8:30 AM

Worship
Lesson 4- "Paul's Growth Through Defeating Strongholds"
Charles Wilson
Drama- "Struggle"
Lesson 5- "Someone Turn The Lights On" Larry Scott
Lesson 6- "Learning to Fight!" Michael Sims

Friday Afternoon

Free Time

Seafood Supper at 5:30 PM

Friday Evening

7:00 PM

Worship
Lesson 7- "What Would It Take? Paul's Passion For People" Richard
Lesson 8- "The Passion of Paul" Rich Wilson
Worship

Saturday Morning

8:15 AM

Worship
Lesson 9- "Why Me Lord?" Larry Scott
Lesson 10- "Paul's Growth Through Prayer and Praise"
Charles Wilson
Drama- "Reflection"
Lesson 11- "Finished" Rich Wilson
Conclusion

Meet Paul

A Man On A Journey
An Introduction to the Retreat
Richard Wilson

When we hear the name "Paul" we think of many things. We think of the man who was converted on the Damascus Road. We think of a man who made three journeys throughout the world to spread the Gospel. Maybe even the thought of the man who wrote the majority of the New Testament comes to mind.

What about Paul the man? Who was this man who made such a difference in the world?

Have you ever thought about the man named Paul? Have you ever pondered this spiritual giant?

What did the people think who met Paul along the way? So many heard him speak. So many saw him face to face. What did they think about this man?

Some who met him liked him. Some who met him criticized him. Some who met him openly rejected him and his message. Some who met him listened and were forever changed.

Those who met him probably would have noticed something in his eyes. They would have seen the eyes of a man focused on a mission.

Those who met him would have heard something in his voice. They would have heard the impassioned plea of a man who was fully convinced that Jesus was the Messiah.

Those who met him would have noticed his hands. His were the hands of a warrior, rough and scarred from years of hardship, work and travel.

Those who met him would have noticed his passion. His passion was so strong that he would go anywhere, do anything and say anything to get even one person to come to Christ. By his own testimony he was willing to become all things to all men to win some for Jesus.

But still, what about the man himself? This giant of a man was like us in so many ways. He was a man who was on a personal spiritual journey. It started at the moment that Jesus stepped into his life and it continued until his life was taken from him as a martyr for the Faith.

Could it be true? Was Paul really like us? Sometimes the answers to our questions are surprising. This man, who has been called by many the greatest Christian ever, was so much like us. . .

He had a past he was not proud of.

He started, like everyone else, as a new convert.

He toddled through the first steps of the Faith.

He was a man who continued to struggle with sin

He was a man who was tormented a "thorn in the flesh."

He was a man who faced hardship, disappointment and rejection.

What is amazing to me is that this man of great faith took the same journey we are all called to take. In simple terms, we are all called to take a journey from where we used to be to the place where God wants us to be. No matter who we are, we all have a beginning point and we all have a final destination. It does not matter if your name is Paul or Frank, you walk the same road. You see the scenery. You face the same potholes.

Paul's story is familiar to Christians today. Paul's life is a story of faith. Paul's life is a story of grace. Paul's life is story so much like our own. The challenge of this study is for us to identify with Paul's journey of faith. The challenge is to follow the footsteps of the man who boldly said, "**Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.**" Paul took a profound journey and along the way he took the time to leave markers for us to follow.

Over these days we will see both the victories and the struggles of Paul. His life was by no means perfect. Still, Paul never let that stop him. Each day was a day to die to himself and to become more like Jesus.

Now let's think for a moment. What if you had met Paul before Paul met Jesus? Would you have been fascinated by him? Would you have wanted to be friends with him?

More than likely, the old Paul, also known as Saul, would have been a far less compelling figure.

You would have seen arrogance rather than grace.

You would have seen self righteousness rather than holiness.

You would have met a man who needed Jesus.

You would have seen a wretched man- you would have seen Saul- Saul of Tarsus. You would have met a Pharisee. You would have met a know-it-all. You would have met a passionately arrogant man. You would have met a man packing his bags for a journey- a journey that stated on the road to Damascus. . .

Sparked

Drama on the Damascus Road

A study of the conversion of Paul

Acts 9:1-9

Larry Scott

The conversion of Paul is one of the greatest dramas of the entire Bible. It is built around three acts and seven scenes. This study is a journey into the dramatic events that make up these scenes

Act 1 Scene 1:

Stephen speaks in the Cilician Synagogue. Paul is selected to respond in rebuttal .

Act 1 Scene 2:

Stephen stands before the 70 of the Sanhedrin as false witnesses accuse him of blasphemy. The Jews take Stephen out to be stoned.

Act 2 Scene 1:

Outside the city wall, they stone Stephen the deacon. Saul of Tarsus presides over the execution. Saul is impacted by the look of glory and peace on the face of Stephen as he dies.

Act 2 Scene 2:

Stephen is given the burial of a great leader. Saul of Tarsus is at a loss because he thinks this is the end of this radical upstart called

“Christianity”. His rage is not satisfied, so he begins to torment the church.

Act 3 Scene 1:

These fanatical “Christians” are now faced with a foe who is like a ravenous wolf. His name is Saul of Tarsus. He strikes the church with the force of an army, sending countless men, women, and children to be tortured and eventually to their deaths. Yet God is about to shake this young rabbi’s heart and turn his world upside down.

Act 3 Scene 2:

Now in the room of Saul, we see that his heart is tormented by the death of Stephen. Saul is violently warring in his soul with the witness of Stephen’s words of testimony and the grace that this young deacon had at his stoning. Saul is tormented in his heart by his own faith.

Act 3 Scene 3:

On the way to Damascus, Saul’s venom is not yet spent. He goes to crush the church. Little did he know that on this road it would be Saul who would be crushed by the glorious visitation of the Messiah.

Basic Training

The Early Journey of the Apostle Paul

Richard Wilson

Where do you go when your journey begins? For Paul there was an indescribable experience on the Damascus Road. Now that the experience was behind him what was the next step?

This is the question we all have to answer somewhere along the way. Where do we go after the journey begins?

Paul did not take short cuts. Yes, he was the "Apostle Paul" but he spent many years getting ready to be God's missionary to the world. What needs to be known about Paul is that he did not go directly from Damascus Road directly to the mission field. For Paul, this was a three step journey. We must realize that we don't jump from the beginning of our walk to the final destination. There is a process and we are all somewhere in the middle of it.

What is this process? The three parts of the journey are (1) Training in the truth, (2) Building a testimony and, (3) Taking on the task. Paul went through a very distinct process that is described in the first two chapters of Galatians.

The book of Galatians is the first book written by Paul. The opening two chapters are an introduction to the years of Paul between his conversion and the beginning of his three missionary journeys. During these days he learned what it meant to be a Christian. He developed a strong testimony with the Apostles. Then, after many years of development, he embarked on a world wide mission to reach Gentiles for Jesus Christ. Let's examine these steps more carefully.

Step One: Training in Truth

By Paul's own admission he was a "know it all" in the Jewish faith. He was well trained and was considered advanced. In Paul's own words recorded in Galatians 1:14, "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers."

Now, after his conversion, Paul was in new territory. He was a "late comer" to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Paul was in uncharted territory. He was unschooled and unlearned in the teachings of Jesus. Paul's first steps on this journey was to be trained in the truth.

How did Paul go about this? There was no seminary for him to attend. There were no training courses in Jerusalem for him to join. His learning came from two key sources; first from Jesus himself and then from the Apostles.

Walking Alone with Jesus

The Apostle Paul began his training in an interesting way. Paul acknowledges that the source of his learning was Jesus himself.

Paul says in Galatians 1:11-12, "***I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.***"

Paul says something stunning- the truth he passed on to the churches did not come from any man. He received all his initial training from Jesus himself. Paul does not describe the process of this revelation but what is clear is that Paul learned and grew because he spent time alone with Jesus.

What we know is that Paul spent a lot of time alone with Jesus during his formative years as a Christian.

There is no substitute for time alone with Christ. The truth is that we will grow more in our time alone with Christ than we ever will sitting under sermons or teachings. Personal time with God is when the Holy Spirit impresses His truth upon our hearts.

Learning From Mature Believers

While Paul learned much while being alone with Jesus, he was not an island. Paul also came under the spiritual training of people who had been with Jesus. Paul may have been a Jewish scholar with a Ph.D., but a common fisherman named Peter knew much more about Jesus.

The Bible tells us in Galatians 1:18 that Paul went up to Jerusalem to meet with the Apostle Peter and also James, the brother of Jesus, "***Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles-only James, the Lord's brother.***"

It took Paul a long time before he began to connect with the Apostles. Our verse says that it was three years before he went up to Jerusalem to meet with the Apostles. When in Jerusalem, Paul met with the pillars of the church. Paul was the leader of the Church. Near him in importance was James, the brother of Jesus.

During these fifteen days in Jerusalem, Paul sat under the teaching of Peter and then James. Paul was probably examined in both lifestyle and in doctrine. The truth is that Paul did not go to Jerusalem to teach Peter and James but rather to come under their teaching.

We also need to come under the teaching of other believers. Indeed, we are to learn from time alone with Christ but we also need good teaching. This was an essential part of the early church. The Bible says in Acts 2:42, "**They devoted themselves to the apostles teachings. . .**"

We must devote ourselves to teaching and training through Bible studies, sermons, classes and books to grow deeper in our faith. We need what other Christians have learned. We learn and grow when we are willing to look to those who are ahead of us in the faith.

Step Two: Building a New Testimony

It would be an understatement to say that Paul had a colorful testimony prior to coming to know Christ. His testimony was powerful and compelling. But what about after becoming a Christian? People knew nothing about Paul. It was in the days after his conversion that he began to build his new testimony.

Galatians 1 does not tell us all the ways that Paul developed his new testimony but we do see the end result.

Look closer at Galatians 1:22-24, "***I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. And they praised God because of me.***"

There are three things to learn about Paul's new testimony:

First, no one knew Paul. ^{Previously known} Paul's life was an open book to most who met him. People did not know the terror of Paul from earlier years. Paul was basically unknown to the churches. Who was Paul? Paul was a preacher of the Gospel. The testimony that mattered was his current testimony of faith in his life. The testimony that matters the most right now is your testimony of faith. Your conversion is important but what people need to hear is about how Jesus is at work in your life today. People may not know you but they will be inspired by your testimony of daily faith.

A perfect example of this is a speaker you hear at a conference. You may never have heard of the person speaking but their story of faith touches your life. You praise God because of their testimony. The same was true with Paul. People did not know him, but his story stirred faith in others.

Second, the report about Paul was compelling. ^{The head of the report - change} Paul had a story to tell. His story was a story of the past and also a story of the present. God rescued him from a life of persecuting the church in hatred and gave him a new life of proclaiming the gospel. Your story is a story of both the past and the present. Both the past and the present are needed to have a complete testimony.

Third, the result of his testimony was praise to God. People heard Paul's testimony and they praised God. Paul's story led people to a deeper understanding of the life changing power of God. Your story should draw people to a deeper faith in Christ.

In the end, Paul developed a ***new spiritual reputation***.

The fact is simple; we have two testimonies- we have the testimony of what we were before Christ. We also have the testimony of our life of faith. After we become Christians we begin to build a new testimony of faith. Your testimony of faith is your new spiritual reputation. This new testimony is being rewritten each day we walk in faith. This new testimony tells of our journey with Christ. Every day lived for Christ is a new chapter to your testimony. Paul was on a journey and he always told his story. Paul had a brand new testimony.

Part Three: Taking on the Task

The third part of Paul's early spiritual development is what we know best about Paul. Paul accepted the task that God had for him. Long before Paul became the missionary he was trained in the truth and built a new testimony of faith in Jesus Christ.

Now Paul was ready to take on the task that God had for him. Paul says in Galatians 2:7, "***. . . I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. . .***" Look at some of the things we can learn about Paul's new task:

"I had been entrusted" ^{w/ the task} These words reveal that Paul was entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel. Why was he entrusted with the Gospel? The reason was because he had taken the journey of faith. Paul had learned the truths of the Gospel and he had built a new testimony of faith that demonstrated that he was trustworthy. Paul could be trusted as a messenger of Jesus Christ.

"Preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles." When Paul was converted many years earlier, it would have been hard to image Paul as a missionary to the Gentiles. What did God do? God used the training process in Paul's life to prepare him for a different kind of ministry. God has a task for you:

He will lead you on a journey of faith to prepare you.
He will bring you to the point where He trusts you.
He will give you a task that stretches you.
He will give you a mission that fulfills you.

God will take you through the difficulty of basic training and then send you into the field ready to fight. Paul emerged from the years of his training as a mighty warrior for God- ready to fight- ready to win.

Paul's Growth Through A Thorn

Charles M. Wilson
2 Corinthians 12:7-10

7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
(NIV)

This lesson will explore one of the most famous statements made in Scripture. Application will be made to fit our current circumstances.

Paul had experienced the spiritual power of Christ. God had given Paul deep and intimate spiritual experiences. Mountaintop walks with God can lead to danger. It was true of Paul; it is true of us! For Paul the danger was that he might begin to think too highly of himself; therefore God allowed "a thorn in the flesh" to enter Paul's life.

I. The problem - "a thorn in the flesh."

A. The thorn is not named!

1. Paul saw the thorn as a "messenger of Satan."
2. The thorn tormented Paul.

B. There is speculation about the thorn.

1. It brought constant attack from Satan.
2. Perhaps it was opposition from men.
3. Maybe it was failure in the realm of evangelism.
4. Perhaps it was physical suffering.

II. The passage in the context of physical suffering.

2 Corinthians 12:10

That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- A. Suffering "in weaknesses."
 - 1. This indicates all kinds of sufferings and weaknesses.
 - 2. This would indicate both moral and physical struggles.
- B. Suffering "in insults."
 - 1. This would indicate ridicule, insult, slander and rumor.
 - 2. You can imagine the inner struggle this would cause.
- C. Suffering "in hardships."
 - 1. This indicates needs, deprivation, hunger, thirst, lack of shelter or clothing.
 - 2. He had been shipwrecked.
- D. Suffering "in persecutions."
 - 1. This would include verbal or physical attacks.
 - 2. Those would lead to abuse and injury.
- E. Suffering "in difficulties."
 - 1. Imagine the tight situations, perplexities, anxious moments, and inescapable problems Paul faced.
 - 2. However, Paul discovered strength in his weaknesses.

III. The presentation of his problem before God.

2 Corinthians 12:8

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. (NIV)

- A. Paul prayed.
 - 1. He was persistent.
 - 2. He was specific.
- B. Why would Paul be so hungry for deliverance from this thorn?
 - 1. It bothered him constantly.
 - 2. It distracted him from the work of God.
 - 3. It made him appear weak.

IV. The provision of God for a suffering servant.

2 Corinthians 12:9

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (NIV)

- A. The thorn was not removed. Why?
 - 1. The thorn served a purpose in Paul's life.
 - 2. It was allowed by God to keep Paul "from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations", 2 Corinthians 12:7.

- B. God provided sufficient grace to see Paul through each day.
 - 1. The word "sufficient" means the power and strength to withstand any danger.
 - 2. The word "grace" is the undeserved favor of God. God would give Paul all the love, blessings and presence he needed at any time and any place.

- C. Paul learned that God's power was made perfect in Paul's weakness.
 - 1. A self-sufficient man does not need God.
 - 2. When this man recognizes his lack of power, he needs God.
 - 3. God responds with help, provision and power.

- D. Paul's faith statement is revealed in the latter part of verse 9..
 - 1. Paul learned that infirmities and weaknesses have a purpose in God's plan for our lives.
 - 2. The power of God is revealed in suffering.
 - 3. Focus for a moment on the word "rest."
 - a. It means to fix a tent upon.
 - b. The power of Christ shields the believer just as the Shekinah glory of God rested upon the Tabernacle.

- E. Paul's victory statement is revealed.

2 Corinthians 12:10

That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (NIV)

1. God wanted to teach Paul to live "for Christ's sake."
2. Each act of suffering gave Christ the opportunity to infuse power into Paul.
3. Paul's weaknesses gave Christ the opportunity to prove Himself.

F. The following passages are proof that Paul learned the lesson.

1 Corinthians 1:27

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. (NIV)

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Ephesians 3:7-9

7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.
8 Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. (NIV)

Ephesians 3:20

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, (NIV)

2 Timothy 1:11-12

11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.
12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. (NIV)

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 can be summed up by the following statements:

1. Spiritual blessings are more important than physical ones.
2. A "no" answer to prayer does not mean that God has not met our need.
3. Weakness is strength if Christ is in it.
4. There is sufficient grace to meet every need.

Paul's Growth Through Defeating Strongholds

Charles M. Wilson

Colossians 3:1-17

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

- 3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.
4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.
5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (NIV)

This lesson will focus on an aged old question of the spiritual life: Why do I continue to commit the same sin time and time again?

I. We begin by defining strongholds.

- A. There are physical strongholds.
1. These are places with strong defenses.
 2. They are very secure places.
 3. The vault at Fort Knox, Kentucky would be an example.
- B. There are spiritual strongholds.
1. These are areas in your spiritual life where you feel that you are not free.
 2. You are not free due to sinful choices that you have made time and again.
 3. These sins are not forced upon you.
 4. You chose to go against the will of God.

II. Let's continue with the detection of spiritual strongholds.

- A. Is there something in your life that is not Christlike?
1. God brings you under conviction.
 2. You confess the sin to God, agreeing with Him that it is not Christlike.
 3. You turn away from the sin.
 4. You have experienced God's forgiveness and cleansing.
- B. For a short while, you walk in spiritual victory.

1. However, temptation comes. You resist.
2. The temptation returns and you give in. You sin again.
3. You had no intention of committing this sin.
4. You had confessed it, repented of it and basked in the joy of your clean walk with God.
5. But you have sinned again, in the same way as before.
6. This pattern is repeated - often.
7. If this is true, there is a spiritual stronghold!
8. This is an area of your life in which you have erected a strong defense.

C. The following are some examples of spiritual strongholds:

1. Grief; worry; anger; bitterness; laziness; holding grudges
2. Pride; lust; disobedience; greed; hypocrisy; gossip
3. An ungodly habit; praylessness; lack of Bible study
4. Lying; a lack of forgiveness; slander; filthy language
5. Each of these is listed in the Bible as acts of the sinful nature.

III. How do we demolish spiritual strongholds?

A. The word demolish is a military word.

1. It means to take down; to totally destroy.
2. When you demolish a spiritual stronghold you have won the war not just a battle.

B. Pay attention to the word fight.

1. This is another military term that focuses on offensive weapons.
2. Paul learned that he had to go into the camp of the devil and do battle.
3. Remember the story of David and Goliath.
4. The Israelites could only think about the giant.
5. David went into the battle with his eyes firmly fixed on God.

1 Samuel 17:37

The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you." (NIV)

C. Pay careful attention to the word weapons. Paul states that our

weapons are not the weapons of the world.

1. A growing believer will choose each day to be sold out to the will, way and work of God. This is obedience.
2. The Word of God is a weapon that has divine power to demolish strongholds.
 - a. Read your Bible every day.
 - b. Go beyond reading to a comprehensive study of the Bible.
 - c. The Bible is your textbook for spiritual warfare.
 - d. Remember Jesus in the Wilderness Three times He used Scripture to combat temptation.

Proverbs 2:1-5

1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,
2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding,
3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,
4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,
5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. (NIV)

- (1) A growing believer is teachable.
- (2) A growing believer has an intent to obey.
- (3) A growing believer has mental discipline.
- (4) A growing believer has prayerful dependence.
- (5) A growing believer has diligent perseverance.

3. A growing believer will run from the source of temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13-14

13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.
14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. (NIV)

Colossians 3:1-3

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.
2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.
3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (NIV)

Colossians 3:5-8

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. (NIV)

4. A growing believer will use all the power that God has given him.

Revelation 12:11

11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.(NIV)

- a. The shed blood of Jesus is the emblem of everything Jesus did for us on the cross.
- b. The word of testimony is our reminder to Satan that we belong to the Kings of Kings and Lord of Lords!
- c. We must be willing to sacrifice our will, way and work for His, even to the point of dying to self.

Colossians 3:9-17

9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

11 Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (NIV)

I have discovered great insight from Day 27 in Rick Warren's book, The Purpose Driven Life.

Someone Turn the Lights On!

Romans 7 / 8

*A look into the struggle between the
two natures of the believer*

Larry Scott

Introduction:

Light exposes dirt. The closer we get to Jesus, the more we will have to deal with “hidden sins”. Paul gives us a glimpse of how the law acts as a spiritual light that reveals the nature of sin born in each of us.

Illust.: Flashlight***

What the light can and cannot do:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Illust.: The law is like a ruler used to measure

The affects of Paul’s efforts to keep the Law of God

**Rom. 7:14-ff

Illust. : Our plight is like that of an Alcoholic / Drug Addict

There is hope! Paul opens our eyes to this hope by “turning on the lights” at the end of Chapter 7 and into Chapter 8 (1-15)

Learning to Fight!

Michael Sims

Fighting is necessary! Unfortunately in today's world children have to protect themselves from bullies, women have to protect themselves from muggers, and nations have to protect themselves from terrorists and its enemies. Fighting is a real part of today's world, but unfortunately it has disappeared from the Christian world. War has fled our thinking when it comes to spiritual matters. But Paul knew the necessity to know how to fight, not against our brothers and sisters, but against the 'powers of darkness.' Spiritual warfare is an important lesson Paul based much of his teaching on.

Realize you have an enemy:

In Hebrew word for Satan means "adversary." Enemy by his very name.

He is the devil (**1 Peter 5:8**), dragon (**Revelation 12:9**), the evil one (**Matthew 13:19**), the serpent (**Revelation 20:2**), the god of this world (**2 Corinthians 4:4**), the ruler of this world (**John 12:31**), and the prince of the power of the air (**Ephesians 2:2**).

Realize the enemy's tactics:

Satan and his demons are ruthless. They wear many masks and use many tactics to lure God's people away in order to destroy them. Understanding their battle plan is half our battle.

- **Temptation**

1 Thess. 3:5

"...lest by some means the tempter had tempted you,"

- **Deception**

2 Cor. 11:14

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

- **Spiritual Blindness**

2 Cor. 4:4

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not,"

- **Opposition**

1 Thess. 2:18

"Therefore we wanted to come to you — even I, Paul, time and again — but Satan hindered us."

- **Persecution**

Rev 2:10

"Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution,"

▪ **Accusation**

Rev 12:10

"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down"

Eph 6:13-18

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

Personal protection is strategic and necessary:

Paul lists personal protection first in his battle plan. Knowing how to defend yourselves from your enemy first, engaging in offensive battle second.

1. Gird your waist with truth

- The belt keeps you from falling on your face in times of battle.
- Truthfulness/honesty/sincerity should be the primary focus of the Christian's heart.
 - i. John 4:23 *"in Spirit and in truth,"*
- Truth is the first step before things get intense.

2. Put on the breastplate of Righteousness

- A breastplate protects all the vital organs necessary for life.
- Righteousness is 'the sense of conformity to the demands and obligations of the will of God,' (New Bible Dictionary, Marshall, Millard, Packer, Wiseman)

3. Shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace

- Greaves protected soldiers' feet and legs from traps set out by the enemy...it gave them a leg to stand on.
- The preparation of the gospel of peace, I believe, means the readiness to withstand attacks by way of enemies attacking the gospel of Christ.
- 1 Peter 3:15 "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear,*"

4. Above all, take up the shield of faith.

- The shield was the most important part of the battle gear. It was full body length, mobile, and sturdy.
- Heb 11:1 "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*"

5. Put on the helmet of Salvation.

- The helmet protects one of the most valuable body parts from a number of weapons.
- 1 Thess 5:8 "*But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*"
- As a soldier must have a hope for victory in the midst of battle, so a Christian must have a hope of salvation in the midst of battle.

Defense isn't good enough. We must fight back!

6. Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God

- No soldier would imagine going to battle without weapons. The sword was what made the soldier.
- Heb 4:12 "*For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*"
- The Word of God is the very weapon that Jesus used in one of His fiercest battles, His temptation in the desert.

7. Pray

- Prayer is a weapon in itself.
- Saving the best for last.

Christians have, for years, stood on the side of the mountain taking unnecessary blows, watching the battle take victims left and right. We think that if we stay out of the battle the enemy can't beat us, but in fact that is the very way he conquers us, by making us think that staying on the sideline is the answer. We have got to put on our armor to defend ourselves. We have got to take up our weapons and fight. Paul knew that Christianity isn't a walk in the park. It is an intense, fierce battle that rages every day. And as he told the Ephesian Church, unless we consciously engage in battle with the forces of Satan we will continue to give ground in our personal spiritual lives as well as our church's. The war is won, but individual battles can still be lost long after victory.

What Would It Take? Paul's Passion For People

Richard Sanders

How do we view people in our everyday lives? Would Paul agree with our view or disagree? What would it take for us to view people through the eyes and heart of God on a consistent basis, day in and day out?

What is it going to take for us to have a passion for people? Paul's life has what it takes and we are going to see what his advice is to us in the 21st century.

1) IN ORDER TO HAVE A PASSION FOR PEOPLE, REMEMBER WHAT WE HAVE AND HAVE NOT RECEIVED. *Rom 5:17-21*

- a) In his letter to the Romans, Paul reminds his audience of what they have and have not received. Roman believers have received righteousness with God, and they have not received the penalty of death and dismemberment. v12,17

*12 When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. NLT
17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. NIV*

- b) If a man, Adam, can have such a huge affect on humanity, then imagine what God's son, Jesus, could do for humanity.
- c) For us today as Christians Paul is saying that we *have received* grace and mercy, (grace - received what we have not earned and mercy - have not received what we have earned) but for Non-Christians today, they are only *offered* the righteousness of God and they *are destined* for death.
- d) Let us not forget there is a difference between us and the unsaved. You and your unsaved neighbor have parallel lives from birth until you became spiritually born again. Then the road took a split and your destinies were eternally altered.
- e) Paul is reminding us of how God sees all humanity from birth. We are all lost beyond hope because we were all born with the curse of death passed down from one man, Adam.
- f) *Illustration*: Death sentence is horrible for anyone to even think about. We were all born into a death sentence. We see people every day waiting for spiritual electric chair or lethal injection.
- g) How does your view of people line up with God's view of people? Do you believe that people are cursed to death because of one man's minor mistake thousands of years ago? Is the electric chair really the end of a good person's life?

- h) If the death sentence is true for everyone, then what is it going to take for us to rescue friends, family members and coworkers out of the destiny of eternal punishment?
- i) How often does this affect our hearts and emotions on an everyday basis? Have we forgotten what is going to happen to those people who are not in a right relationship with God or are we more satisfied that we don't act as bad as them?
- j) The difference between Christians and the rest of humanity is what we have and have not received; which we must remember in order to have passion for the lost.

2) IN ORDER TO HAVE A PASSION FOR PEOPLE, RECOGNIZE OUR ROLES IN RECONCILIATION. II Cor 5:14-21

- a) Paul is sharing with the Corinthian believers that he and his brothers now recognize people differently than how the world sees them.

16 Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. NASU

- b) Each person is not just another human being, but there is a soul and they will be facing eternity.
- c) My professor at Moody Bible Institute told us our role was to think about every person that we encounter as a living spirit, not just a body.
- d) When we recognize people with a death sentence on their lives, we will begin to comprehend the passion Paul has for reconciling people to God.
- e) One example of Paul's extreme passion for helping people get right with God can be found in v20.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. NASU

- f) This would be considered humiliating and a sign of inferiority and weakness in our culture.
- g) *Illustration:* Paul's compulsion for the lost can be illustrated partially. Imagine sitting in a courtroom with an ex-convict US citizen on trial and about to be sentenced to death for a crime that they have already served time for and you knew they were paid in full. Everything in you would be wanting to yell out, "this isn't fair, take this person out of court, there punishment has been paid for."
- h) We need to recognize that we are in this situation everyday. Jesus has already paid the death penalty for people that are walking by us everyday, and we have lost the passion to reach out to them and tell them of their choice for freedom. There should be a law against it because it is just

short of abortion. Innocent victims are facing death and are not being told of their right to life. Christians have the message of freedom and eternal life to change a destiny of shackles and eternal punishment. What is it going to take for you to have a passion for people like the Bible calls us to through Paul?

- i) We are too consumed with our own personal freedom to care about the horrible silence that is allowing people to be put to death. Maybe we only accept others who are like us and avoid or make no effort to spend time with those ex-cons who are sentenced for death and don't know they have been forgiven. We like to only be with the ex-cons like us who know and accept they have been forgiven and act like we do. What if God only accepted those who were like Him and made no effort to spend any time with us? Was it natural for God to spend time on earth among people not like Him? How much of an effort did He make to make people like us right with a God like Him? How much do we care to recognize our role in reconciliation everyday?

CONCLUSION:

If we are going to have a passion for people in the world, we must remember what we have and have not received. We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. If it weren't for one incredible God-man, Jesus, we would all be in the same position as our unsaved neighbors and friends. May we keep fresh on our minds the sacrifice Christ made for us to be right with God.

Practical Steps:

- Participate mentally and emotionally in communion at church.
- In your prayers, thank God the *Father* for sending His only son before bringing Him your want list. Meditate on how God the Father must have felt
- Thank Jesus specifically in your prayers for the suffering He went through to save us.
- When you are tempted to avoid someone because they don't measure up to your personal preferences, remind yourself that Jesus died for all human sin.

Secondly, we must make the effort to recognize our roles in reconciliation. How do we view others? Do we really believe that they are dying and going to Hell if they don't hear the good news and be born again? Does this make any difference to us still? How would you compare yourself to Paul's passion for people to be reconciled?

Practical Steps:

- Begin to initiate conversations with people; start by smiling and noticing people, holding doors, shaking people's hands; then start asking general questions about the weather, automobiles, the stock market or whatever is in the news and eventually get around to asking about where they go to church and let the Holy Spirit lead you from there. When

- your spiritual radar is up, God will bring opportunities into your path. Prayer and a passion for the lost must precede this effort. WARNING this step may involve getting a Doctorate, but Rich and Larry can assist you then.
- Go people watching in a crowded place for about 30 minutes and think about every person that goes by as God would see them. They are a living spirit that is destined to hell until they hear about the good news and receive a new nature.
- If you don't have many Non-Christian friends, ask God to break your heart for the lost. Then join a club, find a hobby, volunteer, use the same gas station and go inside to pay so you will have contact with the cashier, find a partner to do evangelistic surveys with at the Flea markets or wherever until you get kicked out, or etc. Find some way to rub shoulders with the same folks every week in order to build a relational bridge that will allow you to share Christ.

Now you have some tools to know what it takes to have a passion for people; how are you going to use these tools and fulfill one of God's greatest purposes for your life?

The Passion of Paul

The Driving Force of the Apostle Paul

Richard Wilson

Paul was a man of great passion. This is seen in the way that Paul never did anything half-way. Paul put everything he had into all that he did. No one could question his passion.

It could be said that Paul was driven. He was driven to reach the goal that Christ had placed before him. He refused to settle for anything less than what God had for him.

This lesson will examine the passion of Paul as seen in Philippians 3.

First: The "Not There Yet" Passion

Some time back the luxury car company Lexus introduced the advertising slogan, "The Relentless Pursuit of Perfection." While their car was excellent, it was not perfect. Paul adopted the same kind of idea for his own life. Paul "aimed high." He did not become complacent in his walk. His passion was to be like Christ. Paul was not afraid to use the word "perfection." He knew that until he was perfect that the goal had not been reached.

The pursuit of perfection fueled a passion. He knew he was not there yet. Because of this, he kept pushing forward with a passion.

Paul tells us in Philippians 3:12, "***Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.***"

What is Paul saying? He tells us two things:

"I am not there yet"

Paul had a good understanding about where he was in his spiritual life. When he was a young Pharisee, he was filled with arrogance. He saw himself as perfect. By his own admission in the same chapter Paul says in verses 5 and 6, "***. . .in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness (faultless).***" Now Paul says, "***Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect.***" Paul knew that he had not obtained "all" of the things of the Christian life. This means that there was more ground to cover.

Paul also says that he was not perfect. ^{Not Now} This is a man, who at one time in his life, viewed himself as perfect. When Paul looked at Jesus he understood the nature

of true perfection and he knew he was not there. For Paul, the fact that there was still ground to cover fueled his passion to move forward in his faith!

Type A FAITH

"I have a passion to get there"

Paul now tells us, "**but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.**" With great passion, Paul reached out for what was ahead of him. What does it mean when Paul says that he wants to take hold of what Jesus had taken hold of for him? Jesus had taken hold of perfection for Paul. Paul was more determined than ever to reach for the goal of being like Jesus Christ. This was his consuming passion. There was spiritual ground to cover and Paul had a passion to discover it. Paul wasn't there but he had a passion to get there!

SAME view on new territory - Pharaoh's death

Do you have a passion to go where you have never been spiritually? Guess what? You can go there!

Second: The "Letting Go, Going Forward" Passion

The second passion of Paul's life was to let go of the past and then go on toward the future. Paul was well aware of his past. He made no excuses about his former life. He knew just how bad things had been. Every time he looked over his shoulder, he saw his ugly past. Still, Paul knew that he could not live life looking back over his shoulder. He had to go forward. → → →

Paul's "Letting Go, Going Forward" passion is best seen in Philippians 3:13, "**one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. . .**"

The tense of this verse reveals that this was an ongoing process for Paul. He was "forgetting" and "straining" at the same time. Both sides of this spiritual equation were unfinished. We already have learned that Paul had not arrived, so he had yet to reach the goal ahead of him. On the other side of things, Paul had not completely separated himself from his past.



"Forgetting"

Part of the spiritual process is moving on from the past. Paul's past was filled with pride, arrogance, self righteousness, and even murder. I am sure there were times when Paul's past woke him up at night. Paul was in the process of forgetting. While Paul could not erase the memory of his failures, he could live in such a way that his past did not destroy his present or future.

DAD'S Illustration: Moving Away from the Past

Too many Christians live bound up by the past. Paul knew the riches of God's grace. He knew the truth reflected in the words of the hymn:

Grace, grace, God's grace
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within
Grace, grace, God's grace
Grace that is greater than all our sin.

file it all up!
still more grace

Remember, your past has passed you by- it is no more. The things of old are covered by God's grace. Yes, the past hurts. The past may even be embarrassing, but it is behind.

"Straining"

The second part of this spiritual equation was Paul's straining for what was ahead. The idea contained in the word "straining" means to "stretch forth." Paul was reaching, stretching, straining for the spiritual things ahead of him. Paul was passionate about his spiritual future. He wanted all that God had for him. He refused to be bound by his past or complacent in the present. He wanted all that God had to offer.

CAN'T STAND w/o forgetting the past
STRAIN

Rare

Do you have a passion for all that God has to offer? Do you want more than what you have today? Let that desire become the fuel for your spiritual life. Let go of what binds you and with passion stretch out to grab what God has for you.

Same Passion

Third: The "Redirected" Passion

Hebrews 12 - let go - reach out

The last passion revealed in Philippians 3 is a "redirected" passion. Paul was a man of passion. This is obvious in the way that he pursued with passion the things of Judaism. Paul put everything he had into all that he attempted.

He Had
Passion
in
This
area
needed

This passion showed its dark side when he began to persecute the church. Paul acted with passion against the early church. He used the system to gain permission to persecute Christians far beyond Jerusalem.

After Paul's conversion, he applied that passion toward the cause of Christ. It is as if Paul accepted the Great Commission as his own personal commission and he set out to accomplish the task. This passion drove him to all parts of the Roman Empire. This passion led to the starting of churches. This passion enabled him to stand before kings and rulers and proclaim the message of Jesus Christ.

Caesarea -

This new, redirected passion is seen in Philippians 3:14, "**I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**"

This verse is so familiar to Christians. This verse reveals the true passion that Paul had for the things of Christ. Still, the English does not reveal the fullness of what Paul was saying.

The words translated as "press on" come from the Greek word "dioko." "Dioko" is usually translated as "persecute" in the New Testament. When Jesus called Paul on the Damascus Road Jesus used the word "dioko" when he said, "**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?**" Interestingly, in this place, this word is translated as "press on."

Paul is making a play on words. In the past Paul persecuted the church (dioko). Now Paul was pressing on (dioko) toward the things of God. What Paul was saying was, "with all the passion I used to go after the church in the past, I now use to go after the call of God." Paul had redirected his passion toward the things of God.

We all have things we are passionate about. When we redirect our passions toward the things of God, great things happen.

If you want to take strides in your Christian life, let your passions come out in your spiritual life. Become passionate about your relationship with Jesus.

Questions to Ponder:

What are you passionate about?

Is there passion to your Christian life?

What would happen if you redirected your passion and applied it to your relationship with Christ?

Do you allow your past to cloud your walk with Christ today?

All for Jesus

Why me Lord?

Learning to navigate through the shipwrecks of life

2 Corinthians 11:17-30

LARRY SCOTT

Introduction: The story of Dr. Chuck Frye

***The question that every believer has asked at one point or another:

5 principles that the Apostle Paul used to guide his soul through the shipwrecks of life.

1. Paul is not disillusioned or confused with God and God's role in his life:

what are the expectations that I have of God?

You've got to have it to please God _____

2. Paul knew that God had not abandoned him:

Times I have felt "betrayed by God" – or "hung out to dry"

The real reason we feel betrayed by God :

3. Paul did not trust the facts of his circumstances:

Paul understood that God is not bound by circumstances , facts, or logic.

**Rom. 4:17-21

How are Abraham and Sarah an example of this principle?

****The key is How will you deal with it when it comes!**

4 .Paul learned to look for the glory of God when God says "NO":

God did not answer all of Paul's request with a yes!

***Paul's thorn in the flesh 2 Cor.12:7-10**

Paul's attitude made the difference in his life of trials. What does my attitude say about me?

The key is to live a YIELDED life. Am I living my life as YIELDED to God? If not what can I do to make it different?

5. Paul knew that Adversity produces spiritual toughness:

When Paul came to the end of his life, after having experienced so much hardship, what gave him his confidence / strength to meet his death?

***Great spiritual character is borne out of great tribulation. Spiritual toughness is developed when life is hard.**

***** Am I in "fighting condition" Why?**

*****Rom.5:3-4**

Paul embraced his trials because he knew what their purposes in his life were. This truth is seen in Acts 27:21-26

Elizabeth Elliot wrote of Paul's ship wreck in her essay called

"Nevertheless, we must run aground"

"Have you ever put your heart and soul into something, prayed over it, worked at it with a good heart because you believed it to be what God

wanted in your life, and finally seen it “run aground”? The story of Paul’s voyage as a prisoner across the Adriatic Sea tells how an angel stood beside him and told him not to be afraid in spite of winds of hurricane force. God would spare his life and the lives of all with him on board ship. Paul cheered his guards and fellow passengers with that word, but added, “Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island”.

It would seem that the God who promises to spare all hands might have “done the job right”. He could have saved the ship, its cargo, as well as all hands. It seems He could have spared them the tiresome struggle of having to make it to land on the wreckage that floated on the raging waters of the hurricane. The fact is, that He did not. nor does he always spare us.

Let us remember, Heaven is not here, it is there. If we were given all we wanted here, our hearts would settle for this world instead of the next one.

God is forever luring us up and away from this one, wooing us to Himself and towards His invisible kingdom that is to come. Surely it is there that we will finally find what we so keenly long for.

Being “ship wrecked” then, is not the end of the world that we so easily believe it to be. But being “run aground” helps us to fight the temptation – the temptation? To become satisfied with being here in this life. To become complacent and to no longer yearn to be there, in that place where the father longs for us to be with him

Now it is clear to our hearts how the Apostle Paul could pen these words.
Phil 4:12-13

12 I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.

13 For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need.

NLT

Paul's Growth Through Prayer and Praise

Charles M. Wilson

Philippians 4:6-9

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things.

9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (NIV)

If anyone ever had an excuse for worrying it was Paul! The believers in Philippi were disagreeing with one another. Euodia and Syntyche were embroiled in a dispute. This dispute was bringing division in the church. The believers in Rome were disputing. Added to all this, was the possibility of Paul's own death!

Yet, some of the most marvelous material on a calm spirit is recorded in the above passage. Truly, this proves that Paul was a growing follower of Christ.

I. Peace comes through prayer.

A. There is a charge.

1. The believer is not to worry about a single thing!
2. The word "worry" means to be pulled in different directions.
3. Humanly speaking, the Philippians had every reason to worry.
 - a. They were suffering persecution - 1:18-19.
 - b. They were facing a disturbance in the church - 1:27,4:2.
 - c. They had some carnal members - 2:3-4; 3:12.
 - d. Some false teachers had joined their fellowship, and they were attacking the cross of Christ - 3:2-3,18-19.
 - e. Some believers were having to struggle for the necessities of life - 4:19.
4. The only way a person can keep from worrying is to receive an injection of supernatural power - the peace of God!
5. God will enable a believer to overcome the trials of life, no matter how terrible and stressful they may be.
6. This does not mean that a believer is not concerned about

- the problems of life.
7. However, there is a huge difference between concern and worry.
 8. Concern drives us to arise and tackle the problem while worry creates all kinds of problems:
 - a. Fear to act; withdrawal; hesitation; cowardice
 - b. Depression; discouragement; a defeatist attitude
 - c. Unplanned action; harmful decisions
 - d. Physical sickness; emotional problems
 - e. Spiritual backsliding; distrust; unbelief
 9. Yet, the charge of Scripture is forceful!

Matthew 6:31-33

31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (NIV)

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (NIV)

- B. The remedy for worry is prayer "in everything." Four distinct words are used.
1. Prayer.
 - a. This refers to special times of prayer such as in devotions or worship.
 - b. This word encourages a set time for prayer.
 2. Petition.
 - a. This refers to the prayers that focus on certain needs.
 - b. We come and lay our need before God as a child - crying, begging, pleading, seeking deliverance.
 3. Thanksgiving.
 - a. This indicates an attitude of prayer.

- b. Despite the trouble, praise erupts.
4. Requests.
- a. This means specific and definite requests.
 - b. We are to lay before God exactly what we need without any thought that we are bothering God.

Matthew 7:7-11

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.
 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.
 9 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?
 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?
 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (NIV)

C. The promise - peace.

- 1. Peace means to be joined, bound, and woven together. It means to have a confidence that God will provide, guide, deliver, strengthen, encourage, and sustain.
- 2. As we walk about in prayer we experience God's peace.
- 3. There is a twofold promise concerning the peace of God:
 - a. It transcends all understanding.
 - (1) It is beyond anything we can ask or think.
 - (2) Imagine the worst possible scenario or even the greatest solution.
 - (3) The peace of God is far greater.
 - b. It will guard the hearts and minds of those in Christ Jesus.
 - (1) "Will guard" is a military term meaning to garrison, to keep guard and protect.
 - (2) The peace of God is like a sentry who guards and protects the most precious possession of God: the believer's heart and mind.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.(NIV)

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (NIV)

II. Peace comes through praise.

Philippians 4:4,8-9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things.

9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (NIV)

A. Paul begins with a command, an imperative, not a suggestion, that we live in a state of rejoicing!

1. The word rejoice here means to be glad.
2. This implies a walk of absolute confidence in the will of God.
3. The word always means just that - always!
4. There are times when our mind becomes clouded and crowded with the circumstances of life.
5. Therefore, Paul has word for us when those times come.

B. We are to think differently.

1. The word think means to consider, reflect, reason and ponder.
2. The idea is that of focusing our thoughts until they shape our behavior.
3. A mind set upon the world and the flesh (our sinful nature) leads to anxiety, worry, emptiness and restlessness.
4. A believer must discover ways to reshape his thinking or he will remain carnal.

Romans 12:1-2

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will. (NIV)

C. Paul gives us guidance for our thought life in verse 8.

1. We are to think on "whatever is true."
 - a. True is used here to describe that which is real and genuine.
 - b. Many things around us are counterfeit.
2. We are to think on "whatever is noble."
 - a. Noble is used here to describe that which is honorable, worthy, revered and highly respected.
 - b. There is a sense of holiness attached to this word.
3. We are to think on "whatever is right."
 - a. Right is used here to describe righteous behavior.
 - b. It has to do with right behavior toward God and man.
4. We are to think on "whatever is pure."
 - a. Pure is used here to describe being morally clean spotless, stainless, undefiled, free from moral pollution, filth, dirt and impurities.
 - b. This means every thought is to be pure.
5. We are to think on "whatever is lovely."
 - a. Lovely is used here to describe pleasing, winsome, kind, and gracious thinking.
 - b. Notice how different this is from critical, grumbling and unkind attitudes.
6. We are to think on "whatever is admirable."
 - a. Admirable is used to describe worthy things of the

highest honor.

- b. We are not to fill our minds with junk but those things that are of good report.

7. We are to think on “whatever is excellent or praise worthy.”

- a. This sums up everything Paul has stated.
- b. If it is excellent, it will motivate us to do better.
- c. If it is praiseworthy, it is worth commending to others.
- d. We cannot afford to waste the mind power that God has given us with thoughts that tear us or others down.

D. The source of Godly thinking is twofold:

- 1. The Bible is one source.

Psalm 19:8-11

8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.

10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
(NIV)

Psalm 119:9-11

9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.

10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
(NIV)

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (NIV)

Proverbs 2:1-5

- 1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,
- 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding,
- 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,
- 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,

5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. (NIV)

2. Examples of others who have a victorious thought life are another source.

Philippians 4:9

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (NIV)

E. The result of a life filled with prayer and praise is revealed.

1. The peace of God will be with you.
2. His peace will be your constant companion.

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful: (NIV)

Finished

The Journey's End

Richard Wilson

A few lessons back - A Journey Has A Beginning

Every journey has an end. For Paul, this was not the end of the journey, just his arrival at his long awaited destination. Paul had a passion for the work Jesus called him to do but he also had a passion to be with the Lord. Paul said, "**We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.**" Paul wanted to go home, but was willing to stay until the work was finished.

Finally, the time came for Paul to go home to be with the Lord. Earlier, we looked at the book of Galatians, believed to be the first book written by Paul. Now we come to 2 Timothy, believed to be the last book written by Paul. This letter comes as Paul's life is in the balance.

As this letter draws to a close it becomes clear that Paul was at the end. On the Damascus road he called Jesus, "Lord" and he had lived and served his Lord faithfully ever since. Listen to the words of a man nearing death. These are not words of regret. These are the words of a weary warrior. These are the words of a victorious servant.

No Regrets

Mission Statement- Summary Statement

In modern business and even in church life, much emphasis has been placed on having a clear "mission statement." This is a statement of purpose for a business or organization. At Oakwood, our statement is simple and direct, "Life With Purpose." A mission statement is a "front end" statement.

What about the end? Have you thought about what is said at the other end of life? It is my belief that every person has a mission statement and a summary statement for life. A mission statement reflects values, actions and ideas that form parameters for life. A summary statement is different. It is a statement that comes at the end of life that accurately reflects a person's values, actions and ideas that have been fleshed out in years of human existence. Reflection of A Life lived

Mission

Paul stated his mission over and over in a variety of ways. His passion for Christ and for the work of his call was clearly stated in each of his letters. Paul wrote in Colossians 3:17, "**And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**" Paul's goal was to live his life for Jesus. He wanted both his actions and words to reflect Jesus.

whatever you do -> Do it All

How did Paul do? We know the whole story and we know that Paul did very well. When Paul's life neared an end, Paul reflected over his days. As he looked back he gave a summary statement. Listen to the words of his statement:

2 Timothy 4:6-8

"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

This is at the end of Paul's life and he knew it. Paul says, ***"I am already being poured out like a drink offering."*** Paul was aware that at any moment his life would be taken from him. Still, Paul knew his journey had been fruitful. Before his life was "poured out" Paul took a moment to summarize his life in terms he had used throughout his ministry. Paul gives us his summary statement.

NUMB. 15
Before The
Sacrifice

What does this summary statement tell us about Paul's journey of faith?

His Journey Was A Fight And Paul Was Willing To Fight It

Paul realized from the beginning that this journey would be a fight. Paul appeared to be a man who was up for a fight but not just any fight. Paul was willing to fight the "good fight." He encouraged Timothy to fight this fight in 1 Timothy 6:12, ***"Fight the good fight of the faith."***

Paul knew this was a fight worth fighting. This was the good fight because he was fighting for the name and mission of Jesus Christ. Paul also knew that his fight was against Satan. Paul helped the church identify its enemy and even gave instructions on how to get ready for battle.

He taught
the church
to fight

In Paul's summary statement he said, ***"I have fought the good fight."*** There is more meaning in Paul's statement than meets the eye. The word Paul chose for fight implies that not only did Paul fight the fight, he was the one who led others to the fight. Paul led the charge like a general into battle. Personally, he was willing to fight. He also helped prepare an army for battle. ARMY

Paul did not back away from a fight. He stood strong before religious leaders, philosophers, rulers and common people. He was willing to stand against a stranger or even a friend if there was need to go to battle. Peter

Paul knew that the battle was not his but rather the Lord's. His orders came from The Commander. As an obedient soldier he followed the orders no matter where they led.

Is it possible that we look to Jesus and pray for the easiest way? We have been misled by a beautiful statement. The statement says, "The safest place is in the center of God's will." Do you think Paul would agree with that statement? I don't think so. I believe Paul would tell us we are in for the fight of our lives. Be ready to fight because this is the only fight that matters. Fight the fight because it is the "good" fight.

His Journey Was A Race And Paul Was Determined to Win

Paul told Timothy that He had finished the race. In previous writings Paul had used the idea of running a race. As Paul ventured across the Roman Empire he witnessed many races that were a part of the Greco-Roman culture. Paul observed that the Christian life was like a race. Paul believed that it was not good enough just to run the race. If you were going to enter a race then enter it with the intention of winning. 156- Entrants - 20 possible winners

Paul promoted this idea in 1 Corinthians 9:24, "**Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.**" underline

How had Paul done in his race? Did Paul run to win? Note the conclusion of Paul's summary statement in verse 8. Paul says, "***Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.***" Paul had set his eyes on the prize and he knew he had finished well.

We know that it is easy to start well; we also know that it is much harder to finish well. We are all running a spiritual race with Christ as our goal and prize. How determined are you to finish strong? Paul might would ask us today, "if you don't want to win the race, then why are you running?"

His Journey Was Tough But Paul Was True To The Faith

Paul did not have an easy journey. Paul was given a task that put him face to face with hardship and opposition. Even in this letter Paul tells about people who lied about him. He tells of people who abandoned him.

Do you even wonder if Paul said to himself at some point, "What's the use? I'm ready to quit!" We all face this temptation during our Christian journey. Some Christians find the journey too tough and they quit. *Shot down Spiritually*

Paul never quit. Rather than abandoning his faith, he kept it. Paul realized that at no time in his ministry did he "pack it in" and abandon his faith. Paul knew others who had abandoned the faith. In 1 Timothy Paul encouraged Timothy to keep the faith when others did not. "***Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.***"

Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. (1 Timothy 1:18-20)

Paul could say in summary of his Christian life, "**I have kept the faith.**" Keeping the faith is more than being faithful when God's blessings are evident. Keeping the faith happens when we are faithful when:

Things don't go smoothly
When my finances are tight
When I don't have answers for all my questions
When things seem unfair
When I do everything I am supposed to do and life is still tough

IN Summary-

Fought The Fight, Run The Race, Kept The Faith - Past Tense

Present tense What would Paul say to us? Present tense
FIGHT THE FIGHT- RUN THE RACE- KEEP THE FAITH

Fight - Run - Keep Repeat of me

CLOSING REFLECTION

If you were in Paul's situation, what would your "Life Summary Statement" say right now?

What do you need to see change in your life for your statement to read differently in the future?

Heaven ->

1 CORINTHIANS 15

42 - 58

I CAN only Imagine...