

Pressing On

Finding Joy in Hard Times

Phil. 3:15-21 November 18, 2018

DAY 1: The Path to Maturity

“Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.”- Philippians 3:15–16

Continuing his call for his readers to turn from their own works, trust in Christ alone, and make knowing Him and His resurrection power their chief end (Phil. 3:1–14), Paul in today’s passage says something that, at first glance, seems unlike him.

1. He obviously wants people to think the way he thinks, but what does he say about the immature believer?
2. Has there been things that you thought early in your Christian walk, that has been “revealed” to be in correct as a “mature” believer?
3. Paul makes it appear as if he is in no hurry to see his audience embrace what he has said about making the knowledge of Jesus and His righteousness the Christian’s ultimate aim.
4. Given Paul’s stress elsewhere that there is no justification and thus no salvation without repentance and faith in Christ alone:
“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.” - Galatians 2: 15,16
5. We know that the Apostle cannot be somehow implying that it is safe to delay turning from our own “righteousness” to the righteousness of our Savior. So, what is Paul less concerned about?
6. It seems there are things that are of first importance, and things that a denial of or a misunderstanding of, does not discredit you from heaven. Are there things that you disagree about with fellow believers?
7. As Paul shows us, the right approach is not to deny that those who differ on secondary matters are brothers and sisters in Jesus. Instead, we must be patient with them, knowing that God will finally show them the way. As long as we all hold fast to what we have attained — the Gospel of justification by faith alone in Christ — we are fellow children of the Father.

DAY 2: Imitate Me

“Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.” – Philippians 3:17

1. It was not uncommon during this time period for teaching to look much different than it does today. Teachers often lectured, but also set an example of how to live and students were called to imitate their teachers. Who is a mentor, or leader that you have tried to imitate in areas of your life?

And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me – Luke 9:23

2. The ultimate call to imitation was by Jesus himself. What is meant by taking up our crosses and following Him?

3. It would have been normal for Paul to ask people to imitate Him, but in other verses He puts conditions on it;

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. - 1 Corinthians 11:1

What is Pauls’ condition for imitating him?

4. The issue for Paul was always “Christ and him crucified” but not just in an abstract manner. He wanted his readers to shape their lives after the model of the Savior, who put the needs of others first and was willing to set His own rightful claims aside in serving others.

5. The Philippian believers were not present with Christ when He walked the earth, and they could not therefore imitate what they saw Him do. Yet they could imitate the Apostle whom they did know, and they were to do so in every way that Paul imitated Jesus.

6. Who are Godly men/women that you can imitate as they imitate Christ?

7. Just as the Philippians Imitated Paul as He followed Christ, we can follow Godly men and women in our lives who are clearly shaped by the cross. With the hopes that we can become wise.

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. – Proverbs 13:20

DAY 3: Enemies of the Cross.

“Many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.” Philippians 3:18,19

1. Understanding that Christian living combines facts and practice, Paul knew his original readers would become more like Jesus if they knew what to believe and had noble behavior to emulate. Paul not only commended the imitation of himself as he imitated Christ, he also encouraged the Christians in Philippi to keep their eyes on others who walked in Christ’s way
2. Based on the warnings in these verses, we can conclude that some confessing believers in Philippi had changed the Gospel to allow certain sins to be okay. Do you have any modern examples?
3. Philippi was about a day’s walk from the coast, which made it easy for travelers to find their way to the city. It is likely that some teachers who encouraged others to see divine grace as a license for sin were popping up in Philippi regularly. Paul’s description of their ways tells us that even the ancient church had to deal with those who believed the Gospel does not have any objective, moral implications for the way we are to live.
4. It’s easy for us to believe that the early church was somehow more “pure” than it is today, however, today’s passage shows us that the people of God have always had to deal with the problem of those who use the gospel to justify their own sin.
5. What is the solution, both in Pauls’ day as well as today?
6. In addition to preaching the true Gospel, we must live in a manner shaped by the Gospel. As we live in holiness, imitating others who imitate Christ.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good ... - Matthew 5:14-16
7. What strikes you most from today’s verses?

DAY 4: The Problem of Idolatry

“Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.” - Philippians 3:19

1. What is the first commandment?

2. Throughout biblical history, the idolatry that most of the prophets spoke against was the serving and worshiping of pagan gods. Often, those who worshipped these pagan gods designed images of them, and they constructed altars at high places, sites where these deities were worshipped. Do you know any modern Gods that are worshipped by other religions?

3. Idolatry does not need to be limited to religious practice, it can be anything that we love more than God that we should consider an Idol. Jesus states this sentiment pretty clearly;

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life. – Matthew 10: 37-39

4. Sometimes we find good and noble things that we replace God with as first priorities in our lives. What are some examples?

5. The word for belly in verse 19 is koilia in Greek. It is a term for your guts. We can think of it as “The inner most desires of a man.” I want something so bad I can feel it in my guts. Have you ever felt that way?

2 Tim. 4:7-8 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.

6. Every fallen culture has its idols, and we must be particularly sensitive to what the world is calling us to worship in place of God. Neither sex nor power nor fame nor anything else deserves primacy in our lives. Even things that seem more noble like or family should be second to our Lord and Savior.

7. Thoughts?

DAY 5: Citizens of Heaven

“Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” – Philippians 3:20-21

1. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, explains that not everyone who claims to follow Him is His disciple; rather, only those who do the Father’s will because they are grateful for the salvation that is theirs by faith alone have a place in the kingdom.
2. Professing faith in Christ does not save us but only possessing faith, faith that reveals itself in what we say and do. Good works do not make us righteous before God, but they prove that we have laid hold of Christ’s righteousness by faith.
3. We learned in the previous verses that the Christians in ancient Philippi knew people who professed the name of Christ all day long but whose real gods were their own pursuits. How do we know the difference between a person who possesses a saving faith verse a person who simple professes faith?
4. A citizen of a town, city, or country are supposed to follow certain laws and restrictions, we are also given certain rights as well. How does that apply to being a “citizen of heaven?”
5. All who have a living faith in Jesus Christ enjoy an eternal citizenship in heaven even if we do not presently experience the realities of this citizenship in full. What is the final transformation according to these verses, that we will experience as citizens of heaven?
6. We are justified by faith alone but not by a faith that is alone. Everyone who believes in Jesus alone for salvation will inevitably prove this faith through good works of service to God and neighbor
What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? – James 2:14-16
These works do not save us, but they prove that the faith that does give us heavenly citizenship is present in our hearts. If we have no desire at all to please God, we do not have faith in His Son.
7. What strikes you about today’s verses?