



CAPITOL COMMISSION

TO: *LEGISLATORS / SPOUSES/STAFF*
FROM: *DAN FILE*
DATE: *MARCH 1, 2010(MONDAY)*

WYOMING

Phil. 3:15-17 THE MATURE BELIEVER

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When Paul met Jesus Christ, he realized that all his personal and religious efforts for salvation were a pile of rubbish. God was not impressed with his achievements even if others were. So Paul gives it all up in exchange for “the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” (Philippians 3:8) Salvation was not the end for Paul but only the beginning of a life lived to honor and glorify God. Paul saw his life as “laying hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12) Paul had one driving compulsion to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14) The goal of his life was to be like Christ and Paul pressed hard with energetic endeavor, pursuing with all his might to this end. The final prize, the reward of his race was to be like Christ as he states in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, when he would receive the crown of righteousness. The purpose for which I live is no less. Christ’s purpose in saving me becomes my purpose in living. My life is a lifelong pursuit of God.

I. THE MATURE BELIEVER...PURSUING THE PRIZE! PHILIPPIANS 3:15-17

“Therefore let us, as many are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” Philippians 3:15-17

Once again, Paul begins these verses with “therefore”. The word stresses the importance of what he has just shared with the Philippians by encouraging them to not take their eyes off “the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14) Paul then calls them to maturity emphasizing that the start of the race is not the finish. It is just the beginning. May this be our same goal as we pursue the “prize” of becoming like Christ.

A. PURSUING THE PRIZE...WITH THE SAME ATTITUDE PHILIPPIANS 3:15

“Therefore let us, as many are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.” Philippians 3:15

1. “AS MANY ARE MATURE”- PHILIPPIANS 3:15A

You will remember from our study before that in salvation, our *position* before God is righteous because of Jesus Christ. And yet, we know that we are not righteous in our *practice*. So the goal for the rest of our life is becoming in *practice* what we are in *position* before God. Our race is becoming like Christ which culminates in the prize of the “*imperishable wreath*” of 1 Corinthians 9:25. The goal is being like Christ, the prize is being

Christlike. That is maturity.

“**mature**,” Greek word “**teleios**,” means goal, purpose, idea of completed growth, or fully grown.

Paul begins by saying that “*as many are mature*”, to refer to the true believer. It is one who is pursuing the prize of Christlikeness and is a true follower of Jesus Christ. He knows that the true believer is perfect only in position before God, yet in practice, maturity is a lifelong pursuit.

2. “HAVE THIS MIND”- PHILIPPIANS 3:15B

“**mind**,” Greek word “**phroeneo**,” means to think the same things.

We have seen this word before in Philippians 2:2 and vs.5. Those who are perfect or mature in a positional sense, the true followers of Jesus Christ are called to have this same mind or attitude. What same attitude is that? The attitude of giving maximum effort towards pursuing the prize of becoming like Christ. This is to be our mind as well, not just Paul’s. We are to think this way, think the same thing as Paul. We are called to be intent on pursuing God just as Paul was. Are we??

3. “IF ANY OF YOU THINK OTHERWISE”- PHILIPPIANS 3:15C

Paul goes on to describe people who call themselves Christians and yet are not interested in pursuing the prize of becoming Christlike. The church has many people who are content with where they are and don’t pursue godliness. Paul has done all he could to preach and teach the truth as evident clearly by the book of Philippians. At some point, if people will not submit themselves to Jesus Christ, then it is up to God to reveal that and the Holy Spirit to do the work. There are times when we have a different attitude and only God can motivate us. Often, He will do this through trials, which force us to look at our spiritual attitude. We have been “*laid hold of by Christ*” to pursue Christ. We must not forget that! He is the prize and not other things that press for our time, attention and concentration.

B. PURSUING THE PRIZE...CONSISTENT, STEADY AND UNWAVERING— PHILIPPIANS 3:16

“Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let

us be of the same mind.” Philippians 3:16

Spiritual maturity doesn't happen by intermittent effort but rather demands consistency. Paul begins this verse by saying “*nevertheless*”. It means that Paul has a final thought and wants to emphasize the importance of keep moving along the path.

1. “LET US WALK BY THE SAME RULE”- PHILIPPIANS 3:16C

“rule,” Greek word “**kanon**,” and means in a line, as a rule, continuing to a standard, to a boundary.

To “*walk by the same rule*” then means to follow in line. Believers are to fall in line, submit to a standard, line up and follow God and His Word. It gives the sense of not being all over the page but being consistent, steady and unwavering. We are to stay in step, to be consistent and keep moving ahead. It is used of armies moving to war or to battle. As a runner we are to stay in line and keep running with consistency until we hit the finish. We must pursue Christlikeness with all our might, focusing on nothing else. Does that characterize our lives?

2. “LET US BE OF THE SAME MIND”- PHILIPPIANS 3:16D

Again, Paul uses the word “*phroneo*” referring to having the same mind or to think the same things about the importance of giving maximum effort towards pursuing the prize of becoming like Christ. Paul continually makes the point that our mind, our attitude, our heart is to be set towards this one thing; becoming like Christ.

C. PURSING THE PRIZE...MIMICING GODLY EXAMPLES— PHILIPPIANS 3:17

“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” Philippians 3:17

“follow my example,” Greek word “**summimetes**,” two words meaning come along side and imitate or mimic one another.

Paul encouraged the Philippians to mimic, imitate him. He wasn't placing himself on a pedestal. Rather, he was encouraging the believers to imitate him as he pursued the goal of becoming like Christ. Paul knew he was not perfect and yet we could pattern our lives after his. Scripture records Paul's failures, weaknesses, and struggle with sin. And through Paul's life, God gives us a godly model for struggling with the flesh, how to have victory through temptations, how to serve faithfully, how to live a life that characterizes the fruits of the Spirit in _____ spite of tremendous hardship,

how to work through relationships and the list goes on. Paul is an example to us who believe in almost every area of life in pursuing godliness. He writes in 1 Thessalonians 1:6, “*And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the words in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.*”

Paul called the Philippians to “*note those who so walk*” in Philippians 3:17. In other words, Paul commanded the believers to fix their gaze on those whose daily conduct was according to this godly pattern. There are others that we can come along side and imitate our lives after, but only those who walk according to the godly pattern laid out in Scripture. We need examples of godly and faithful lives to pattern our life after. It encourages and challenges us in our pursuit of Christlikeness.

Lastly, we are then to be an example that others can mimic as well. But, if other believers imitated our lives, would they be closer to the prize of being like Christ? One concern in the church is the lack of godly examples for others to follow. What kind of an example do we set? Let us be a pattern for godliness, for pursuing the prize with maximum effort of being like Christ. Consider the following verses.

- *“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1*
- *“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do and the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:9*
- *“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.” Hebrews 13:7*
- *“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me ... And out of them all the Lord delivered me.” 2 Timothy 3:10-11*

When we become a Christian, we are a new creation with a new heart. We have a new standing with God and are accepted by God because we have the righteousness of Christ covering us. We have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is the power of God at work in us and yet...we have not arrived. We still have an unredeemed flesh to struggle with and we can still be tempted and sin. It's a battle. It's a race to the finish and salvation is the start of that race. We must follow the examples of the faithful before us to pursue the prize of the upward call of God with all diligence till we stand before the Lord one day. Until then, we must “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*” (2 Peter 3:17)