

Broomfield



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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Follow Christ's Example

Steadfast Christianity, Part 9

Upon a first glance at the teaching of Paul and the teaching of James, there appears to be conflict. Paul says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28). Whereas James says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24).

This apparent discrepancy was so serious to Martin Luther, that he concluded that the book of James was not Scripture. Yet the apparent tension between Paul and James is relieved when we understand that while a man is saved by faith alone¹ he is not saved by a faith that is alone.²

When it comes to salvation, we expect that there will be an impact in the way a person lives. A man's motives, goals, daily devotion will be impacted. How he deals with the pain and misery of this world will be affected. What he does with his sin will be affected by Christ!

James 2:18, "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

1 John 2:5-6, "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

Titus 1:16, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

In his famous work *The Reformed Pastor*, Richard Baxter wrote these words:

"As long as men have eyes as well as ears, they will think they see your meaning as well as hear it; and they are apter to believe their sight than their hearing, as being the more perfect sense of the two. All that a [Christian] does, is a kind of preaching; and if you live a covetous or careless

¹ Compare Romans 3:28

² Compare James 2:17

life, you preach these sins... by your practice.”³

It is important that our lives keep up with our doctrine. This is the final concern that Paul addresses in Philippians 4:1-9. As Euodias and Syntyche were struggling to get along, Paul exhorted them and the church in Philippi with the disciplines of peace. In this section we will see how Paul exhorts the Philippians unto a life of emulating Christ.

The Call to Christ Likeness

Philippians 4:9, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, **do**⁴: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

The exhortation is for the Philippians to live out the life presented to them by Paul. This is the idea behind the single word do. It means to practice or exercise. It is a present imperative which means that it refers to continuous action. We get our English word *practice* from this which carries the idea of routine or repetition.

Accordingly, Paul calls the Philippians ever and always to be engaged in the battle for holy living with this qualification — **WHAT YOU SAW IN ME, CULTIVATE IN YOUR OWN LIFE!**

It is not enough to simply profess Christ. It is not enough to say that you love Christ. It is not enough to be able to articulate the gospel. It is not enough to simply know and hold right doctrine. Rather, we must be a people who make it our business to actively reap the character of godliness in our lives!

This is where Christianity becomes difficult.

- God calls me to love — yet how is this to be manifested when it comes to the one who hates the Lord?
- We are exhorted unto holiness in our thought life — yet how is this worked out in an evil age where wickedness is flaunted in broad daylight?
- We are called to meekness and humility — yet what does this mean when I am being physically attacked?
- It's easy to say, “Be holy!” — Yet how much more difficult it is to live it out!

In light of this, you know what is needed, don't you? A working knowledge of how Christ Himself walked! We need a living example of what it means to be Christ Like in all that we do! And that's exactly God's plan when it comes to holy living.

Even though Christ no longer walks this earth, nevertheless His face and affections can be seen in and through brothers and sister! Thus, in order to know what it means to “work out our salvation”⁵ we are exhorted in Scripture to follow the example of godliness laid down for us by men and women of the faith.

Hebrews 6:11-12, “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

³ Richard Baxter, The Reformed Pastor, Soli Deo Gloria Publishing, pages 84-85

⁴ πασσω prasso

⁵ Compare Philippians 2:12

The Hebrew writer encouraged God's people to “mimic” godly examples. Christianity must do far more than simply change our thinking; it must transform our lives! Thus Paul exhorts:

1 Corinthians 4:16, “Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.”

1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

2 Thessalonians 3:7, “**For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us:** for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you.”

Philippians 3:17, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”

We need examples. We need examples of what it means to have grace lived out in a life. Thus in this final appeal — before he brings this epistle to a close — Paul exhorts the Philippians one last time to follow his example!

Now brothers and sisters, this is an important exhortation when it comes to our personal godliness. It is easy to just get on the band wagon of a theological system. It is easy to become enamored with a teaching or teacher. It is easy to become engrossed with a facet of Christianity. It is easy to derive comfort in knowing that we are in accord with Biblical teaching.

However, the ultimate proof of any system, passion, or movement is not solely whether it comports with Scripture (and it must) but does it reflect the standard taught by Paul in our passage? Fidelity to the Scripture is only the beginning point, the bottom line is fruit.⁶

For example if I could present to you a new system of math — apparently logical and seemingly sound — which produced the answer of “5” to the problem of “2 + 2” would you accept it? Or if I could prove to you using physics that there was no such thing as gravity, would you follow my teaching?

Of course not! It doesn't matter how logical something may appear to be if the fruit of my labor yields an answer that does not comport with reality, my system is flawed!

Brothers and sisters, the bottom line of any teacher or teaching is, Is it laden with the fruit of kingdom living?

Hebrews 13:7 (NASB95), “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.”

It is obvious that you wouldn't accept a teacher if he spoke erroneously. Based upon Hebrews 13 it must equally become obvious that we must not accept a teacher or his teaching if his life does not adorn what he says!

We all need to hear this!

It is easy to espouse a teaching. It is easy to claim a vision. It is easy to argue a point. (And depending on how good you are, you may gather a following!) Yet the standard when it comes to validating a

⁶ Compare Matthew 7:20

genuine work of God is that not only what is said must comport to Scripture but what that which is lived out must comport to Christ likeness. If the graces of Christ are not discernibly present, it is not sound.

The Content Validates

Yet, the questions remain: “How do I know if Christ is housed in a speaker?” “We are called to emulate the faith of others; well who ought we to follow?”

Paul answers these questions by giving us the content of what must be lived out in order to be considered one worthy of emulation! He gives the not only the content of what constitutes godliness. He also gives us the content of what validates a ministry, movement, or teaching.

Philippians 4:9, “**Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do:** and the God of peace shall be with you.”

Paul gives us a list of four areas from which the Philippians were to gather their information as to what it means to be Christ like. These are areas which on account of the inspiration of the word of God are the standard for evaluating genuine works of God.

Christ and Him Crucified

The first of these standards is what they learned from Paul. The term learned⁷ refers to the learning that comes from teaching, instructing, and discipling. Thus Paul is referring here to the instruction he gave to the Philippians. Everywhere Paul went he preached a very important message. And what was that message? What had the Philippians learned from Paul? Paul summarized his message many times:

1 Corinthians 1:23, “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

1 Corinthians 2:2, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

Philippians 1:21, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

Philippians 3:3, “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

Family of God, this is the message of Paul. It revolves around Christ and Him crucified! And what does this mean? Simply stated from Romans, it is the glorious message though every man, woman, and child is guilty of sin⁸ and all are without hope, comfort, alone, and bereft and incapable of doing anything about; yet God being rich in mercy⁹ became man, fulfilled the law that Adam violated and gave Himself as a

⁷ μανθάνω manthano

⁸ Compare Romans 1-3

⁹ Compare Romans 4

sacrifice for our sin. It is thus through Christ, God is reconciled to man¹⁰ such that we the sinner now can stand before God blameless, without sin, holy, spotless and pure. Accordingly, Christ has become our all and all.¹¹

This was the message that Paul preached and that the Philippians “learned!” This is the message that must be appropriated into all of our lives if we are to grow in grace. And this family of God is the message which determines a genuine work of God.

Galatians 1:9, “As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

And so we conclude that the epitome of a Kingdom example is one who has this message: Christ and Him Crucified! This is upon what we must live, breath and die.

Year after year this message is preached. Yet, it is amazing to me to discover Christians who hear this message year after year and fail to take head to its content. When they come for counseling I tell them that they are wretched and they say, “I know all that, but I am not as bad as this person says.”

They’ve missed it. You have missed it. Practical Christianity begins with this premise: We are losers. We are wretches. We are zeros outside of Christ. We need to learn to live here and accept this truth.

When we look at the Philippians church and the problem between Euodias and Syntyche we find that they needed to accept this truth. Undoubtedly they believed that they weren’t losers. Euodias had some portion of her life that was stepped upon and hurt. And if she lived in light of this truth she would have remembered that she really was worse then Syntyche said.

We are zeros outside of Christ. No one should be able to step on your pride if you are a zero because you have none.

This is Paul’s point. Our boast is Christ and Him crucified.

Christ and His Life

The second of the terms that Paul uses is received.¹² The emphasis of this word is not what was proclaimed by Paul, but what was brought with Paul. It was not was taught, but what was brought to the Philippians.

Everywhere that Paul went he preached the gospel. He was preaching Christ. Yet he did far more, he brought Christ in tangible ways. Paul brought the heart of Christ with him. He brought the life of Christ with him. He brought Christ Himself to the Philippians and to everyone else.

Paul was not an ignorant fisherman, but a highly educated individual. At age 12 he studied under Gamaliel so that he could become one of the leaders of Judaism. This is how he became a studied Berean believer. Most of us when we think of an educated theologian like Paul think of cold harsh distant rabbinical teaching. Yet in the book of 1 Thessalonians we see the heartbeat of Christ in the life of Paul.

¹⁰ Compare Romans 5:1

¹¹ Compare Romans 9:5

¹² παραλαμβνω paralambano

1 Thessalonians 2:5-12, “For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:
6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.
7 ¶ But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:
8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.
9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.
10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:
11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,
12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”

I read a passage like this and conclude that to sit with the Apostle Paul was to have sat with Christ Himself. Christ’s gentle, humble, gracious manner is what Paul brought to the Thessalonians. Paul brought Christ to them.

The Philippians did not get just a Rabbi, but they received a man who gave his life. He got down on his knees and poured his life out for them. This is the record born out in 1 Corinthians 8. Paul urged his fellow Macedonian believers to stop giving of themselves. Paul told them he didn’t want their money. Yet the Philippian believers had learned Christ from the Apostle such that they continued to give.

1 Corinthians 8:5, “And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”

Do you see the essence of godliness? Do you see the exhortation here? How can there be division? How can there be disunity in the body of Christ where my sole purpose in life is to glorify God by bringing Christ to you in practical humble ways? How can there division?

How can there be any kind of division when I come and lay my heart before you and I say, “I am not here to be blessed, I am not here for you to give me attention, I here to pour my life out for you.” That’s what the Philippians received from Paul.

Thus if you look any ministry, man, any movement that does anything less you are looking at a sham. At best you are looking at something that is weak.

Recently I talked with a brother in our congregation that came here from another denomination. He related to me how in that denomination you never could get to know the leaders. They were always one step removed from the people.

Brother’s and sisters, if this is true, that based upon this passage that movement or denomination is suspect.

But let’s point the fingers at ourselves. I remember in seminary I was taught about the dominie.¹³ The dominie was the preacher who stooped so low once a year to make his pastoral visit in your home. This

¹³ Dominie means teacher. In the Dutch Reformed Church it is equivalent to reverend.

was a big deal. Our reformed heritage likes to place the pastor and leaders up on a pedestal where we can worship them. But if the preacher isn't with his loins girded washing the feet of the saints, he isn't a shepherd or an elder, he is a gentile leader lording it over you...

The standard of ministry in the Kingdom is not sitting back eloquently pontificating on the doctrines of grace, but getting our hands dirty washing the feet of the saints.

This is the challenge that we face. Wash the feet of the saints. Pour your life into other's souls. Let them know Christ. Let them see the face of Christ. Let them see His affections. Let them see these things in the things you do. Let them see Christ in the places that you walk.

Any ministry or movement that results in a different result is suspect.

The third of these is what you heard, and the fourth is seen.

Paul is engaged in summation of the Christian walk. He is saying that our theology is worthless if doesn't drive us to Christ and Him crucified. Secondly our theology must drive us to the longing and passion to pour our lives out for one another. If we miss this we missed the boat. This is what the table of the Lord is all about. Christ pouring His life out for our benefit.

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on March 14, 2004. Greg is the preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.