

## CHRISTLIKENESS

### GROWING IN GRACE RESOURCES

- this morning, we're going to study one of the most important sections in the entire book of Phillipians.

- remember, chapter 3 has been giving a contrast between "self-righteousness" and "Christ-righteousness."

1) the Judaizers had been teaching that you couldn't be saved unless you were circumcised

2) all of us struggle with self-righteous tendencies.

- so it's been important for us to think through this important theme.

- especially from the perspective of identifying, and then putting off, any habits of self-righteousness  
- whether they be habits of thinking, speaking, or behaving

- the great news is that right here in this very passage, Paul gives us the opposite, or the "put-on" for self-righteousness...

- that is, growing in the knowledge of Christ.

- that's his whole point in verses 7-8 *But whatsoever things were gain for me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as but rubbish that I may gain Christ.*

- What's exactly involved in knowing Christ?

1) Rejoicing that we're found in his righteousness alone

2) (this passage also speaks about) Learning about the power of His resurrection.

- people who are growing in their knowledge of Christ are growing in their understanding of just how powerful God is.

3) Willing to partake of His sufferings...

- realizing that some aspects of knowing Christ and living for Him are difficult.

- so as we put off sinful habits of self-righteousness, we stand in a perfect position to grow in our knowledge of, and love for, our Lord

and Savior Jesus Christ.

- let me just mention verse 11, which completes that section, but may leave a question in your mind if we don't touch on it:

*in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead*

- 1) Paul's not questioning whether he will be raised from the dead
  - the KJV makes it sound like he is -- the NASB clears that up

- the point of the verse is -- that will be the climax of the process he's been describing in the entire chapter

- in heaven -- then he'll perfectly KNOW his Savior
- in heaven -- he'll perfectly understand God's power
- in heaven -- he'll be delivered from self-righteousness entirely

- so verse 11 is just a natural climax of all he's been speaking about

- this process will not conclude until I get to heaven.

- now, Paul goes on in these next verses to develop that very idea
  - and in so doing, he explains why this approach to life is so challenging, and so encouraging:

- READ Phil. 3:12-16. *Not that I have already attained it or already become perfect, but I press on so I may lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. (13) Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do; forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, (14) I press on for the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (15) Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; (16) however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.*

- we're titling these verses -- "Christlikeness"

- we're going to organize our outline around "three commands we must follow in order to grow in Christ God's way"

## I. Don't Act Like You Believe You've Arrived

- you'll notice that we've turned this around from what Paul said (in the first person--"I have") to how it needs to affect us (in the second person--"You must")

- the reason we've done that is because that's the way Paul/the Lord would want the verses to affect us...

- we're just "getting a jump on" the application phase.

### A. How Paul practiced this principle

- verses 12 and 13 are in many ways restatements of one another
  - it's almost like laying two transparencies down on top of one another
  - that's the way we're going to be studying them
- INPUT - from verses 12-13, what phrases do you see where Paul makes it clear that he doesn't believe--even as a godly, mature man--that he's done growing.
  - 1) Not that I had already attained it  
(attained what?) - v. 12
  - 2) Not that I have already become perfect - v. 12
  - 3) Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold on it yet - v. 13

- so, there's no question that Paul did not believe he had reached perfection
- it's interesting how this word comes up again in verse 15 (READ)
  - so there's no question that Paul believed he was mature -- he's not discounting that
  - but there's a big difference between "a person knowing they've taken some steps of growth" and a "person believing that they're perfect."

- let's push this one step further:

#### B. Why the Philippians needed to practice this principle

- there's a lot of answers we could give to this
- let's limit it right now to two:
  - 1) there's a real possibility that some in the church may have over-corrected in reaction to the Judaizers and their "works-righteousness"
    - the nature of their over-correction may have been ---
      - we don't need circumcision -- we've already reached perfection
      - we don't need anything!
    - in a sense they would be right, in a sense they

would be terribly wrong.

- they don't need anything for salvation
- they surely hadn't arrived -- they needed to be aggressively growing in Christ
  
- to make their practice match their position!

2) (from Warren Wiersbe) - "A divine dissatisfaction is essential for spiritual progress. 'As the deer panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' (Psalm 42:1-2)"

- that is a very important statement -- A divine dissatisfaction is essential for spiritual progress.

- now, let's move this one step closer to home (in fact -- let's bring it home)

C. Why you and I must practice this principle.

- we're saying -- we must not act like we believe we've arrived.

INPut: What might someone do/not do---  
say/not say---think/not think that would give the  
impression he believed he'd arrived?

- a good question for all of us to consider this morning is -- to what degree does my lifestyle match these three statements Paul is making about himself?

- and what would have to change for my testimony on this subject to be in line with what these verses are saying?

- one of the ways we can tell if we're getting this area under control is if we:

II. Make Growth In Christ Your Highest Priority

- this emphasis comes through in several places:

1) v. 12 - I press on ....

2) v. 13 - I reach forward ...

3) v. 14 - I press on toward ...

- there's no question that this is the emphasis of the passage.
- people who have made it their goal to put off self-righteousness and grow in the knowledge of Christ realize that that is a life-long pursuit.

#### A. The point of the metaphor

- Paul is calling up the picture of a runner in a race
  - the words indicate "intense endeavor"
    - incidentally, this same terminology was used in Bible times to speak of a hunter "eagerly pursuing his prey"
  - but the picture here is of a runner racing toward the goal, with every muscle straining to reach it.
  - the idea is -- "run for all you're worth"
  - many of you have seen posters of famous runners while they're in a race
    - muscles bulging
    - singularly focused on the goal
    - running with all of their might...
  - it's almost embarrassing to think about the amount of effort, and the amount of focus that we often put into growth in Christ---with this kind of a metaphor/picture.
- now, in order to get this done, Paul talks about it from two sides:

#### B. What we must not do

- in verse 13, he says "forgetting the things which are behind"
- he probably has in mind all the things he mentioned in verses 4-6, and even the good things he's done since coming to Christ.
- he's not talking about passively forgetting them...
  - instead, he is going to consciously choose "not to rest on his laurels"

- (Kent) - a conscious refusal to let his past accomplishments absorb his attention and impede his progress.

- the positive side of this is:

### C. What we must aggressively do

#### 1. "lay hold of that for also I was laid hold of"

- that is such a critical concept.
- God saved us for a reason (John 15:16)
  - Believers are wise to get in the habit of asking questions like:
    - Why did Jesus save me?
    - What was His purpose in "laying hold of me?"
    - What does He want to accomplish with my life?
    - Why did he "gift me" the way He has?
    - Why has he put me in this place?
    - Why has He given me these opportunities?
    - Why has He given me these trials?
  - see, what was Jesus Christ wanting to accomplish by "laying hold of me"
    - and to what degree am I accomplishing that purpose?
  - it's amazing that God would save us, and then give us a "choice in the matter" when it comes to the degree to which we will "press on" to be/accomplish the goal that He saved us for in the first place.
  - we would never do that with an employee
    - I'm hiring you to do such/such
      - but you have a choice as to the degree to which you're going to accomplish the purposes for which you were hired.
  - no way -- you're going to accomplish them to the degree to which I hired you or...?
    - you're not going to be paid
    - you'll lose your job

- that's not the way it is with Christ -- at least not in the immediate sense.
- I wonder how often we take advantage of "the arrangement"
  - just because God doesn't give us quarterly evaluations
  - just because He doesn't hold the possibility of losing our salvation over our heads as a way to motivate us
- is it possible that some of us have "taken advantage of God's grace?"
- of course there are long range implications
  - pressing on for Christlikeness is the way to achieve greatest joy and satisfaction in life
  - so, failing to do what Paul is talking about here will ultimately have a price tag.
    - but it won't be immediate - we have a choice

## 2. With a singular focus

- another very important phrase -- "this one thing"
- it is so important for us as we grow to learn how to focus//how to concentrate on the things that are most important.
- life presents so many distractions....there are always things that can take us away from doing what's most important.
- "this one thing"
  - a. "one thing thou lackest" - Mark 10:21
  - b. "one thing is needful" - Luke 10:42
  - c. "one thing I know" - John 9:25
  - d. "one thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after" - Psalm 27:4
- some of us are like the college student who has no focus
  - takes all kinds of classes
  - spends all kinds of time, and all kinds of money

- but in the end has no degree and no job!

- one thing that characterizes Paul's life is a singular focus.

- we have to ask this morning -- to what degree is that true of you?

### 3. with a goal in mind

- verse 14 - I press on toward the goal

- the goal of knowing Christ, of becoming more like Him, of serving Him, of accomplishing what He wants me to accomplish

- is a goal that is to be firmly fixed in our minds

### 4. with a prize in mind

- I Cor. 9:25 - "...but they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible."

- so we're talking about making growth in Christ your highest priority

## III. Even If You Are Maturing, Keep Heading Down This Path

A. You are never too mature - verse 15

B. Live up to the truth you already know - verse 16