

Broomfield



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Follow Christ's Example, Part 2

Steadfast Christianity, Part 10

Some to "Honor" — Some to "Dishonor"

There came a time in Timothy's life when the ministry got the best of him. He was charged with caring for the souls of those in Ephesus. This was a congregation which obviously gave him much grief. So, in a letter to encourage this young minister, Paul wrote these words reminding him that not all are of Christ.

2 Timothy 2:20, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour"

In essence, what Paul says that the church is composed of two kinds of people: the genuine believer and the sham. There are those who love Christ and there are those who love self. There are those whom the Lord uses for His glory, and there are those whom God will spit out of His mouth.

Now of the two, which are you?

Is your presence in the kingdom unto "dishonor?" Is your existence a stench to God? Are you living solely for yourself? Does your life revolve around your wants, desires, conveniences, or needs? Or is your purpose in the kingdom unto "honor" such that when God considers you, He sees a tool that He can use for His glory?

Which are you?

Oh that we might be "useable" to the Lord! Let us present ourselves to the Lord for His service with no preconditions. Let our response to inconvenience, trial, or hardship not disqualify us for any work of the Lord. Let us be like Job, though He slay us, yet we would remain steadfast and immovable in our love and devotion to Him. This was the passion of Paul as he continued in verse 21 to Timothy.

2 Timothy 2:21, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

Paul longed for all in the body to be "useful to the Master." Yet in order to be "useful," Paul knew that holiness. Godliness and Christ-likeness was a must! According to this text, a "vessel for honor" is one

who was “sanctified.” In light of this, listen to the words of Robert Murray McCheyne:

“How diligently the cavalry officer keeps his sabre clean and sharp; every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God's sword, His instrument- I trust, a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.”¹

Here in Philippians Paul continues to exhort believers to Christ-likeness. As Euodias and Syntyche were struggling to get along, Paul reminded them and the church in Philippi of the disciplines of peace. The final discipline stated here is the emulation of godly men and women of the faith.

The Call to Emulate

Philippians 4:9, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, **do**²: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

The simple word *do* means that we are to cultivate these things in our lives. It is God's will to use examples of Christ likeness to encourage the child of God unto godliness.

God calls us 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 is easy to say, “Be holy!” Yet how much more difficult it is to live it out! And yet, this is where examples of godliness come in. Even though Christ no longer walks this earth, nevertheless His face and affections can be seen in and through brothers and sisters! So, in order to know what it means to “work out our salvation” (Philippians 2:12) we are exhorted in Scripture to follow the example of godliness laid down for us by men and women of the faith.³

As a final appeal before he brings this epistle to a close, Paul exhorts the Philippians to cultivate a life which is characterized by the example he set before them!

This raises these questions: What was the example and what does it mean to be a godly person?

The Content of Emulation

Philippians 4:9, “**Those things, which ye have both learned⁴, and received⁵, and heard⁶, and seen⁷ in me**, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

¹ Robert Murray McCheyne as quoted in *Lectures to My Students*, Charles H. Spurgeon, page 8

² πρᾶσσω prasso

³ Compare also Hebrews 6:11-12, 1 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1-2, 2 Thessalonians 3:7,; and Philippians 3:17

⁴ μανθάνω manthano

⁵ παραλαμβάνω paralambano

⁶ ἀκούω akouo

⁷ εἶδω eido or οἶδα oida

With this Paul, as it were, draws a circle of what constitutes godly living. This is a circle which contains four quadrants. If the Philippians ever were to get over their petty fights, they needed to appropriate into their lives each of these elements..

Learned

The first element is what they learned from Paul. This references what Paul taught when he was among the Philippians. Paul summarized the message that he preached, “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23). In the next chapter he taught this: “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

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 revolved around Christ and Him crucified! Thus, it was this message that the Philippians were to appropriate into their lives!

This means that the true man of God is one whose life revolves around Christ and the cross. It means that the mark of personal godliness is the presupposition that without Christ I am a loser.⁸ It means that I realize that my heart is deceitful above all else- and indeed desperately wicked.⁹ It means that I realize that I was born for trouble.¹⁰ It means that I know that I truly am that bad.¹¹ It means that every good thing I ever could do is but filthy rags before God.¹²

When this is my confession, then my greatest confidence and hope in life will be Christ. This means that life for the man of God will revolve around what God thinks, not what other people think. The man of God will not be swayed by man’s opinions, but God’s. The man of God will not seek the praise of men, but of God. And the man of God will not shrink because of the ridicule of man, but will humbly seek after Christ.

Indeed, the first mark of godliness is the deriving of all comfort, consolation, and joy from Christ and His cross work!

Received

The second element of godliness is that we will emulate what we received from Paul. This term references not what was proclaimed by Paul, but what was given by him! It speaks to far more than

⁸ Compare Romans 3:23

⁹ Compare Jeremiah 17:9

¹⁰ Compare Job 5:7

¹¹ Compare Romans 3:19-20

¹² Compare Isaiah 64:6

“instruction,” but the life conveyed by the instruction.¹³

When Paul was with the Philippians, he did far more than simply lecture about the kingdom of God. Rather, he brought Christ such that the Philippians' lives were changed!

One cannot read this passage without concluding that to have sat with Paul for any amount of time, was to have sat with Christ! The love, passion, care, and concern reflected by Paul was nothing less than that of our Lord!

This is what Christianity is all about! It is not about getting a blessing, being fulfilled, or even feeling a certain way. It is about bringing the Lord — His face and affections — to everyone everywhere! This is the second element of godliness. If in your work, play, marriage, parenting, free time, etc. you are about anything else, than you are a hypocrite!

Heard

The third element of godliness is that we emulate what we heard about Paul.

This adds another dimension to kingdom ministry. Not only were the Philippians to emulate what Paul taught and portrayed, but also what they heard about him such that they too would be known for the same things.

Two thousand years removed from Paul how can we possibly know what the Philippians heard about Paul?

It is not hard to derive what was heard about Paul from the general statements of Scripture. Early in Paul's ministry, this is what people were saying about him:

Galatians 1:23, “But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.”

The earliest rumor about Paul was that he had become an outlaw for Christ. He was boldly preaching that for which the Jews gave him the authority to destroy! He clearly wasn't in it for himself because it would have been much easier to have remained a Pharisee. God had transformed him from being a servant of the Sanhedrin to being a servant of Christ!

At the time of the writing of Philippians, another “nasty” rumor was being circulated.

Philippians 1:29-30, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”

No doubt through the testimony of Epaphroditus, the Philippians had heard all about the bitter providence in which Paul currently was engaged. He longed to go to Rome and preach Christ. Yet, when he finally arrived there, he came not as an ambassador of Christ, but a common prisoner. He was persecuted by the local church leaders. Yet never did he curse; he only blessed! He had sat by the bed-side of Epaphroditus ministering to his needs though himself stricken with deep mourning at the thought of losing one so

¹³ Compare also 1 Corinthians 11:2, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2; and 2 Thessalonians 3:6

faithful. And through it all, he kept preaching Christ. He was being used by God to bring the Lord to Caesar's household!

And so, what was it that the Philippians heard about Paul? Simply that in and through all things he remained faithful to Lord and His calling!

And so we see further that the epitome of a godly person is that they are ones who not only lives for Christ alone; he personally invests his life in the lives of others; and he is also known as one who is in it for the Lord and whose life speaks of faithful service regardless of the context.

Family of God this is what we are after when it comes to our walks with Christ!

Sadly, this is where we so often times fail. Because of the forgiveness we have received in Christ it is easy to fall into the trap of not caring about the impression we leave on others — after all we are not to be people pleasers! The result is that we can be known by so many things. For example we see brother Bob and say, what a joker! We see brother Bill and say he is so judgmental. Then we see Christian Hank, and we know that he is against abortion, homosexual marriage, the Democrats, and every other cause. However good these things may be, if we are not known for faithfulness to Christ, we are falling short of godliness.

1 Timothy 3:7 lists the final qualification for those qualified to serve the church as shepherds of the flock.

1 Timothy 3:7, “Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

This doesn't mean that godly people are to be men pleasers (always worried about what people think) rather it means that a facet of godliness is gauged by the impression we leave on others when we are being ourselves.

What is your reputation? What are you most known for?

These are important questions to ask!

May it always be that we are known for Christ!

Witnessed

The final area of godliness that we are to emulate for godliness is that we are to follow what we have witnessed about Paul.

The word seen is rather straight-forward. It is one thing to preach a great message, involve yourself in the lives of others, and even have a glowing reputation, but if you don't walk the walk, you're a sham. And brothers and sisters, this often times is the bottom line.

The question is what do your [spouse, children, parents, closest friend] say about your “glowing” reputation? What do they say about your involvement in the lives of others? What do they say about the glorious message you proclaim?

If those closest to you consider you to be a hypocrite, you are a sham!

Don't miss the import of the teaching here. By this passage Paul is welcoming a public dialogue as to how he acted and lived among the Philippians.

If we would have this dialogue with your [spouse, children, parents, closest friend] how would they answer these questions?

- Are you as kind as you seem?
- Do you really love Christ?
- Has he given you cause to suspect his devotion to the Lord?
- What does he do when he's upset?
- Does he bring Christ in his words and deeds?

If you could not pass such a public scrutiny of your private life, then your profession is a sham! You had better take the log out of your own eye — Euodias and Syntyche — and focus on our own sin!

Paul places before the Philippians the final credential as to what constitutes a godly example: Personal Integrity.¹⁴ John Calvin wrote these words:

“Now, the main thing in a public speaker should be, that he may speak, not with his mouth merely, but by his life.”¹⁵

Family of God this is what we are after. This is the final measuring rod of any supposed servant or work of God!

From all of this we see two very important points as it relates to working out our salvation in Christ. First, this passage will determine whom we ought to emulate when it comes to living the life of faith. As we have seen, they must meet these criteria:

- Their message is nothing other than Christ and Him crucified!
- They must reflect the face and affections of Christ in public and private.
- They must have a reputation of faithfulness to the Lord in and through all things.
- Their lives stand up under personal scrutiny.

Any teacher, teaching, or movement that does not result in the manifestation of this fruit is a sham and **OUGHT NOT TO BE FOLLOWED!**

Secondly we have a standard for what constitutes godliness. The criteria that will produce such a life are these:

- Our life will boast only in the cross of Christ!
- We will bring Christ's face and affections to all in their path!
- Our life is accompanied by a reputation for faithfulness to the Lord in and through all things.
- Our life will stand up under personal scrutiny.

This therefore must become our goal as we serve the Lord!

¹⁴ Compare 2 Thessalonians 3:7

¹⁵ Calvin's Commentaries, Vol. XXI, Philippians, page 122

It is not enough to profess truth — anyone can do that. We must live the truth.

There are no doubt many, like me, who find this passage very challenging. I know I am weak. I know I have failed miserably. And this passage inflicted a very deep wound! Is there any comfort for one who is wounded!

Christ's Comfort

Philippians 4:9, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: **and the God of peace¹⁶ shall be with¹⁷ you¹⁸.**”

The phrase *God of peace* is an expression that Paul uses frequently in contexts of trial and tribulation.¹⁹ It is an expression of comfort to those who otherwise might grow tired and weary. So be comforted brothers and sisters. For example even though the following may be true:

- The way is difficult, God is with you.
- It doesn't look like it is going to get easier, God is with you.
- The life of faith is treacherous, God is with you.
- Deceivers are heading your way, God is with you.
- You have gotten hurt pouring your life into others, God is with you.
- You have failed Christ in so many ways, God is with you.
- Your profession of the faith has been weak, God is with you.

This all sounds great, but what does it mean?

The most precious of all promises that God has given us in the covenant is that, “He is with us.²⁰” This means this:

- We are His house, 1 Timothy 3:15 — As a result of this He is pleased to inhabit our lives, warts and all!
- We are His temple, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 — As a result of this He is pleased to interact with this world through us!
- We are His people, Matthew 1:21 — As a result of this He has deigned to protect, uphold, strengthen, use, bless, and encourage us unto Christ like living.
- He is for us, Revelation 21:3-4!

The promise that God is “with us” helped saints in the past live out the gospel. For example this promise helped the apostles boldly do the work of the ministry by making disciples.

Matthew 28:20, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

¹⁶ ειρηνη eirene

¹⁷ μετα meta

¹⁸ υμων humon

¹⁹ Compare also 1 Corinthians 14:33; 2 Thessalonians 3:16; Romans 16:20

²⁰ Compare also Genesis 26:3; Exodus 3:12; Joshua 1:5; 1 Chronicles 11:9; Job 29:5; Psalms 23:4; 46:7.

They could be outcasts for Christ — it didn't matter — for Christ was with them!

This promise helped Joshua fulfill the seemingly impossible call of taking the promised land with all confidence and courage.

Joshua 1:5, “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”

This promise held David fear no evil even though his path was difficult and dangerous.

Psalms 23:4, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

This promise helped Paul stand in the midst of inconvenience, discomfort, danger, and trial.

Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”

This promise aided the many Martyrs of Scripture when they were surrounded by the enemy with no human hope of deliverance, smiling and accepting God's will.

1 John 4:4, “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

This promise has aided a very dear friend of mine whose wife recently underwent surgery to remove a malignant brain tumor. He wrote these words on the eve of surgery:

“The seriousness of this situation has sunk in a lot deeper for me than Mary's congestive heart failure ever did. I doubt that I would still be able to hold things together if you were not lifting me up in prayer and God were not answering those prayers with the strength that I need. Christ is still on the throne. All that truly matters is that He will remain there no matter the outcome of Mary's surgery. This is not about us, this is about Him.

“Don't get me wrong- it is painful to see my wife suffer. Also, I am terrified of the thought that I might have to tell my girls that their mother will not be coming home or that she is severely disabled. However, I will willingly accept these outcomes because Christ is on the throne. He is not a tyrant who takes pleasure in torturing people. He has promised over and over again in His word that He will never forsake me, He will always sustain me, and He will cause all things to work together for my good. God keeps His promises. Remembering this allows me to put things in perspective.”

Isn't this phenomenal!

The “God of peace” being “with us” means that He ever and always walks with us and is for us!

Rather than despairing at personal failure or difficult circumstances we can rejoice knowing that He always is with us. In fact, don't miss the play on words here as Paul brings this section to a close. As we rely upon God as exhorted in verse 6-7, then not only will the “peace of God” stand guard over us, but through the eye of faith we also will behold the “God of peace!”

And so as we have been called to a life of godliness — emulating the fourfold example of Paul — let us

not loose heart! In Christ, the God of Peace is with us!

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About the Preacher

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