



John's Schedule

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Following Christ is Living in Him



Part 28 (080629AM)

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Christ's first words, to His first disciples, should be our first priority as His disciples today. "Follow Me" is still the essence of Biblical Christianity.

Those two words were what He spoke to Peter, Andrew, James and John as they fished ([Matthew 4:19](#)) and to Matthew as he sat at the tax office ([Luke 5:27](#)); and those two words are what He still calls for as He walks through this world.

But the sad part about the history of the church is that it seems like after a few years most believers in most churches have gotten inoculated by Christ's words and seem to take them less-and-less seriously. Inoculations are when a powerful virus is injected, and some irritation, or redness occurs, but then it goes away; it was a slight annoyance but nothing like the actual disease.

"We have all been inoculated with Christianity, and are never likely to take it seriously now! We are on Christ's side, we wish him well, we hope that He will win, and we are even prepared to do something for Him, provided, of course, that He is reasonable, and does not make too much of an upset among our cozy comforts and our customary ways.

But there is not the passion of zeal, and the burning enthusiasm, and the eagerness of self-sacrifice, of the real faith that changes character and wins the world." [1]

Living Life by Following Christ

Paul as he wrote the New Testament epistles (or letters) to churches and individuals, he was just expanding and illustrating that life of following Christ. In [Galatians 2:20](#) Paul explained that as believers, following Christ means we do not live our own lives. We live the life of another—or, more accurately, another lives His life through us. Look again at those words:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (KJV)

The heartbeat of [Galatians 2:20](#) is the essence of following Christ; and that is all that is essential to live our lives as believers. But, until we grasp that as the key to the mystery of Christian living, we have not graduated from the pre-school level of the Christian life.

Noted pastor and writer Ray Steadman (who wrote that great challenge to the church called Body Life) summarized this truth when he taught these words to his congregation:

"People who equate orthodoxy with authenticity find it hard to even consider the possibility that, despite the correctness of all their doctrinal positions, they may have missed the deepest reality of the authentic Christian life.

But we must never forget that true Christianity is more than teaching—it is a way of life. In fact, *it is life itself*. "He who has the Son has life," remember? When we talk about life, we are talking about something that is far more than mere morality, far more than doctrinal accuracy.

Life is a positive quality, not negative—a description of what we fundamentally are, not what we are not.

The eternal life that Jesus brings to us is radical, not superficial. It is humble, not self-promoting. It is compassionate, not indifferent. It is courageous, not timid or retiring. It is a far cry indeed from the mild compatibility, agreeability, and affability that passes for Christianity in thousands of churches across the land. In fact, the Great Imitation is so widely accepted as genuine Christianity that the real thing is often regarded as a threat or a heresy whenever it appears." [2]

This morning each of us can measure your life's worth by the degree to which Christ is followed! But as our text reminds us this morning, not only are we to be Christ's followers—our lives are also to slowly become a pattern for others to follow!

Measuring Life by Christ's Standard

This morning, are you personally following Jesus? Does your day revolve around Him: as you start the day with **seeking Him**, as you go through the day **servicing Him**, and end the day with **thanking Him**? Believers are Christ's personal followers in a Christ-less world.

But, the tricky part of being a Christian is really understanding that we are utterly helpless, in our own strength, to do anything good as Christians. Grace-energized living is the understanding that our flesh, no matter how hard we try, is never able to please Christ.

We have no human powers to overcome temptation and sin, or to accomplish any good works. Here is short summary of what following Christ is all about:

"Our natural life in Adam is called "the flesh," in the Bible. The flesh has obvious bad traits such as lying, stealing, cheating, drunkenness and immorality. But the "best of the flesh" (doing our best to serve God in our own effort for example), is equally as bad as far as God is concerned. King Saul's experience recorded in First Samuel 15 illustrates this point vividly. On the cross, God has said "no" to the flesh, to the law of self-effort, for all time and eternity."

The whole secret of being a follower of Christ is to learn, (and to relearn), that only Jesus can live the Christian life. We must give Jesus permission to live His life through us day by day. Paul calls this mode of living "our reasonable service" in Chapter 12.

In Romans 7 Paul shows us that when "I" to do anything to serve God in my own strength "I" will always fail, and when "I" determine to avoid sin by my own will power, "I" am found to fail. A daily death-to-self is what God asks of me.

God the "great I AM" has taken up residence in my heart—the Holy Spirit has come to join Himself with my spirit. My human spirit is now the lesser, subservient "i am." This new inner partnership, or union of two spirits—my spirit with God's Spirit—is really a Lover-beloved union of two persons, not a mutually convenient arrangement such as a business partnership. Knowing God as He wishes to be known is an interactive relationship of intimate love—which fulfills the great commandment." [3]

And this is the completely new operating system described by Paul in Galatians:

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (2:20)

And that is the heart of Paul's message in [Titus 2:7](#). Please stand and listen to Paul's plea for Titus to invite Christ to personally live through him daily; and not just teach about this life—but to live it!

Titus 2:7, NKJV

*in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works;
in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,*

Paul uses the word *yourself* (*seauton*) in this verse. Titus, was a "younger man" himself; and Paul urged him to set an example for the young men in the churches he led (see also how Paul urges Timothy similarly in [1 Timothy 4:12](#)). Authoritative words have no impact if not backed up by a blameless life of *doing what is good*. Titus's life-style was to be an example of how that self-control can be applied to daily living. This principle is true for each of us today.

We are Christ's Representatives

In Christ's church there is always someone who is watching us, looking up to us and following us in some way. We must walk the talk, live the life and be Christ's example.

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend of all—the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.

I would be faithful through each passing moment;
I would be constantly in touch with God;
I would be strong to follow where He leads me;
I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod;
I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod.

—Howard Arnold Walter, 1906

Paul went to the heart of God's goal for the church as he wrote to Titus. Paul instructed Titus himself to set the pace.

That is the essence of this next point about grace-energized men, they were men who sought to **Become Representations of Christ in A Christ-less World**. But the question we always face is—how?

I think that the clearest explanation for anyone who wants to represent Christ well in this world, was given by Paul to Timothy. So, to expand upon the [Titus 2:7](#) mandate that grace-energized men be imitators that represent Jesus well before a watching world, please turn with me to II Timothy 2.19-26.

This section of God's Word contains a complete list of how we can maintain a life that God can use for His Glory, and a life God rewards.

This is God's standard for any and every man, woman and child who want to be a good and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As I speak to young men specifically, just put your name in their and ask God through His Spirit to enable you to also live this way.

The Model to Follow

A grace-energized, godly man will model obedience to God's Word.

Here are the seven areas that the Apostle Paul pointed out to Timothy and that every man of God must always guard.

These are intentionally sought disciplines; these are deliberately guarded areas; these are never areas you can coast through; but always areas we must engage our hearts in seeking out by His grace and through the power of His Spirit.

1. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have **A LIFE THAT IS CLEAN*** in God's sight. This is that great Old Testament call to living in the fear of the Lord.

[2 Timothy 2:19-21](#) a Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ **depart** (aor. impv.) from iniquity."²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.²¹ **Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor . . .**

Depart (NKJV for *aphisteimi* [868]) is a well chosen word that says in as many ways as it is possible to say it—stay away from sin. It means:

- "to cause to withdraw, to remove";
- "to go away from, to depart from";
- "to desert; to shun, flee from";
- "to cease; to keep one's self from, to be absent".

Grace-energized young men will—flee sin, hate sin, and keep themselves in the love of God so that they have a life that is clean.

At this point we are all "hearers" of God's Word, to become "doers" we all must pause and ask ourselves before the Lord—what He wants cleansed from our lives. Do that for a moment and let the Spirit point out an area that needs your attention.

Look back at [II Timothy 2:19-21 a](#) and actually make this verse a prayerful response to Jesus Christ. You can do that now by saying to the Lord:

"By Your grace and for Your Glory I invite You to live in me and through me. You O Christ can empower me to "depart" from this sin (name it to Him) that "so easily besets" as Hebrews 12 calls it".

"I will today withdraw from anything that encourages this sin, I will depart from this sin, I want to desert, shun, flee from, cease, keep myself, and be absent from this sin today."

This choice we have to make each day is the life of surrender to Christ that is the only way to live. Here is how the great Christian thinker C.S. Lewis described this daily surrender:

"The Christian life is different: harder, and easier. Christ says, "Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work. I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires, which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself; my own will shall become yours." (C. S. Lewis)

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: life that is clean; and:

2. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have **A BODY THAT IS YIELDED*** to God's Work. This is servant hood.

[2 Timothy 2:21b](#) Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, **sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work**.

Grace-energized young men will—keep their body as God's instrument to do His will. As Christ constantly desired and said, may we continually say, "Not my will but Thine be done".

Adelaide A. Pollard wrote a magnificent poem of 1907, "Have Thine own way". May these words be your hearts desire for a body that is yielded to God's work. Turn for a moment to hymn # 371

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Search me and try me, Master, today!
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!
Power, all power, surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit 'till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: **life that is clean, a body that is yielded**; and:

3. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A HEART THAT IS PURE** as God's Home.

2 Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace **with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart**.

Just as Robert Boyd Munger says in his booklet **MY HEART CHRIST'S HOME**, we must constantly examine our life, as if it were a house full of interconnected rooms. We must be sure Christ is at home in every part of our house.

Grace-energized young men will—guard their hearts, renounce their flesh, purge themselves from any filthiness of the spirit (**II Cor. 7:1**) as Paul exhorts and be that man of God who is pure in heart that sees God.

Look at **II Corinthians 6:14-18** and see the way that Christ living in us changes our habits and desires.

When we let our eyes stay fixed upon the land that is far off, we will always see the King in His beauty (**Isaiah 33:17, 14-16**)—from a heart that is pure.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: **life that is clean, a body that is yielded, a heart that is pure**; and:

4. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A MIND THAT IS DISCERNING** God's way.

2 Timothy 2:23 But **avoid foolish and ignorant disputes**, knowing that they generate strife.

Grace-energized young men will—cultivate the mind of Christ, invite the wisdom that is from above, and think the Word.

The way to keep a mind that has confident assurance of God's way is to always sense the way God works vs. the way the world, the flesh, and the devil works. Look briefly at **James 3:13-18** to see that described.

Always remember we live in a crooked and perverse generation (**Philippians 2:15**). Let your life be a light as you walk in His light.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: **life that is clean, a body that is yielded, a heart that is pure, a mind that is discerning**; and:

5. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A MANNER THAT REFLECTS** Christ's meekness and gentleness.

2 Timothy 2:24 And **a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all**, able to teach, patient,

Grace-energized young men will—stay meek and gentle in the power of Christ's Spirit. Take Christ's yoke He promised (**Matthew 11:28-30**) and let Him grow the fruit of the Spirit of God unhindered in your life (**Galatians 5:22-24**).

When we surrender to allowing the Spirit of God to direct our personality we find Christ's **MEEKNESS** at work in us; meekness is the opposite of asserting self; meekness is the ending of our personal agenda; meekness is living daily as crucified with Christ.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: **life that is clean, a body that is yielded, a heart that is pure, a mind that is discerning, a manner that reflects Christ**; and:

6. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have* **A SPIRIT THAT IS HUMBLE** to God's Word. The only way to change people is through the Word. We can't.

2 Timothy 2:25 **in humility correcting those who are in opposition**, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,

Grace-energized young men will—clothe themselves with humility (Col. 3:12). Wrap up in the apron of a servant as Peter said to the elders he served (1 Peter 5:5-6). Let the humble mind of Christ be in you (Phil 2:5-8) and let God lift you up. There is no limit to what God can do with you if you let Him get all the credit!

Open to 1 Peter 5:3-7 and look at the choices we must make. Peter said that the examples to the flock, the leaders, the shepherds who taught by word and lifestyle had a big choice to make in v.3, they were to be “examples” to the flock. In v. 5 there are two commands, or imperatives. The second one is “be clothed” which literally means “clothe yourself”.

The Greek word is *egkombaio* and described the white apron towels that slaves wore as they served their masters. In John 13 when Jesus washed His disciples feet He first wrapped a towel around Himself. That is exactly what this word means. Peter probably could still see that Last Supper night vividly in his mind. Jesus quietly rose from the meal, walked to a corner, picked up the apron towel no one else would lower themselves to wear, and did the foot washing work of a slave.

Peter said that the humility Christ seeks in His church is one where everyone from elder to newest believer, all take the slave’s apron and clothe themselves with humility. Why? Because anything less than a life of humble slavery to God for others meets daily resistance from the Lord Himself.

God just won’t tolerate any pride in His people. At every level He resists the lives of His children when they are proud.

This slavery for Christ as His humble servant is a conscious choice, Christ living in me enables me to make.

*So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a: **life that is clean, a body that is yielded, a heart that is pure, a mind that is discerning, a manner that reflects Christ, a spirit that is humble;** and:*

7. *A grace-energized representation of Christ must have **A HEART THAT IS COMPASSIONATE** like Christ’s.*

2 Timothy 2:26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, **having been taken captive by him to do his will.**

Grace-energized young men will—put on a heart of compassion (Colossians 3:12). Clothe yourself with Christ (Rom 13:14) and be moved as He was for others. Love with Christ’s compassion, and you will receive that unfading crown of His good and faithful servant!

- *Do you have an eye to see how helpless our world is?* There are almost 7 billion sheep, most of them without a true knowledge of the good Shepherd! There were only 250 million in Christ’s day. The population of our world is 28 times that today! What do you see in a crowd? A business man sees a potential market, an educator sees a potential classroom, a politician sees potential voters. Nearly everyone thinks in terms of personal benefit. Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight of a crowd, and that compassion led Him to give His life on a cross of wood, writing a letter of love for the sins of the world.
- *Do you have a heart to feel?* The word in the Bible for compassion means ‘to suffer together with’. The emotion of compassion constitute a language that is understood universally. Compassion can be seen and felt by all because it is the language of the heart that needs no translation to be understood. We of the instant gratification, veneer thin depth of commitment that characterizes our day, have lost so much compassion.. Superficiality of emotional expression from the media has seeped into our spiritual lives. We are good actors, but often poor feelers, of others pain. Ask God for a heart of compassion like Christ’s.
- *Do you have hands to perform?* What ministry are you involved in today touching the lives of people for Jesus? Can you name one? Why don’t you start in our children’s ministry and then expand into the Rescue Mission, Crisis Pregnancy Center and so on?

So ask yourself, “How am I doing at following Christ”? Do I represent Him well? If not, why not stop and right now renew your decision to be a grace-energized, personal-follower of Jesus.

So Christ living my life in and through me energizes me to live a:

- ✓ A LIFE THAT IS CLEAN in God’s sight.
- ✓ A BODY THAT IS YIELDED to God’s Work.
- ✓ A HEART THAT IS PURE as God’s Home.
- ✓ A MIND THAT IS DISCERNING God’s way.
- ✓ A MANNER THAT REFLECTS Christ’s gentleness.
- ✓ A SPIRIT THAT IS HUMBLE to God’s Word.
- ✓ A HEART THAT IS COMPASSIONATE like Christ’s.

May we all follow and imitate Christ all our days, by His grace!

[1] *From the Edge of the Crowd*, A. J. Gossip, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh: 1924.

[2] Ray C. Stedman, *Authentic Christianity*

[3] Lambert Dolphin, June 2008, *Newsletter #78: Discover --or Rediscover--the Exchanged Life.* [269 words]

