

Book of Philippians

Philippians 3:12-21

When you're young you can do some pretty dumb things. I remember when a high school friend drove his car home from work *in reverse*. I wonder now what he was thinking. That's really dangerous. Something else is dangerous and that is trying to drive forward while looking in the rearview mirror. Some people are trying to live while looking back at the past with regret or pride. Paul learned that the key to living is to know Christ better, serve and glorify Him, and long to be with Him forever. In this section Paul uses the analogy of a runner to describe the believer's spiritual growth. He also refers to the believer's spiritual walk and citizenship.

1. The desire of a believer's life (vs. 12-14)

A. We cannot be complacent

Paul understood that sanctification (living the Christian life) is a lifelong process of growing and maturing in Christ. He was always satisfied with Christ, but never satisfied with himself. Just as Christ had pursued and laid hold on him for a purpose (Acts 9:1-22), so he pursued that purpose Christ had in mind for his life. Paul was saved by grace not works, but he was saved for the purpose of doing good works (Eph. 2:8-10). The ultimate purpose for every Christian is to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

B. We must be committed

Paul had a single focus in life. He said "this one thing I do," not "these ten things I dabble in." Paul simplified the Christian life into the simple goal of being more like Christ. He was determined to forget the failures and achievements of the past and to reach forth to the future. "Forgetting" means he did not allow himself to be influenced by the past. In verses 7-11, Paul spoke as an accountant counting his gains and losses. In verses 12-14 he spoke as a runner pressing toward the finish line. His goal was to press toward the mark and receive the prize of his calling in Christ (2 Tim. 4:7). Paul understood that the Christian life is a high calling, a holy calling, and a heavenly calling. Salvation is an event that occurs in time, but it has eternal significance. The prize is not salvation, but being glorified like Christ in heaven. In a small church yard at the foot of a tall mountain in Switzerland, a young man is buried with these words on his tombstone: "He died climbing." May that be true of us.

2. The discipline of a believer's life (vs. 15-19)

A. We should be likeminded in our attitude

In verse 15 Paul made a transition from his own testimony to encourage other believers to do the same. It all begins with attitude. The word "perfect" (vs. 15) means mature. Their willingness to be like Paul would be a proof of their maturity. This was a forceful, yet gracious way to encourage them to press on to be like Christ. For those who not pursuing spiritual maturity, Paul knew that God would reveal the truth to them even if it meant chastening.

B. We should be consistent in our walk

Paul encouraged them to walk (walk in line) and to follow his example and the example of other believers such as Timothy and Epaphroditus (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Th. 1:5-7). “Mark them” means to look at, observe, and consider them. The Bible often describes the Christian life as a walk. With a broken heart Paul also warned them about the walk of those who were enemies of Christ (vs. 18-19). He had apparently warned them on numerous occasions about the dangers of these false teachers. These were apparently people who professed to be Christians but obviously were not. They were wolves in sheep’s clothing. He spoke of their ultimate destruction. He spoke of their fleshly desires. They lived to satisfy their physical appetites. He spoke of their shameful boasting. They were proud when they should have been ashamed. And he spoke of their earthly focus. They stressed ceremonies, feasts, sacrifices and such physical things.

- We should walk in the light (1 Jn. 1:7)
- We should walk in the truth (3 Jn. 3, 4)
- We should walk in Christ (Col. 2:6)
- We should walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16)
- We should walk in good works (Eph. 2:10)
- We should walk worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1)
- We should walk in love (Eph. 5:2)
- We should walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8)
- We should walk as Christ walked (1 Jn. 2:6)
- We should walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7)
- We should walk in wisdom (Col. 4:5)

3. The direction of a believer’s life (vs. 20-21)

A. We have a heavenly citizenship

Philippi was a Roman colony and therefore its residents were Roman citizens with all the rights and privileges. Paul reminded believers that they are citizens of heaven (vs. 20, conversation). Scripture teaches that our Father is in heaven (Mt. 6:9), our treasure is in heaven (6:20), our names are written in heaven (Lk. 10:20), our home is in heaven (Jn. 14:2), our Savior is in heaven (Acts 1:11), fellow believers are in heaven (Heb. 12:23), and our inheritance is also in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4). We are set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:2).

B. We have a heavenly hope

We look for (eagerly wait for) Christ to come from heaven (1 Th. 4:13-18; Tit. 2:13; 1 Jn. 3:2-3). This expresses our patient waiting, but with great expectation. The return of Christ is

mentioned in 23 out of 27 NT books. The hope of Christ's coming is not a wish for something that may happen, but an assurance of something that will happen, even though we don't know the exact time.

C. We will have a heavenly body

We now have a vile (lowly body, lit, body of humiliation) body, but Christ will change our body to be like His glorious body. Our earthly body is subject to disease, deformity, decay, disability, and death. This transformation will take place by His unlimited divine power (vs. 21; 1 Cor. 15:35-57). Christ has power to create and overrule natural laws. Those who are already dead in Christ, but alive with Him in spirit in heaven, will receive new bodies at the resurrection and rapture of the church. Those then living on earth will have their bodies transformed also.

Sources:

MacArthur, John, ed. *The MacArthur Study Bible*.

Strong, James. *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*

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B. We must be _____

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