

Suggested Supplementary Reading

The Holy Word for Morning Revival—

Philippians: Week 5, Days 1-4

Crystallization-Study of the Epistle to the Philippians: Week 9, Days 4-6

The Life-study of Philippians, Messages 23-24, 54-55

Our Experience in the Church Life

We Need To Be Like Paul — to Pursue the Goal of the Experience and Enjoyment of Christ

“... We do not want to talk about Christ without having the experience of Christ. However, we may turn from pursuing Christ and seek to have our own way regarding certain things in the church life. When we do this, we have no joy within us. When we are like this, we are in the flesh, and we are not experiencing Christ. The mysterious Christ seems to disappear.

“If we exercise our mentality instead of our spirit, we shall not experience Christ. If we argue with one another and compete with one another, we do not experience Christ because we are not in our spirit. We need to have Christ not in terminology, but as a reality. We need to be centered not on things, but on Christ Himself. We all need to see the vision that what the Lord desires today is Christ. If we learn this lesson, we shall not care for our way or our success. Rather, we shall say, ‘Lord, we are here to gain You. Show us the way to gain You more. We don’t want to simply have meetings. We want to have You. We have been obtained by You so that we may obtain You. Lord, what is the way for the saints in this locality to experience and enjoy You more?’ This is the right attitude to have before the Lord.

“What the Lord desires today is not simply meetings, work, or activities. Furthermore, He does not desire any practices. What He wants is for us to be living and full of Christ. Then whatever we do and are will be the living testimony of Jesus Christ. This is what the Lord needs today.”

“...Throughout the recovery, we all need to think the one thing—to pursue Christ toward the goal for the prize. If we do this, we shall be in oneness, and we shall be full of life.”

(Witness Lee, The Experience of Christ, Chpt. 9, pp. 81, 82)

Prayer Burdens

1. The ongoing labor among grade six children to usher them into the Kingdom of God. There were 15 Grade 6 young people at the 1st Grade 6 meeting last Saurday night at Hall. Please pray for them, for other Grade 6 children of the saints, for the friends of the current Grade 6 participants and for the Grade 6 serving saints.
2. The annual business meeting on March 4 to proceed with much grace and the presence of Jesus Christ, the Head of the body of Christ. Praise the Lord for the privilege to serve Him in prayer. Amen!

Announcements:

General

1. Donation Receipt Request Forms Available

The Donation Receipt Request Forms can be picked up at your respective Service Office or from your district leader. Refer to News and Fellowship on this site to see how to process the form (if you have questions).

The church in Toronto

Philippians Week 16

Mar 5 - Mar 17, 2007

Pursuing Christ to Gain Him (3) — Gaining Christ by Pursuing Him

Weekly Bible Reading:

Philippians 3:12-16

Hymns:

499; 513; 662; 1205; 426

Monday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 3:12, 14a

12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

14a I pursue toward the goal...

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

The Christian Life is a Life of Gaining Christ

“In verse 12 Paul says, ‘I pursue, if also I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.’ The Greek word translated ‘lay hold of’ may also be rendered gain, grasp, or get possession of. It may even be rendered seize. For simplicity, in this message we shall use the word gain. Paul aspired to gain that for which he had been gained by Christ Jesus. At the time of his conversion Paul was gained by Christ. Christ had gained Paul with the intention that Paul would gain Him. “Not many Christians speak of their conversion in the way Paul spoke of his. Have you ever heard anyone say that at the time he was converted Christ gained him so that he might gain Christ? We need to realize that Christ has gained us that we might gain Him...Christ gained us not merely for the sake of forgiveness, redemption, salvation, or heaven. I repeat, He gained us for the definite purpose that we might gain Him.

“Do you realize that you have been gained by Christ? At the time of your conversion, Christ laid hold of you, seized you, grasped you. When you were converted to Christ, He took full possession of you. Now it is impossible for you to escape His grasp. The Lord holds the whole earth in His hands. How do you expect to be able to run away from Him? The Lord is very patient; He is not easily offended or angered. Sometimes Christians misrepresent the Lord Jesus and give others the impression that He will immediately become angry if they do something wrong. However, the Lord may bear with you quite a long time without becoming angry with you. He is not troubled by your attempts to escape from Him. He knows that once He has gained you, you cannot get away.”

“The Lord has taken possession of us so that we might take possession of Him. This was His purpose in grasping us. Christ wants us to gain Him. The Lord’s aim in His salvation is to seize us that we might take full possession of Him. Not even when Paul was writing to the Philippians did he regard himself as having gained Christ in a

full way. Rather, he was still pursuing Christ in order to gain Him.
“...the Christian life is a life of gaining Christ. How much have you gained of Christ? This is a crucial question. We grow in life by gaining Christ. The degree to which we have gained Christ is the degree to which we have grown with Christ. We all need to gain Christ in order to grow in life. Spiritual growth is measured by how much we have gained of Christ.”

(Lee, Life-study of Philippians, Msg. 23, pp. 191-193)

Tuesday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 3:13-14

13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,

14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.

1 Corinthians 9:24

24 Do you not know that those who run on a racecourse all run, but one receives the prize? Run in this way, that you may lay hold.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

Pursuing Toward the Goal for the Prize

“In verses 13 and 14 Paul goes on to say, ‘Brothers, I do not yet reckon myself to have laid hold, but one thing—forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’ Even though Paul had experienced and gained Christ tremendously, he did not consider that he had experienced Him in full or gained Him to the uttermost. For this reason he was still advancing toward the goal—the gaining of Christ to the fullest extent.

“In verse 13 Paul speaks of forgetting the things behind. In order to gain Christ to the fullest extent, Paul not only forsook his experience in Judaism, but also refused to dwell on his past experiences of Christ and be limited by them. To dwell on our past experiences, no matter how real they may have been, frustrates our further pursuing after Christ.

“In verse 14 Paul tells us that he was stretching forward to the things which are before. He knew that Christ is unsearchably rich, that there is a vast territory of His riches to be possessed. He was stretching forward to gain these riches and to advance further into this territory.

“Paul was pursuing toward the goal for the prize. Christ is both the goal and the prize. The goal is the fullest enjoyment and gain of Christ, and the prize is the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom as a reward to the victorious runners of the New Testament race. In order to reach the goal for the prize, Paul was exercised to forget the things which are behind and to stretch forward to the things which are before. This is the way to gain Christ by pursuing Him.

“Even though Paul was a matured saint and a very experienced apostle, he tells us that he had not already obtained and had not yet been perfected. He did not regard himself as one who had obtained the full enjoyment of Christ or the full maturity in life. He, of course, had obtained the common salvation by the common faith (1 Tim.

Galatians 1:15a-16a

15 But when it pleased God...

16 To reveal His Son in me...

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

Not Being Otherwise Minded, but Having the One Mind of Christ in the Reality of the Lord's Recovery

“The fact that Paul says that if we are otherwise minded, ‘this also God shall reveal’ indicates that to be otherwise minded is to be lacking in revelation. If we are otherwise minded, we need revelation. For this reason, Paul does not say in verse 15 that God will teach us; instead, he says that God will reveal this to us.

“Believers cannot have one mind simply by reading the Bible in letters. When the Lord Jesus came, the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament had already been written. But even though the religionists searched the Scriptures, they were not willing to come to Christ that they might have life. In John 5:39 and 40 the Lord Jesus said, ‘You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is these that testify concerning Me; and you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.’ If we search the Scriptures without coming to the Lord, we shall have many different minds. Some may prefer Moses and others, Elijah or Jeremiah. Only when we come to Christ, the unique One, can we have one mind.

“After His resurrection, the Lord said to His disciples, ‘These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me’ (Luke 24:44). This indicates that in the Scriptures we need to see Christ.

“The situation among Christians today is a repetition of that of the religionists when the Lord Jesus was on earth. In fact, today's situation is worse. Now readers of the Bible have sixty-six books instead of thirty-nine. There are more ‘Pharisees,’ ‘Sadducees,’ and ‘scribes’ today than in the first century, for there are many more readers of the Bible and more believers who are otherwise minded.

“Although there are hundreds of different minds among Christians today, it is not our goal to unify the believers. However, when Christ, the unique Person, is revealed to us, we are unified in Him and by Him. In fact, He Himself is our unification.

“Not only is it not our aim to try to unify the believers; actually we do not expect that a great number of believers will take the way of the Lord's recovery. At the end of His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus did not have a large following. According to Acts 1, only one hundred twenty were gathered together in that upper room in Jerusalem. It is not our goal to be warmly welcomed or to have a huge number. At this point, we need to be reminded that Paul did not write the book of Philippians at a time when he was welcomed by the multitudes. On the contrary, this Epistle was written when Paul was rejected, persecuted, and imprisoned.

“Probably if millions of Christians took the way of the Lord's recovery, the recovery would cease to exist. It would be terminated by the many different minds among the believers. The Lord's recovery truly is a narrow way, a way difficult for most Christians to take. All those in the recovery must heed Paul's word to have ‘this mind.’ ”

(Life-study of Philippians, Msg. 55, pp. 484-486)

laid hold of by Christ Jesus. According to this verse, the principle of our conversion and salvation is that we have been gained by Christ in order to gain Him. This principle must become a basic and governing element in our Christian walk. “Unfortunately, many of today’s Christians do not follow this governing principle. Instead of pursuing God’s unique goal, they seek other things. For example, those in the Pentecostal movement or charismatic movement may seek power or spiritual gifts. They may pursue speaking in tongues, healing, or manifestations of other gifts. Those who have such pursuits are not following the basic principle of the Christian life. This principle is to pursue Christ that we may gain Him. “Christ has gained us not that we may gain gifts, but that we may gain Him. In one of his best hymns, A. B. Simpson says:

Once it was the blessing,
Now it is the Lord...
Once His gift I wanted,
Now, the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing,
Now Himself alone.
(Hymns, #513)

As this hymn indicates, the governing principle of the Christian life is not gifts or healing—it is Christ Himself. Realizing this, A. B. Simpson also put out a tract on this theme entitled ‘Himself.’

The Same Path

“It is crucial for us to see that the basic and governing principle of the Christian life is that we gain Christ. As many as are full grown, let us walk according to this rule, this elementary principle. Perhaps path is a better word than rule in verse 16. If we use this word, the verse will read ‘by the same path let us walk.’ This understanding is also based on the various meanings of the Greek word: to range in line, to march in military rank, to keep step, to conform to virtue and piety. Paul’s use of this Greek word indicates that by the same path we should walk according to the elementary principle.”

(ibid., pp. 201-203)

Saturday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 3:15

15 Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.

Ephesians 1:17-18a

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him,
18 The eyes of your heart having been enlightened...

1:14-16), but he was still pursuing Christ in order to gain Him. Furthermore, Paul was also seeking Christ in order to have the extra portion of resurrection. In order to have this portion of resurrection, called the out-resurrection, we must pursue, run the race, and finish our course triumphantly.

“Like Paul, we have been regenerated, but we are not yet perfected, or matured, in life. At the time of our conversion, we were gained by Christ so that we may gain Him. Now as those who have not yet obtained and who have not yet been perfected, we are pursuing Christ.”

(Life-study of Philippians, Msg. 23, pp. 193-194)

Wednesday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 3:14, 20a

14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.

20a For our commonwealth exists in the heavens...

Hebrews 3:1

1 Therefore, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus,

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

The Goal, the Prize, and the High Calling

“The goal toward which we are pursuing is the full enjoyment of Christ, and the prize is the extra enjoyment of Christ. I believe this extra portion of the enjoyment of Christ will be in the millennial kingdom. In the millennial kingdom the overcomers will enjoy Christ in an extraordinary way. This extraordinary enjoyment of Christ corresponds to the out-resurrection in verse 11...”

“...This prize is the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The Greek word rendered high means above. The high calling is the calling by God from above, from the heavens. It is a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1), corresponding to the heavenly citizenship in verse 20, not an earthly one like that given to the children of Israel in the flesh. This high calling is to take possession of Christ, whereas the earthly calling to the children of Israel was to take possession of a physical land.

“We have received not an earthly calling, but a high calling, a heavenly calling. God has called us to gain Christ as our real land. In typology, God called Israel with an earthly calling to gain the good land. Now God has called us with a heavenly calling to gain Christ.

“...No matter how we may interpret Paul’s word concerning the goal and the prize, we cannot deny that both are facts with certain points. Even if you do not agree with the interpretation that the prize is the top enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom, you still need to take care of the fact that there is a prize for you to obtain. To receive the prize we must reach the goal, and to reach the goal we must run the race. These facts are of great importance.

“As we consider these facts, we need to apply them to our situation according to the context of Philippians 3. In this chapter Paul shows us our need to gain Christ. Christ is the goal and also the prize. Do not be distracted by the effort to understand just what kind of prize you will obtain when you reach the goal. What is crucial is that you

realize that, according to the divine revelation, God has set forth Christ as your goal and prize. Furthermore, He has called you to stretch forth toward the goal.”

(ibid., pp. 195, 196-197)

Thursday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 3:15

15 Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.

Philippians 2:2, 5

2 ...think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,

Philippians 4:2

2 ...think the same thing in the Lord.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

Having the Mind to Seek After the Fullest Enjoyment and Gain of Christ

“...In verse 15 Paul says, ‘Let us therefore, as many as are full grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to you.’ The Greek word rendered ‘full grown’ means mature, perfect. Maturity is a matter of stages. We may be mature, but not mature in full. In verse 15 Paul uses the expression ‘full grown’ in a relative sense, meaning relatively mature, neither childish nor absolutely mature. Hence, further pursuing, further growth, is needed.

“Those who are full grown still need a mind to pursue Christ. At the time Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he was full grown. However, he was still growing. This confirms that even the matter of full growth, or maturity, may be relative. Today none of us can say that we have reached the goal. Although we may not be childish and may actually be somewhat full grown, we still have not reached the goal.

“According to verse 15, ‘as many as are full grown’ should have ‘this mind.’ This book’s dealing with the Philippian believers is focused on the mind, the leading part of the soul. It charges them to strive together for the gospel with one soul (1:27), to think the same thing, to be joined in soul, even to think the one thing (2:2; 4:2), to let the mind which was in Christ be in them (2:5), and to have this mind, a mind focused on the pursuing and gaining of Christ to the uttermost. When our mind is thus occupied, we have the same mind, thinking the same thing, even thinking the one thing—the fullest gain of Christ—joined in soul, like-souled (2:20), and with one soul.

“Paul’s word in verse 15 implies that if we do not have this mind, we may be childish. Not having this mind is a sign that we are not full grown. As we consider the situation among Christians today, we see a great deal of childishness. Not many believers have this mind, the mind to seek after the fullest enjoyment and gain of Christ. Imagine how marvelous the situation would be if all seeking Christians had a mind focused on pursuing Christ for the full enjoyment and gaining of Him. If the seeking Christians were like this, the situation on earth would be excellent and wonderful. However, the situation among Christians today is confused and complicated. This is due to the fact that seeking Christians do not have this mind. Instead of seeking God’s unique goal, they pursue other goals. These different goals cause trouble. We

in the Lord’s recovery should have one goal, and this goal should be to pursue Christ that we may have the fullest enjoyment of Him and may gain Him in full.”

(Life-study of Philippians, Msg. 24, pp. 199-200)

Friday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 3:16

16 Nevertheless whereunto we have attained, by the same rule let us walk.

Galatians 5:25

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 6:15-16

15 For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is what matters.

16 And as many as walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, even upon the Israel of God.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

Walking by the Basic Principle

“In verse 16 the Greek word for walk is *stoicheo*, which means to walk orderly. It is derived from *steicho*, which means to range in regular line, to march in military rank, to keep step, to conform to virtue and piety, as used in Romans 4:12; Galatians 5:25; 6:16. It is different from the word walk in Philippians 3:17 and 18, which means to live, to deport oneself, to be occupied with, to walk about, as used in Romans 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:16; and Ephesians 4:1, 17. By this word the apostle charges us to walk and order our lives by the same rule, in the same line, in the same path, in the same footsteps, whereunto we have attained, at the state to which we have attained. Whatever state we have attained to in our spiritual life, we all must walk by the same rule, in the same path, as the apostle did; that is, to pursue Christ toward the goal that we may gain Him to the fullest extent as the prize of God’s calling from above.

“The Greek word *stoicheo* is a verbal form of the noun which means element. ...Perhaps the Greek should be rendered ‘walk according to the elementary principles,’ since the meaning is that the elementary principles become our walk. Among the ancient Greeks, there were, as there are today, societies or organizations which followed certain basic principles. There are also basic principles, basic elements, involved in being a Christian. These elements should become a Christian’s walk. This was Paul’s concept in using this particular word for walk in 3:16.

“...Paul uses this term in Romans 4:12, where he speaks of ‘those who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.’ To walk in the steps of Abraham’s faith is to conform to his faith, to conform ourselves to certain virtue or piety. This Greek word is very rich in meaning.

Gained by Christ to Gain Christ

“Paul’s main thought in 3:16 is that, as Christians, the most important principle of our Christian life should be to pursue Christ. Pursuing Christ, therefore, should be the major principle according to which we walk. Paul has already indicated this in verse 12 by saying that he pursues in order to lay hold of that for which he has also been