

The Lord's Message: Life in Christ: Follow the Example of Christ

Date: November 19, 2023

Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Philippians 3:10-4:1

For the past several weeks, we have been studying the book of Philippians to learn about how to live our lives for Jesus. From the previous studies, we have learned that a life in Christ is one that is made possible by God's abounding grace. We receive this grace. We live in this grace, and we pass this grace on to others. This grace also affects how we view death. For a believer in Christ, death is simply a passage to eternal life with God and Jesus. To live is Christ to die is gain. Knowing all of this humbles us. Today, we are going to learn this humility should lead us not to rest on our successes or failures, but to follow the example of Christ to press on in our daily living.

Let us pray.

If we remember that when Paul wrote this letter to the church at Philippi, he was in prison in Rome for preaching the Gospel. He knew that his time was short upon this earth. In just a few years from now, Paul will be executed by being beheaded. None of us know when our time here on earth will come to an end. Paul is encouraging the church, and all of us, to continue to grow in our walk with the Lord. A Christian that is not growing is a dying Christian. John Wesley put it that we are "moving on to perfection." This process is called sanctification. Sanctification is the act of making or declaring something holy. God is the one that will declare what is holy and what is not. We will all someday stand before the judgement seat of Christ as it says in **Revelation 20:11-15**.

The goal for every Christian should be what Paul says in **Philippians 3:10-11**. Paul goes on to say in **verse 12** that he has not attained this goal. That might be a surprise to many of us. After all Paul faced many trials and tribulations for preaching the Gospel. He lists them in **2 Corinthians 11:25-30**. Now, you might be thinking that if Paul has not attained this goal after all that he has gone through, then there maybe no hope for me. Your race to attain this goal is different from my race or anybody else's race. Do not compare your walk with Christ to others. Your walk with the Lord is your walk with the Lord.

Now, that does not mean that we should rest on our success or allow our failures to hold us back. We should, as Paul says in **Philippians 3:13**, forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead. Just because yesterday you got up early and read your bible for 30 minutes. You prayed for another 30 minutes. You told 3 people about Christ and prayed for them to receive Jesus. You gave a meal to a person who was homeless. You told your wife not to fix supper, you would stop at her favorite restaurant and bring home her favorite meal to her. In the evening, instead of being on Facebook and commenting to all your friends, you read your Bible and prayed to God before going to sleep. That was yesterday. Today is a new day. You need to keep straining forward. If you had a bad day, you got up late. You did not read your Bible. You did not take time to pray. You were frustrated with a co-worker and got into an argument with them. You ignored a homeless person. You did not compliment your wife on the meal that she had prepared. Instead of reading your Bible, you watched YouTube videos until late at night. Now, you feel horrible for your failures. That was yesterday. Today is a new day that you can strain to be better. We should not let our success or failures cause us to rest in our walk with the Lord, but instead keep on pressing on, keep on growing in Christ.

In **Philippians 3:14**, Paul says that we will rest after we have achieved our goal, or our prize, which will not be until we are in heaven with Jesus. After a runner finishes the race they receive their reward or prize. They have completed their goal.

Let us remember that our life in Christ is not a sprint, but a marathon. That is what Paul is saying in **verse 15**. In **verse 16**, Paul says that we should live up to what we have already attained. One might ask what have we attained by having a relationship with Jesus? We have attained a savior who loves us so much that He was willing to die on a cross for us, so that we would be forgiven of our sins. We have attained a friend that will be with us through all the trials and tribulations in this life and lead us to eternal life. We have attained one who continues to teach us and instructs on the ways of God. We have attained one who helps us to continue to grow and be more like Him.

Paul warns the church at Philippi, and all of us, to be careful whose example we are following. Satan uses many people to bring about our destruction, even Christians. In **verses 17-19**, Paul says that we should be careful about simply following people because they are popular or famous. We should also be careful about others who are not following the Bible. Instead, we should follow Paul and others who humbly live their lives for Christ. Those Christians who are not concerned about fame or fortune. Those Christians that are not concerned about living a comfortable life here on earth. Instead, as Paul says in **verse 20**, their citizenship is not found on earth, but in heaven. We should follow the example of Christians who are following Christ. We should also live our lives following the example of Christ.

We should follow Christ and eagerly wait for His return. Until Jesus comes and brings everything under control as Paul says in **verse 21**. So, run your race for the Lord, following the example of Jesus. **Philippians 4:1. Amen.**