

CHRISTOLOGY

VII. Christ in Living

A. The Impossible Possibility Phil. 3:10-16

I. Introduction

- A. The ultimate goal of the Apostle Paul was that he would reach the final prize of salvation, which is freedom from the presence of sin forever. NOTE: He realized that the possibility of reaching this goal was sure, but it could only be reached finally in eternity when he was with the Lord.
- B. While the ultimate goal for Paul was perfection, the immediate task of the Apostle was to push on in Christian maturity and deeper fellowship with Christ. NOTE: Paul saw the impossibility of reaching this goal in his lifetime, but he felt that he could make strides towards attaining this goal in this life through progressive sanctification.
- C. Thus, Paul had an impossible possibility. He was striving for a goal which he knew was impossible for him to reach in his experience in time, but most assuredly would be his in eternity.

II The Ideal: Continual Fellowship with Christ in Time (3:10)

- A. Introduction: Paul in this section is talking about his experience, not his position in Christ. His position in Christ is perfect and eternal. His experience is imperfect and temporal.
- B. ***“That I may know him”*** — The passion of Paul was to know Christ fully and completely in his experience. POINT: This is the ideal but can never be fully realized while Christians are in this unsanctified, sinful body. However, it can be progressively realized and should be the aim of every child of God. NOTE: Great Christians are men and women who know and experience their God (Dan. 11:32).
- C. ***“And the power of his resurrection”*** — Paul longed to realize more fully the resurrection power of Christ in his own experience; that the resurrected Christ would become the power of his life (Eph. 1:19-20).
- D. ***“And the fellowship of his suffering”*** — The yearning of Paul was to participate in the sufferings of Christ as He is allowed to live out His life in him. NOTE: This is suffering primarily with the world, flesh and the devil as Christ seeks to win men through the Christian. (Col. 1:24 cf. Rom. 8:36; 2 Cor. 4:10-11). It is a privilege to suffer for Christ, and through suffering, the Christian draws closer to Christ.
- E. ***“Being made conformable unto his death”*** — Paul desires to enter experientially into his co-crucifixion with Christ where he died to sin and self (Gal. 2:20). NOTE: Christ died for Paul’s sins and he wanted his life to be one without sin that he might glorify God to the maximum (2 Cor. 4:10). Christ’s death was to destroy sin so Paul did not want sin to reign in his body because of Christ’s finished work for sin.

III. The Longing: The Rapture (3:11)

- A. ***“If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”*** Scholars disagree as to the meaning of this verse and it is not essential to the argument.
- B. An interpretation that makes sense is that the “out-resurrection” refers to the Rapture of the Church. The conditional “if” expresses doubt as to the manner, not

fact, of the Rapture. Thus, Paul is wondering whether he will be alive or dead at the Second Advent when Christ returns for His Church. NOTE: The Rapture for Paul meant complete fellowship with Christ.

IV. The Realization: Inadequacy of Fellowship (3:12)

- A. ***“Not as though I had already attained*** (obtained, laid hold of)” — This looks back to 3:10 where he is speaking about his desire for deeper fellowship with Christ. POINT: Paul had not laid hold of complete fellowship with Christ. The whole of Paul’s experiences, as of the time of this writing, shows that he felt he fell short of what he could be or should be in his experiential walk with Christ.
- B. ***“Either were already perfect*** (fully complete, mature)” — The word “perfect” means complete or mature. Paul, in his experience, falls short of complete and mature fellowship with Christ. POINT: Paul’s life was short of perfect fellowship with Christ. Paul pointedly denies that he had reached a spiritual impasse of non-development. He had made great gains in the spiritual life, in Christlikeness, but the goal is still before him, not behind him. NOTE: Paul was perfectly satisfied with Jesus Christ, but he was not satisfied with the moral quality of his life and his depth of fellowship with Christ. NOTE: This verse lays bare any false teaching of sinless perfection, eradication or total sanctification. Paul was a seasoned Christian but still saw great need for progressive sanctification and growth in his life.
- C. ***“But I (constantly) follow after*** (pursue, keep up the chase)” — Paul was relentlessly seeking a deeper life of fellowship with Christ and greater moral and ethical changes in his life as a Christian. NOTE: A sense of inadequacy did not defeat Paul but spurred him on. Thus, the sense of inadequacy to reach the perfect goal of sanctification in his present experience did not discourage, but encouraged him, for he knew that there were many more intermediate goals to be reached before the ultimate goal would be attained in eternity.
- D. ***“If that I may apprehend*** (lay hold) ***that for which also I was apprehended*** (laid hold of) ***of (by) Christ***” — Christ sovereignly laid hold of Paul for salvation and Paul is laying hold of Christ by faith to experience that salvation. NOTE: The “if” gives a condition of doubt (maybe he will and maybe he won’t) and shows the absolute necessity of clinging close to the Lord through faith if a proper Christian experience is to be had. NOTE: Paul’s conversion was the beginning, not the end of the chase of salvation.

V. The Goal: Present and Ultimate Fellowship with Christ (3:13-14)

- A. Introduction: In this section Paul uses the analogy of a track runner and his perseverance in the faith.
- B. ***“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended*** (laid hold)” — “Count” means to think and arrive at a conclusion. Paul meditated about his life and concluded that he had not arrived in the Christian life — a broad look over his life showed that he fell short. NOTE: Even as a mature Christian there is need for progressive victory over sin and deeper fellowship with Christ.
- C. ***“But this one thing I do”*** — Paul concentrated on this one thing as he ran the Christian life. NOTE: In the Roman and Greek games, there would be a pole at the finish line, and the runners would fix their eyes on this pole and run towards it, keeping the rules of the race. The Christian is to fix his eyes upon Jesus Christ (Heb. 12:2) and keep the rules set down by Christ (2 Cor. 2:5) so that he can fulfill his course with joy (Acts 20:24) and a clear conscience (2 Tim. 4:7).
- D. ***“Forgetting*** (constantly) ***those things which are behind***” — Paul forgot completely about the sins and failures of his past unsaved life; he refused to let it haunt him because his sins had been forgiven. He also put behind him his sins, failures and mistakes as a saved person and he never rested on his laurels and experiences as a Christian. He kept pushing forward. NOTE: A runner in track must

never look back for he loses his stride (cf. Gal. 5:7).

- E. **“And reaching forth unto those things which are before”** — “Reaching” is an athletic term, depicting a track runner straining and stretching his body to cross the finish tape. This is a picture of a Christian giving every ounce of strength to gain fellowship with Christ and taking each obstacle of life as part of the sanctification process which will bring him finally in the end to ultimate fellowship with Christ in eternity. The Christian must grasp every opportunity for fellowship with Christ ere the race is done!
- F. **“I press (continue to chase) towards the mark (down towards the goal)”** — Paul perseveres in faith-obedience to the mark which is the end of the Christian race. He is always moving towards the goal of total and complete fellowship with Christ even though he knows he cannot attain in this lifetime. NOTE: The future goal is when the Christian leaves earth and flesh behind and enters into the presence of the Lord, either through death or at His coming.
- G. **“For the prize”** — The prize is not rewards for faithfulness (although the Christian will be rewarded in eternity) but the prize is perfect fellowship with Christ, full and complete, in eternity. NOTE: The great prize will be to know Christ fully (1 Thess. 4:17; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21). In light of this, everything else fades into insignificance.
- H. **“Of the high (upward) calling of God”** — Paul is speaking about the upward calling of God. The prize is perfect fellowship with Christ and there is an upward calling to move towards this ultimate goal of Christ. POINT: When it appears that the goal of fellowship with Christ is reached in our experience, then the prize is set up a little higher, then higher, and we progress towards fellowship with Christ which will be complete in the future. NOTE: Fellowship is progressive. Each step of deeper fellowship with Christ is a step towards heaven and the complete reality of Christ. Fellowship with Christ is a “little bit of heaven.”
- I. **“In Christ Jesus”** — The whole upward calling and prize is found in Christ Jesus; thus it is related to the realization of the believer’s position in Christ through union with Christ.

VI. The Warning: Fellowship Is To Deepen Through Maturity (3:15)

- A. **“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect (mature) be thus minded”** — There apparently was a group of fairly mature Christians at Philippi who thought they had arrived spiritually (perfectionism). Paul says these mature Christians are to have the same attitude as the Apostle about spiritual growth; that is, no one has ever reached ultimate maturity — there is always more need for growth in grace.
- B. **“And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you”** — Paul says if these mature Christians think they have arrived, then God will reveal to them just how far wrong they really are, and He will use Paul’s life (as stated above) to convict them.

VII. The Exhortation: Fellowship and Maturity Has Immediate Outlets (3:16)

- A. **“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule,”** — Paul tells them that whatever their state of maturity, they are to walk according to the light they have, expressing an open mind and a teachable spirit.
- B. **“Let us mind the same thing”** — All are to give attention to being occupied with Christ. God will bring us along in maturity if we are in fellowship with Christ and seeking to please Him in everything.

B. Union with Christ

I. Introduction

- A. The Christian life is the Christ life — Christ living in the Christian and the Christian

- living for Christ by faith.
- B. Jesus Christ is to be the central figure of every Christian's life. He is to be dominated by and occupied with Christ in every experience of life (Col. 3:4).
- C. The "key" to Christianity is found in the words "*in Christ*," "*in Him*," "*in whom*," "*in Christ Jesus*," etc. This speaks of the Christian's union with Jesus Christ.
NOTE: The words "in Christ" or its equivalents occur 164 times in Paul's writings alone. Thus the words "in Christ" are vitally connected up with Paul's spiritual secret for Christian living.

II. Union with Christ

A. Union Actualized by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

1. At the moment of conversion, a person is placed into union with Christ by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5). This is not water baptism but spiritual baptism in which the believer is identified with Christ (cf. John 14:20).
2. Through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit a person is put into vital, living and organic union with Christ so that the believer becomes one with Christ. This is an eternal, unchanging, abiding and indissoluble union. It is a mystical but actual union. The Christian becomes one spirit with the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:17).
3. The baptizing work of the Holy Spirit is not experienced but union with Christ is a fact, position and relationship. The Christian experiences the effects or results of union with Christ but not union itself.

B. Union Illustrated

1. Biblical
 - a. Bride and Bridegroom (Eph. 5)
 - b. Body and Head (Eph. 1:22-23)
 - c. Branches and Vine (John 15)
2. Logical: Union with Christ is like the blacksmith who puts an iron in the fire. The iron gets in the fire and the fire gets into the iron. There is an interpenetration of the elements.

C. Union Explained: This union is a fact but it cannot be fully explained. We can experience the effects of it but we cannot understand it. It is much like the new birth — we know we have it and we enjoy it but cannot explain it.

D. Union Related to Eternity and Time

1. Conceptually: In eternity past, the believer was always in Christ in the mind of God (Eph. 1:4).
2. Potentially: The Christian was potentially in Christ when Christ died on the Cross (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6:2).
3. Actually or Experientially: The Christian was actually placed into Christ in his experience when he trusted in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).
4. Finally: The Christian's union with Christ will be completely realized when he is with Christ in eternity to come (Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:17).

E. Union's Blessings: Because the Christian is in union with Christ, all that Christ has from the Father, the Christian has. The Christian is a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 3:17).

F. Union's Results: The believer becomes a "new creation" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) and begins to walk a new kind of life (Rom. 6:4). He shares Christ's death to sin and its resurrected life (Rom. 6:1-5).

G. Union's Expressions

1. Walk (Col. 2:6): A life of reliance and trust in Christ as a Christian.
2. Ways (1 Cor. 4:17): Paul's life was a life lived in Christ. Because of union, the Christian will direct his ways in Christ.
3. Power (Phil. 4:13): "I can do all things in Christ who keeps on empowering me."

- Because of union, Paul could keep moving in this life for Christ.
4. Behavior (1 Pet. 3:16): Union with Christ affects Christian behavior.
 5. Triumph in Ministry (2 Cor. 2:14): Paul learned that in every kind of circumstance he could triumph in Christ.
 6. God's Will (1 Thess. 5:18).
 7. Speech (2 Cor. 2:17).
 8. Rooted and Built Up — Growth (Col. 2:7)
 9. Taught (Eph. 4:21)
 10. Guarded (Phil. 4:7)
- H. Union to be Appropriated and Appreciated (Gal. 2:20): God has sovereignly put every Christian into Christ and the result of this will be a new kind of life. Yet it is equally true that because one is in union with Christ he will exercise his human responsibility and lay hold of Christ by faith. Faith appropriates or lays hold of this marvelous union. Through faith we experience the realities of our union with Christ. NOTE: Union with Christ is not static but dynamic. NOTE: Faith is a result of union with Christ but it is also a responsibility of every Christian to exercise faith.
- I. Union's Aim (Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:15, 17): At the coming of the Lord Jesus the believer's eternal union will be completely realized. The Christian will not only be "in Christ" but actually and finally "with Christ."
- J. Union Realized in Experience: How can a person know he is in Christ?
1. Believe what the Bible teaches — all who have trusted Christ are in Christ.
 2. There is a desire to keep Christ's commandments (1 John 2:3-6).

C. Occupation with Christ

I. Introduction

- A. The sole object of every Christian is to be occupied with Jesus Christ every moment of every day. This involves relating the person of Jesus Christ to every area and experience of life.
- B. To be occupied with Christ is to be in conscious fellowship with Christ in one's experience. This is a moment by moment fellowship.
- C. Occupation with Christ involves allowing Christ, by an act of one's own will, to reign as Lord of one's life. It is taking self off the throne of one's life and placing Christ on the throne. It is a willingness to be obedient to the person of Christ.
- D. Occupation involves making Christ the center of one's attention and affection.
- E. The Christian is to love Christ, whom he has never seen (1 Pet. 1:8; John 20:29), and this love is expressed by obedience to the commands of Christ (John 15:10, 14 cf. 1 John 3:24). NOTE: To be occupied or in fellowship with Christ is to be obedient to the person of Jesus Christ.

II. Occupation with Christ

- A. Christ, the Christian's Life (Col. 3:4, 11 cf. Rom. 5:10, 1 John 4:9): Jesus Christ is the very essence of the Christian's life. We cannot make Him our life because He is our life through union with Christ (Rom. 6:4). The Christian life is Christ living His own life in the Christian. NOTE: Since Christ is the believer's life, the goal of living is to exchange, in experience, one's personal life for the life of Christ. It is to have a progressive experience of an exchanged life.
- B. Christ, the Christian's Object of Life (Phil. 1:21): The whole process of living for the Christian is Christ — not doctrine, church, good works, etc. All these are important but the Christian life is Christ. Christ and life are one and the same thing for the Christian.
John Eadie said this about Paul:

For to live is Christ — the preaching of Christ the business of my life; the presence of Christ the cheer of my life; the image of Christ the crown of my life; the spirit of Christ the life of my life; the love of Christ the power of my life; the will of Christ the law of my life; and the glory of Christ the end of my life. Christ was the absorbing element of his life. If he traveled, it was on Christ's errand; if he suffered, it was in Christ's service. When he spoke, his theme was Christ, and when he wrote, Christ filled his letters.

- C. Christ, the Christian's Power for Life (Phil. 4:13): Christ empowers the Christian with His own life to live the Christian life. The Amplified Hew Testament says:

I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me — I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me (that is, I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency).

- D. Christ, the Christian's Purpose of Life (2 Cor. 4:10): The purpose of the Christ life is to manifest the life of Christ in the Christian to others.
E. Christ, the Christian's Hope of Future Glory (Col. 1:27).
F. Christ, the Christian's Example of Life (1 Pet. 2:21).

III. Fellowship With Christ (Phil. 3:10)

- A. ***"That I may know him"*** — The passion of Paul was to know Christ fully and completely in his experience.
B. ***"And the power of his resurrection"*** — Paul longed to realize more fully the resurrection power of Christ in his own experience that the resurrected Christ would become the power of his life (Eph. 1:19-20).
C. ***"And the fellowship of his suffering"*** — The yearning of Paul was to participate in the sufferings of Christ as He is allowed to live out His life in him. NOTE: This is suffering primarily with the world, flesh and the devil as Christ seeks to win men through the Christian (Col. 1:24 cf. Rom. 8:36; 2 Cor. 4:10-11). It is a privilege to suffer for Christ, and through suffering, the Christian draws closer to Christ.
D. ***"Being made conformable unto his death"*** — Paul desires to enter experientially into his co-crucifixion with Christ where he died to sin and self (Gal. 2:20).

Hudson Taylor: "Jesus Christ counted on as never absent is holiness complete."