

“Towards Christ”
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Readings:

Philippians 3:17-21

Introduction

- Every life is moving toward something.
 - Whether we realize it or not, the goal we pursue shapes the decisions we make
- every day.
- Paul asks exactly that question in Philippians 3:
 - What direction is your life moving?
- Look what happens to Alice, the main character from Alice in Wonderland.
 - Lost at a crossroads, she asks the Cheshire Cat which path she should take.
 - He replies,
 - “Where do you want to go?”
 - She answers,
 - “I don’t really care.”
 - The Cat says,
 - “Then any road will do.”
- The same question faces the church.
 - What is our goal?
 - The answer determines how we live today.
- Someone once asked me,

- “What do you do to keep people in church?
 - Entertainment? Music? Drama? Circus”
- My answer was simple:
 - If people remain in the church, they should remain because of Christ.
 - Jesus is our goal.
- In Philippians 3, Paul reminds us that Christ is both
 - the reason we began the Christian life
- and the destination toward which we press on.

1. FOLLOWING CHRIST

- When I was younger, I struggled with Paul’s words:
 - “Join in imitating me.”
 - They sounded arrogant.
- Later I understood that Paul is not asking believers to copy his personality or
 - achievements.
 - He is inviting them to follow the same direction because he is following Christ.
- Earlier in the chapter, Paul says that everything he once valued is now loss compared
 - with knowing Christ.
 - He no longer trusts his own righteousness but the righteousness God gives
 - through faith in Jesus.

- His desire is to know Christ, share in His sufferings, experience the power of His resurrection, and continue pursuing the One who first pursued him.
- Paul also admits that he has not yet reached perfection.
 - He is still pressing on.
 - Therefore, to imitate Paul is not to imitate a perfect man but to walk beside
 - someone whose eyes are fixed on Christ.
- The same is true for us.
 - We do not earn fellowship with God through our efforts.
 - Christian maturity is not becoming more impressed with ourselves; it is becoming
 - more captivated by Christ.
 - Our confidence is not in our obedience but in His grace.
- Paul endured suffering because Christ remained his goal.
 - His life pointed beyond himself to the Savior,
 - and ours should as well.

2. JOY IN THE PRESENT

- After describing those who imitate Christ, Paul speaks about the enemies of the cross.
- At first, we might think he is describing pagans or persecutors.

- Instead, he describes people who know the message of Christ
 - but continue living with themselves at the center.
- For Paul, conversion is not simply improving our behavior.
 - It is a complete change of direction.
 - Everything that once defined our identity becomes secondary
 - because Christ has become our greatest treasure.
- This does not mean rejecting everyday life or withdrawing from the world.
 - We, Christians, live in the same world as everyone else,
 - but under a different Lord.
 - Christ now shapes our priorities, values, and identity.
- Paul says that the enemies of the cross have made their own appetites their god.
 - Their lives are driven by whatever they desire most.
 - Their appetites, not Christ, govern their decisions.
 - Their confidence rests in personal desires, achievements, or self-sufficiency
- rather than in God's grace.
- Success, comfort, reputation, possessions, or even religious performance can become our goal.

- None of those things are necessarily evil.
 - They become dangerous when they become ultimate.
- Because none of these can give the freedom Christ gives through the cross.
- Paul contrasts two paths.
 - Those who follow themselves move toward destruction
 - because they trust what cannot save them.
 - Those who follow Christ move toward the life He has secured for them.

3. JOY IN FUTURE

- Paul then declares, “Our citizenship is in heaven.”
 - Philippi was a Roman colony.
 - Roman citizenship was a source of enormous pride and privilege.
 - Paul deliberately says that Christians possess an even greater citizenship,
- not Rome, but heaven.
 - Their identity is no longer defined by earthly status but by belonging to Christ.
- He is not saying Christians should ignore this world.
 - Rather, our true identity and hope belong to Christ and His kingdom.

- Because we belong to Him, we wait for the day when He will return and complete His work.
- Paul says Christ will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body.
 - We are not talking about rejection of our humanity
 - but its complete redemption.
- Our present existence is marked by weakness, suffering, and death.
 - Yet this condition is temporary.
 - Christ will give His people the fullness of the life He has promised.
- This future is not earned by discipline or religious effort.
 - It is God's gift through Christ's death and resurrection.
- Paul expresses the same truth in Romans 8:1:
- “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- Those who belong to Christ already live in the freedom He has won, even as they wait
- for its final fulfillment.
- That is the difference between the two paths.
 - Those who trust themselves remain bound to themselves.
 - Those who trust Christ already belong to His kingdom
 - and await the complete restoration He will bring.

CONCLUSION

- The goal we choose determines the direction of our lives.
- If we make ourselves the goal, we will never find lasting satisfaction.
 - Even when we achieve what we want, it cannot give the life we were created for.
- But if Christ is our goal, every step has purpose.
 - We follow Him because He first called us,
 - and we live in the freedom His cross has secured.
- Paul's invitation remains:
 - press on toward Christ.
 - Live according to the message of the cross.
 - There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- One day faith will become sight.
 - The Christ we now follow by faith we will see face to face.
- Until that day, let us keep pressing on toward Christ.