

Text: Phil. 3:11-21

Title: "Becoming like Christ's life"

Time: 1/9/2022 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: A few weeks ago, a car struck one of the telephone poles in our neighborhood knocking out our power at the parsonage. It is a bit scary, honestly, to be reminded how dependent my existence has become on a reliable source of electricity. Power-outages shut me down.

Thankfully, Skip did some great work on a generator I purchased some time ago, so I thought I had an immediate solution. I lugged this great power source out of the modular, down the snowy ramp, all the way around to the parsonage. I then filled it with gasoline and turned the key. The generator turned over a time or two but did not start, and then came that dreaded clicking noise that told me that the new battery I had bought for the generator was also out of power. Months ago, it started the generator just fine, but now when I really needed it to do so, it had run dry.

I brought the battery to an auto parts store where they charged it overnight for me, but by the time I finally got my generator started again on the next day, the power lines to the house had been fixed for hours and the emergency was over. I decided that this was no way to be prepared for a future power outage, so I purchased a battery maintainer at the parts store and have the generator battery plugged in to that so that the power is there when I need it.

I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that Philippians 3 is about becoming more like Christ through becoming like His death and like His life (v. 10). Becoming like the death of Christ is the focus of the first 10 verses of the chapter.

Becoming like the life of Christ is the focus of our passage this morning, verses 11-21. Whereas becoming like Christ's death involves a fellowship of His suffering, especially suffering loss to gain Him, becoming like Christ's life involves experiencing the power of His resurrection.

Paul clearly believes that this power of Christ's resurrection is as necessary to our spiritual well-being as keeping power to the parsonage is for me to get my work done day after day. Keeping the power to the parsonage required taking certain steps to ensure that this can be done, and living in the power of the resurrection life of Christ also requires taking certain steps to ensure that we have the strength we need to do the Lord's will for our lives each day.

I want to highlight three steps for living with the power of Christ's resurrection enabling us to love and serve Him.

I. Dying is the first step to living in the power of Christ's resurrection (v. 11).

Illustration: The metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly is an amazing miracle of God's creation. It is as though a caterpillar dies when it forms its chrysalis, and then as though rising from a tomb, a completely new creature, not at all resembling the caterpillar, emerges to spread its wings and live its new life.

Application: The power of Christ's resurrection is the power of the Creator of the butterfly to recreate. We get the word *metamorphosis* from the Greeks. It means *to change shape*, and it is used by Paul in Rom. 12:2, where the Apostle instructs believers to not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. Paul uses the word *metamorphis* when he speaks of the transformation of

the believer from worldling to disciple of Christ. This is the experience of the power of the resurrection of Christ lived out in the life – it is a power that recreates and changes us into something new.

But remember verse one of Romans 12. Paul first commands believers to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, to die. Jesus called this death “taking up your cross” and following Him to the hill of crucifixion (Luke 9:23, “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”).

In Phil. 3:11, Paul explains that one must use the correct means to get to the end of Jesus’s resurrection recreation power in our lives, and that means is being made conformable to Jesus’s death (v. 10). Death was the pathway to resurrection power for our Savior, and that is how we must get there as well. We die to our self-righteousness, our self-confidence, our self-will, and our selfish ambitions, and only then can we experience the amazing power of the Lord to change us into something new. That was something Paul sought to do each day (1 Cor. 15:31, “I die daily”).

So, do you want the power of Jesus’s resurrection to change into something new today? If so, the first question you must ask yourself is, “Did I die today?” “Have I presented my body as a living sacrifice to the Lord today?” The path to Calvary always goes through Gethsemane. The night Jesus died for our sins He prayed to His Father, “Not my will, but Thine be done.” Have we gone to our Garden of Gethsemane this morning and prayed like that?

II. Pursuing is a step to living in the power of Christ’s resurrection (vv. 12-15, 20-21).

Illustration: As we get older, our brain function begins to deteriorate a bit. I find myself from time-to-time walking into a room in pursuit of something, but after getting there no longer able to remember what it is that I was pursuing. Sometimes I must retrace my steps to see if I can jog my memory about what I needed to be looking for.

Application: The power of Christ's resurrection in our life requires a keen and clear memory about what it is that we are supposed to be pursuing. It is like we need a certain kind of brain-health about this (v. 15). It should become such a focus that we are able to say with Paul, "This one thing I do" (v. 13). As we come into the room of each new day, we must not forget what it is that we have come for. Paul's goal must be our goal every day.

Paul calls this goal "the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (KJV). My translation of that phrase is "a goal unto the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus." This high or upward calling of God in Christ Jesus is described in detail in verses 20-21.

Our citizenship is in heaven; there we will have a glorious body like Christ; and then everything will be subdued to Him. So, that is what the mark or goal of verse 15 looks like. Our goal is very simply to pursue a heavenly life on earth, to be citizens of heaven here. It is to be reflecting Christ's glory in an inglorious body, and it is to be subject to Christ now in a world that is in absolute rebellion against Him.

Paul not only defines the goal, but also he gives us some of the keys to success when it comes to our pursuit of this goal:

1. Pursue with honest humility (vv. 12-13a).

Illustration: I learned in business school that the Japanese developed a principle of manufacturing quality they called *kaizen*. We learned that the definition of *kaizen* was “a number of undramatic and subtle improvements gradually and cumulatively raising the level of performance without interruption.”

Application: Paul defines our pursuit of Christlikeness in a similar way. He teaches that we should always be asking ourselves, “What needs to be changed next?”, “In what area am I not yet like my Savior?”, and “How can that change about me?” Christ saved us for a purpose that we can obtain only when we know we are not there yet and so continuously seek to improve (v. 12).

2. Pursue with forward-looking faithfulness (vv. 13b-14).

Application: Paul speaks of forgetting what is in the past and focusing on what lies in our future as believers. But it is important to understand that the past he is talking about is a past lived in this life, and the future he is focused on is a future in the life to come. In this life, sometimes we know that the future is going to be a bit harder than the past has been. A cancer diagnosis will alert you to that truth about this life. Both the past and the future can be difficult here.

But for we who possess life eternal, our future is always better than our past. Our future will experience the reality of that heavenly citizenship. Our past was the experience of knowing nothing about that hopeful assurance. And so, our experiences apart from Christ in this life are the things that we must leave in the past, and the glory and joy of the life to come must always be the future that drives us to a determined commitment to faithfulness. We endeavor to live that future by faith now.

3. Pursue with sensitive teachableness (v. 15).

God is a God who reveals Himself and His will to us. In terms of what is called special revelation, it is especially the work of the Holy Spirit to make God's Word known to us. He shows us where our pursuit of Christ is falling short as we look into His revelation like we look into a mirror (Jam. 1:22-25, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."). We must spend time in God's revelation to experience the Holy Spirit's corrections, which bring lasting change.

So, what are we in pursuit of today? Is it to become more Christlike through humility, faithfulness, and teachability? If that is our pursuit, the power of resurrection life will change us and make us new each and every day.

III. Imitating is a step to living in the power of Christ's resurrection (vv. 16-19).

Illustration: I am thankful for the people the Lord gave to me as examples in my life. Last year Pastor Henry Prause went home to glory, having served Northeast Baptist Church of Millerton, NY for over sixty years.

Application: Whom shall those who follow us have as their examples? Our young people look up to many whose god is their belly. Henry was the friend of the cross, not its enemy. His legacy is one of salvation, not destruction. Jesus

was his God, not his own belly. Pastor Prause laid up treasures in heaven and did not focus on earthly things.

The generations behind us need examples like that as well. The ground we gain as the church of Jesus Christ we gain together (v. 16—"we" and "us"). Imitating godly examples and being a godly example for one another play an important part in our experiencing the resurrection power of Christ in our lives as it changes us into His image. That is the calling of our church. We need to be saying to one another, "Imitate me." I am not the only one, and when I fail they need to find someone else, but by God's grace I want to do for someone else what Henry and so many others have done for me. Who comes to mind who needs to hear from you, "Be an imitator of me"?

Conclusion: The power that Paul speaks of in this passage transformed him from Saul the persecutor of the church into Paul the Apostle of church-planting among the Gentiles. We come to know Christ personally and intimately through allowing the power of His resurrection life to completely change us into His perfect image. That was Paul's life as a Christian, and it is what our life should be as well.

Experiencing the power of this life begins with dying, continues with pursuing and imitating, and ends in a completely changed person. This power is the reason Kevin Hobi today is different than he was 10 years ago, or even yesterday. Is that same power changing us into a more Christlike version of who we are? That is who we were meant to be. Paul promises that God shall reveal the answer to this question to you if you are willing to ask (v. 15).

What is your answer? If it is that you have never really known the power that changes the life from sinner to saint,

perhaps the problem is that you have never been saved by the power of Christ's death. Dying comes first. The first day we die to self is the day we repent of our sin and self-righteousness, and in faith trust Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness we need and a righteousness God accepts. Will you do so today? The power of new life will be yours.

If your answer is that it has been a long time since you have seen real change in your life, perhaps the problem is that you stopped dying to self, stopped pursuing, and stopped the influence of those whom you should be imitating. If that is the case, begin again. The life of change through the power of Jesus's resurrection is the only life worth living. Become a part of the citizens of heaven who determine to bring the change of resurrection power first to themselves, and then to a dark and dying world.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching