

#8 Philippians

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Verse 13: (vs. 12: Not that I have already attained, *or am already perfected*; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.) 'Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: (*I have not apprehended! I am not perfect!*) but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

'For the Lord God will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.' Isa 50:7

Isaiah was speaking prophetically of Jesus Christ but it is the same thing that Paul is saying over and over: I press on, setting my mind, my eyes and my heart on things above and I know that I will not be ashamed of the Gospel or of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, false teachers, as now, were bringing all sorts of erroneous claims regarding what the life of the believer should look like and Paul was never shy about disputing error and naming names. In his second letter to Timothy, he mentioned two: 'But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, ¹⁸ who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Tim 2:16

This is the very false teaching which Paul was writing to correct in His second letter to the Thessalonians. Here, in verse 13, Paul is contradicting the teaching of some then and many now, that the 'spirit-filled' believer is somehow empowered and capable of living a sin-free life. The same teaching is found in some of today's Pentecostal/Charismatic groups. They teach that once one has 'tarried' and finally received the 'second blessing' of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, with its being identical to the once and for all Coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, which they teach happens after one's initial salvation, that then, the believer has been endued with a certain power from on High which will allow him to live sin-free.

Paul says, 'Even I, Paul, have not become perfect in the practical sense; yes, Hebrews does tell us that with His one sacrifice, the Lord Jesus has perfected every believer; we do stand before God clothed in the absolute perfect Righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ but we still, until the Rapture, live within bodies of flesh which remain under the sway of our carnal sin nature with which we must battle every day.

Even though Paul knows Jesus Christ, the power of His Resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, having been made conformable unto His death and is waiting daily, expectantly, for the Resurrection, the Rapture... he says that even he has not been made perfect... he, just like every other believer must continue to battle his own flesh which is why he continues to work to forget what lies behind and to press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

In Romans 7, Paul writes: 'For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. ¹⁶ If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. ¹⁷ But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ²¹ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.'

Here, Paul is clearly laying out the experience of every child of God who longs to walk in close fellowship with his Lord. Some teach that what Paul is expressing in Romans 7 is actually his experience before Salvation but that after Salvation, his must have been a completely different experience: then, he must have been '*much*

more sin free;' but that is clearly untrue because the fact is, if this were simply Paul's experience before Salvation but that now, since he has been saved he is able to walk in victory over his flesh, then we, too, should be able to walk in sinless victory over our flesh which any and every honest believer would soon deny. No matter how sweet the little old lady who sits in her Sunday School class appears to be, if she is honest she, too, will quickly admit that she must also battle her flesh to one degree or another, every day.

And therein lies the real problem within those 'circles' where they are taught that a sinless life is not only possible but actually the 'norm' for every believer who has received their so-called 'second blessing:' they must pretend and report to others that they have reached that important milestone but the truth is, they just end up lying to each other as they desperately try to hide their sin. But remember, the Word says, 'be sure your sin will find you out.'

Just some quick, well known examples: Jimmy Swaggart: always preaching about the 'Mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues while all the while sneaking off to meet with prostitutes. Pastor Zachary Timms from Florida, sneaking off to a NY hotel room where he dies from an overdose of cocaine and heroin. Pastor and former president of the National Association of Evangelicals, Ted Haggard, 'outed' by his homosexual 'escort' who also provided him with drugs. Even Tom Tillman whose sin dramatically found him out more than 30 years ago... all of them pretending to 'have it all together' while, in truth, living lives of sin and hypocrisy.

The list could go on and on including so many more whose sins have not yet found them out.

'Blessed *is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered* (covered by God). Blessed *is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit*. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.' Psa 32

Paul is simply teaching the truth: we all battle sin but those who are most victorious are those who are honest, open, transparent and humbly walking with their Lord and Savior, fixing their eyes on Jesus Christ and Eternity. Those who truly understand and believe God's promises regarding eternal rewards are much less likely to despise His promised rewards for the momentary pleasure of sin as Esau despised his birthright for the momentary pleasure of a measly bowl of lentil stew. That is what we do when we choose to sin.

That is why John tells us, 'This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.' 1 John 1:5

By the way: how do we answer when 1 John 1:9 is used as supposed proof that if we have unconfessed sin in our lives, we are unforgiven and, so, must be careful to not die in that state. Those who teach and believe this are ultimately saying: 'Every time we sin, we lose our salvation!' And so, we must constantly get resaved over and over and over again but the fact is, Jesus Christ died only once and His sacrifice was payment once for all.

'For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.' Rom 6:10

'For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,' 1 Pet 3:18

God's Word is clear that when we come to God in faith, when He gives us Eternal Life, the shed Blood and priceless Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ covers and pays for all our sin, past, present and future. Other verses which bear this out include: 1 Cor 15:3, Heb 10:10, Eph 1:13, Rom 8:30, 1 Cor 5:5 and many more.

The 'confession' that John is referring to is when we come to God in faith, confessing our sin and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation which is also when we are completely cleansed and made righteous: 'For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.' 2 Cor 5:21 We have become, as a past and completed action, the Righteousness of God. We cannot *unbecome* the

Righteousness of God; however, when we sin, when we live with unconfessed sin, we carry with us the fact of a practical unrighteousness; we carry a darkness with us. John is saying that when we finally humble ourselves before God and abandon our sin, He, once again, washes away that practical stain we carried about with us even though, in His eyes, we had been made righteous and holy all along, His beloved children.

Even so... when we battle some sin or other... and just because we 'battle' a sin... it does not mean that we fall to that sin... at least, not always. When someone asks for prayer because they are 'battling' an 'unspoken' sin... we've found, that is usually 'code' for: '*I keep on sinning in that area and the truth is, I don't really want to quit that sin because I like it.*' They may not 'want' to keep sinning, but the fact that they do continue sinning is the proof that they do it because they want what they get from that sin. After they sin in that area, they may be very remorseful but soon, they go and do it all over again. Only when we believe and understand that what God offers, in way of eternal rewards, is of far more value than what we get from the sin... only then will we choose to forego that sin and leave it behind.

Paul says, 'forgetting what lies behind, I press on forward...' In this context he means forgetting all the 'good' he supposedly had done... it was all self-righteous dung. But he also means, forgetting the bad that we've done. We can never draw close to God, bringing our whole heart to Him if we are dwelling on either of those two. If we set our minds on the good things we've done, then that will metastasize into a cancerous growth of self-righteousness and self-reliance, imagining that we're able to accomplish good things in our own strength which will invariably birth in us, pride... ugly and evil pride. On the other hand, if we allow our minds to dwell upon our past failures and sins, that will metastasize into another cancerous growth that will cause us to refuse to come boldly to His throne of Grace to find help in time of need: 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.'¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' Heb 4:15 And, surprisingly, that also will birth in us, pride: our thought being, 'My sin is too big... Christ's sacrifice could not have been enough to take away *my* sin... I am too large and strong a sinner to be forgiven.' Pride lies at the heart of every sin.

Paul, and Peter, make very clear that at the moment of our Salvation, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, that we are complete in Jesus Christ; there is nothing missing or needed as children of God: 'Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.'⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.¹¹ In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.¹⁸ Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—²¹ "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"²² which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.' Col 2:8

'Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,³ as His divine power ***has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness***, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.' 2 Pet 1:2

All of God's Word fits and weaves together into one majestic whole. Imagine being unelect, having not been chosen before the foundation of the World, being unsaved and unregenerate; imagine trying to read God's Word and have it seem like foolishness to you; imagine the emptiness, the hopelessness, the misery and gloom of life. Because of God's love for us, that He chose to reveal Himself to us and called and drew us to Himself, we have hope for now and eternity; we can have joy in persecution and sorrow; we know our future.

Verse 15: 'Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. ¹⁶ Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.'

Paul is, first, speaking of himself: 'Ever since I met the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, ever since I was actually taken up into Heaven, seeing a fraction of the wondrous, glorious and unimaginable future that awaits all God's children, nothing in this life, no riches, no luxuries, no sin, nothing of this life or of this World are worth a moment of my time and attention; my only goal is to walk with, obey and glorify God. Secondly, Paul is speaking of his readers and all of us, down through the Centuries; 'Hear what I say, read what I write, pay attention to everything God says through me; copy me as I copy the Lord Jesus Christ; let us all set our hearts and minds on Jesus Christ and His promises and let us all be of one accord as we look for His soon coming again for us, His Bride. And as we do, let us trust in the Holy Spirit to teach us and guide us into all Truth. We were made perfect, complete, holy and righteous at the moment of our salvation but all of us need the ongoing guidance of the Holy Spirit in growing, learning and walking more closely with God daily.

Verse 17: 'Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.'

'Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³² Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, ³³ just as I also please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking my own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved. Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered *them* to you.' 1 Cor 10:31-11:2

Paul writes that his is, in fact, the Earthly example of a God-honoring life and they would all do well to emulate him but also, he writes, anyone who follows my pattern and example is someone you can reliably follow. In this, we see, that Paul is not writing out of arrogance and self-righteousness; he is simply telling it like it is: Jesus Christ is perfection; I follow Him to the degree that I am a good example for you and those who faithfully follow my example are also those whose lives are good examples of Christian living.

Verse 18: 'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and whose glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.'

To whom does Paul make these accusations; who are these enemies of the Cross of Christ whose end is destruction and shame who set their minds on earthly things?

Paul is not writing of atheists; they are fools who have no impact on the 'Cross of Christ,' or the Church and its growth. Paul is not writing about celebrities, movie stars, politicians; they are all easily seen for the vermin that they are.

No, Paul is writing to warn of false teachers and preachers supposedly within the walls of churches or stadiums. He is writing of those whose goals are worldly wealth and accumulations, those who teach heresy but have gathered huge followings of goats or completely deceived weak minded, dull witted sheep. The proof of their deception is found in what is most important to them: Famous TV preacher, Kenneth Copeland has a net worth of \$800 million and has stated, his goal is to become the first 'preacher' \$billionaire. Benny Hinn is worth upwards of \$42 million; Joel Osteen's wealth is \$40 million while the aptly named Creflo Dollar's worth, earthly speaking, is \$27 million and there are so many, many more!

Some of these do set their minds of earthly things and are, in reality, enemies of the Cross of Christ.

Paul says, 'Follow me as I follow Jesus Christ and when I'm gone, if the Rapture hasn't happened yet, follow those who follow me; pattern your life after them, after me and mostly, after the Lord Jesus Christ.