

New Year's Resolutions – One Pursuit (Paul)

Text: Phil. 3:7-14

Introduction:

1. Series outline:
 - I. One Passion – Closeness to God (David) (Psalm 27:1-6)
 - II. One Priority – Communion with God (Mary) (Luke 10:38-42)
 - III. One Pursuit – Conformity to God (Paul) (Philippians 3:10-14)
2. There are several examples in the Word of God of godly individuals who aimed at “one thing” and were blessed as a result. We saw an example of that single-mindedness in David (Psalm 27:1-6) with his passion for the presence of God. We saw that same spirit in Mary with her priority to spend time at the feet of Christ. In this lesson, we will study the “one thing” in Paul’s life: One Pursuit – Conformity to God.
3. In Philippians 3, Paul speaks of his past (Vs. 1-11); his present (Vs. 12-16) and his future (Vs. 17-21)

Look at...

I. Paul's Ambition (Vs. 7-11)

A. To Know Christ in Salvation (In the past) (Vs. 7-9)

1. Rejection of Self-righteousness (Vs. 7-8)
 - a. “things...I counted loss for Christ” = Paul’s religious works as described in Vs. 4-6. Paul’s previous religious pride involved pride of ancestry and pride of religiosity. If you had lined up a the most religious people of the day, Paul would have stood head and shoulders above everyone else at the head of the line.
 - b. “excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” = reference to knowing Christ in salvation
 - c. “count them but dung” = Paul considered his past religious achievements on the same level as excrement!
 - d. “that I may win Christ” = based on the same root word translated ‘gain’ in Vs. 7. Paul lost in order that he might gain! He lost his reputation but gained salvation; he lost his legalism but gained the Lord; he lost religion but received redemption; he lost his self-righteousness but gained Christ’s perfect righteousness.
 - e. “To have everything without Christ is to have nothing, but to have Christ is to possess everything.” (Gromacki)
2. Reception of Divine righteousness (Vs. 9)
 - a. “be found in him” = in Christ!
 - b. “not having mine own righteousness” = the self-righteousness described in Vs. 4-6
 - c. “through the faith of Christ...by faith” = the channel through which the Divine righteousness is received

- d. "righteousness which is of God" = God's righteousness credited to the repentant, believing sinner. See Rom. 1:16-17; 3:10, 19-28; 4:1-5; 10:9-10

B. To Know Christ in Sanctification (In the present) (Vs. 10-11)

1. Knowing His Person (Vs. 10a)
 - a. 'know' = an experiential knowledge. Some know facts about an individual whereas others know someone intimately.
 - b. 'him' = Christ
 - c. "Getting saved is like getting married, it is just the beginning of a growing, knowing, sharing relationship." (Gromacki)
2. Knowing His Power (Vs. 10b)
 - a. 'power' = supernatural power
 - b. 'resurrection' = the same power that raised Christ from the dead
3. Knowing His Presence (Vs. 10c)
 - a. 'fellowship' = communion, joint participation
 - b. "his sufferings" = not his sufferings for sin. We can never participate in that! But we can suffer for Christ's sake. Col. 1:24 *"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:"*
4. Knowing His Principle (Vs. 10d)
 1. "being made conformable" – present tense; passive voice. A daily, ongoing work wrought in us by the Holy Spirit.
 2. Identification with Christ's death a key theme for Christian living in the New Testament.
 3. Paul could testify, "I die daily" (1. Cor. 15:31). Christ requires His disciples to take up the cross daily (Luke 9:23)
 4. See Rom. 6:6 & Gal. 2:20. We are crucified with Christ!

Look at...

II. Paul's Attitude (Vs. 12-13a)

Paul's attitude is full of humility as he acknowledges:

A. He Hadn't Acquired Everything (Vs. 12a)

1. "already attained" = word means 'received'
2. Paul hadn't received everything that God had in store for Him yet, including the resurrection (Vs. 11).

B. He Hadn't Arrived at Everything (Vs. 12b)

1. "already perfect" = 'perfect' means complete, spiritually mature
2. Paul is saying he still has more room for growth, even though by now he is a mature saint and a seasoned Apostle!

3. "Paul states that he has not come to the place in the Christian life where growth in spiritual maturity has been completed, beyond which there is no room for further development." (Wuest)

C. He Hadn't Apprehended Everything (Vs. 12c-13a)

- a. 'apprehend' = to lay hold of, seize upon so as to make one's own.
- b. "I count not myself to have apprehended" (13a) = 'count' means to reason, calculate, or think. Reveals Paul's mindset. He didn't have the mindset that he had apprehended (laid hold of) all that God had for him as a part of His Divine will for Paul's life.
- c. "but I follow after that I may apprehend" = Paul wanted to lay hold of, grasp after and seize the purpose for which God had gotten a hold of him.
- d. "that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" = Christ had got a hold of Paul's life and saved him with a purpose in view for His life. He was Christ's "**chosen vessel...to bear my (Christ's) name before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel**" (Acts 9:15) In Galatians 1:15-16, Paul stated, "...it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, **To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen...**"

Look at...

III. Paul's Aim (Vs. 13b-14)

A. Forgetting the Past (Vs. 13b)

1. "one thing I do" = single-minded pursuit. "No athlete succeeds by doing everything; he succeeds by specializing." (Wiersbe)
2. "forgetting those things which are behind" = this would include his past life before salvation as outlined in Vs. 4-6. This did not mean that Paul could erase these things from his mind. This is clear from the fact he just recounted them in detail! But with God's grace, he didn't have to allow the past to hinder his progress for the Lord.
3. Someone once said, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life."
4. "Paul uses an illustration here of a Greek runner completely forgetting his opponents whom he is leading in the race. Just as a runner's speed is slackened should he think of those behind him, and the thud, thud of their pounding feet, so the Christian's onward progress is hindered should he dwell on the past full of failures and sins, full of heartaches and discouragements, full of disappointments and thwarted hopes and plans. As long as a Christian has made things right with God and man, he should completely forget the past." (Wuest)
5. Application: Our forward movement for Christ can be hampered and hindered if we are constantly dwelling on past failures or even past victories. Yesterday's failures do not have to be today's or tomorrow's failures! And yesterday's victories, which do serve to

give us hope and encouragement, are not today's or tomorrow's victories. Some believers live so much in the past, they miss what God has for them in the present and in the future!

B. Focusing on the Future (Vs. 13c-14)

1. "follow after" (Vs. 12) = picture of a hunter. Means to pursue.
2. "reaching forth...I press towards" = picture of a runner, straining very muscle towards the finish line. "reaching forth" means to stretch out towards. 'press' comes from the same word translated "follow after" in Vs. 12 and speaks of a vigorous, passionate pursuit. 'towards' means to bear down upon.
3. Hebrews 12:1-2 *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* We learn some important lessons about the Christian race in this verse:
 - a. We need to be light weight – "lay aside every weight...and the sin" Note the word 'every'. Not some of the weights hindering your race for the Lord but ALL of them!
 - b. We need to be looking – "looking unto Jesus" He is our focus and our goal!
4. "for the prize" = the eternal rewards for faithfully following the will of God.

Conclusion:

1. Have you, like Paul, turned from your own righteousness and received God's righteousness? Are you saved?
2. What should we resolve as believers for 2019? Resolve to have just **one pursuit**, Christ and Christlikeness.
3. The heart of this three-part series can be summarized in Paul's words in Philippians 1:21 – **"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."** Will Christ be our love, our life, and our all this year?