

## PHILIPPIANS BIBLE STUDY

Philippians 1:27-30 (a)

Lesson #8

### JUST ONE THING

*27 Just one thing: live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, working side by side for the faith of the gospel, 28 not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is evidence of their destruction, but of your deliverance—and this is from God. 29 For it has been given to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him, 30 having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear about me.*

Phil 1:21-30 (HCSB)

*27 Just one thing: live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*

#### **A. The Great Commission of the True Believer:**

Last week we concluded our examination of the meaning of “To Live is Christ and to Die is Gain” as Paul had declared just preceding this set of passages we’re studying now. So, staying on that theme, and giving it tangible expression, he continues on with his discourse. After so lofty a phrase as to live is Christ he sums it all up in a single great commission statement that defines the function and purpose of every born again believer in a grand finale declaration by saying that after all this I’ve preached to you, **now I ask just one thing of you in response.** And what is that one grand thing that sums up and quantifies the whole of the preaching of living Christ, in a single statement, and defines both the obligation and primary objective of every genuine believer?

Well, before we read the holy scripture’s answer to that question, I would like to point out perhaps some noble and wonderful statements that he didn’t say was that thing:

1. He didn’t say that they were left on earth solely to evangelize the lost and he wanted them to get out there and win the city of Philippi for Jesus, whatever it took. To find new ways of preaching the gospel until every one in that city was a church member so that none were lost, because this was the will of God. This isn’t what he said?
2. He didn’t say that they were to band together and stop the pagan worship and the lewd pagan rituals that were polluting the culture of the day and the whole of the society. To drive out the false religions in their city and to silence the voices of opposition to Christianity. That also isn’t what he said?
3. He didn’t say that the church was called to put a stop to the abuse of children among the Roman society and to stamp out abortion of unborn babies. I had a friend who got caught up in the anti-abortion movement about 15 years ago, and he declared to me with full assurance that this was the primary work of the Holy Spirit in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the stamping out of abortion. He’s since left the church, divorced his wife, and disappeared off the scene. I haven’t heard from him in over a decade. (Romans 8:28 is my fondest hope for this dear friend of mine.)
4. He didn’t say that they were to reform the practices of the culture by taking over the government and enforcing the laws of God on the unbelieving masses through political influence or by military might. He didn’t say that.
5. He didn’t say that they were commissioned to abolish slavery and set everyone free. He didn’t say they were to abolish homosexuality, though it was rampant in the Roman empire at that time. He didn’t mention either of these.

Now obviously, there is no limit to the things that he didn’t say, except our own imagination. But I wanted to hit some of those things that we find popular and prevalent in our own day and time. Just Like my friend who truly thought that the whole purpose of God in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was for His church to put a stop to abortion, there are those who really think that abolishing homosexuality is the Holy Spirit’s current objective, or the winning of our cities for Jesus is the primary objective, or the recapture of our country’s past moral virtues is our objective.

Now while some of these are perhaps noble from a Christian perspective, one must first and foremost ask if they accurately conform to the teachings of holy scriptures. Was Jesus unable to abolish slavery in the Roman empire if that was His objective? Was Jesus unable to win a single city, even the one that He grew up in, to Himself, if that was His objective? Was Jesus a great preacher, with wonderful ideas, but just not able to win and persuade the people to follow Him because He didn't have the power, or He didn't have the authority to overturn their own inviolable free wills to comply?

Was Jesus actually, in the final analysis just another victim of the system that His Father had set in place, and powerless to make any real widespread and sweeping changes in the beliefs and practices of the people on the earth in His day? Is this the Jesus that the scriptures teach us, and were these His mission objectives?

Do we remember the words of Jesus where He declared that all of those that the Father had given Him from before creation would in fact come to Him, and that he wouldn't reject or lose a single one of them. He said this in the face of a society, and a religious system (Judaism), that was violently opposed to everything He said and did. But in spite of this, Jesus told the Father that He had accomplished ALL that He had been sent to do, and was prepared to be crucified, resurrected, and glorified.

And yet, He had made essentially no impact on society whatsoever. He didn't stop or change the religious practices of the day. He had initiated no social reforms, He had not influenced the political system to any degree, in fact most of the kings and authorities didn't even know who he was. And yet, in spite of all this apparent failure, Jesus told His Father that **His ministry was a complete success, and He had done everything He had been sent to do.** A fact to which His Father wholeheartedly agreed.

Well if that's the case, then all those things that He didn't do could not possibly have been any part of His God ordained mission, could they? He hadn't won any cities to Himself, He hadn't reformed society, He hadn't straightened out religious practices, and He hadn't put a stop to the ungodly behaviors of the masses of humanity. So what in the world did He do that He could claim an unprecedented victory and success?

As Jesus hung on that cross, beaten, stripped and humiliated, in full public view, the masses yelled insults and taunts at Him. To them this was a fitting end to this troublemaker, and proved beyond any doubt that He was just another imposter who came to a wretched end. He had been nothing to them but an annoyance, and they were glad to see Him gone for good, so they could get back to their former ways without His constantly pointing out their sins.

So what had He accomplished that made His Father say that He was "Well Pleased" with Him, and His ministry an eternal and unchallengeable success? The answer, because He had redeemed a minuscule little group of people of that day, whom His Father had given Him out of the world, and He had taught them, through day to day teachings and experiences, how they should live their lives while on this earth, and by doing this they both honor Him and glorify His Father. And in the process secure for themselves forgiveness of sins and eternal life and glory in His eternal kingdom.

It was for this small, unimpressive, unrecognizable, little remnant of human society that Jesus had become incarnate into human flesh and made entrance into His own creation to redeem, regenerate, sanctify, and train to become His eternal mate and partner in the soon to be eternal kingdom granted to Him by His Father. He said "I will build My church" and it is for that very purpose that He came, lived, died, and resurrected. It is for that very purpose that He sent the Holy Spirit to empower and teach His eternal mate to take her place at His side in His coming kingdom. He is building His church, and will continue to do so until the fullness of it comes to saving faith, as He is not willing for any of those who are chosen to be left out, so He patiently waits for the full number to come to repentance and faith. (Rom 11:25; 2 Pet 3:9)

In His earthly time He had had virtually no impact on society, politics, religion or behaviors, and so He was seen as a fraud and a failure by the unbelieving masses who expected something very different from their coming Messiah. But, let us be certain that when He returns He will most certainly have an impact on all of these things. He will take His place in politics as the Theocratic King of kings, He will rule this entire earth with an inflexible rod of iron. He will determine and enforce all laws and all social behaviors and rule and control all commerce. He will be that Messiah that the people expected the first time and much much more. But everything in its proper time. In the final analysis, He did exactly what He had come for on this first visit. He's building and preparing His real church, but very few can see it. (Jn 3:3)

Jesus, in His high priestly prayer of John 17, expressly says that He doesn't pray for the world in mass, but rather for that small specific group that His Father has given Him out of the world. If His mission had been to save everybody, then He would have had to pray for everybody and not just for a very select few. He was astonishingly clear in that prayer. He said who He was praying for, and He said who He was not. He left nothing to speculation. He was not under any illusion that He was sent by His Father to save everybody on earth. In fact, if that was His mission, He undeniably failed miserably, because He himself said that the entrance to His kingdom was narrow and few would ever find it. (Mat 7:13-14).

But as the scriptures declare:

***19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."*** 2 Tim 2:19 (NASB)

This two part seal on the foundation plan of God sums it up beautifully. First, The Lord knows those who are His (because he chose them by name before time began) and He will not miss or lose so much as one. He gave His word on that.

And secondly, on the part of the believers, our principle task is to live our lives in a manner that is worthy of the gospel that Jesus preached and died for. And that, my dear brothers and sisters, is the answer to the "Just One Thing" question that we are examining in verse 27 of Philippians chapter one. That is the Christian's great commission.

To learn through progressive sanctification, how to live and think and behave in such a manner that honors Christ and glorifies God our Father, who has chosen us, called us, redeemed us, and regenerated us for this very purpose.

And therefore, all other activities that a believer may pursue are supportive and peripheral to this first and foremost calling to believers to depart from wicked behaviors. Caring for the sick, feeding the poor, encouraging those in despair, preaching the gospel, providing for the homeless, and many such good works are among those things that are tangible demonstrations of believers living their lives in a manner that is worth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But if the church begins to believe that even doing all those things just mentioned, and yet not departing from unrighteousness is sufficient to please God and fulfill our calling, then we are missing the whole point. Good works are the God ordained outcome of saving faith (Eph 2:8-10) but they are certainly not a substitute for it. While faith certainly works, at the same time works aren't necessarily saving faith. Real faith produces obedience to the commands of God in a progressive pattern of life that is unmistakable. Jesus told His disciples that if they really loved Him they would do the things that He commands them. By that He meant that their love would drive and motivate them to honor Him by their actions. But it didn't mean that if they could do some of the things that He said then they would have love. And besides, no one can always do those things without exceptions. But even in those periods of failure, which have been planned for our ultimate good in the shaping of our character and the proving of our faith, our love for Him is still our driving motivation.

The departure of the believer from the ways of sin and unrighteousness is the foundational characteristic of the true believers, and the clear mandate to the church. Many are those who seek to substitute various good works, and even preaching the gospel for godliness and holiness, but to down play, or even ignore, the mandate to depart from sin as the believer's first and primary call of duty to Christ, is to deny the very heart of the gospel of Christ, and an attempt to lay another foundation. Repentance is inextricably linked to true saving faith. Unless you have both, then you have neither.

Any group calling itself a church that is willing to accept or retain membership that is knowingly living in sin is either not a church at all, or like Corinth, one that this is in desperate decay and ignorance. Any such church will certainly soon lose it's lampstand, if it ever really had one in the first place.

For the individual, and for the real church of Jesus Christ, there is just one thing that is first and foremost required. That they live their lives in a manner that is worthy (that is in compliance to) the gospel of Christ. If this isn't happening, then nothing is being done by that person or church that is of any Godly significance, period. God does not value or accept good works from intentionally practicing sinners. We do not display our love for God by tolerating our sins, but rather by mortifying them. And this must be our attitude toward ourselves and toward our brothers. We do not display our love for our brother by patiently tolerating his open and continued sinning. We admonish and rebuke in those situations.

From the beginning of the new covenant gospel there has been the intrusion of sin into the life of the disciples and the church. Satan has no intention of leaving it alone and is always working through the weaknesses of the human flesh to hamper and damage the work of Christ.

The church in Corinth is the classic example. The people there thought that they could still partake of some of their sinful behaviors as long as they had flashy and impressive gifts to display in the church assemblies. So they boasted about their gifts (mostly fake we might add) as they delved into the old sinful practices of the world. For this many of the members were physically sick, and some had actually died at the hands of God. Paul severely rebuked and chastised them for these behaviors, and pleaded with them to stop such behaviors and bring their actions into conformity with the gospel message preached. He certainly didn't say that he would demonstrate his love for them by ignoring their sins.

From this early epistle of Paul to one of the first century churches we are taught that there is absolutely no substitute for repentance of sins. Either for individuals or for churches. Repentance and holiness of life is job one for those who claim the name of Christian. Apart from these there is no job two or job three. As soon as a church places anything higher than teaching and enforcing that its member's lives are to conform to the teaching of the gospel, then any and all Godly progress immediately halts, and is replaced with human works programs and evangelism outreach schemes.

Let me make an example: Lets say that a certain city, for a long period of time, has entertained a lustful and sinful set of behaviors to the degree that it has gained national recognition for that very thing. Then, after many decades of continued persistence in those behaviors, that city suffers a devastating disaster that results in massive loss of life and property. Now, here comes the church. It rushes in to help clean up the mess and feed the hungry and comfort the survivors. But, to keep from being offensive, it avoids telling them about another such city named Sodom, and reminding them that the wages of wilfully sinning against God's commands is death. So let me ask you now. Is that church doing the work of a church?

Look, FEMA can help them clean up and give them food and money and probably just as good or better than the church. If the church has any real work there it is to explain the dangers of the life style that city had chosen and warn them that continuing in the same things could bring even more disaster. To help them with their bodily needs is honorable, and biblical, but Paul didn't go to Corinth to help them economically, he went to help them spiritually, by pointing out their sins, for which they were sick and dying. And his prescribed remedy was repentance from their sins, not financial aid. And repent they did, as Paul commended them for in his second epistle to them.

My point is this. How Christians and churches live and behave is the first and highest priority assigned by the scriptures to that body of individuals who claim the name of Jesus and call themselves Christians. No amount of good deeds compensates for a life of willful sin. No sin is so small that it is insignificant to God and tolerable in His sight. The wages of any and every sin is the same. The entirety of the human race was condemned to death for two people eating a piece of fruit they were told not to eat. If that sin was sufficient for that penalty, then tell me, what is a small insignificant sin?

This truth has been difficult to retain however, as from the time of Corinth to this very day, the vast majority of churches, and the vast majority of pulpits, extol the human and fleshly benefits that they can provide, and completely miss or vastly minimize the biblical mandate of holiness of the members. The thought that sin is just a minor annoyance, or worse that it doesn't matter any more because after all, "Jesus paid it all" anyway. So sin is no longer considered any problem to the churches or to Christians. As absurd as this sounds when you say it, nevertheless it is an honest assessment of the mind set of the typical church goer. And has been since early in the life of the churches. If we just keep doing good works and evangelizing then we don't have to address this whole troubling sin thing. And besides, that turns people off and even makes them hostile sometimes. So its better just to avoid that issue and do good works so the people will like us. Because if they like us, maybe they'll like Jesus also.

The problem with this is obvious. If our life and behavior isn't in conformity with the gospel message and the life of Jesus, then what others see and like about us won't be Jesus. No individual or church can advance the gospel message by avoiding the offense that it creates. Those who are being called of God will take the offense to heart and be convicted of their sins, resulting in confession and repentance. Those who love their sins will be offended and hostile, and this is

exactly how the omnipotent God of creation designed it to be. We ourselves can only do a useful part in His plan if we are faithful to our mandate to live, speak, and behave in a manner that is in complete conformity with that gospel message taught by Jesus Christ and preached for two thousand years.

If our lives are still plagued with diverse sins that we just won't deal with, then we will spend our whole lives sitting on the bench so to speak. We can be on the team, but not in the game, and that is the situation with more than a few who are actually genuine Christians but who aren't admonished and rebuked by caring Pastors and teachers like Paul was to the Corinthians. In his closing letter to his son in the faith, Paul told Timothy to continue preaching the gospel, to teach the scriptures, to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all perseverance, and to let no one disregard him and behave differently.

Repeatedly, in one epistle after another, Paul used this similar phrase of walking in a manner that is worthy of our calling. And that starts, first and foremost, with repenting of our sins, and then, and only then, issues in the outworking of every good word and work that is fitting to a believer and honoring to the name of Jesus. All of which is a glory to God the Father.

**Conclusion:**

Separation to God

*14 Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? 15 What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement does God's sanctuary have with idols? For we are the sanctuary of the living God, as God said:*

*I will dwell among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people. 17 Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you. 18 I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty.*

2 Cor 6:14-18 (HCSB)

And to Him we commend this teaching tonight.

Amen