

Introduction

- a) This message is Part 2 of *A Reset of Pursuit*. We will continue looking at 11 vital lessons from Paul, written in Philippians 3, that can help us in our reset of pursuit. We will look at the remaining 6 lessons today.

11 Vital Truths from Philippians 3 About Resetting Our Primary Pursuit

6. **Knowing Christ also means experiential identification with Him in His crucifixion, death, and resurrection.**

- a) Paul said, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:10-11). Notice the connection between knowing Christ intimately and experiencing the cross, including crucifixion, suffering, death, and resurrection.
- b) Knowing Christ is more than a sweet, intimate quiet time with Him, latte in hand, enjoying fellowship with His Spirit as instrumental worship music plays in the background. Thankfully knowing Christ includes this. But it also includes experiential identification with Christ in His crucifixion, suffering, death, burial, and resurrection.

Identity and Image

- a) Paul’s identity used to be in his Jewish roots. But this identity blocked and hindered him from gaining more of Christ. Therefore, he laid down his identity in his Jewishness and found his identity in knowing Christ and being united experientially to Christ’s crucifixion, death, and resurrection.
- b) Let’s talk for a minute about identity. Identity is your distinguishing characteristics or personality that makes you who you are. Identity is the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks, and expressions that define you.
- c) In today’s culture, many are obsessed with their identity. They are seeking to establish their identity in their gender, race, ethnicity, physical appearance, religion, politics, education, occupation, possessions, gifting, accomplishments, success, net worth, family, and friendships. These things often determine our self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, and self-worth.
- d) The whole issue of identity is magnified by social media. There’s a lot I like about social media. But things I also despise. But here’s one thing that’s absolutely true—social media is not reality.
- e) I will never forget what happened a few years ago. It was probably the last time my brother Jon posted a family picture on Instagram. Or maybe Heather posted it. I can’t remember exactly. But it was a picture of his family enjoying the day at the lake. It looked like it came straight out of a magazine. It seemed like they were having the time of their lives enjoying the lake together as a beautiful family. Later, when I said to Jon, “It looked like you all had an incredible time at the lake together. I loved the picture.” Jon’s reply was something like this: “Well, actually, that picture was the only time, in the few hours we were there, when the kids were content. The rest of the time they were complaining and crying.” I always knew social media was not reality, but this story emphasized it to me like never before. What looks like utopia on social media is not reality. It is a 30-second moment that captures our best, but it’s so far from reality.
- f) My point is social media magnifies this whole issue of identity and image. It’s so sad how many people’s identity is shaped by the image they project on social media and how much their value and worth is determined by the likes and comments they receive. How shallow!
- g) Paul talked about this issue of identity and image in Philippians 3 and called it confidence in the flesh. Based upon Paul’s statement, our identity and image, if built upon things, will hinder us from gaining more of Christ.

- h) God wants us to find our identity, purpose, and meaning in Christ. God's eternal purpose is to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ, His beautiful and glorious Son. We were never meant to find our identity in what we do, how we look, who we know, what we accomplish, or what we possess. From God's perspective, our identity comes from the measure of Christ we possess, in our intimate relationship with Christ, and in experiencing His crucifixion, death, and resurrection.

Experiential Crucifixion

- a) In Galatians 2:20, Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." About 8 years later, in Philippians 3, Paul wanted to be experientially identified with Christ in His crucifixion, burial, death, and resurrection. He wanted to move from more of a positional reality to a deeper experiential reality.
- b) Do you love Christ more than you love yourself? Do you love Him so much that you are willing to experience your own identification with Him in His crucifixion, burial, death, and resurrection? Or do you like your nice, comfortable, orderly, and blessed life more?
- c) If we want to know Christ, there really is no way around knowing Him through an experiential identification with Him in His crucifixion, death, and resurrection.
- d) Christ's indestructible life is resurrection life. And resurrection life only comes after death to self. Stop trying to avoid the cross and the experiential crucifixion He wants to bring into your soul and self-life. Embrace it. Let self die fully. And then you will have the resurrection life of Christ dwelling within you in fullness.
- e) When the Holy Spirit applies the cross to you inwardly, putting your self-life to death, it's never fun. But there is no other way to experience Christ's resurrection life, for His totally-other-than life cannot mix with the self-life of the soul. The self-life of the soul must be crucified so Christ's indestructible life can fill you and possess you.

Knowing Christ By Experiencing the Cross with Him

- a) Paul said knowing Christ includes "fellowship" with "His sufferings." The word for *fellowship* is *koinonia* and it means *fellowship, association, community, communion, and joint participation*.
- b) To be clear, "the fellowship of His sufferings" does not mean embracing sickness, disease, or disability as a gift from God. Nor does it mean poverty or lack. Instead, Paul used this term for the persecution, rejection, betrayal, and loneliness he experienced in his journey of pursuing Christ wholeheartedly.
- c) Most of what we term "the fellowship of His sufferings" are not the inward work of the cross designed to crucify the self-life in the soul. Rather, it's the result of the fall, our own unwise decisions and shortcomings, or spiritual warfare. Most of the time, this type of suffering should be resisted and prayed against.
- d) Nor are "the fellowship of His sufferings" fellowship with suffering in and of itself. That would be masochism—the strange enjoyment of pain. Rather, the work of the cross within us—including the suffering it brings as we die to self—is not meant to be experienced alone. Instead, we are invited into fellowship with Christ by experiencing with Him the sufferings He experienced.
- e) Paul was not praying to experience suffering. Paul had already been suffering for Christ for many years. And when he wrote Philippians, he was under house arrest in Rome for preaching the gospel. Instead, Paul's desire was to know Christ intimately in his present suffering. That said, it's not wise to ask God to experience suffering. Trust Me: If you will follow Christ, by default, you will experience plenty of suffering.
- f) "The fellowship of His sufferings" is an invitation to experience a much deeper level of intimacy with our beloved Bridegroom. It's as if the Bridegroom is saying to us His bride, "Come, My beloved and precious

one. Experience with Me the dying of your flesh and your self-life. As you suffer the death of your self-life—when you transition from you being the source of your living to Me being the source of your living—it can be hard. But as you are experiencing this pain of dying to self, know that I am with you in it and that you can know Me unlike any other time.”

Don't Resist the Cross

- a) The Song of Solomon, in addition to a real love story between Solomon and the Shulamite maiden, is also an allegory of the love relationship between Christ and His bride. In Chapter 2, the bride was lovesick for Jesus. But it was a selfish love. What could He do for me? How could He make me feel good and bring me into my destiny? How could He give me chill bumps and euphoria by experiencing His love?
- b) We see evidence of this when she proclaimed, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16). She put her interests and desires above His. She was more interested in her inheritance in Christ than His inheritance in her. She had a heart after God but lacked a heart after God’s heart. That is, she loved the Lord but didn’t love His ways, what was most dear to His heart, and what God wanted.
- c) In Chapter 2, Jesus invited her to run after Him, experience the deeper work of the cross, and to engage in spiritual warfare. But she refused. She said in 2:17, turn My beloved. You do Your thing and I will be waiting here when You return to experience Your love once again. But in Chapter 3, because she refused the Lord’s invitation to go deeper, she experienced a sense of separation from her beloved’s presence.
- d) After this season of separation and discipline, she says in 4:6, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. Basically, she vowed to embrace the cross, death to self, and the suffering that comes with following Christ.
- e) Two verses later, in 4:8—after the maiden embraced her own cross and said yes to her own experiential death to self—the Lord calls her His bride for the first time. After saying “yes” to embrace the cross, the Bridegroom then calls her His “bride” 6 times in 4:8-12 and 5:1.
- f) Here’s the principle for us: We can only make ourselves ready as the bride of Christ by saying “yes” to our own cross, experiencing our own death to self, and embracing the suffering that goes along with it.
- g) The deeper work of the cross is a requirement if you want Christ to have His inheritance in you.
- h) To summarize, here’s the lesson for us: When we are experiencing the work of the cross, rather than run from it, embrace it and fellowship with Christ by experiencing with Him the sufferings He experienced. When we are going through the experiential work of the cross, we can have the sweetest, most joyful times of intimacy with Christ imaginable. So many who have gone through suffering testify they were never closer to the Lord than during these fiery trials.

Resisting the Cross Leads to Stagnation

- a) Some, motivated by fear and selfishness, have resisted the deeper work of the cross. As a result, you have experienced stagnation in your relationship with the Lord.
- b) If you feel dry, disconnected, and spiritually dead, it might mean you are resisting the work of the cross. You have put up your hand and said “No” to Jesus when He was trying to crucify your self-life in your soul.
- c) I believe, if you will repent and say “yes” to the deeper work of the cross, no longer resisting the cross or running away from it, you will experience times of refreshing from the Lord’s presence.

Prepare for Persecution

- a) For a season, to strengthen the resolve, commitment, and devotion of the American church, I believe the Lord will allow us to be baptized into the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings.

- b) We need to prepare for persecution from a tyrannical, lawless, and antichrist government.
- c) The Lord will use this to discipline His church in America—to separate true believers from false ones and to prepare the remnant as His bride.

7. Maturity is measured by the measure of Christ in you.

- a) Paul said, “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect [mature], but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12, emphasis mine).
- b) I like to use the word *mature* rather than *perfect*, for if you dig into the Greek you can see this word translated *perfect* can also signify *mature* or character brought to completion.
- c) When Paul says “obtained it,” he is referring to everything he has already mentioned. Namely, surrendering things, gaining Christ, knowing Christ intimately, not doing things to gain God's love, favor, and approval, and experiential identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death, and resurrection.
- d) Maturity is not measured by influence, gifting, impact, miracles, or outward expressions of spirituality. Maturity is not measured by how high we jump in praise and worship, how loud we pray, or by all the external activities we do. Maturity is not measured by our intellectual knowledge of the Bible, how much we study the Bible, or how many verses we can quote. Rather, maturity is measured by our intimate knowledge of Christ, the measure of Christ that fills, possesses, and controls us inwardly, and by our experiential identification with Him in His crucifixion, death, and resurrection. We need a new perspective of what maturity really is.

8. Pursue Christ like He pursued you.

- a) Paul said, “I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. . . . I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12-14).
- b) The Greek word *press on* means *to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing, to run after, to pursue, to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavor to acquire*.
- c) Here's what Paul is basically saying. Jesus Christ chased after me. He pursued me and eagerly sought me. He earnestly endeavored to acquire me as His very own. Now that He has won my heart and conquered me, I am going to chase after Him and pursue Him with the same type of passion, energy, and pursuit in which He pursued me.
- d) In short, Paul said he wanted to pursue Christ like Christ pursued him. In the same way, let's follow Paul's example and chase after Christ like never before.

9. Reorient your life around the one thing of utmost importance.

- a) Paul said, “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead” (Phil. 3:13).
- b) Under house arrest in Rome, Paul recalibrated his internal pursuits and reoriented his entire life around *one thing*. This *one thing* was not really a *thing* but a person—the Lord Jesus Christ.
- c) Paul made Christ the sun which his life orbited around. Paul ensured that everything about his life revolved around the person of Jesus Christ. For Paul, this *one thing* included pursuing an intimate relationship with Christ; gaining more of Christ; having the full measure of Christ within him by letting go of things; not putting any confidence in the flesh; laying down his natural impulse to do things to gain God's love, acceptance, and favor; experiential identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death, and resurrection; and pursuing Christ like He pursued him.

- d) Like Paul, let's become a people of *one thing*—passionately pursuing a deep, experiential, inward, holy-of-holies relationship with the Father and the Son by the indwelling Spirit. Like David, make your *one thing* to dwell in the holy of holies and behold the Lord's transcendent beauty. Like Mary, make your *one thing* to sit at His feet and listen to His words.
- e) Let go of the million other things you are chasing after and become a man or woman of *one thing*. Or rather, one Person—the Lord Jesus Christ.

10. Forget the past and press forward into your future in Christ.

- a) Paul said, "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (Phil. 3:13).
- b) To become a people of one thing, it's imperative to let go of the past. Let go of regrets. Let go of disappointments. Let go of pain. Let go of how you were rejected. Let go of how someone hurt you or mistreated you. Let go of your mistakes. Let go of the guilt, shame, and condemnation resulting from unwise decision you have made. Let go of the effects of your own shortcomings and flaws. Let go of self-condemnation. Let go of failure and flops. Let go of hope deferred, which sickens the heart. Let go of unforgiveness. Let go of bitterness.
- c) To be a person of one thing, we have to let go of the past so we can reach forward to what lies ahead.
- d) "Lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles [you]," wrote the author of Hebrews, "and . . . run with endurance the race that is set before [you], fixing [your] eyes on Jesus" (Heb. 12:1-2).
- e) Let today be a new beginning, a new start, a new day, a new life, a fresh way of living. Let go of everything from the past season. Push delete and empty the trash. This is a completely new reset—a reboot and restart into a new way of living.
- f) For those who keep looking back at their past, rather than looking forward into their future in Christ, I believe this is a new day for you. If you will trust God and rely on His grace to let go of your past, you will begin to experience a new day, a new season, a restart in your life. The Lord will give you grace to no longer remember the days of old.

11. The mature have these mindsets.

- a) Paul said, "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect [mature], have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained" (Phil. 3:15-16, emphasis mine).
- b) The Greek word for *attitude* means *to think, to be minded in a certain way*. In other words, it means *mindsets*.
- c) A mindset is "a fixed mental attitude or disposition that predetermines a person's responses to and interpretations of situations."¹ It's "an inclination or a habit."²
- d) Paul said the perfect—or better translated the mature—have these 11 mindsets. These 11 lessons are the mindsets of the mature.
- e) As we close, I encourage you to make this more than a sermon you hear and forget. Or a sermon you hear, enjoy, and say amen to, but never act on. Instead, take these 11 life lessons from Paul and develop these mindsets in you. Make a decision today to no longer be a child but to begin a journey toward mature sonship. How? By developing these 11 mindsets of the mature.

¹ <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/mindsets>, referenced on 5/6/2021.

² *Ibid.*