

Imitate Those Who Pursue the Prize Philippians 3:17-21

Introduction

The Bible teaches two truths that we must hold together. One is that everyone who trusts Christ will persevere in faith and enter heaven (Philippians 1:6). The other is that everyone who trusts Christ must persevere in faith in order to enter heaven (Matthew 24:13).

In Philippians 1 Paul emphasizes the first truth; in Philippians 3 Paul emphasizes the second truth. But we must not let chapter 3's emphasis make us forget the first truth — that Christ will keep us persevering to the end.

So with that in mind let's look at Philippians 3:17-21 –

What does Paul call his readers to do? (v.17)

Paul calls us to imitate him in doing what he described in verses 8-14 – counting everything as loss in order to gain Christ, and pressing on toward the goal for the prize of Christ.

What would that look like in real life? It would mean that whenever we find ourselves sinning, or not obeying, or loving something else more than Jesus – that we would fight the fight of faith until we once again see and feel Christ as our all-satisfying treasure.

Why does Paul mention other examples besides himself? (v.17)

It's so we will not think it's just the apostles who lived that way. It's so we understand that every Christian is called to live this way.

How does Paul motivate us to do this? (vv.18-21)

He tells us what's true of those who don't imitate him –

- They are enemies of the cross of Christ,
- Their end will be destruction,
- Their God is their belly,
- They glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

He tells us what's true of those who do imitate him –

- Our citizenship is in heaven,
- From heaven we wait a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,
- Jesus will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body.

So – imitate Paul by fighting the fight of faith so you keep treasuring Christ.



HOME GROUP DISCUSSION OF SUNDAY'S TEACHING

(Sometimes in our home groups we talk about Sunday's teaching, so we can work together on responding to God's Word — asking questions, sharing insights, talking together.)

Do you agree that both of these truths are taught in the Bible –

That everyone who trusts Christ will persevere in faith and enter heaven;

That everyone who trusts Christ must persevere in faith to enter heaven?

Why or why not?

On a scale of one (not much) to ten (lots), how much are you imitating Paul, as he describes himself in verses 8-14?

If you found your heart full of jealousy toward someone, would you fight the fight of faith like Paul would? If not, what would you do?

Have you ever used the excuse that Paul did this way because he was an apostle, and that surely Paul wouldn't expect the rest of us to live like he does? If so, how does it impact you to see that in verse 17 Paul says that there are non-apostles who are also living this way?

One reason Paul gives for why we should imitate him, and fight the fight of faith to keep treasuring Christ, is because of what is true of those who don't imitate Paul. Which of those four reasons is most persuasive to you? Why?

Another reason Paul gives for why we should imitate him, and fight the fight of faith to keep treasuring Christ, is because of what is true of those who do imitate Paul. Which of these three reasons is most persuasive to you? Why?

What's one specific way that this week you can grow in imitating Paul – and fight the fight of faith to keep treasuring Christ? Share these with each other, and pray for each other tonight and throughout the week.

