

Philippians 3:8-16 (NIV)

⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

50-03-04-Commitment to Communion

Lent, repentance, union, communion, commitment, growth
Phil 3:8-16

Ongoing repentance moves us ever closer to the holy life of Christ.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture reading)

–This **text** in Philippians tells *the secret of Christian growth*. Paul’s testimony reveals two main principles: 1) we haven’t yet reached our goal, and 2) we must be vigorously committed to *reaching that goal*.

–This passage aptly concludes our Lenten series on *the elements of repentance*, because it brings us full circle. Let’s review the cycle:

- We begin with our complacency’s confrontation by Christ.
 - That confrontation bring us **conviction** by *the Comforter*.
 - True conviction opens *the conscience* to **contrition** [or “godly sorrow”].
 - This becomes a **confession** of present *sin* and our *faith in forgiveness*.
 - The cycle ends in a **complete change: a comprehensive conversion**.
 - We then arrive at a **new level of committed communion** with Jesus.
- That last stage is like coming home in our union with Christ. He’s the goal we’re after, **not an autonomous spirituality**. We’re on a journey of growth, as Paul says in **Eph 4:13**, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. The cycle of repentance changes us to become like the One who saved us: HOM.idea. This passage assumes that...

I. We Are in Christ and He Is in Us– y.8b, *I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...***A. What took place when we first began this cycle of repentance:**

1. Jesus moved into our earthly lives– **John 14:23**, Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” (Jesus Himself began to live in us, and He brought *the whole Trinity* along with Him!)
2. But also, we moved into His resurrected life (and **Eph 2:6** says that God has “seated us with him in the heavenly realms **in Christ Jesus**.”)

B. Initial **conversion brought us *regeneration* [*genus* = “family”]:**

1. Jesus became human to start a new human family, and our *new birth in Christ* makes us “children” in that *new, divine family*– **John 1:12**. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

2. By joining *His divinity* to *our humanity*, Jesus enabled the *transferability* of His *nature* to us as individuals, so that, as 2 Pet 1:4a (ESV) says, we might “become **partakers of the divine nature**...”
 3. That “**divine nature**” (like *divine holiness*) is ours by faith, **not** as a *separate possession* but as an amazing relationship— 1 Cor 6:17, But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.
- C. Our destination is Jesus, Who already lives in our hearts. (We’re on a *journey inward* so that we can make a *journey outward*.)
1. Jesus made this *journey inward after emptying Himself* for the Incarnation (In His humanity, He learned in the way we do. He grew to know the Father Who lived inside Him— Luke 2:52, And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.)
 2. Christ’s life is our pattern: He exemplified how we are to bring His life to others, the way He brought the Father’s life to the world— John 14:10, Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. (This is *beyond fantastic!*)

TRANS: Being *in Christ* and *Christ being in us* parallels the earthly relation of Jesus with the Father. “**BUT WAIT**, *Jesus is God and we’re only humans.*” **Yes**, but He became human to give us His “divine nature.” In His humanity, Jesus had His own human will as well as the Father’s will living inside Him. This is *also now* our situation. There are...

II. Two Wills Involved in Our Salvation and Sanctification— v.12b, *I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*

- A. *Two wills* are seen in this verse.... But what is the “*that*” Paul was pursuing and the “*that for which*” Christ got hold of him? (They are the same thing: *God’s life being manifested in us through Christ.*)
- B. *Two wills* are involved in this manifestation, both *God’s* and *ours*. (After salvation, two wills reside in us, *God’s will* and *our will*. If ever our human will is in conflict with God’s divine will, Jesus showed us how to respond: “not My will but Thine be done.”)
- C. The “*that for which*” Christ pursued us, the experience He wants for us, is *His divine life being manifested through our lives*, just as He manifested the life of God the Father. (This happens as we live out our union life with Christ on a moment to moment basis.)

TRANS: Our *commitment to communion* with the indwelling Christ is the *launching pad for fulfilling* “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus answered that prayer by His *earthly life*. He’s still doing it in ours. **Ongoing repentance moves us ever closer to the holy life of Christ.** By moving closer in fellowship with Jesus, we see where we need changes in our thinking and behavior. So, when we are praying, “*Not my will but Thine be done,*” we are going to feel...

III. A Dissatisfaction with a Static Spiritual Life— v.13b-14, *Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

- A. Something we all must remember is *how to properly forget!*
 1. If we’ve had *spiritual failures*, let’s ask forgiveness and move closer to Christ’s indwelling presence. (“*Forgetting what is behind*”)
 2. If we’ve had *spiritual victories*, let’s praise God (“*Forgetting what is behind*”) and move closer in our communion with Christ.
- B. We don’t need to build up steam to keep *moving forward* in the Christian life; Jesus is our momentum! He’s our motivation!

CONCLUSION:

—Complacency stagnates spiritual growth! (Our determination to “*press on toward the goal... for which God has called*” us is nourished by meditating on Christ’s commitment to us. His Cross obtained for us this inward communion with Himself, which maintains this repeating cycle. [**Poem:** “**CYCLE OF REPENTANCE**” (DLH, 3/19/2018): Complacency confronted by the Word / must meet the Comforter’s convicting weight. / If wooing from that Spirit’s Voice is heard, / the conscience and contrition soon will mate. / Convinced of sin, believing lips confess. / Convinced of grace, the same sing praise and bless. // Repentance (*metanoia*) means “to change” / our way of thinking, planning, how we talk. / We turn, transform, renew or rearrange, / converting comprehensively our walk / full circle in communion with the Son, / committed to the new life He’s begun.]

— **Ongoing repentance moves us ever closer to the holy life of Christ.** As long as we draw earthly breath, may we all be committed to communion with the indwelling Christ, so that *His holy life in us* can be fully manifested in each of our lives by holy living.