

Having The Same Mind And Walking By The Same Rule

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:12-16; Gal. 5:25; 6:15-16

NOT HAVING OBTAINED, JUST PURSUING CHRIST

At his conversion, Paul had already obtained the believers' common salvation by the believers' common faith (1Tim.1:14-16), but he had not obtained the extra portion of resurrection. To obtain that portion he had to pursue, to run, and to finish his course triumphantly. (3:12) "Pursue" is the same Greek word as for *persecute*, meaning also *to press toward, to follow after*. In such a way Paul ran the race to obtain the prize and reach maturity. (3:14) Before he was saved, he persecuted Christ. After he was saved, he pursued Christ to such an extent that he persecuted Christ, but in a positive way. He wanted to gain, grasp, take possession of, and even seize Christ.

At his conversion Paul was grasped, taken possession of, by Christ in order that he might grasp, take possession of, Christ. Christ gained him that he might gain Christ. (3:12) Paul had experienced and gained Christ tremendously, yet he did not account of himself to have experienced Christ in full or gained Him to the uttermost. He still endeavored to pursue toward the goal — the gaining of Christ to the fullest extent. In order to gain Christ to the fullest extent, Paul not only forsook his experiences in Judaism but also would not linger in his past experiences of Christ. He forgot the past. (3:13) Not to forget but to linger in our past experiences, however genuine they were, frustrates our further pursuing of Christ.

Christ is unsearchably rich. There is a vast territory of His riches to be possessed. Paul was stretching out to reach the farthest extent of this territory. (3:13-14) The goal is to have the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ. The prize is to have the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom as a reward to the victorious runners of the New Testament race. (3:14) To be called upward is for the obtaining of the prize to which God has called us from above, from the heavens. (3:14) This heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1) corresponds with the heavenly commonwealth (Phil. 3:20). It is not an earthly calling like that given to the children of Israel in the flesh. This upward calling is to take possession of Christ, whereas the earthly calling to the children of Israel was to take possession of the physical land.

HAVING THIS MIND-NOT OTHERWISE MINDED

Paul says, "Let us therefore, as many as are full grown, have this mind..." (3:15) The Greek word rendered "full grown" means mature, perfect. Maturity is a matter of stages. We may be mature, but not mature in full. Paul uses the expression "full grown" in a relative sense, meaning relatively mature, neither childish nor absolutely mature. Hence, further pursuing, further growth, is needed. At the time Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he was full grown. However, he was still growing. This confirms that even the matter of full growth, or maturity, may be relative. Today none of us can say that we have reached the goal. Although we may not be childish and may actually be somewhat full grown, we still have not reached the goal. Those who are full grown still need a mind to pursue Christ.

What does Paul mean by "this mind"? (3:15) To answer this question we need to consider Paul's word in verses 13 and 14: "Brothers, I do not yet reckon myself to have laid hold, but one thing—forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What Paul means by "this mind" is to have a mind to forget the things behind and to stretch forward to the things before in order to pursue toward the goal for the prize. Paul's word in verse 15 implies that if we do not have this mind, we may be childish. Not having this mind is a sign that we are not full grown.

Having "this mind" is related to pursuing the out-resurrection. To have this mind is to have the understanding and realization that, as those who have been chosen, redeemed, and regenerated by God, we must pursue one thing—to have our living out of the old creation and in God. This means that our whole life should be in the out-resurrection. We have seen that this out-resurrection is actually the dear, precious, excellent Person of Christ, the very One who, through crucifixion and resurrection, has passed out of the old creation and has entered into God. Hallelujah, Christ Himself is the reality of the out-resurrection! Now we must pursue a life which is this wonderful Person of Christ. With Paul we should be able to say, "To me to live is Christ" (1:21). Paul could also testify that he had been crucified with Christ and that Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20). The very Christ who lived in Paul is the One who, in His own Person, is the out-resurrection.

In 3:15 Paul says that “if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to you.” Pursuing after Christ must be our goal. We should not be otherwise minded. God wants always to adjust our mind to His center by revealing to us the need of such a mind, a mind focused on the pursuing of Christ. Paul’s word in verse 15 indicates his assurance that there was just one goal. Because of this assurance he could say that if in anything we were otherwise minded, this also God would reveal to us. Paul did not mean that Christians did not have other goals. What he said was that God would reveal this to them. We all need to see God’s unique goal. We thank the Lord that throughout the years God’s goal has kept us from being distracted. It is very easy to be distracted in the Christian life, for there are many distracting factors surrounding us. If we do not have a fixed goal, the unique goal, the goal set up by God in eternity, and hold to it, we shall eventually be distracted. The only thing that can keep us on God’s way is His unique goal—Christ for our highest enjoyment and ultimate gain. If we take this goal as our ultimate goal, we shall be preserved.

ONLY THIS WALKING BY THE BASIC PRINCIPLE

In 3:16 Paul goes on to say, “Only this, whereunto we have attained, by the same rule let us walk.” It is rather difficult to translate the Greek word rendered “only this” in a definite way. It may also be rendered “but rather,” “nevertheless,” or “however.” It is a concluding word to the preceding verses, charging us with only this: to walk by the same rule. The words *whereunto we have attained* modify *walk*. The Greek word for *walk* is *stoicheo*, which means to walk orderly. It is derived from *steicho*, which means to range in regular line, to march in military rank, to keep step, to conform to virtue and piety (**Romans 4:12; Galatians 5:25; 6:16**). It is different from the word *walk* in Philippians 3:17 and 18, (*peripateo*) which means to live, to deport oneself, to be occupied with, or to walk about (**Romans 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 4:1, 17**).

Among the ancient Greeks, there were, as there are today, societies or organizations which followed certain basic principles. There are also basic principles, basic elements, involved in being a Christian. These elements should become a Christian’s walk. This was Paul’s concept in using this particular word for *walk* in 3:16. By this word the apostle charges us to walk and order our lives by the same rule, in the same line, in the same path, in the same footsteps, whereunto we have attained, at the state to which we have attained. Whatever state we have attained to in our spiritual life, we all must walk by the same rule, in the same path, as the apostle did; that is, to pursue Christ toward the goal that we may gain Him to the fullest extent as the prize of God’s calling from above.

GAINED BY CHRIST TO GAIN CHRIST: THE SAME RULE OR PATH

Paul’s main thought in 3:16 is that, as Christians, the most important principle of our Christian life should be to pursue Christ. Pursuing Christ, therefore, should be the major principle according to which we walk. Paul has already indicated this in verse 12 by saying that he pursues in order to lay hold of that for which he has also been laid hold of by Christ Jesus. According to this verse, the principle of our conversion and salvation is that we have been gained by Christ in order to gain Him. This principle must become a basic and governing element in our Christian walk. Unfortunately, many of today’s Christians do not follow this governing principle. Instead of pursuing God’s unique goal, they seek other things. For example, those in the Pentecostal movement or charismatic movement may seek power or spiritual gifts. They may pursue speaking in tongues, healing, or manifestations of other gifts. Those who have such pursuits are not following the basic principle of the Christian life. This principle is to pursue Christ that we may gain Him. It is crucial for us to see that the basic and governing principle of the Christian life is that we gain Christ. As many as are full grown, let us walk according to this rule, this elementary principle. Perhaps *path* is a better word than *rule* in verse 16. If we use this word, the verse will read “by the same path let us walk.” This understanding is also based on the various meanings of the Greek word: to range in line, to march in military rank, to keep step, to conform to virtue and piety. Paul’s use of this Greek word indicates that by the same path we should walk according to the elementary principle.

PURSUIING CHRIST

The governing principle of our Christian life should be the pursuing after the enjoyment of Christ and the experience of Christ. This principle will preserve us in the proper oneness. This inward matter is what Paul describes as “this mind”; it is also the unique path for our Christian walk. Both the unique mind and the unique path are related to pursuing Christ. Pursuing Christ in order to experience Him and enjoy Him should be the basic and elementary principle of our Christian life. How wonderful it would be if all Christians had this mind and walked in this path! The reason for the confusion and the divisions among Christians today is that so few are willing to walk according to this basic principle. As Christians, we need to walk in a particular lane—the lane, the path, of pursuing Christ. We should care for “only this,” this “one thing,” not so many different doctrines and practices. But today believers are distracted by things. God has set up a goal for us and has prepared a prize for us, and if we would have the mind to pursue Christ, the world would be turned to the Lord, and the Lord Jesus would have a way to come back soon.