

Session 10, Paul's Exuberance in Life's Blessings:

DEVELOPING A NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Philippians 3:7-11, *"But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and 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 on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."*

When we hear about people giving into sin, not going to church because “those people don’t think like I do”...or, saying to others, “I’m saved, but I don’t think God wants us to not enjoy life and the pleasures of the world.” Some may say, “Well, that’s just normal Christianity!”

We think, for some reason, that the Christian life is supposed to be:

- One in which we lose more than we win;
- We fail more than we succeed;
- We cry more than we shout;
- We just barely get by and let others go all the way for God.

We think the Christian life is one in which we fail and seek to justify our failures by pointing to others who are as bad off as we ourselves are.

That kind of thinking is “negative Christianity”...and just wrong!

What those above are thinking as "normal Christianity" is really..."abnormal Christianity"!

The normal Christian:

- Walks in victory in this life!
- Is in love with Jesus and lives it!
- Is not the victim, but he is the victor!

However, the normal Christian is an elusive person! Why?

Because he is so rare!

The church is filled with the run of the mill, abnormal variety of Christians, when it should be filled with the other kind...On fire, all out, unselfish people who are proud and happy to be alive in the world of today.

If you want to see a normal Christian, then look no farther than the Apostle Paul. He lived the normal Christian life!

You would never have heard Paul say, "*Well, I'm just doing the best I can! Everything is against me and I have the hardest time being a Christian.*"

You would never have heard Paul say, "*I just can't stop this sin! I am so weak! It has such a hold on me and I know that I will never be free from it.*"

You would have never heard Paul say, "*I just feel like giving up! I can't live this way anymore and besides, no one understands how I feel. Nobody cares!*"

That wasn't Paul! No, he said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Philippians 3:13-15!

In Philippians 3:7-11, Paul gives up some insight into what the normal Christian life is all about.

How to Develop a Normal Christian Life.

YOU MUST CALCULATE YOUR LOSSES, v. 7-8

- **This Involves A Personal Assessment** - If anyone had a reason to hope they could make it based on their birth and their religious background, it was Paul! All of this Paul accounted to be a loss. The word "*loss*" means "*damage or injury*" In Paul's life, what he thought were assets were really liabilities! All those things worked against him to prevent him from trusting a source outside his religion or outside himself... Being raised in the church and being a good person all your life will not save your soul! You still must be born again - **John 3:3!**
- **This Involves A Present Accounting** - Paul used present tense verbs to describe what he does with those things that he used to consider assets. He counts them as loss and he views them as refuse! He is telling us that he lays all he is and has alongside Jesus and sees it all as garbage compared to Him! In other words, nothing in Paul's life was nearly as important as being a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ
- **This Involves A Precious Acceptance** - Notice why Paul did this, "*for Christ*", v. 7; "*for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*", v. 8; "*for whom*", v. 8; "*that I may win Christ*", v. 8. Paul was willing to turn his back on everything that was important to him so that he might be saved! He saw Jesus as worth more than everything else! Notice that he uses the language of "*personal relationship*" in these verses

YOU MUST CONSECRATE YOUR LIFE, V. 8-9

- **There Is Persistence In A Consecrated Life** - When Paul came to Jesus, he counted all his assets as losses and this he continues to do day by day! This is talking about a mindset that says "*Jesus Christ is first in my life and I will allow nothing to come between me and Him!*" The faithful, growing Christian is the one who is always looking for ways to deepen his relationship with Jesus and is constantly on the lookout for things that would hinder that relationship, **Heb. 12:1-2**
- **There Is Pleasure In A Consecrated Life** - Paul speaks of the "**excellency of the knowledge...**" The word "*excellency*" means "*superior, above and beyond the ordinary*." Paul says that his just being able to "*know*" Jesus is a privilege beyond compare. Here, he is referring to the knowledge that comes by experience. It is one thing to hear someone

else speak of Jesus, Who He is and what He can do. It is quite another to experience Him for yourself! Paul says that knowing Jesus is worth more than anything he may have given up to come to God.

- **There Is A Payoff For A Consecrated Life** - There may have been those who questioned Paul's mental state when he turned his back on family, fame, fortune and future to follow this man named Jesus. Surely he gave up a lot from human perspective. But, for Paul, what he gained far outweighed what he may have left behind! Paul knew that all his credentials and all his family associations and religious achievements would amount to nothing when he stood before the Lord

YOU MUST CONCENTRATE YOUR LONGINGS, v. 10-11

- **The Consecrated Life Longs For A Personal Experience** - Paul says that he wants to know Jesus. He has already talked about his experience of Jesus in salvation. Now, he relates that he wants to grow in his experience of the Lord Jesus day by day. The normal Christian life is one that continually learns about Jesus and grows in grace day by day, **2 Pet. 3:18**.
- **The Consecrated Life Longs For A Powerful Experience** - "*The power of His resurrection*", refers to the power of the life of Christ living through him. Paul has learned what so many people never figure out: you cannot live the Christian life! It cannot be done! If a life is to be changed and lived in the newness of His power, then it must be lived through the Christian by the Lord Himself. This is just what Paul himself said that he desired in **Gal. 2:20**. The genuine, consecrated life is one that longs for the power of Christ to be in control of every aspect of life!
- **The Consecrated Life Longs For A Pain Bearing Experience** - "*The fellowship of His sufferings*" This phrase calls to mind a readiness to go all the way with Jesus, even to the point of death! The consecrated life is one that sees "suffering" or "going through hardships" as a means of growing closer to the Lord. It is not that we desire it, but we are ready for it if it comes along...and, chances are it will!
- **The Consecrated Life Longs For A Practical Experience** - "*being made conformable unto His death*" This phrase speaks about coming to the place where we reckon ourselves

dead with Christ. This is the challenge to every believer! To die to sin and to self is to be more alive in the Spirit than ever before, **Rom. 6:6; 11**

- **The Consecrated Life Longs For A Pleasant Experience** - Verse 11 is about Paul's desire to leave this world in the rapture. He longs to be with the Lord and to return with Him to glory! This is the heartbeat of every consecrated life! It longs for the return of the Lord Jesus. It throbs with anticipation over His return. Therefore, it lives a holy, dedicated, consecrated and expectant life, looking and longing for the return of the Lord from glory, **1 John 3:1-3**.

In light of these verses, would you have to say that your Christian life is normal or abnormal?

The church and the world have seen enough abnormal Christians to last for many life times.

Don't you think it's time that people like you and I showed this world what Christianity is all about?

That it isn't about church buildings and denominations; that it isn't about offerings, rules and regulations; but that it is about a life changing encounter with Jesus Christ. We need to get real before the world and show them the difference Jesus makes!
