

S.N. June 23, 1978 P.M. WXR1

"WELL, NOBODY IS PERFECT"

Phil. 3:9-16

How shall we pay before God
Laws of love & Psa 19:7
let us go on unto perfection
Heb 6:1

Paul's message
P. Paul
P. Day
P. School

INTRODUCTION:

In our last message from the 3rd chapter, we talked about learning how to count. Paul's great ability to consider all things and everything that he had counted before was but dirt. Paul sets down here many good things and he finds the necessity of repeating them. Like any good teacher, The great saving truths of Christianity do not change. We cannot hear too often, and we do not tire of the foods that are essential to life. We eat bread everyday. We drink water. Therefore, we must listen again and again to the bread of life and the water of life. Now we have some fancy things at mealtime. And we have some basic foods upon which we live. And Paul knew this very well. Therefore, he repeated these things over and over again. You know he began this chapter with the word "finally". I told you a few things about that word last week. That word finally is something. It is something like a preacher who was preaching a funeral once. And he was such a long-winded fellow, that finally the undertaker told him, if you don't hurry up - we won't get through in time for the resurrection.

But Paul here launches into a great lesson for these people - that he unfolds their duty in these first two or three verses. He calls them dogs. Beware of the dogs. Now this is a well loved animal, in our country. There are so many dogs running around, that you can't even sleep at night. It seems to me that there is a dog in every house. But Paul was talking about these dogs that were barking and biting at his heels. He says, beware, of these people. You remember the rich man and Lazarus. That poor man's poverty - the dogs annoyed him by licking his sores. So they were not looked upon with any respect. And Paul also calls them evil workers. That too, was a designation that was not in a good light.

change - I wish he had a dog barking too - And all over location make him noise

V. 2-3 So he had three things that he said about them - beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, and beware of concision. There were those who set about to do harm to Paul and all the harm that they could do in the world. They were unbalanced individuals. They cannot distinguish between that which is good and that which is bad. And Paul takes to task these pranks who stand by major and minor trifles. And they were teaching just the opposite concerning the Messiah. Insisting that a Gentile convert must become a Jew before he can enjoy salvation.

V. 8 Paul makes a clear examination of his own life here. And he finally says, I count all of these things but loss - V. 8.

I consider them but dirt. A (missionary) once who had served over 40 years in China, was teaching and (speaking) to a small prayer group. He was talking about the incident in Simon's house at Bethany. When Mary anointed the Saviour with the costly ointment. The breaking of the alabaster box was a symbol of complete devotion. There are some Christians he said, who do not know what it is to give their all for Christ. His eyes drew moist, and he added with great modesty - but I think I do. But I am sorry for those who don't. They were the ones who had missed the greater gain. Yes, Paul learned how to count about profit and loss. And according to the new standards which he had to measure by, he charged off all of his past as lost. The idea is that he summed it all up in one word, Christ. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.

What he means is, he has gained Christ. And he goes on to tell us in two or three ideas about this.

V. 9 - He says, I have a new position. Paul immediately felt security.

In Christ is a favorite expression of Paul. He uses in the Lord, in Him, 164 times. Yet we understand perfectly well what he means, for when Jesus said - "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him - the same bears much fruit. For apart from me, ye can do nothing." John 15:5.

Our safety lies in our position in Christ. Paul declares that Christ in you is the hope of glory. Col. 1:27. To him a man was either out of Christ or in Christ.

Not only had Paul found the new position.

Y. 10-11 Secondly, he had found a new fellowship in V. 10-11. Part of Paul's gain in Christ was to know him in terms of his resurrection power. To know him in the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering, becoming day by day, conformed to his death. Is somehow, in the process. I might obtain the maximum experience. His resurrection from the dead.

Do we know what it is to be released of everything and to be with Christ in his power.

To know him and the power of his resurrection - was a power that operated in the raising from the dead, and what it means. What it means for him. That power, well, that is the power that is going to raise us from the dead. And that is the power that is going to be operating in our lives. We would all like to know the secret of the power operated in us. Which would guarantee us a resurrection, as well.

Now note here, that Paul uses the word "to know". This is not simply intellectual knowledge of theories or principles, it is the personal experience of another person.

In the Old Testament, this word "know" refers to sexual intercourse as Adam knew Eve, his wife. And she conceived and bear a son named Cain. Gen. 4:1. The Greek word closest to this - the most intimate. And the most personal knowledge of another person is what Paul is talking about. Paul aims personally to know Christ. To have knowledge of the person.

And the knowledge he wants, is the power of his resurrection. Not simply something which happened to Jesus - but it was a living dynamic power which operated in the life of Christ. And in the individual Christian.

Now this was a guarantee of the importance of life and of his body in which he lived. It was in the body that Christ arose. And the importance of the human body. It is a guarantee of immortality. Of life to come. It is a guarantee of life beyond the grave. And therefore Paul is talking about united in Christ and sharing with him, in his death and in his resurrection.

As in V. 9 - He says I want to be found in Him. It means that we may continue with this transforming presence layed up in the heart of man. It is like a wardrobe kept away from moths. It has perfume in it. And this is a blessed position that Paul wants. That I may, I must know, he says. Knowing him, not knowing about him, but knowing him. Being conformable, as Paul considers that the Christian is going to suffer. If his life is in the will of Christ, Christ did not exhaust all of the

suffering himself. But that his body was going to suffer for this purpose. And Paul wants to have that experience in him. To have a miniature experience of what Christ experienced. He is in Christ, and Christ is in him.

I wish we had time to (re-construct) the scene. Very briefly, Paul must have had something in mind as he wrote these words to the Philippians. A long time ago, my brethren, I was placed under arrest. The Lord of Glory, in the mighty person of the Holy Spirit came down and ceased me. He put his hand on my shoulder as I was on the road of (Damascus) and said - Saul of Tarsus, you are under arrest. You are to be my man.

Paul seems to add, during all of these years - I have been living to carry out the purpose for which Christ layed hold of me. I now want to reveal to you, my friends, what that purpose was and is.

We need to pause here and say, if you are a Christian today, do you know why Christ seized you in his love and saved you by his grace? Are you quite sure. If you are like many Christians, you will say, when asked that question - of course I know. He has claimed to me, in order that he might save me from the doom of Hell!

Now let us (suppose) that Paul was present and listened to your answer. If that should be your answer. I'm afraid that Paul would shake his head in disappointment. He would say to you and to each of us, all of these are indeed desirable things. Like being saved from Hell, or being free from sin, or being washed and cleansed of all guilt. All of these indeed, Christ does for us.

Yet, all of these fall short, of the real end for which he has redeemed us.
That end is simply and firstly this - that we may know him.

The depth of that little phrase stagger us. To know his gifts is good.
But that's - there must be more. To know his creatures is good. To know his
blessings is good. To know his comforts is good. But to know that all of these
things that God made - but the soul that reverses itself and shuts itself up away
from Him. And Paul tells us his longing is to know the person of Christ. To know
the power of Christ. And the power of the resurrection.

Why it is suggested, for example, that a Christian ought to forgive, one who
has terribly unjustly wronged him.

And of course, that is noble in human character. But the whole Christian life
is more than can be expected of human nature. The Gospel reveals, in Jesus Christ,
persuades us that when we receive him, we have more than man's power. No wonder
Paul engages in an honest, spiritual check-up. And brings about some questions
that are very strong.

— Ask yourself, are you discontent over the ease over which you live your life -
with so little pain in it? You pay so little to identify with Christ and with the
suffering! Are you ever disturbed that you just do lip service. That you only pay
that kind toward Christian principles.

Therefore Paul has learned to count his gains. V. 8. The knowledge of Christ

of the things that you live totally for. What is the main thing, the main spring that moves your life?

V. 11-12 Now Paul is thinking about reaching perfection. In these next verses, he talks about this in V. 11-12. He talks about it not as though I had already attained. Now as we come to this, portion of this chapter, we are face to face with the matter of perfection. And people often say, well, (nobody is perfect). But, I want to show you the closer to Christ we come, the more we feel that we have hardly begun to know him.

In most biographies that we read of great people, we try to discover their secret. The thing that made them great. For example, when you listen to an aged Doctor talk, and tell about the secret of his long life and health. And you expect something great. Well, he talks about many things but as a climax of his address - he simply says, drink 8 glasses of water a day.

Now when Paul talks about his spiritual biography, he talks about the past in V. 1-11. He is going to talk about the present, V. 12-16. And he'll talk about the future in V. 17-21. We've discussed him as an accountant and we have discovered the new values now that he has upon finding Christ. In this present section - V. 12-16, we discover Paul as an athlete, pressing towards the finishing line, in the Christian life. A race. Paul exercises the spiritual mind. He is not upset by the things that are behind him. The things that are around him, or the things that are before him. Because things do not rob him of his joy.

And in these verses, Paul uses one of the many illustrations. He often uses three

13/ or four. There is a military illustration put on the whole armour of God. There is the one of the architect, you are the temple of God. You are a builder. The one of agriculture - what so ever a man sows, that shall he also reap. The one of the athlete is found here in this paragraph. Now Paul, as to what sport he was talking about - whether it was a foot race or a chariot race. But either one of these will do. It might have been a chariot race in which the driver had little to hold on too. Just a small platform upon wheels. He had to lean forward and strain every muscle to maintain his balance. And to control the horses. The verb, reaching forth, in V. 13 - literally means stretching, as in a race.

It is important that Paul is not telling us how to be saved now in this Scripture. He is telling something about those who participate in athletics. And this is a very graphic picture because all of us wants to be winning Christians. All of us wants to win the race.

I want you to notice (four or five) different things here. That Paul says right now in this passage.

13/ I. DISSATISFACTION - V. 12-13a

13/ I count not that I had already attained. Either were already perfect, that I follow after that I may apprehend. That for which also I am apprehended of Christ. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. This statement is one of a great Christian. He never permitted himself to be satisfied with his spiritual attainment. Paul was satisfied with Jesus Christ - V. 10. But he was not satisfied with his Christian life. It was like a race.

I read the story that how in a business office, this man came in, the salesmen and his boss met him. And the salesmen knew that he had been doing pretty good. He had been bringing in plenty of orders. I thought he would compliment me, but instead, he didn't. He told me to get with it. Later that day, the secretary talked to the boss, about this salesman and the boss chuckled. Oh yes, this is one of the best salesmen I have. But he has a tendency to rest and be satisfied with his performance. If I didn't get him mad with me once a month, he'd never produce.

Now there are many Christians who are self-satisfied! Because they compare their running with what other Christians are doing. And usually with those who are making no progress at all. Paul, if he had compared himself with others, he would have been tempted to be proud. But he did not compare himself with others. He compared himself with himself, and with Jesus Christ. And in V. 12 - it explains his thinking. He has not arrived yet at perfection. But he is perfect and mature in V. 15.

Often in the Bible, we are warned against the false estimate of our spiritual condition. The church at Sardis had a name that thou livest and are dead. Rev. 3:1. The church at Laodicea boasted that it was rich. And in God's sight it was poor. Miserable, blind, and naked.

Sampson thought that he still had his old power, but in reality, it had departed from him. Judges 16:20.

Self-evaluation can be dangerous because we make two errors. First, we make ourselves better than we are. Second, we may make ourselves worse than we really are. Therefore, Paul, is amazing what he has to say here about his purpose - to know Christ better all the time. And the resurrection power surging through him. The matter of perfection - the word here is not to be made lost. But it means to end up with a purpose and Paul's was to be Christ-like. No one would ever say that he had learned all that there was to be learned in spiritual things. I've met a few people who were very high on this.

Our habits and time in the way we spend them, betray how much that we believe we need to grow. What we are involved in right now, right now is an expression of our hunger and thirst for more of Christ.

Search your mind right now. And see whether or not there is not some satisfaction that ought to be turned to dissatisfaction of how little you know about Christ. And how little you are growing in him.

II. DEVOTION - V. 13a

13. "This (one) thing, I do. Here is a phrase that is important to your Christian life.

Jesus, one day said, to the (rich young ruler) - one thing thou lackest. Mark 10:21.

Luke 10:42 - One thing is needful. He explained to busy Martha when she criticized her sister.

(Blind)
One thing I know, said the man who had received his sight by the power of Christ.

John 9:25.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after. Psalm 27:4.

Too many Christians are involved with many things, when the secret progress is to concentrate on the one thing.

Now it was this decision that proved the turning point of D. L. Moody's life. The tragedy of the Chicago fire in 1871 - Mr. Moody was involved in Sunday School promotion. The Y. M. C. A. work. And many other activities. He was doing a multitude of things. He was tied up into all sorts of promotional things. Even evangelistic meetings. And he was in many many good organizations. But after the fire, he determined to devote himself exclusively to evangelism. This one thing I do, became a reality with him. And as a result, millions of people heard the Gospel.

Now if you are going to divide your time or energies up between a multitude of things, and you miss the real thing. That is tragic. The believer must devote himself to running the race of a Christian.

No athlete succeeds today by doing everything! You'll never see many athletes today trying to be champs in every sport. But he succeeds because he specializes. Here is a fellow who concentrates on pitching, in baseball. And he works on it. And that is his one thing that he does. And here is a fellow who concentrates on

football. And he has this that he works on. Or golf - or whatever his sport is. He gives his time to specialize on it.

Nehemiah, the wall builder, and the governor. When he had many invitations to do other things. He said this, I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down.
Neh. 6:3

James 1:8 says a double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. This is the secret of power. He concentrates on one thing.

III. DIRECTION - V. 13b

13 Forgetting those things which are behind. The Christian race is one that looks forward. Always towards the future. Imagine what would happen in a race, if there were chariots and runners and they would start looking behind. Imagine what happens when a man is plowing a field and he is always looking back. Luke 9:62.

We are accustomed to say - past, present, future. But Paul says the Christian forgetting those things which are behind, that this terminology here to forget. Does not mean to fail to remember. We may wish we could erase bad memories. To forget in the bible here means that you no longer are influenced by those things which are behind. Your sins and your iniquities - God says, I will remember them no more. Now a bad memory, this is impossible. But God is saying here, I will hold these sins not against you. And they will no longer effect your standing before me. But what it simply means is we will break the power of the past by living for the future.

We cannot change the past. But we can change the meaning of the past. As Paul talks about in I Tim. 1:12, 17. About the weights that hold a man back.

A good example and illustration of this principle is in Joseph, Gen. 45:1-15 - when he met his brothers on the second time, and revealed himself to them - he held no grudges against them. To be sure, he remembered those things. But Joseph knew that God had a plan for his life. A race for him to run. And he broke the power of the past.

Too many Christians are shackled by regrets of the past. Trying to run the race by looking backwards. I don't think it does a man any good to keep bringing up all of the bad things that happen in his life. You know, I don't think this is good even when people are giving testimonies. Sometimes I hear people talk. Sometimes these stars get up and talk - how they lived in the gutter and this and that. But my friends, Paul says, we regret those things. Let us not be destructured by these things which are behind us. But let us with devotion, he says, (go on to perfection.)

That means, Paul says if you come out here and put a stake down. You have gotten this far along the line. And I have gotten this far. All right he says, you don't stop there - do you. Well, if you are running in a race, when you get to the 7th or the 8th pole - that is not the end of it. It is fine to know that you have gone this far but you want to keep on going. Now, it is just like a fellow who hits a ball over the outfielders head. And he runs to first base and he stops and looks around. No, Paul says, you put a peg down on that base and you keep on moving. Keep moving right on. That is.

You don't do like Little Jack Horner who sat in the corner, eating his Christmas pie.

He stuck in his thumb, and pulled out a plume, and said - what a good boy am I. //

No, you want to put a stake down and say look what I've done. What a great fellow I am. No, that is not what Paul is talking about in the matter of perfection here. And reaching forth in this gain.

IV. DETERMINATION - V. 14

v. 14
Pauls says "I press toward the mark of the prize for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He says I follow after." V. 12. He carries this idea on and he describes it here as a hunter. Who pursues his prey. A man does not win as an athlete by listening to a few lectures And sitting down and watching a few movies run off. Or even buying him a book on tennis. Or going out to the gym or cheering at the games. He becomes a winning athlete when he gets into the game and he determines to win.

Now Paul had the same zeal when he persecuted the church - V. 6. And now he wanted to display this when he serves Christ. Come to think about it, wouldn't it be wonderful if Christians put as much determination into their spiritual life as they do to their golfing, fishing, and bowling.

Now what I am talking about in this message is, that you are not a computer. Organ
Trumpets and flutes are simply slipping a little card in a slot. And that thing is amazing. And how it all clears up with a flick of a switch. Well, you are human beings. And I wish somehow you could forget the past and have that memory

of those unhealed memories of the past.

Now Paul wants to forget something, and accomplish something in life. And he is heading for the finishing line. He longs to become more like Christ in every thought and every action. The thing that is most disappointing today is - that so many runners drop out of the race. So many Christians slacken their pace. There is not a grandstand crowd watching them, so they lose their enthusiasm. But you need to concentrate on Christ and rivet your attention upon him, Paul says. And have determination in reaching forth.

There are two things you want to avoid. First, you do not want to say - I must do it all. You do not want to say, God must do it all. There are some who are active - and there are some who are quiet. Both of these are headed for failure. Let go, and let God. Is a real clever slogan. Did you ever hear that. I think we have been in a crowd where you used that as a song. Let go, and let God. But that does not fully describe the process of Christian living, my friend. What quarterback would say to his team - o.k. men, let go, and let the coach do it all. On the other hand, what quarterback would say, now listen to me. And forget what the coach says. Now both of these things are extreme and they are both wrong.

The Christian runner must have a spiritual mind, but must realize that God must work in him if he is going to win the race. Without me, you can do nothing. God works in us that he might work through us.

But some Christians are so busy, that they will not die to self, but spiritual determination is reaching for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

but he reaches the goal, Paul says, he is reaching toward Heaven. One athlete may receive a prize. All Christians may receive their reward. The goal has already been established for us.

V. DISCIPLINE - V. 15-16

15-16 Now, just a brief comment. It is not enough to run hard to win the race. But all Christians must be obedient to the rules. In the great games, they have rules and any violation of the rules - disqualifies the athlete.

And this is the emphasis here. (Spiritual rules) are laid down. You remember the great athlete Jim Thorpe. In 1912, in Stockholm in the olympics. He won a great race. He was a hero. But the next year, the officials found that he had played semi-professional baseball. And therefore forfeited his amateur standing. This meant that he had to give the gold medal and the trophy back. And this was erased from the records. It was a high price to pay for breaking the rules. Now if any man Paul says, is going to enter into this contest. If he breaks the rules of the game, he is going to be disqualified. The issue is not what he thinks or what the spectators think. You don't have to worry about what people are going to say to you around the church or in the community. But you are going to have to worry about what the judge says. Some day you are going to have to stand before the judgement seat of Christ. The Greek word for judgement seat is bema. And the judge is the one who is going to judge us under the rules.

Now the Bible is full of people who began the race, had great success, but failed in the end because they disregarded the rules of God.

It happens a lot. It happened to Sampson, Ananias, Sapphira, and it can happen to us.

It is an exciting experience to run - looking unto Jesus. Because we know we will one day stand before the judgement.

This matter is so serious and most of us Christians are giving less than half the attention that it deserves. We are looking for the guidance of God. That directs us while we shun the guidance that God gives us and convicts us of by his rules and regulations. We dash hither and yon and we get all excited about being do-gooders - while here is the Holy Spirit that wants to work in our lives.

What is meant here in these verses is - that of spiritual adults. We have reached this perfection in Jesus Christ. And Paul regards himself here as such. I Cor. 13:11.

"Old man - Narrow Lot - cash - Lots selling Forbiddan Princ - Millionaire - Possibilities of that Black - Agent to clay - Transducer Figure - Two week sign deal - 1000 to Bind - old sought Bind up - glass pain - work - Papay Brought - knows - signal - Purchaser not say Doing improvements - More comfortable. Oh - "Not Buy Place for What's on it - But what am going put on" God - just in angolly - Not what finds in men - "going put in them!"