

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

A MIND

TO

PURSUE

CHRIST

WITNESS LEE

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Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:13-16

In this booklet we shall be concerned mainly with [Philippians 3:15](#) and [16](#). In [verse 15](#) Paul says, “Let us therefore, as many as are full grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to you.” The Greek word rendered “full grown” means mature, perfect. Maturity is a matter of stages. We may be mature, but not mature in full. In [verse 15](#) 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.

Those who are full grown still need a mind to pursue Christ. 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.

THIS MIND

According to [verse 15](#), “as many as are full grown” should have “this mind.” This book’s dealing with the Philippian believers is focused on the mind, the leading part of the soul. It charges them to strive together for the gospel with one soul ([1:27](#)), to think the same thing, to be joined in soul, even to think the one thing ([2:2; 4:2](#)), to let the mind which was in Christ be in them ([2:5](#)), and to have this mind, a mind focused on the pursuing and gaining of Christ to the uttermost. When our mind is thus occupied, we have the same mind, thinking the same thing, even thinking the one thing—the fullest gain of Christ—joined in soul, like-souled ([2:20](#)), and with one soul.

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. As we consider the situation among Christians today, we see a great deal of childishness. Not many believers have this mind, the mind to seek after the fullest enjoyment and gain of Christ. Imagine how marvelous the situation would be if all seeking Christians had a mind focused on pursuing Christ for the full enjoyment and gaining

of Him. If the seeking Christians were like this, the situation on earth would be excellent and wonderful. However, the situation among Christians today is confused and complicated. This is due to the fact that seeking Christians do not have this mind. Instead of seeking God's unique goal, they pursue other goals. These different goals cause trouble. We in the Lord's recovery should have one goal, and this goal should be to pursue Christ that we may have the fullest enjoyment of Him and may gain Him in full.

GOD'S UNIQUE GOAL

In [Philippians 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

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 BASIC PRINCIPLE

In verse 16 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, as used in Romans 4:12; Galatians 5:25; 6:16. It is different from the word walk in Philippians 3:17 and 18, which means to live, to deport oneself, to be occupied with, to walk about, as used in Romans 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:16; and Ephesians 4:1, 17. 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.

The Greek word *stoicheo* is a verbal form of the noun which means element. We do not have an English equivalent for this word. In English we can use element as a noun, but not as a verb. One version adopts the rendering “observe the elements.” This conveys much of the original meaning; however, I do not care to use the word observe here. Perhaps the Greek should be rendered “walk according to the elementary principles,” since the

meaning is that the elementary principles become our walk. 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](#).

We have pointed out that this word is derived from a word which means to range in regular line or march in military rank. Paul uses this term in [Romans 4:12](#), where he speaks of "those who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham." To walk in the steps of Abraham's faith is to conform to his faith, to conform ourselves to certain virtue or piety. This Greek word is very rich in meaning.

GAINED BY CHRIST TO GAIN CHRIST

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.

Christ has gained us not that we may gain gifts, but that we may gain Him. In one of his best hymns, A. B. Simpson says:

Once it was the blessing,
Now it is the Lord...

Once His gift I wanted,
Now, the Giver own;

Once I sought for healing,
Now Himself alone.

(Hymns, #513)

As this hymn indicates, the governing principle of the Christian life is not gifts or healing—it is Christ Himself. Realizing this, A. B. Simpson also put out a tract on this theme entitled “Himself.”

THE SAME PATH

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.

EXTRAORDINARY EXPRESSIONS

In [3:7-16](#) Paul uses many unusual terms and expressions. In [verse 7](#) he says that certain “things were gains,” and he speaks of having counted such things loss on account of Christ. In no other book does Paul use these terms. In [verse 8](#) he

speaks of “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus,” a new and extraordinary expression. In this verse he says that he counts certain things to be refuse in order to gain Christ. The term “refuse” and the expression “gain Christ” are also unusual. In [verse 9](#) Paul goes on to speak of being “found in Him” and in [verse 10](#) of knowing Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. [Verse 10](#) also uses the extraordinary expression “conformed to His death.” In [verse 11](#) we find a unique term for resurrection—“the out-resurrection from among the dead.” The unique expressions in [verse 12](#) include “not that I have already obtained,” “already perfected,” “I pursue,” “lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of.” In [verse 13](#) Paul says, “forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,” and in [verse 14](#), “I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” The expressions in these verses are also new and even extraordinary. In [verse 15](#) Paul declares, “Let us therefore, as many as are full grown, have this mind.” The phrase “this mind” is unique. Can you find such an expression in any of Paul’s other Epistles? By “this mind” Paul means a mind focused on pursuing

Christ, a mind centered on enjoying Christ and gaining Him. In [verse 15](#) Paul goes on to speak of being otherwise minded, and in [verse 16](#) he uses the phrase “only this.” Both are new terms used here for the first time.

PURSUING CHRIST

As we have pointed out, in [verse 16](#) Paul speaks of walking by the same rule. We have also seen that the Greek word for walk in this verse means to walk according to the elementary principles. 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. In the past we have said that the genuine ground of oneness keeps us in the real oneness. This is true, and we continue to proclaim this teaching today. However, the ground of unique oneness may be considered somewhat as an outward matter. Along with this, we need something inward to govern us and preserve us in the 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. Here in Philippians Paul did not deal with the problem of the church. His burden was to point out that our need is to pursue Christ. I believe that as Paul was writing this Epistle, he exhausted the vocabulary available to him to express his burden concerning the Christian walk. 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 such as prophecy, head covering, foot washing, the mode of baptism and the kind of water used, the type of bread used at the Lord’s table, and even the size of the cup used to contain the wine or grape juice. How poor is such a situation! If, by contrast, we would see that 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.

Today's Christianity is without impact, power, and authority because it has been cut into pieces and made subject to confusion. What is the remedy for such a degraded situation? The remedy consists simply in pursuing our wonderful Christ. If we would all set our mind on pursuing Christ, there would be no problems.

Only Christ can enable believers of different nationalities and cultures to be truly one. Let us all pursue Christ to such an extent that we are willing to count as loss even our national philosophy and characteristics on account of Him. We should not allow these things to remain as rocks hidden deep within us, occupying a place which belongs to Christ. Our national characteristics are used by the enemy, Satan, as substitutes for Christ. The enemy uses them to keep Christ from having adequate ground in our being. May the Lord have mercy on us that we would have a mind to pursue Christ to the uttermost and to walk according to the elementary principle of the Christian life! This principle is that we pursue Christ, forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the goal established by

God that we may obtain the prize He has prepared for us.

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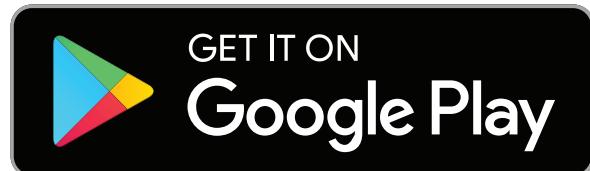
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