**Text:** Philippians 3:7-14

**Title:** Paul’s Ministry Example

**Introduction:** Outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is hard to find a man more influential than the apostle Paul. He is a great example to us.

Paul, under the inspiration of God, told Timothy, who was the pastor in Ephesus, to be “*an example of the believers.*” Paul practiced what He preached!

1 Timothy 4:12, *“Let no man despise thy youth; but* ***be thou an example*** *of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity,”*

**I. Paul’s Doctrine Was Right** vs. 7-8

Paul calls Jesus Christ, “My Lord.” Paul believed in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ! He also believed in the sinless life, vicarious death, bodily resurrection and the future coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a great attack against the essential doctrines of our faith today.

1 Timothy 4:1 *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits,* ***and doctrines of devils****;”*

Here, Paul exhorts young Timothy about doctrines of devils and in verse 16 to take heed to his doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:16, *“****Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them****: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”*

May we today, in 2010, take heed to our doctrine.

**A. Paul’s doctrine was right on salvation**

Paul tells the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 2:8-9 that our salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:**Not of works, lest any man should boast.*”

Paul says it again, this time teaching Titus, who pastored in Crete.

Titus 3:5 *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*”

Again we see that our good works will not save us from our sins.

**B. Paul’s doctrine was right on separation**

2 Corinthians 6:15-18, “*And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?* *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”*

The church at Corinth was not known for being mature and spiritual Christians. Sadly, this church had many spiritual problems that needed to be attended to.

As we live in this world, we are not to be of the world. The place for the ship is the sea, but we are in trouble when the sea is getting in the ship!

**C. Paul’s doctrine was right on Christian service**

Romans 12:1-2, *“I* *beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

It is only reasonable since Christ gave His life for us, we should be willing to serve Him with our lives.

**D. Paul’s doctrine was right on the Scriptures**

He said in 2 Timothy 3:16, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction*, *for instruction in righteousness:”*

The Word of God is inspired by God and profitable for us today!

The Word of God is profitable for:

* Doctrine–this teaches us what is right
* Reproof–this teaches us what is wrong
* Correction–this teaches us how to get right
* Instruction–this teaches us how to stay right

Not only is Paul an example to us in his doctrine, but also in his desire to know God.

**II. Paul’s Desire Was Real** vs.10

In Philippians 3:10 he says, “*That I may know Him.*”

Paul’s great desire in life was to know his God!

Many in our society today call themselves Christians. A Christian is to be Christ-like. I would submit to you that while many *may know about God, few people actually know God.*

We need a generation of young people today who, like Paul, have a desire to know God and live for Him.

Paul said in 1 Timothy 3:1, *“If a man* ***desire*** *the office of a bishop, he* ***desireth*** *a good work.”*

Few people today have the right desires.

What is the desire of your heart? Is it to do a work for God?

The Bible teaches us if we will delight ourselves in the Lord, then He will place in our hearts the desires that He wants us to have (Psalm 37:4).

Let’s look carefully at verse 10.

Philippians 3:10, *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;”*

Paul’s desire to know God was real. This was proven by his devotion and dedication to Christ.

Many say they want to know God but are unwilling to get to know Him on His terms.

**Paul had a desire to know God and:**

**A. His power**–through His Spirit

“*The power of His resurrection*”

Romans 8:11 *“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”*

**B. His fellowship** - through His suffering

“*The fellowship of His sufferings*”

2 Corinthians 12:7-11 *“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.* *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.**I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.”*

When Christ manifests Himself through our lives, there will also be suffering that we face to remind us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.

**C. His resemblance** - through His sacrifice

“*Being made conformable unto his death*”

Often people will comment on my children and say they look like their mother or father. The fact is, our lives, as Christians, need to look like the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus denied Himself and made himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:7).

Once again, Paul is a great example of living the crucified life.

In 1 Corinthians 15:31 Paul said, *“I die daily.”*

Look at what he told the church of Galatia. Galatians 2:20 *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

Again look at what he says in Colossians 3:3, *“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”*

Not only is Paul an example in his doctrine and desire, but notice thirdly,

**III. Paul’s Direction Was Rewarding** vs.13

Philippians 3:13, *“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,”*

It is not enough in the Christian life to have your doctrine right and to have a real desire to know God. You must also be headed in the right direction! We will not be rewarded by God when we stand before Him if we spend our lives living in the past.

It is not rewarding to live in the past.

Paul was headed in the right direction. He was:

**A. Forgetting the past**

“*Forgetting those things which are behind.*”

Paul had a past to put behind him!

We need to put the past behind us if we are going to get anything accomplished for God in the future.

**B. Facing the future**

“*Reaching forth unto those things which are before.*”

Paul was reaching forward in his ministry, not looking back. Thank God for all the heroes of the past, but let us recognize that we have some right now in the present. Let us live to raise up the next generation as well!

**C. Focused on God’s Calling**

Philippians 3:14, *“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

Paul was not just facing any future, he was facing God’s future for his life.

Sadly, many today are facing the future but not God’s future for their lives.

Is your focus in life all about you or are you looking to God’s calling and will for your life as you look to the future?

Not only was Paul’s doctrine right, his desire to know God real, and his direction rewarding, but notice lastly:

**IV. Paul’s Determination Was Radical** vs. 14

I have known some who had the right doctrine. They even had the right desire to know God and were facing the right direction, but they did not finish their course for God.

Paul had many obstacles he had to overcome but he finished his course.

We see some of the problems he faced in 2 Corinthians 11:25, *“Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;”*

Even with all the problems he faced, he was reliant upon God’s power. He tells us in Philippians 4:13, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”*

Paul stayed faithful to God through all his difficulties and was determined not to quit!

Paul tells Timothy at the end of his ministry in 2 Timothy 4:7 *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:”*

Paul finished the work God called him to do.

**A. He finished his fight**

*“I have fought a good fight.”*

We are in a spiritual battle and must be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. (Ephesians 6:10)

**B. He ran his race**

“*I have finished my course.*”

1 Corinthians 9:24-27, “*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.* *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”*

Paul was not a castaway. He finished strong.

Hebrews 12:1-2, “*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,* *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

**C. He kept the faith**

“*I have kept the faith.*”

Many start living for God but often they drop out or fall out. I do not know about you, but I want to be a finisher. Jesus was a finisher. (John 19:30)

Are you determined to finish your course?

It’s not enough to have the right doctrine.

It’s not enough to have the right desire to know God.

It’s not even enough to be facing the right direction.

We must, by the power of God, be determined to finish our course with joy.

We see Paul’s determination again in Acts 20:24, *“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”*

Will you finish God’s course for your life?