

Citizens of Heaven Here on Earth (Part 1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 June 2018

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 3 verse 17 through chapter 4 verse 1 for context, but this morning's sermon will focus on verse 17.

! Amen. Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

Amen. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word.

May you please be seated. Again, since I was gone last week and was down at the SBC convention, tonight I'll let you know a little bit more about how that went.

It was a good convention. I feel very confident about the direction that our denomination is heading in. But just for a recap's sake, because it has been a couple weeks, if you remember the last time we were in Philippians, we covered verses 18 through 19.

[1 : 56] And if you'll remember, in chapter 3, verse 13, Paul lays out the goal of the Christian life. In verse 13, he lays out the goal of the Christian life.

And there he says, But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus.

And so there we see in the Christian life there is a goal. And the goal of the Christian life is Christ-likeness here and now. And then we see that there's a prize.

And the prize of the Christian life is Christ-likeness in heaven. When we get there, that prize we will receive and we will be like him. But in this life, we are pursuing the goal of becoming more and more like him.

And so Christians should always be moving forward in their pursuit of this goal as they seek this prize. And so in verse 13, to get an idea of what Paul is talking about, not looking behind but concentrating and focusing forward, pursuing the prize, he uses an example of a race.

[3 : 15] Now back then they didn't have the IndyCar races that we have now. And I'm not a big race car fan. But I'm amazed by the men who get inside in, there was a woman at least, by the individuals who get inside those cars because they go so fast but they're not very well protected.

And they've just got, you've seen them, the guy's head is just barely sticking out of the top of there. Could you imagine if one of those guys was racing that car going 100 miles per hour and he's turning around looking left and right, what's going to happen if he does that?

He's going to crash and probably die. Such it is with the Christian life. We don't look back on what was or who we used to be before we came to salvation through Jesus Christ.

We don't dwell upon that. We don't look back to that. We are focusing always forward to that prize, that destination, that goal of becoming like Jesus himself.

And so if you remember, as part of that, a couple weeks ago we covered Jesus' prayer for us in John chapter 17. And as part of that prayer, Jesus said that we who have been called to salvation no longer are no longer of this world just as he himself was not of this world.

[4 : 38] And there when he's talking about world, he's not talking about literally the planet Earth. He's talking about the sinful fallen world system that we all are so familiar with.

This world system that calls right wrong, that calls good evil. And so that's the system that he is referring to. And then in Jesus' prayer for us, he says that we, as his people, have been called out of this world by him.

We're not only called out for salvation, but we are called out also for a mission. We have a mission that we are to be a part of.

And he tells us what that mission is. He tells us what the purpose of that mission is. And that mission is to then call us out so he can send us back into the world. Send us back.

Why? Well, to fulfill the great commission. If you remember Matthew 28, Jesus' last words to his followers before he ascended into heaven where he is seated at the right hand of the Father was this.

[5 : 42] Go and make disciples. And so our vision as a church is in perfect agreement with what Jesus calls us to do as his disciples, as his followers, to be on mission for him in this world.

We engage. We go. We enlighten. We share the gospel. We share the good news of Jesus Christ. We share the word of God with the unbeliever. We encourage one another here.

We need each other's support. We need each other's encouragement to go out and engage, to go out and enlighten. And then we are equipped here so that, again, we can go back and engage and enlighten and encourage.

And around and around it goes. Paul says that he's pressing on towards this goal. He's pressing on towards this prize. And he calls others who follow Christ to do the very same thing.

In verses 18 and 19, he makes the point that this world really only contains two types of people. He says that in this world there are only really two types of people.

[6 : 48] And a couple weeks ago we covered that first type of person, which is one who walks as an enemy of the cross of Jesus Christ. Christ. You're either in that category or you're in the other category, which we're going to spend the next couple of weeks on at least, which is this, that you are in the category of those who are citizens of heaven living here on the earth.

That you have been called out of the world. You don't really belong to this world anymore. You belong to the Lord. So you're either in one of those two groups of people.

And he tells us there that we are called out of this world again so that he can send us back into it.

And if you remember as part of his prayer, he said in, or as part of his sermon, I should say on the Sermon on the Mount, he made this point very clear about being in one of these two camps.

In that sermon, Jesus said, there are two gates. He said there's two paths. There's two destinations. There are two trees.

[7 : 55] And that ultimately, again, there are two foundations with which you are building your life upon. Either on the rock, you will survive God's wrath.

Or on the sands where you will be completely obliterated by it because you still stand condemned for your sins.

And then Jesus made it very clear again in John chapter 14 when he said, I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life.

And then he said, he concluded that sentence by saying this, No one comes to the Father except through me. Now, why did Jesus say that?

Well, I can tell you it wasn't because he was trying to gain popularity for himself. He wasn't saying, oh, there's all these other religions out there. I want all of their followers. You know, I want these large crowds.

[8 : 53] As a matter of fact, he turned the crowds away often because his teachings were too hard for them to grasp because they were not of his flock. Jesus said that he is the only way.

Why? Because he is of the truth. Because there is no other way. There can be no other way. Only he, being the sinless, spotless son of God, was able to fulfill what the law required.

You look at the Ten Commandments, none of those are we able to fulfill completely. In fact, we could say on a daily basis we break just about every single one of those commandments.

None of us is perfect. All of us fall short of the glory of God except Jesus of Nazareth. He was able to atone for our sins by dying in our place for the sins, again, that we ourselves committed.

He willingly took them upon himself. And those who believe in him, the Bible says, have received his righteousness in place of their sin.

[10 : 07] And now when God sees that man or that woman or that child, he sees not a guilty sinner but his innocent son. And so he loves you at the point of your conversion as much as he ever will.

You understand that? There is nothing you can do as a child of God that will make God love you less. He loves you completely because of his son, Jesus Christ.

And so as a result of all of this wonderful grace of God, we now have peace with him. We can now pursue this goal of becoming like Christ in this life, knowing that one day we will arrive at the prize.

We will be in glory. We will be glorified as Christ himself was raised from the dead. We will be glorified, glorified, resurrected, and where we wait for him now to come back.

And here's the thing. You could do nothing to deserve any of this. There is nothing that you could ever do to earn any of it. It's all accomplished by God and because of his amazing grace and love towards us.

[11 : 21] So now those of us who have been saved are called out of this world. We see that. We can't help now but be different. We must be different.

Because we've been given the Holy Spirit of God. He now indwells us. He resides in us. We have become a new creation. Our hearts, our minds have been enlightened by the gospel.

We've repented of our sins. We've agreed with what God says about sin. We've turned from that. And now we pursue his ways knowing that his ways are good, knowing that his ways bring and result in life.

And to go the other way only results in death. And so our desire is to be like Jesus who set us free from the shame of sin, who set us free from the guilt of sin, and who set us free from the penalty of sin.

And so we love him. Why? Because it was he who first loved us. We love him because he loved us so.

[12 : 31] So we're called out of this world, but we're also then called to go back into the world. We have been saved, but we've also been given a mission.

Why are we called back to go into the world? Let's look at Matthew 5, 14 through 16. Again, Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says, You are the light.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

So just as Jesus was the light that shines in the darkness, and darkness has not overcome it, So we too are pursuing that goal. We are pursuing that prize of Christlikeness.

[13 : 29] We who have been illumined by the gospel and the Holy Spirit must now light the way for other unbelievers to come to know Christ as their Lord and Savior. This is not an undercover mission.

You understand? Now, there are some places where we send missionaries, and they must be very careful with where they are at. But no doubt that they are going there, and they are letting their light shine where they are.

And we too now are called to this mission, and it is not an undercover mission. A light shines. Why? So that it won't be hidden. You don't use a flashlight and then cover your hand with it. You want its light to shine. God wants the light that He has put in you, right?

His Spirit calling you to salvation to shine for Him in this dark world. We teach our kids this, don't we? You know the song.

[14 : 33] This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Hide it under a bushel. No! I'm going to let it shine. We tell them this.

But are we the type of example to them that reflects the truth of this song that we're trying to teach them about?

When they look at us, do they see people who let their light shine? I don't think that we are doing a very good job as Christians, particularly in the United States of America, of letting our light shine in this way.

Again, being down at the convention, I heard many reports. The Southern Baptist denomination is the largest Protestant denomination in the United States of America.

One of the reports giving was from the North American Mission Board. And there they've done a project over several years. And they have determined that over the past 20 years, excluding those who have died, six and a half million people have dropped out of our churches.

[15 : 49] And they have no idea why, and they have no idea where they're at. Maybe they're going to a church somewhere else in another denomination. Maybe they don't go to church at all anymore.

Whatever the case may be, six and a half million people who used to be in the church are now unaccounted for.

What happened? Well, one thing that they said was probably because for too long the church has viewed baptism as the finish line. We think, oh, we got them baptized.

Okay, our work is done. No, the work is just beginning. Because we have to disciple these men and women. We have to help them grow to become like Christ.

But we were looking too much at baptism as being the finish line, and then we didn't continue on with our mission, which was not just to go, but to make disciples, to train them.

[16:49] Not simply engage them and then let them go. That's why our vision statement doesn't end at engage. There is more to it. But here's the other thing that I think has more to do with it.

We are too much like the world and not enough like Jesus. In the church, we as followers of Christ are too much like the world and we're not enough like Jesus.

We haven't been running in such a way to pursue the prize. And while our lights haven't gone out, our lights have gone dim.

In Genesis chapter 13, if you'll remember, Abraham is with his nephew Lot. Abraham is an older man and Lot is his nephew.

Lot is a full-grown adult man. And God has blessed these two. And they have a large amount of possessions together. They have large herds.

[17:55] They have large flocks. And you know, if you live back in these ancient biblical times, that was how you determined your wealth. Not by how much money you had in the bank, but how big your herds were.

And so they had two large herds. They have two large camps. And they were traveling together. And it got to the point where the workers of Abraham, the herdsmen of Abraham and the herdsmen of Lot, they weren't able to coexist like they were before.

Because you can imagine, that's my sheep. That's my goat. Whatever the case might have been. And so they weren't able to continue to live together in this peaceful way, in this agreement. And so Abraham and Lot saw that this wasn't good.

And so they got together. And Abraham says, look, we've got to separate. There's two areas available to us. And so Abraham tells to Lot, you pick where you want to go, and I will take the other.

So I imagine like my father, you know, we get a candy bar and we would split it. He would say, okay, whoever cuts it, the second person gets to choose, you know, right? Because we want to do it fair.

[19:02] Well, Lot made a great decision based upon the world's point of view. He picked the Jordan Valley. It was a better piece of land. At least it appeared that way to the flesh.

However, it was close to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. And so Lot chose that land. And you fast forward five chapters later, and we're in Genesis chapter 18.

And not only did Lot choose that land, but over the course of that time, Lot and his family moved closer and closer to that wicked city until we find them in chapter 18 living inside of Sodom.

And I can tell you that they were not there on a missionary journey. And God was going to destroy those cities, if you remember, because its wickedness had come up to him. He saw what had been going on, and he was going to destroy those cities.

And Abraham pleaded, God, if you can find at least ten righteous people there, will you spare it? God said he would, but he couldn't even find ten. And you know the rest of the story, that as Lot and his family are fleeing to escape from the destruction of this city, of these cities, his wife turns back.

[20:20] And she looks, and she becomes a pillar of salt. She's obliterated. Why? God told him, don't look back.

Just keep going forward. But she looked back because she still had love and affection for that place.

And when she looked back, I think in her heart, what she was thinking was, I wish we could be there again. I wish this city wasn't being destroyed.

That's truly where I want to be. She wasn't willing to forget what lay behind. She was not willing to strive forward to what lay ahead.

And so I use that story because I want to tell you that I think many Christians are a lot like Lot. Instead of seeking to eliminate sin from their life, they flirt with the world.

[21:22] They're enticed by the world. And before you know it, people would have no clue that they claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ based upon the way they live their life.

Because they look more like the world, they look more like them than they do Jesus Christ.

Because they've made their home with enemies of the cross instead of with their fellow heavenly

citizens.

And I know that because I myself was one of those, just like that. Brothers and sisters, we are in the world, or we must not forget that we are no longer of it.

Let me say that again. We are in the world, but we must not forget that we are no longer of it. We have a mission, and we've neglected that mission for too long.

We have a goal and a prize that we've been too lazy in pursuing. Churches are plateauing.

Churches are declining. Churches are dying, closing up their doors for good across this nation.

[22 : 44] My question to you is, do you care about that? Do you care about it? Do you care to do something, if anything, about that?

Now, you might be asking this question. What can be done? Well, I think Paul tells us in this passage of Scripture that what can be done, what must be done, is that we, as followers of Christ, must be living as citizens of heaven here on the earth.

And so I'm going to explain what that means. In part today and in the weeks to come. But here's the main idea. The main idea two weeks ago is the main idea this morning.

It will be the main idea for the next couple weeks, I'm sure. And it's this. In this world, either you live as a citizen of heaven, or you live as an enemy of the cross of Christ.

Enemies of the cross live for the world, but citizens of heaven live for the world that is yet to come.

You're either living as an enemy of the cross, or you're living as a citizen of heaven.

[23 : 51] And so the first thing that we see here in verse 17 from Paul is that a citizen of heaven imitates, watches, and follows the examples of other godly men and women.

So what does it mean to live as a citizen of heaven here on the earth? Well, it means that we are watching, imitating, following the example of other godly men and women.

As Paul tells the Philippians to imitate, watch, and follow him. Now here's the thing about Paul. He was not a perfect example.

In fact, this past Wednesday in Bible study, we covered that, how he was an enemy of the cross, very much so. He hated Christians. He hated the church. His mission was to put an end to the church until Jesus confronted him on the road of Damascus and saved this man and transformed this man to becoming this great apostle that he ended up becoming.

But he was no perfect example. In fact, 30 years after his conversion, in 1 Timothy 1.15, Paul still thought of himself as being the foremost of sinners.

[25 : 02] However, here and in many other places in Scripture, Paul invites Christians to follow his example.

And we've got to understand that he's not asking this out of a place of pride, or he's not saying this because he's full of himself. He's not being egotistical here.

He wasn't bragging about himself or putting himself on some kind of a pedestal, saying, hey, look, you guys are messing it up. And here, you need to follow me because I'll show you what to do. He wasn't doing that in any way.

This man was a mature believer. And he realized that Christians are imperfect people, just as he himself was an imperfect person. And imperfect people need imperfect examples to follow.

So I want you to listen carefully to what I'm about to say because I don't want to confuse any of you. That's certainly not my intent. Jesus was perfect.

[26 : 05] Jesus is the standard. He is the model. He is the pattern that all believers are to emulate. However, listen carefully.

Jesus never had to pursue perfection. We understand this? Jesus never had to pursue perfection because he was perfect.

He's always been perfect. He'll always be perfect. So how can he pursue something that he already is? Do you understand what I'm saying?

How can he pursue something that he already is? Becoming like him is the goal. It's our goal. It's our prize that we pursue.

And so we need examples of other imperfect men and women who have striven to overcome their imperfections as they pursue the goal and the prize of becoming like Jesus Christ.

[27 : 10] Do you understand? So we need the imperfect example of other believers who are striving to overcome their sin as they pursue Christlikeness in this world knowing that that is the prize that they will one day arrive at just as that is the case for us.

And so I remember back in seminary during our time of orientation as new students, one of the things that they recommended that we do is find two theologians or pastors, two men that we would learn from their example.

And they said, one of those men needs to be dead, a follower of Christ who has gone on to glory. And one of those men need to be living. And so the purpose of that was that you could learn from their example, that you could learn from their failures, that you could learn from their mistakes, because they told us, guess what?

You're going to come across the same things that they came across. And we've got to learn from their examples and learn from their triumphs, learn from their successes. And so for me, the dead guy that I chose was Charles Spurgeon.

Charles Spurgeon was a great man, a tremendous pastor, but he had vices. He battled with depression later on in life.

[28 : 34] He stood up in England during a time where there was the downgrade controversy. There's a lot of liberal theology going on. A lot of people were moving away from saying that God's Word was inerrant and truthful, and in fact, His Word.

But Spurgeon stood pat. And he was called names for that. He lost friends for that. He lost association with many of his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ for that.

But history has revealed and proved that he was right in the stance that he took. And I thank God for this man, so much so that as a matter of fact, I've named my dog after Charles Spurgeon.

And I have a Charles Spurgeon bobblehead that is over my shoulder and my desk. So I have God looking down for me from above and Charles Spurgeon looking over my shoulder, right? But he's just a man.

A great man of God, but he was just a man. And God used him in tremendous ways. And because you're curious, my living guy, there are many, but probably John MacArthur would be him.

[29 : 38] And I struggle to find faults and failures in that man. So somebody get that to John MacArthur. Maybe he'll come and preach at our church, right? Let's continue. Paul was a fellow traveler on the path towards the pursuit of Christlikeness.

He himself modeled virtue. He himself was a morally upright example. He was an example. He was an example of one who had overcome the flesh, who had experienced victories over temptation, who set an example of worship and service to God, one who set an example of patient endurance in many sufferings and going through many trials.

And so he asks others to imitate him as he follows Jesus Christ because he set a good example. So here's the thing that I want us all to understand as well.

Scripture commands all Christians to both follow godly examples and be godly examples for others to follow.

Commands it. The Bible says that this is not an option. You don't have an option in this. I'm telling you right now that someone is watching you.

[30 : 57] Someone is watching you. Someone is watching your life. And I'm telling you that either they are being positively or negatively influenced by what they're seeing from you as you pursue this goal and this prize.

And the Bible makes it clear that Christians are to be models for others to imitate. We are to be living proof that Jesus truly saves.

Living proof that Jesus truly transforms. And we allow our light to shine brightly and that draws others to us.

You may have already experienced this in your life. As you work, wherever it is you work, as you are in your neighborhood or in your community, you might have found out that when you are around your co-workers, they change their speech around you.

They act differently around you. They might say a colorful word and not realize that you're in their presence and then realize that you're there. And they might even apologize to you for that.

[32 : 17] You have ever had that happen? That's a good thing. Because they realize that there's something different about you that is unlike most of the other people that they see around them.

Don't feel upset because you're being singled out in that way. In fact, use it as an opportunity to share the gospel with them. You know why I don't joke like that?

You know why I don't use that language? Right? It's not because I'm some kind of a great morally upright person. It's because of the gospel. It's because of what Christ has done in my life. Now, if

the reverse is true, if people don't do that around you, then there's probably a problem because they don't see it in you.

And that has to change. Also in this verse, we see from Scripture that a citizen of heaven sets an example for others to follow.

Now, we've already been talking about this, but let's get more in depth about what is meant here. A citizen of heaven sets an example for others to follow. And as you are reading that, I have no doubt that many of you are uncomfortable with that thought that other people are supposed to be following you.

[33 : 43] If you've ever driven in a car with me, as my wife has on many occasions, you know that I am horrible with directions. And if we're going to go a trip somewhere, and if I don't have a GPS with me, I'm not somebody that you should follow because I'm going to get myself lost and you're going to get lost as well.

And many Christians kind of have that feeling about themselves in life. Maybe they don't admit it, but when it comes down to it, when you think about being an example for somebody else, you think, I don't even know where I'm going.

How could God expect anybody to follow me? And so we have this tendency to shy away from this responsibility. But again, the Bible says that being a godly example is not an option for Christians, but it's a command that we must obey.

Let's look at a couple of scriptures to see that this is the case. The first is Titus 2, verses 1-8. There again, the Apostle Paul says, But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith and love and in steadfastness. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine.

[35 : 02] They are to teach what is good and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works. And in your teaching, show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

And then another, 2 Timothy 2-2. You, then, my child, you, then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

And so there Paul is speaking to Timothy and what he's saying to him is, Timothy, take the things that I have taught you. Take the things that you have learned from my example.

Don't keep them to yourself, but pass them along to others. If we really want to grow as Christians personally and as a church collectively, then we must be concerned with how we can help others grow.

[36 : 29] We're not just primarily concerned with ourselves here. We're concerned with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ as well. How can a person truly say that they are following Christ but are not helping others do the same?

Jesus, if you remember, invested himself into his disciples who in turn did the very same thing for others and as a result of that, the church grew and the church multiplied and I'm telling you that you are sitting here today because somebody shared this good news with you and you could trace it all the way back throughout the years and the centuries to Jesus and his disciples.

And so we here today have the mission to continue doing that and sharing this good news with others that they would then go and do the same.

So how can a person say that they are truly following Christ and yet not be involved in either evangelism or discipling other Christians?

Christians. And I would say that they can't. Jesus said a disciple is not above his teacher but everyone when he is truly trained will be like his teacher.

[37 : 58] And so there we see that a teacher teaches and a disciple disciples. And it can be no other way. Now I didn't put this in your notes but I wish that I had.

And it's this, that we got to understand it. I hope it all, not only does it connect in our minds but it sinks into our hearts. And it's this, a healthy church, a healthy church is marked by having members who are not only following Christ but who are helping others follow Christ.

Let me say that again. A healthy church is marked by having members who are not only following Christ but who are also simultaneously helping others follow Christ. You find that, you'll find a healthy church. You'll find a vibrant church. You'll find a church full of life. Jesus had his disciples. Paul had Timothy, Silas, Titus, Epaphroditus, Mark and Luke and others. And this is what healthy Christians do. This is what healthy churches are involved with. There is, this is something that the church should excel at doing.

[39 : 16] We should be great at this because we have been designed for this. We are made for this. And so my prayer is that this is what we will become as a church. That Highland Park Baptist Church will be a church that cranks out disciples who make disciples.

And our community and our state and our nation and the world is transformed by that. And God is glorified for that.

So now the question becomes, okay, that sounds good, Pastor Mike, right? I hope you're saying that sounds good, Pastor Mike. How are we going to do that? How are we going to do that?

That sounds like pie in the sky. How is that going to be achieved? Well, I'll tell you that it's something that we're working on. I'll tell you that it's something that I think we're getting to.

And I do believe that it's something that we will arrive at. I do believe that that will be what our church will be characterized as one day. But one thing I do know for certain is where this begins.

[40 : 25] That's the goal. There's got to be a starting place and I know where that starting place is. And it's simple. And it's doable. But you've got to do it.

It's this. It's the realization that each of us must obey this command to live as an example. Setting an example for others. That's where it begins.

Now again, you might be saying, well, you can't be serious. I'm not someone who anyone should follow. I remember when I was in college and I've shared my testimony with you, I was far from the church and far from the Lord at that point in time in my life.

Right? Like that sheep that had wandered away, the Lord had went and found me and He brought me back. And I remember going back to my old church. They knew where I'd been and what I'd been doing. I felt guilty.

I felt ashamed. I felt like I shouldn't be here. But yet our youth pastor there wanted me to be there and he wanted me to be involved with his youth ministry.

[41 : 29] And he wanted me to disciple other teens there in that youth ministry. And I thought, I shouldn't be doing this. I shouldn't be doing this.

If you knew all these things that I'd done, I mean, I'd turn my back on the Lord there for a while. He never turned his back on me, but I went my own way. I shouldn't be doing this. So I understand your feelings.

I do. And I want you to understand that the real issue is this. The real issue isn't whether or not people are following you. That's not the real issue.

The real issue is whether or not you are following Jesus. The real issue isn't whether or not people are following you, but whether or not you are following Jesus. You see, this has nothing to do with how great of a person you are.

But it has everything to do with how greatly you are following Jesus. And if you are doing that, this responsibility becomes much easier for you to accept.

[42 : 33] If you are following Jesus and others follow you, it will go well. I promise and assure you. Now we see that as citizens of heaven, we have no choice but to be an example to be followed.

However, we do have a choice in the kind of witness we give and the kind of impact we will have for the kingdom here on earth. Someone is going to follow you.

Someone is going to be influenced by you. And so the question becomes, do you know where you're going? Do you know where you are going?

Are you providing the kind of example that will enhance their lives? Or are you like the blind leading the blind? And so again, my question to you is how much of any of this matters to you?

So here's what you can do. This is what you should do. This is where it begins. One, be praying.

Two, seek someone who will pour into you.

[43 : 53] Seek someone who will disciple you. Learn from their example. Learn from their mistakes.

If possible, ask to meet with that person on a regular basis and be willing to be vulnerable with them. Knowing that when you do that, you will be strengthened.

Whatever you uncover, the Lord will cover up. And you will grow. And you will help others to do the same. And so here's the second part. Seek someone to pour into you and then you seek someone to pour yourself into.

You seek someone who you can be that same example to. You be willing to meet with that person. You be willing to pray with that person.

You be willing to help that person grow and become more like Christ. You're going to have to take the initiative. And I'm willing to help you.

[44 : 52] we need to develop some more disciple ministry programs here. I realize that. But we need to begin and we must begin with prayer.

And you can already begin to do those two things that I said. I want to read a quote to you. It's a lengthy quote. You only have a portion of it in your notes.

But this is from J.D. Greer who is our newly elected president of the SBC. And I want to read this to you and I hope it will encourage you towards this endeavor.

He says, Martin Luther said in his letter to Romans, letter on Romans, that true spiritual progress was always to begin again. He said, we must daily embrace the love and kindness of God and daily exercise our faith therein, entertaining no doubt of God's love and kindness.

Always begin again with the gospel. Abide in it. Swim in it. Make your home in it. See more and more of your life through it. Be absolutely convinced at every moment of every day of the goodness of God in your life.

[45 : 58] That's the only way you'll ever truly grow. The gospel has done its work in us when we crave God more than we crave anything else in life. More than money, more than romance, family, health, or fame.

And when seeing his kingdom advance in the lives of others gives us more joy than anything we could own. When we see Jesus as greater than anything the world can offer, we'll gladly let everything else go to possess him.

When we love others like he loves us, we'll willingly yield our possessions to see his kingdom come into their lives. Obedience that does not flow from love ends up being drudgery, he says, and continues, but to us and to God the gospel turns drudgery into delight.

It changes us from being slaves who have to obey God to sons and daughters who want to obey God. Again, God is not just after obedience, he's after a whole new kind of obedience, an obedience filled with desire.

And so let me close with one last appeal to you to be this way. I was reading in Luke chapter 19 and you're familiar well with that portion of scripture at the beginning, verses 1 through 10, where Jesus meets Zacchaeus and since we have already sung one children's song, let's go ahead and do Zacchaeus was a wee little man and a wee little man was he.

[47 : 23] Zacchaeus was a wee little bad man. People hated Zacchaeus because Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Now, back in that time, the Romans owned that area.

They were under control or the Jews were under their control and so they needed to get tax money. And so what they would do is they would hire people from within that nation, within that community who knew how the finances worked.

So they knew how to get their hands on the money. And so they would hire Jewish men to be the tax collectors. So you can imagine that as a Jew, you have a fellow brother of nationality who's working for the enemy to get your money.

You're not going to like that person, are you? Especially when he knocks at your door and says, hey, I need such and such amount of money. Here's the other thing about a tax collector. The Roman government would say, hey, we need this much, and then you can collect how much ever more you want.

So Zacchaeus was a bad little man. He was a rich little man. And Jesus came to his town. And Jesus was walking.

[48 : 28] And obviously there was a large crowd. And Zacchaeus was a little guy. Now most of the time, right, in a community like that, you would let a smaller person come to the front. man, but this was Zacchaeus.

They don't like him. We're not going to let you see Jesus, right? Get out of here, you dirty, filthy, bad guy. So what does Zacchaeus do? He climbs up in a sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see.

And Jesus, in his omniscience, sees him in that tree. And he calls him down from that shameful place.

Right? He's in this tree, a grown man in a dress skirt thing, you know what I'm saying? Whatever they wore back then, a robe.

And he's in this shameful place. The rest of the world wants nothing to do with him. He's an outcast. He's hated and despised.

[49 : 34] And rightfully so, for what he's done. Jesus sees him, calls him down, goes into his house, eats with this man, and Zacchaeus is totally changed.

He gives back everything he's ever taken. Four times as much as the law requires. And then he gives something that the law doesn't require him to do. He gives half of his possessions to the poor. He changed completely. What was the difference? Jesus Christ. You know what Jesus said to him? Today, salvation has come to you.

God was going to see what was going on. He wanted to see what was going on. But Jesus saw him.

Jesus called to him. Jesus went to him. And he says to Zacchaeus, today, salvation has come to you. He called him out of that disgraceful place, and he gave him newness of life.

[50 : 50] The man was changed. He wasn't obeying the Lord because of religion. He was obeying the Lord because of the gospel, because of grace. Now, here's what I want us to understand.

As Jesus called Zacchaeus out of that tree, that despised place, he himself was hoisted upon another kind of tree, a cross where he was despised, where he was scorned, where he was crushed for our iniquities.

He's done the same thing for you, follower of Christ. He has called you down from that despicable place, and he has climbed up in your place for your sins.

How are you going to live your life in response to that? Is the Lord worth your time? Is the Lord worth your service? Is he truly your Lord and Savior?

Now, you might be here today and you feel like you are Zacchaeus in the tree, and as you've heard these words, you feel that God is calling to you, and today may be your day of salvation, and you must respond.

[52 : 15] You come out of that tree, you don't have to come out of a tree this morning, you come out of the pew, and I'll be here, and I'd love to pray with you. Church, let's do this.

Let's be this way. Let's be a church that disciples disciples. Let's be a church that brings much glory and honor to Christ, who died in our place for our sins, knowing that on the third day he arose again, and there's so much evidence to prove that, and he's coming back, and when he comes back, or when we go to be with him, let's be found diligently pursuing this mission that he's called us to be on.

Thank you.