

The Bulletin

Meeks Street Church of Christ

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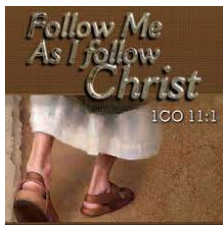
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October 22, 2023

“Imitating Paul” #1

By Brian Meade

It is the words of the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “*Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*” (ESV). This simple and easy to follow statement by Paul helps us to see clearly the way to follow Christ by watching him. It is often that people need to see a good example of someone who is following Jesus in the proper way.



Paul qualifies his statement by saying, “*as I am of Christ.*” Or as the NKJB says, “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*” This helps us understand how and when to imitate Paul. It is when Paul is being “Christ-like” in his manner of life, that’s when we can certainly imitate or be just like Paul in his actions.

I also want to be clear, Paul is not asking disciples to follow after Paul, as disciples of Paul. No, he prohibits anyone to be a disciple of anyone other than Jesus in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13. No one is to divide up the body of Christ in making disciples after themselves (Acts 20:30-31), that brings about apostasy from the faith. But there is a sense that we can duplicate what Paul is doing as he follows Jesus. How do we do that?

1. By Imitating Paul’s Strong Faith In God.

Faith in God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible is the foundation for everything we do for the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:6). When we read about the life of Paul in Acts, and his letters in the New Testament, one thing is very clear—Paul was a man of tremendous faith! It took a great deal of faith to leave his former life as a Pharisee, and begin to follow Christ (1 Timothy 1:12-16). It is obvious that we cannot imitate Paul’s “ignorance and unbelief”, as he persecuted the church (Acts 9:1-2), but we would do well to imitate his life of faith after his conversion!

Paul would give statements declaring his faith all through his writings, most notably in 2 Timothy 1:12, “*For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*”

Another prominent statement of just how strong Paul’s faith was in Jesus is found in Philippians 1:21, “*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” Paul speaks with strong confidence and expectation of his faith in the Son of God to fulfill his promise of eternal life. Oh, that we could have the same faith that Paul had and imitate such joyful hope and trust in Jesus!

2. By Imitating Paul’s Zeal For God.

The dictionary tells us that zeal is defined as, “great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or an objective.” It has been described as having “strong passion for what you believe in and working hard to achieve it.”

Paul was zealous before his conversion, and certainly was still zealous as a disciple of Jesus. Before his conversion, he would say about his former life in Philippians 3:4-6, “*though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*”

Paul worked very hard at trying to destroy the Lord's church (Galatians 1:13). There is no doubt that he believed like some of the other Jews of his day, that Jesus was not the Christ, and that was what motivated him to pursue the disciples to foreign cities and imprison them (Acts 26:11). Again, Paul "acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:13 NASB).

Paul shared this zeal to destroy the Lord's church with his former Jewish brethren, as he stated in Romans 10:1-3, *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God."*

Paul knew firsthand that a zeal for God without knowledge is a dangerous thing! We should learn from that warning in the Scriptures and be sure we are zealous for only the truth! (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Sadly, many today are zealous for false religion and traditions of men, without ever really testing to see if the Scriptures teach their dogmas and creeds. But yet, they blindly follow these teachings, like Paul did in ignorance of the truth. For one must absolutely know for certain that what he believes in is the truth, otherwise he can be fighting the truth! (Acts 5:39).

But after Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he worked zealously to build up the Lord's church, beginning in Acts 9:20-22, *"Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, 'Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?' But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ."*

Paul was very zealous in wanting to see the gospel "Go into all the world..." (Mark 16:15-16). This zeal he had led him to make three missionary journeys, in which he travelled many days across the known world.

Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13-14) began from Antioch of Syria and sailed to Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Paul then returns to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch of Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, Attalia, and then back to where he started in Antioch of Syria.

Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-18:22) began with this statement of Paul in Acts 15:36, *"Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.'"*

Paul and Silas leave Antioch and go through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches (15:41), Derbe, Lystra (when Timothy joins them), Phrygia, the region of Galatia, Mysia, Troas, Macedonia, Samothrace, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Syria, Cenchrea, Ephesus, Caesarea, and back to Antioch to conclude the second journey.

Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:14) began from Antioch again, as they travelled to the region of Galatia, Phrygia, the upper coasts of Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece, returned to Macedonia, Philippi, Troas, Miletus, Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Caesarea, and ends in Jerusalem.

The main point I want to convey in Paul's travels, is that of Paul's zeal in taking the gospel with him wherever he would go (Romans 10:14-15). Paul was a firm believer in going to where the people were, and teaching them to not delay their salvation (Acts 16:33; 2 Corinthians 6:2).

This is what we need to imitate in Paul's zeal, and not wait for people to come to us. Some have the attitude that, "If we build a building, they will come..."

Not so! Let us be like Paul in the work God has given us to do.



Visit our YouTube Channel:

Meeks Street Church of Christ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgiXJxZC1oraOugO9qIfBtw?view_as=subscriber

And Our Facebook Page.

For sermon videos, articles, and announcements.

News and Notes:

Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Daniel Holloway, Debbie Keplinger, Robbie, Sheila, Sherry Doles, Sandi Poole, Nathan Cox, Sandra Oliver, Chad Harris, Eli Johnson, Burt Ward, Jamie Jones, Fred Johnson, Mary Ann Holley, Larsen Plyler, Willis Fields (Brandi Meade's Dad), Sam Kennemur (Upcoming surgery November 6th), and Lisa Busby,

Our Gospel Meeting, with Tim Henderson, Starts Today! (22nd—25th).

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer:

Adam Harris

Preaching:

Tim Henderson

Sermon #1:

*"What Is A Disciple?" Pt. 1
Matthew 28:16-20*

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:

Preaching:

Tim Henderson

Sermon #2:

*"What Is A Disciple?" Pt. 2
John 13:34-35*

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements:

Jerry Kennemur

Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading:

Paul Johnson

Scripture Reading:

Ephesians 5:14-17

Song Leader:

Jerry Kennemur

Lord's Supper:

Doug George

Assisting:

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Preaching:

Tim Henderson

Sermon #2:

"Accidental Disciples"

Closing Prayer:

Nathan Meade

Gospel Meeting: 7:00 P.M.

October 25, 2023

Announcements:

Brian Meade

Preaching:

Tim Henderson

Song Leader:

Tim Harris Sr.

Closing Prayer:

Paul Busby

Gospel
Meeting

At The Meeks Street Church Of Christ
October 22nd—25th

With brother Tim Henderson

Sunday Morning at 9:00 (22nd).

Monday—Wednesday 7:00 PM Nightly
(23rd-25th).