

Follow Me Pt3

by Phil Beach Jr.

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual maturity and selflessness in modeling a Christ-like life for others.

Duration: 1:03:24

Scripture: Matthew 6:21, John 15:12-13, Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 4:1-3, Philippians 3:17, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 John 4:7

Topics: "Following Christ", "Selflessness", "Spiritual Maturity"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the importance of living a life that models Christ's character, urging Christians to reflect God's nature in their actions. He highlights the distinction between spiritual and carnal living, encouraging believers to pursue spiritual maturity by dying to self and serving others. Beach warns against the hypocrisy that arises when one's actions do not align with their faith, and he calls for a commitment to love and serve within the body of Christ. He stresses that true liberty in Christ is not a license to sin but a call to selflessness and love for others. Ultimately, he reminds the congregation that Christ's life within them is the source of their strength to live as worthy role models.

Transcript

A very, very sobering theme, particularly in the New Testament, one that we can never, ever forget, is that our lives as Christians should be worthy of being modeled. That is, brothers and sisters, and even the world, should be able to look at our lives and say, there's a life, a lifestyle, behavior patterns, that show me something about God's character, something about God's nature, something about what I see in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's essential for us to remember that when our Christianity and our service for the Lord and our walk with the Lord and our consciousness of it departs from the awareness that we are to be modeling in our actions what we profess, then the leaven of religion and hypocrisy can begin to infiltrate our inner lives.

We saw that Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4, 1 Corinthians 11, and in a number of other places, that we as Christians were to follow him as he followed Christ. And we saw that there are specific areas in his life that he was so confident were under the control of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that they were worthy of being role models for other Christians, and that it was his desire, as a man that was apprehended by God, to see that mentality formed in the church, so that the church, wherever it is, wherever it meets, might be continuously seeking for such a union with Jesus, such a love walk with Jesus, that their lives are progressively becoming more and more and more a worthy role model that other Christians can look at and say, surely

I'm seeing something of the Lord in your life that is attractive to me. I'm seeing something of the patience of the Lord or the goodness of God or the love of God or the forgiveness of God.

And this was Paul's desire, that the church would be captured with a vision and a revelation that they were to be the body of Christ, through which Christ could demonstrate the perfections of his beauty by the power of the Holy Spirit. We saw last week that some of the areas that Paul asked the church to follow him in were the areas of being a spiritual versus a carnal Christian, and that being a spiritual versus a carnal Christian would affect the way we look at certain things. Paul wanted the church to be spiritual, and to be spiritual is not to be some impractical idea.

To be a spiritual Christian is to be a mature Christian or a Christian that is governed by the Spirit of God in obedience to the Word of God. That's what a spiritual Christian is. A carnal Christian, that word carnal means fleshly, and the word spiritual implies spirit.

So a carnal Christian is one who's governed by their fleshly nature, their fleshly desires. Their minds are governed by fleshly thinking, worldly thinking. And Paul admonished the Christians to strive toward being spiritual, so that in being spiritual it would properly help them to look at certain issues.

We either have a mature outlook or an immature outlook. So being spiritual versus carnal was one of the areas that Paul admonished the church to follow him in. We are called as the church, the moment we become believers, born-again Christians, we are called as the church to long for and strive after spiritual maturity.

Now let me tell you something. Spiritual maturity is costly. Spiritual maturity is costly because spiritual maturity necessitates parting with preoccupation with me, I, my desires.

What's good for me? What's in it for me? When we get put into parenting and we start having families, we realize that families don't work when people are not willing to die to their own interests. The great crisis in families today in the church simply revolves around, most of the time, an unwillingness on either one or both of these spouses to die to self-interest. Many marriages today simply are a legal agreement that we're married, but people still want to live single.

We still want to live single lives and yet be married. You can't do that. You can't take your single mentality into a marriage.

You have got to come to the place where you acknowledge before God that this drive to do your own thing, to satisfy your own desires, to think chiefly of yourself, has to die. The success of the marriage, the success of the family, and the success of a local church hangs upon believers acknowledging that as Christians, essentially speaking, they are called to die to self. The root problem in all of our conflicts, in all of our divisions in the church, in all of our problems in family life, are stemmed at this idea of wanting to do my own thing.

So Paul says, follow me as I follow Christ along this issue of spiritual maturity. Men, listen to me. Your major goal, women too, your major goal as a Christian should be through the power of grace divine, through the power of the word of God, to be freed from selfish ambition.

The success that you experience in your marriage, in your family, and in your effectiveness in being a profitable member in the body of Christ hangs upon the ability that you have to come to God and ask Him to deliver you from selfish ambition. Paul said, I don't please myself. Jesus said, I come not to do my own

will, but the will of Father in heaven.

And the church has to echo the same heart cry. God, deliver me from the tyranny of self-ambition, from doing my own thing unrelated to your purpose and the interests and desires of others. So this is a high and holy calling.

We don't have an option here. It's not an option. Well, I think maybe I'll consider this.

Paul said, follow me in this issue. Now, listen closely. As we follow Paul in pursuit after spiritual maturity in our life, it will affect the way we look at two important issues.

And Paul tells us regarding these two issues that we ought to follow his example. Now, what two issues are these? These are what the two issues are. The first issue is how we look at fellow members of the body of Christ and how we look at fellow ministers of the body of Christ.

Now, if we maintain the posture of being a carnal fleshly Christian, then when we look at one another in the body of Christ, we will look at each other with the eyes of jealousy, the eyes of rivalry, the eyes of competition, the eyes of bitterness and hatred and contention. We will look at it in the eyes of division. We will have cliques and etc., etc., etc.

The list goes on and on and on. Likewise, if we have the eye of carnality and we look at fellow ministers, then ministers become our personal property. This is my pastor.

This is my minister. I'm of this minister, not of that minister. And what happens is the very ministry that God raises up for the purpose of bringing maturity to the body of Christ becomes a means of division within the body.

So an immature, carnal outlook of each other and ministers results in havoc, division, heartache, disunity, and a lot of troubles that we're struggling with in this hour right now in the church, in the land today. It's because this issue of carnal and spiritual. As I said, the most costly thing as a Christian is not just to receive the Lord, but to come to understand the full ramifications of what it means to belong to the Lord.

If you belong to the Lord, then your body is not your own anymore. Your mind is not your own. That is, to engage in all kinds of unwholesome, unprofitable thinking.

Your spirit is not your own. You've been bought with a price. Your time is not your own.

You become the property of the one that bought you. I'll never forget what one of my training officers told me as I was training to be a police officer in Mississippi. He discovered that I had a large family, and he was just amazed.

He was a single guy. He was just amazed. And he said, the bottom line, Phil, in my own life, and I respect him for his honesty, as to why I am not interested in having a family.

He said, because I'm too selfish. He said, I'm too selfish. He said, I realize that if I have a family, I can't be the center of attention anymore.

I realize if I have a family, then I don't just decide what I want to do and do it. He said, and because of that, I'm not ready now to make that decision. Well, I said to Ricky, I said, Ricky, I have great respect for you for saying that, because you are telling the truth.

It's costly. It's costly to follow Paul in this area of spiritual maturity. Might I ask a rhetorical question right now? May the Holy Spirit bear witness.

How well are you doing right now in this issue of following Paul as he modeled spiritual maturity? How are you doing? How well are you doing? How often are you thinking of the needs of others? How often are your plans revolving around how to bless and aid and help others? Let's bring it right down into your home. How often are your plans revolving around helping your wife, your family, your children, and the church family that God has connected you to? To what extent are you living for the sake of others versus disconnected from others? There's a commitment there though. There's a commitment.

You're committed legally to your marriage, to your family, and you're committed through the Holy Ghost to your church family, but you're living oblivious to people and to their needs. Did you ever think that there might be some serious problems going on in your life right now simply because you are so oblivious to the needs of the people around about you and eventually things are going to have to come out? And maybe some problems you're going through right now is because you've been so preoccupied with your own self and your own needs, you haven't taken the time to say, what are your needs? What should I be doing to help you? Might I suggest this morning that you consider how well you are following Paul along these lines of living no longer for self but for others. I don't care what you know.

I don't care what you profess. I don't care where you've gone or where you think you're going. If you are not a servant, if you are not presently growing in your capacity to forget about your own desires and to pick up and bear the desires of others, you will eventually come to a major crisis in your life.

And that crisis will be a choice that you will have to make. You will either acknowledge what God's Word says about that I, that self-serving part of your own personality and declare that it is crucified with Christ and say, God, I don't want nothing to do anymore with this self-serving drive that I have been dedicated to which is destroying my relationships. God gives relationships in order as an opportunity to serve, not to get.

Our problem in the 21st century coming up is that we perceive everything in our life to how it affects us, how we can get something out of it. I was meditating on the words of the Apostle Paul. This is powerful.

This is what the Holy Ghost gave me. I was meditating on the words of Paul in Philippians chapter 3 and in Romans chapter 16 where he had mentioned that there were certain people whose God was their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who are enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ. And I said, God, why did Paul say that God was their belly? What does that have to do with what you're trying to teach here? As I began to meditate upon this, the Holy Spirit started to talk to me and he said, Phil, when you're hungry, whose desires does that reflect? My own.

My own. He said exactly. He said, when I inspired Paul to say whose God is their belly, I captured in that statement the epitome, the ultimate expression of following one's own needs.

Nobody is benefited when my belly is hungry. It's me. And whenever I reach to satisfy my belly, nobody ever benefits but me.

It's the epitome of following one's own desires at the expense of ignoring everyone else's desires. This is the spirit of the world that is seducing the church of Jesus Christ in this hour. There is a spirit of greed, a spirit of selfishness, a spirit of I want all I can get and I want to can all I get at the expense of ignoring

relationships that God has brought into our life.

Father, let me tell you something. You've got to die to yourself if you want your family to prosper. Mothers, you've got to die to yourself.

The body of Christ will never come into adulthood and become a vessel through whom the glory of God can come unless we learn this all-important lesson of dying to ourself. The most important person in our world has to cease from being ourself. It was in this way, beloved, that the Apostle Paul admonishes us to follow his example.

Beware of the spirit in this age. Beware of what moves in the hearts of the sons of disobedience. The spirit that now walks in this world is a seducing spirit.

And I want to encourage you and admonish you by the love of God this morning, by the Spirit of God that's speaking through this earthen vessel. Be followers of Paul as he followed Christ along the lines of this carnal versus spiritual. I say by the Spirit of God, declare war on those passions within you that if you follow them, will lead you to do your own thing at the expense, at the expense of denying the people in your life what they need.

Declare war upon them. Don't be governed by those passions. Offer yourself to the Lord.

God, bring me into emancipation. Deliver me from these passions that are self-related. The joy of serving.

The joy of being free from my own agenda. The joy of being free from the tyranny of demanding my own way. Following my own thing.

The joy of seeing my job as a Christian is to selflessly serve people. Oh, what joy will come. What victory will come.

What spiritual maturity will come. So this is the first area that we are to be followers of Paul in. The second area is this issue of the conscience and liberty.

We saw that the word liberty is being greatly abused today in the church. Christians interpret liberty to be licensed to sin or licensed to do what they want. And that is an erroneous understanding of the true heart of God regarding liberty.

Do you really think that if Jesus came walking in the room here, I know He's here, but I mean if He came in person, walked through the doors, come up here, and started to talk to us about Christian liberty, do you really think you could hear Jesus say, my children, remember you have liberty. Don't be in bondage over anything. Do what you want.

You're free now. No, He wouldn't say that. You know what He would say about liberty? He'd say just what He already spoke.

He says the liberty that you know as a Christian is the emancipation from the law of sin and death. That's Christian liberty. I am free finally from the tyranny of sin.

I'm free from this taskmaster, this pharaoh that lived inside of me, that demanded my allegiance. I am free now. Hallelujah.

I'm not under the law. I'm not under sin. Hallelujah.

Death is no longer my power. I am united to Christ. And now that I am at liberty, I am free to be a slave.

It is freedom to be a slave. A slave to what? Jesus Christ. A slave to serve my brothers and sisters.

So this whole issue of liberty and conscience has to be governed by love. If my conscience permits me to do something, I must ask myself, am I being controlled by love? Am I thinking only about myself? Or can my liberty cause my brother to stumble? If my liberty causes my brother to stumble, then am I operating in love? No. I'm operating in selfishness.

So I must control my liberty and my conscience because conscience permits us to do a lot of things. But love demands that we only do that which is what? Beneficial and up-building for the body. Now it's costly, and you won't even hear this if you're not prepared to see that God wants you to be free from selfish ambition.

The Lord never wants the church to enjoy a liberty and to enjoy a conscience that permits them to do whatever they want to do at the expense of wounding a brother because you're not operating in love. That's not the liberty that God gives. That's not the kind of conscience that God wants us to have.

Paul said that he had a conscience free of all men. That is, he was not engaging in any kind of so-called rights that he had as an apostle that could possibly offend someone. So he denied his rights, denied his own clear conscience several things so that he wouldn't offend people.

One being a paycheck. He said, many churches I went to and I didn't take a penny from them. I went out and worked day and night.

Why? Because I didn't have a right? Not so. He said, I had every right. I had every right.

If people are benefiting spiritually from me, says Paul, shall not I then benefit carnally from them? He said, but I gave up that right. Why? So that nobody would say, Paul's here because he wants money. He suffered and refused a liberty and a right that he had because he walked in love.

He said, I seek to please people whenever I can so that I can win more people to Jesus Christ. That's the spirit of Christianity. But let me tell you, that spirit is completely opposite than what's working in the world.

So we have to battle. We have to keep our minds washed in the water of the word. We have to make sure that we don't get seduced by a spirit that's not of God.

Try the spirits. Test the spirit. Listen, test the spirit that you're following right now.

Test the beliefs that you have. Try them. Make sure they line up to what? To the word.

More importantly, to the person of Jesus Christ. Test those spirits. Don't just follow anything.

Try them and test them. And make sure that they're leading you to obedience to the words of Jesus. If you love me, keep my commandments.

Hallelujah to God. Praise the Lord for his faithfulness. So this issue of follow me as I follow Christ is, as we're seeing, more than just a surface issue.

It gets to the very heart of our Christianity. Philippians chapter 3, verse number 17. I'd like to read.

Philippians chapter 3. We saw several major areas in Paul's life where he was telling us to follow him as he followed Christ. And now I want to look at another one. Philippians chapter 3, verse number 17.

Brethren, be followers together of me. Stop right there. Now, we did this a few weeks ago, but I like this because as far as I'm concerned, this is really what makes it, this puts it right down into our lives.

Stop right now. Can you say to brothers and sisters that are in your life right now, follow me about the areas of your life, any area of your life. Follow me.

Husbands, can you say to other young men, follow me in my example on how I treat my wife, how I talk to my wife, how I pray for my wife, how I encourage my wife, how I serve my wife. Can you say follow me? Paul said follow me. Now, I know that we're not supposed to have anybody follow us.

I realize that. I know that Jesus, we want people to follow Jesus, but we showed a few weeks ago how that was pretty cheap. Many times that's an excuse.

We don't want our life to be scrutinized, so we say, don't follow me, follow Jesus. Really what we're saying is, brother, get away, don't get too close. I don't want my life scrutinized.

I don't want to be accountable to anybody. I don't want to have to think through what I'm doing to make sure it's all right. Don't follow me, follow Jesus.

That sounds so spiritual, but I'll tell you, the Lord showed me something about that statement. Now, I'm not annoying the fact that Christ is the one we're to follow, but you know what I'm saying. We use that as an excuse because we don't want people getting into our life.

We want our own territory, and we don't want people invading it. But Jesus said, let me tell you something. If I'm not the Lord of all the kingdoms of your life, then it's going to be hard for me to be Lord at all.

Follow me. Follow me. Now, this is not intended to bring condemnation or to make you feel guilty.

This is intended to help us get perspective. Our Christianity should be so changing us. Our relationship with Jesus and our participation in the word of God should be so changing us that we're actually being able to see, well, it's true, in this area of my life and in this area of my life, God is making me a role model.

You know, that's the great need today. People need role models. God says the church ought to be the role model for any honest heart that wants to see what God is like.

Why do you think all these stars are being lifted up on TV? Why do you think they're being lifted up? Why do you think someone like Michael Jordan is so incredibly popular with the young people? It's because he's a role model. Now, I'm not here to judge Michael Jordan whether he's a good or bad role model, but what I'm saying is you can see it's inherent within the heart of people to want to see someone and want an example to follow. You are a role model.

You are a role model. You might be the only Bible that somebody reads someday. You know that? So I really want to drive this point home.

Pray God will help you so see your life as a role model, and pray God deal with every area of inconsistency in your life, every area of duplicity, every area of dubious practice. Pray God deal with this. Don't condemn yourself.

Don't feel like, oh, God doesn't love me now because I can see through this world that there's a lot of areas in my life that really aren't right. Don't feel like God doesn't love you anymore. He loves you in spite of you.

His love is unconditional, but let it stir you on to a desire for perfection, for spiritual maturity. Let it affect you in such a way where you're going to say, Lord, thank you that I see those areas of my life that need adjustment because now I can believe you for greater things. Philippians 3, verse 17, Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us, for an example.

Paul just said to follow him, and he also said mark those who walk just like I do. Now, we're not going to get into this in detail, but I want you to understand this is a whole other area of life that Paul is commanding us to follow him in. And basically what it is, is the Philippians chapter 3 revelation.

We know what the Philippians chapter 3 revelation is. Paul talks about his religious heritage. He talks about his natural birth.

He was circumcised. He was a Pharisee. He was a Pharisee.

He was perfect touching the law. But let's get to verse number 7, because this is the example that Paul is asking us to follow him in. Basically, we can capture this example by illustrating it like this.

This is Paul's example of having a single heart. Staying focused in life. Staying focused in life.

Verse 7, after he got done talking about all of these wonderful accomplishments that he did, he says, but what things were gained to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. Here, Paul captures in one statement an attitude that he is telling us to follow him in.

And basically, this attitude can be captured in this statement. All that Paul could have trusted in, could have boasted in, and could have been proud of, that had nothing to do with Christ's accomplishment on the cross, he considered to be useless to him. He considered it to be of no value in comparison to knowing Jesus Christ.

Everything that was of value to him, that didn't directly relate to Calvary and what Jesus did by dying on the cross, he considered to be of no value. And it seems to me that many times in Christianity today, it is not the things that revolve around Christ, the person of Christ, the work of Christ, and all that Jesus did and is that makes our hearts so happy, but contrary-wise, many times, it has to do with us and what we think we are and what we're doing in our religious heritage or our religious traditions or whatever it might be. And we're absolutely getting obsessed with these things.

Paul said, I consider those things rubbish. As soon as something gets more important to you than the finished work of Jesus and seeing Him and glorying in Him and looking to Him and becoming more like Him, as soon as something becomes more important to you than that, you need to have a serious transaction with God. Nothing can become more important to you than knowing Jesus Christ, being

changed to reflect the likeness of Jesus Christ.

I don't care what it is. Now, the Lord spoke to me this morning while praying to include in this particular point, listen closely, a word of admonition. And here's what it was.

Let go of what you are holding on to. God is jealous. Nothing is yours.

Now, I feel like along this point where Paul said, follow Him, along this line of singleness of heart, I feel that the Holy Spirit would want to put His hand on certain areas of our life that we're holding on to too tightly. And in holding on to it, it's getting too big. It's getting... Listen, you know something's getting too big in your life when you're neglecting God because of it, whatever it is.

Now, it might even be something like an Isaac, something God gave you or something God's giving you, but you better let go of it because God did not let Abraham hold on to Isaac. You can't hold on to anything. Just a few days ago, I was holding my youngest son, Andrew.

He is such a joy in our life. Such a joy. He's such a happy boy.

He's so happy. He's so content. He just looks and smiles and coos and talks and he just brings joy.

And I was delighting in my son and I felt a real love, a father's love for his son. And the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, Son, give him to me. And I said, Oh God, how incredible.

How God is able to search the depths of our heart. He saw how my heart was turned to my son and he was pleased. God wants every father to love his son and daughter.

He's for love. He's not against it. But God searched the depths of my heart and he saw with that love, I needed to give a release.

You be careful what you love because godly love never takes something for itself. God purified my love in that moment and showed me that all that love I had for Andrew was a love that was not to end in me taking Andrew for myself. It was a love that was to give Andrew to God so that God could be pleased to do in Andrew's life what God wants to do.

If you love something but you have it because you want it for yourself, you are setting yourself up for a major disappointment. God doesn't put love in fathers for their children that they might love their children for themselves. God puts love there so they can love their children to God.

Husbands love your wives but don't own them. They're not yours for your own personal benefit. You are heirs together, Peter said, of the gift of life.

Whatever you have in your heart, let God search you. This is a word from the Lord. This is prophetic.

Whatever it is, let God show you. Don't hold on to it too tight. If you let God purify your love, it will never be a possessive love.

Listen, I'll say that again. If you let God purify your love and give you perfect agape love, it will never be a possessive love. Love is not possessive.

Love enables you to pour your life out into something with one thing in mind, that God might get out of it what He wants. Oh, is that liberating or what? Is that liberating? That's good. So pray to God in your

relationships, in your dreams, in your visions, in your passions.

Whatever it is, ask God to show you. Are you holding on to something too tight? Let go of it. Let go of it.

Don't be afraid to let go. Don't be afraid. I'm coming to the place in my Christian life where I'm more afraid to hold now than I am to let go.

Years ago, I was more afraid to let go because I thought I'd lose it. But now I'm realizing I'd lose it if I hold on to it. If I let go, then God's the one who orchestrates it.

God won't lose it. Let go. Let go.

You say, I don't know how to. Then ask Jesus to show you how. Is this making sense? Hallelujah to God, I'm blessed.

I'm blessed because Jesus is so real. He's so lovely, and he's so faithful, as Colette shared this morning. So follow me along this line of singleness of heart.

Paul modeled the way we need to live in this world, forgetting those things which lie behind. It's only 12.05, brother. We're doing good.

Forgetting those things which lie behind. Pressing toward the mark. Let me say a word here from the Lord.

Don't let your past hold you. Don't let your past hold you. Some of you this morning, right now, some of you are still held by your past.

You're held in fear. You're held in bondage. You're held in anger.

You're held in confusion. Forget those things which lie behind. I'm always telling my beloved wife, sweetheart, don't worry about yesterday.

It's over with. Don't get hung up with what happened. And don't be preoccupied with what will happen.

So many people today live in an unreal world, and that's either the world of yesterday or the world of tomorrow. If you live in yesterday and tomorrow, you miss today. And did you know that God only promises you the grace for now? He doesn't promise you grace for tomorrow.

You haven't got there yet. And He doesn't promise you grace for yesterday because His grace today covers everything that happened yesterday. His grace today covers everything that you've gone through up to this moment.

So you can't escape. You must accept the now. Jesus said, take no thought for tomorrow, for in it there's enough evil to worry about.

But now seek first the kingdom of God. Don't allow your past to cripple you. Don't allow fears of the future to cripple you.

Find the moment of grace now and trust God for your past, trust God for your future, and thank Him today for who He is. And as you thank Him for who He is, He will bring grace and healing and restoration to your heart. He will do it.

He is the God who heals. He is the God who restores. He is the God that speaks life into death.

He's the God that takes confusion and sorts it all out. You've just got to trust Him. You've just got to wait for His timing.

We're impatient, aren't we? We want God to do it right now, don't we? But God is saying, you trust Me. You trust Me. You let Me work in your life.

Sometimes we want an answer for everything and God says, you're not going to get an answer for anything. I'm asking you to trust Me. Can you trust Him? Just trust Him today.

Trust Him today. Matthew chapter 6, verse 21. Matthew chapter 6, verse 21.

Here's the words of Jesus that support this last point that we just brought out. Singleness of heart. Don't let anything capture your heart.

I didn't say, nor is God saying, don't love anything. You've got to love people. I mean, love is so wonderful.

I'm coming to... You know, John the Beloved was how old when he wrote his epistles? They say he was somewhere around 100 years old. 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. You would think someone that was that old that had been one of the original apostles who had been to the island of Patmos and had gotten one of the most profound revelations the world's ever known, you would think he would have some profound theology to share with us.

He didn't, did he? You read 1, 2, and 3 John and you know what the theme is? Of a seasoned apostle who was about ready to meet his Christ that he loved so much? Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God. And he that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God.

His major theme was love, truth, and fellowship. Love, truth, and fellowship. Love.

Truth. Jesus Christ is truth. If you have truth that's disconnected from Christ, it's error as far as your soul is concerned.

Now, 2 plus 2 is 4. That doesn't have anything to do with Jesus, at least not by looking at him, but that's not the kind of truth I'm talking about. I'm talking about truth that can change the life. Jesus said, I am the truth, the way, and the life.

So love is so important. Perfect love casts out all fear. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you what? Have love one for another.

But here's what Jesus said here in Matthew chapter 6. Verse 21, For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Now, you know the word treasure means that which is costly, that which is valuable to you. If your heart values something, that's where your heart is going to be, where your treasure is.

The thing that you value the most is where your heart is. Now, I'm telling you from the Lord this morning that I don't care what is in your life, what God's doing in your life, nothing should be more valuable to you than Jesus Christ. Now, I'm not saying that as an excuse for you to neglect or to belittle the people in your life, but don't let people become more important to you.

Don't let your love for things and people become so possessive that they become more valuable to you than the Lord's will. I can't emphasize this enough from the Lord. Don't love something for how it can benefit you, because if you do, you'll be hurt.

It's freeing. It's freeing to love something unto God, to love something for the purpose of believing and pouring your life out that God might get glory in this person's life. That's how you get free from being hurt.

Oh, it's so freeing. I love you. Not so I can see how you might benefit me.

Let me tell you something. All this stuff is extra now. You want me to tell you how to have a wonderful marriage? Now, I know some of you aren't married, but listen closely.

This does not only relate to marriage. It relates to all relationships in your life. The secret to having wonderful relationships is don't approach it with what I can get out of it.

Approach it with what can I contribute to it for the betterment of the point I'm receiving. Listen, this is God's word to us. This is liberating.

If you enter into this truth, you will be hunted down by everybody you meet because everybody will wonder why you're so different. You'll have joy. You wonder why people don't have any joy? Because they're selfish.

They're too selfish. Joy comes when we empty ourselves, not when we're always trying to get for ourselves. The richest man in the world is the one who gives everything he's got.

The man who makes people wealthy is the man that pours himself out. You want to make your family rich? Wash their feet. Be a servant.

There's such a need for this in the body today. Take this to heart this morning and let God work it in you. This deals with every facet of our relationships with people.

Don't look at it how you can get something. I'm just going to say, the Scripture says in Hebrews that the marriage bed is undefiled, but God will judge fornicators and whoremongers. I know because I've been a minister for 20 years.

I know that there's a lot of problems with Christian couples regarding this subject of intimacy. I'm not going to go into it here. It's not the time or place, but I will say this.

Most of the time, if not all the time, the problem with intimacy is that neither partner has a clue on what real physical love is all about. It's not for my pleasure only. You are liberated when you understand that the intimate relationship God reserves for husbands and wives are ultimately for the pleasure of each other.

If I look at my wife and say, I love you, I want to please you, I want to serve you, I'm not thinking of my own needs, I enter into a new dimension with her. First of all, we become one in spirit. Let me tell you, wives love their husbands.

And a wife will go so far to cover her husband's faults because she loves him. But let me tell you, a wife knows when a husband is after nothing but pleasing his own needs. And she might not say anything because she loves him too much, but deep on the inside, she's hurting.

She's hurting. Is it true? Yes, it's true. She's hurting because she knows that her fulfillment comes not by just being there so you can have your needs met.

Her fulfillment comes when you demonstrate, even in the intimate part of marriage, the selfless love of Christ serving her. Come on, men. Amen? Thank you.

This principle of selflessness is universal. And it's emancipating. It's 12.15. I'm only going to go a few more moments.

My last point. Now listen, there's many more instances in the Bible where we can find where Paul either specifically or indirectly implied that we are to follow him. It would be too exhaustive to go into each one at this time.

I basically felt God gave me this three-point series just to whet the appetite. Can't do it all from the pulpit. Don't want to do it all.

Just want to whet your appetite so you can realize there's one mediator between God and men. You can go to the Word, get together as brothers and sisters at homes, get in with your families, look into these things, and God will bless you. And I think we've done that.

I think there's been an appetite that's been whet, hasn't there? About this whole topic of golly, I'm supposed to be a model. I think people are feeling uncomfortable and that's good because we want to stir people. We want to stir people onto spiritual perfection and maturity.

But the last point that I want to make in closing this message out, as I had promised from the first message three weeks ago, is what is the secret? What is the liberating secret that will enable me to truly have a life that can be a role model for others to follow? What is the liberating secret 2 Corinthians chapter 5? The liberating secret. Unless we can capture this liberating secret and live on the basis of this truth, it will be a futile attempt that you will make to try and have a life worthy of being modeled after. You'll fail and fail and fail and fail and be so miserable you'll give up and say, this is just not possible.

But let me tell you, there is a liberating secret, 2 Corinthians 5.17. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. All things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. The liberating secret that enables us to grow in a life that is worthy to be modeled is the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who is now set down at the right hand of His Father, promises that every genuine born-again believer is united to Him in spirit and that their life now becomes Christ's life.

Christ's life is now my life. I do not need to find the resources that God is asking me to have in this Christian life in my own self, that is, in my flesh. I have these resources in Jesus Christ.

The liberating secret to the Christian life is let God be God in you. Let Christ be Christ in you. Looking unto Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith.

Galatians chapter 2. We've read it many, many times. 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. Beloved, have you come to see that now that you're a Christian, Jesus Christ has become for you all your resources, all your righteousness, all your holiness, all the power that you need behind

your will to make a decision, all the grace you need in your heart to say no to sin and temptation, all the wisdom that you need, Christ has become everything. The secret and liberating truth in Christianity is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Pray that God will give us ever-increasing revelation of the great Christ that lives on the inside of us, who promises to be all our sufficiency, who promises us to be all that we have need of. Have you seen yourself this morning? Have you seen the need to grow that your life might be a model? If you have, that's good, but don't stop there.

Now I admonish you to look unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith. Look unto Jesus now, the one who promises to bring to completion what He has begun in your life. And as you look to Him and trust Him and believe His Word, He will transform your life.

And those areas of darkness and inconsistency, He'll change if you confess your sin. Don't deny it. Don't justify yourself.

Don't try and be right when you're wrong. Acknowledge your sin. Repent.

Turn to Jesus. And by faith, believe. And He'll change you.

Do you believe that this morning? Hallelujah to God. Let's bow our hearts and pray. Father, how thankful we are this morning that we are challenged by Your Word.

How thankful we are that You are encouraging us and strengthening us not to be discouraged or give up, but neither to be comfortable in our present stature, but to continue as Paul admonished us to strive towards spiritual maturity and to seek that we might win Christ and be found in Him. Lord, I pray by the power of Your Holy Spirit and Your Word that every hearer will be challenged to move on with You. Every hearer will be strengthened to confess the areas in their life that they're ashamed of, that they would not want other Christians to follow.

Areas of sin and compromise. Areas where maybe not blatant sin, but simply areas where selfish ambition is really what's behind our actions. Lord, we know that selfish ambition must be crucified so that we can be vessels that are driven by the agape selfless love serving You and others, willing to lay our lives down for our brethren.

Father, take this Word and reproduce it a hundredfold in the hearers, I pray. And to You we give glory and honor now and forever. Hallelujah.

Amen and amen. Praise the Lord.

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