

## Series: Citizens of the Kingdom

### Week 8 – Moving and Looking Forward

The Point: This week will be on why, as citizens of the kingdom, we should not get bogged down in the past, but look ever forward. We are called to be doers.

Our Primary verse(s):

Philippians 3: 7-21

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<sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in<sup>[a]</sup> Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

#### **Following Paul's Example**

<sup>15</sup> All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

<sup>17</sup> Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. <sup>18</sup> For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

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Our Secondary verse(s):

Luke 9: 1-6, 23, 57-62

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### **Jesus Sends Out the Twelve**

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*When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, <sup>2</sup> and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. <sup>3</sup> He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. <sup>4</sup> Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. <sup>5</sup> If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." <sup>6</sup> So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.*

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*<sup>23</sup> Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."*

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### **The Cost of Following Jesus**

*<sup>57</sup> As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."*

*<sup>58</sup> Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*

*<sup>59</sup> He said to another man, "Follow me."*

*But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."*

*<sup>60</sup> Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."*

*<sup>61</sup> Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family."*

*<sup>62</sup> Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."*

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## A note from Jeffrey

I figured it would be helpful to provide context for the approach I took in crafting this lesson. This is the second lesson I have developed for both this series and Hillcrest. However, there is a notable distinction between this one and the first lesson (week 3) I created. This time around, I found this lesson to be more conceptually focused compared to the operational nature of week 3. When you are presenting a less operationally driven lesson, I believe it's valuable for everyone to grasp the "why" behind the lesson's design and the thought process (or lack thereof) that influenced its development.

I am an objective-oriented person, a doer. Sure, theories are fine, but how do they translate into real life? And what is the significance of moving forward without dwelling on the past today? Especially in an era where we have meticulously documented every action, whether positive or negative for the world to see. Why is it important, as citizens of the kingdom, to continually be looking ahead? To be able to forgive not only those around us for their pasts, but also forgive ourselves.

Ron Rinehart, a close friend of mine from Greenlawn CoC in Lubbock, once shared a powerful insight with me: "The devil likes to remind us of our past, because he has no future." This quote has stayed with me, influencing my mindset as I crafted this lesson. I specifically chose the two preceding scriptures with Ron's words in mind. On one hand, we have Jesus, both fully human and fully divine, urging us to get to work and not look back. On the other hand, we encounter Paul, whose own past is likely more troubled than anyone present.

With these reflections, let's dive into the lesson.

## Introduction:

[Note to Chris: Let me know the action steps from week 7 and I will edit this to include something about it]

## Read the Primary Verse

Note from Jeffrey: These verses contain so much! You could spend the entirety of this lesson here. I have listed a few questions below focusing on the following verses: 7-8, 10-14, 20-21

- Why is our past just a deterrent to our walk?
- As we read these verses what is/are the major theme(s)? What speaks to you?
  - For me it is that Paul is telling us that we should be continually working to know Christ better
- Reflect on Verse 7. What are gains that you have had that you consider loss?
  - Are there gains that you *should* be considering as loss?
- Look at verses 10 and 11. Re read them. How do we attain resurrection?
  - Only by knowing Christ and participating in his sufferings.
- Re-read verse 13.
  - What do you see here?
  - Why is it so important for us to forget what is behind?
- The 'why' is verse 20!
  - What is the most important citizenship you have? The kingdom's!!!
    - All else is bunk!
  - Why is it so important to remind ourselves where our citizenship is?
  - How can our earthly citizenship become a roadblock to growing our faith?

## Read the Secondary Verse

- Why is it important for us to 'shake the dust off our feet'?
- What does it mean to take up or cross in 2024?
- Who is responsible for our cross?
  - This doesn't mean we can't help each other. It just means that we are ultimately responsible.
- Verse 62 is a pretty harsh verse. Why can't we look back?
  - Let us substitute the plow for something more modern, say a lawnmower. Do you think you would be able to mow straight lines while walking backwards?
  - How does this apply to our spiritual life?
  - If we are truly kingdom-minded then, where should our mind be?
- Do you believe that these two passages we've read is telling us to do real, tangible work? Or is it saying that it is sufficient to just think and reflect?
  - I am not saying that meditation isn't important, but we also need to be doers!

Final Thought:

We are called to not be look back, but be ever pressing onto the goal. The goal is to know Christ, and all that entails. Nowhere in the Bible does it give us any inclination that this striving will be easy. It is demanding work. But it's worth it!

Action Step(s) for this week

Forget about those wrongs done to you by others. Actively put them out of your mind when they try to encroach. Then, do something for someone else, do it even (especially?) if it is undeserved in the world's eye.