

Following After God

Philippians 3:10-12

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We're going to read Philippians 3:10-12. Paul says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

In John 10:10, Jesus makes this statement, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." We know that verse well, but I think that verse kind of describes the first two categories that we have covered in Philippians 3, "I am come that they might have life," that's salvation. A Christian is a person that has the life of God in their soul. If you're not born again, you don't have the life of God and you're not a child of God. That's the first phase, justification. Then he says, "and that they might have it more abundantly," that's sanctification.

A lot of Christians have life, but they're not experiencing the abundant life. Some Christians, as we know, look like they've been baptized in lemon juice, right? They look like they're not really going to Heaven; they look miserable. Jesus came not only to give us life, salvation, but He came to give us abundant life, sanctification. Salvation starts with our faith in Christ, we get the righteousness of Christ, we're justified before God; and it starts a lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus Christ, being sanctified or set apart and made like Him. That's the lifelong process. Salvation is a position that's sure and does not change; sanctification is a process that is progressional and is lifelong, and culminates in the third phase, which is glorification. So, "... have life," justification or salvation; "...more abundantly," is sanctification.

Two weeks ago (I wasn't here last Wednesday night), in verses 1-9 we saw Paul's description of justification, and he talked about the false teachers who were promoting circumcision and legalism. He said, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." He went on to describe if anyone could be righteous by keeping the law or by their good deeds, it would be him. He listed his spiritual pedigree for us, and we looked at that in great depth last Wednesday night. Coming to verse 9, I want to go back one verse to get a little transition and running start to our text, he said, "And be found in him." Paul said, "All those things that were gain to me, I counted loss, I counted refuse, I counted a pile of dung, that I might be 'found in him.'"

There are two kinds of righteousness discussed here, "...righteousness, which is of the law," and the righteousness, "...which is through the faith of Christ." Law righteousness is your own good deeds or religious works. Faith righteousness is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us by faith. Paul says, "I want to be found in Him."

I'm going to give you some key phrases to either underline, note, or mark. The first is, "...found

in him.” This is justification or salvation. This is the believer’s position in Christ, “...found in him.” “...not having mine own righteousness,” that is a religious righteousness or your own righteousness by keeping the law, “which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” If it doesn’t say that in your Bible, you got gipped when you bought it and need to buy a new Bible, “...righteousness which is of God by faith.” “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast,” Ephesians 2:8-9, so we know we’re saved by grace through faith in Christ.

I love verse 9 because Paul makes it so very clear, “I want to be found in Christ,” “not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,” and the law cannot justify any man, “but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” There is a righteousness of God that is by faith. Actually, the entire book of Romans is in many ways summarized in verse 9 there. Then, the second phrase, and I’ll just kind of spill the beans right now and then we’ll go back over it, is in verse 10, “That I may know him.” The first is in verse 9, “...found in him,” the second is in verse 10, “...know him.” Between verses 9 and 10, starting with verse 10, we now start the section on sanctification. So, “And be found in him,” that is justification, my position in Christ; “that I may know him,” is sanctification, the growing and pursuing Christ in my Christian life.

Notice the third phase, verse 11, “...I might attain.” I want to “...be found in him,” verse 9; “That I may know him,” verse 10; “...I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead;” and the fourth statement, verse 12, “...I follow after.” That’s where I got my title. I pursue, I follow hard after. So, “And be found in him,” “That I may know him,” “...I might attain,” “...but I follow after.” This is all describing Paul’s passion to be like Christ and to live the Christian life. It’s so marvelous. Paul is leading us in verses 10-12 into the innermost sanctuary of his heart and revealing to us the supreme passion of his life. He wants the sanctified life, and he wants to live more abundantly.

Getting saved or becoming a Christian is in many ways like getting married. Many of you tonight are married, maybe some are not, but when you get married, that’s just the initial beginning of a life together, right? The longer you are married, the better you know each other...you know the funny thing about marriage, I don’t know if it’s true of everybody, but the longer you’re married, you kind of start to look like each other, and that can be a frightening thing. My wife and I have had people say, “You guys are married, aren’t you?” We said, “Yeah, how’d you know?” “Because you look like each other.” I thought, Oh my poor wife! Now, if you’ve been married a long time, you start to think alike, you act alike in many ways, you get to know that person.

When you become a Christian, you’re married to Christ—you are the bride, He’s the heavenly Bridegroom. It starts a love relationship as you walk with Him and you get to know Him and you draw closer to Him and value Him and appreciate Him more in that love relationship.

There are three points I want to give you, verses 10-12, one point for each verse. The first is

the goals of Paul's sanctification are listed for us in verse 10. What are the goals of Paul's desire to be sanctified? Go back to verse 10. He says, "That I may know him," that's the key word, "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." All of that in verse 10 is under the heading of "I want to know Him." So, "And be found in him," and then, "That I may know him." We're going to break this down, but Paul's words show us that he wants to know Christ better. He wants a personal, experiential knowledge of Christ. This purpose cannot be fulfilled unless the truth of verses 7-9—being saved, being a Christian, having the righteousness of Christ—is true, so sanctification comes after justification. They're always in that order.

Let me make a very practical point: You cannot live the Christian life unless you are a Christian, duh! There's a lot of people who try to live the Christian life, but they're not really Christians. They're just trying to be Christians. It's like saying, "I'm trying to be an elephant," or "I'm trying to be a giraffe." Try as you will, it will never happen. You must be born into God's family. The theological term for that is regeneration—we're dead in sins, God's Spirit regenerates us.

The word "regenerate" simply means given life or given new life, and the basic title that we use for the term is "born again," John 3, you must be born again. Naturally, if you haven't been born again, you haven't been regenerated, it's going to be impossible to live the Christian life. You may be able to go through some of the motions, but you won't have the power, right? You don't have the life of God in your soul. You need to "...be found in him," verse 9, before you can "...know him," verse 10. That's the logical order. People get frustrated because they're trying to live the Christian life, but they're not really Christians. You have to be born again.

Paul says, "That I may know him," this is Paul saying, "I want to move from just being justified or saved to being sanctified," not just having life, I want to have abundant life. I want to have an overflowing life. What is it that Paul wants to know? Three things. Write them down. First, verse 10, he says, "That I may know him," not "I want to know about Him," not "I want information of Him," "I want to know Him."

There's a big difference between knowing about someone and knowing someone, right? Many times there are famous sports people, or maybe a politician or a movie star that you might idolize or you might know, but you don't know them personally—you know about them, but you don't know them. It's not just knowing about Christ, this is actually very clear that we know Him. This is Christianity. Christianity is Christ. It's not a code of conduct, a creed, a ceremony, a religion; it's Christ. Take Jesus out of Christianity, there is no Christianity. Take any part of the story of Jesus out of Christianity, and there is no Christianity. Just take the virgin birth out of Christianity, and there's no Christianity. Take the substitutionary death of Jesus out of Christianity, there's no Christianity. Take the resurrection out of Christianity, there's no Christianity.

We have what's called progressive Christians today. In years past they were just known as liberals that deny all of the essentials of doctrines about Christ and the gospel, so it's not Christian belief or it doesn't result in Christian behavior because what we believe determines

how we behave. We must have Christ. We must have a personal relationship. If you're a Christian, you know Him. It's not just a religion or a set of rules, it's not just what you're doing, it's about a Person. It's a love relationship. Paul says, "That I may know him."

Paul is referring to having a personal experiential experience with Christ. Paul had been a Christian when he wrote these words for thirty years. Thirty years from Acts 9, his radical conversion, and he says, "I want to know Him." Paul is talking about a continual deepening and strengthening of his love relationship with Christ because we could say, "Well, Paul, you do know Him. You met Him thirty years earlier," but he says, "No. I want to know Him experientially. I want to know Him more deeply. I want to know Him more fervently." It's growing. This is to be a lifelong pursuit for all Christians. From the moment of conversion, the lifelong pursuit is wanting to know Him more, wanting to know Him better, wanting to seek Him and follow hard after Him. That's what Paul is talking about, "I want to know Him, not just about Him."

How does that happen? Let me give you three simple ways. First, the Bible—you know that's where you start, right? You want to know about God? Open up the Book. It's the Word of God, the living, powerful, active Word. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. When you read the Bible, you're hearing the voice of God. That's why we read the Bible, we study the Bible because we want to hear God's voice, because we want to know Him. It's the greatest self-revelation of God to us. So many times people drift away from the Bible and they think they can get to know Him more just by working for Him or serving Him or living other ways for Him or rites or rituals. No, we get to know Him in His Word. You cannot neglect the Scriptures and be living a sanctified abundant life. You cannot. Jesus prayed in John 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." That's the chief means by which God sanctifies us, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

For starters tonight, if you're not reading your Bible, you're not following hard after God. You can't say, "I really want to know Him." You say, "Well, I've already read the Bible." Read it again. "Well, I've already read it twice." Read it three times. Read it again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again. Amen? Read it until the Lord takes you home or you die. Even if you lose...I've heard so many stories about great preachers that lost their eyesight and had the Word stored in their heart and would quote the Scriptures to their own heart or they would have the Scriptures read to them. What a marvelous thing.

Harry Allen Ironside, one of my favorite Bible teachers of years past who died in 1951, a few years before I was born believe it or not, when he was doing his last couple years of preaching, he lost his eyesight. The story is told that he would quote a whole chapter and then actually go back without his eyes and go to verse 1 and comment, verse 2 and comment, quote it again with his commentary, and do it perfectly as he had done for over 50 years in his ministry. That's what you call the sanctified life. We want to hide God's Word in our hearts. Amen? "...that I might not sin against thee."

Another way to know Him is through prayer—spending time talking to Him, communing with Him

—whether it's formally on your knees or in a quiet place or just as you go about your day. If you pray and pour out your heart, you're drawing near to Him. You're seeking Him. As you're driving in the car or doing chores in or around the house or in your job, pray and seek the Lord.

Also, It's having an appetite. Write down Matthew 5:6, this beatitude, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they," the Greek is emphatic, they and they only, "shall be filled." It's pursuing God in His Word, pursuing God in prayer, and also pursuing God by my appetite. If you don't have an appetite, let me give you a little secret: Ask God to give you one. Ask God, "Give me a hunger for Your Word. Give me a hunger for prayer. Give me a hunger for You. Help me to seek after You, and You only." Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." This is a lifelong pursuit, so you want to pace yourself; but you want the strength of the Spirit to draw you into prayer, to the Word, and increasing that appetite in your heart because it's a lifelong pursuit. The devil is real, and he's going to throw all the curves he can to deter you and keep you from wanting to know Him or seeking after Him. David said in Psalm 42, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God." Ask yourself, Am I hungry to know Him?

The second way Paul wanted to know Him, verse 10, "...and the power of his resurrection," he wanted a powerful experience. First, he wanted a personal experience; secondly, he wanted a powerful experience with the Lord. He is not speaking of an abstract knowledge about the resurrection, he knows the facts. What he wants is to experience the resurrection life right here and right now.

In Ephesians 1:19-20, Paul is praying for the believers in Ephesus and prays that the power of the resurrection might be experienced in them right now. You see, the resurrection of Jesus Christ isn't just something that Jesus did in the past that we believe doctrinally or theologically, it's an experience that we have right now, daily, His resurrection power giving us power over sin to live godly and holy lives. What he's talking about here, "...and the power of his resurrection," is that, "I want to experience the resurrected Christ in my life, and I want to live out my daily life His resurrection, His power." So, power over sin's grip and power to produce the Spirit's fruit, the power of His resurrection in our lives right now. Power over sin does not come by the law, it doesn't come by the flesh, it comes by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:16, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." I want to know Him personally, I want to know Him powerfully, I want that resurrection power to be displayed in my life. That's why Paul said in Ephesians 5:18, every Christian should study that verse, "...but be filled with the Spirit," it's a command not an option. It's all inclusive, every believer. It's in the passive voice, let the Spirit fill you. It's in the present tense, be being filled constantly with the Holy Spirit.

First, Paul wanted a personal experience; secondly, he wanted a powerful experience; and thirdly, verse 10, he wanted a painful experience, "That I may know...the fellowship of his sufferings." This is where many times Christians say, "Alright, I'm outta here! I want to know Him, Amen! Preach it, Brother! I want to know the power," Christians just start getting all

excited, "Power, yeah power! That sounds good! I love power. I want to know the power of His resurrection. Yeah, preach it, Brother!" Then, Paul says, "...and the fellowship of his sufferings," "Don't preach it, Brother! Don't preach it, Brother!" I want to know, "...the fellowship of his sufferings"? What is Paul talking about here? I call this Paul's painful experience. How do we understand that? What is Paul saying?

Let me tell you what Paul is not saying. He's not saying that he wants to suffer to pay or atone for his sin. We cannot participate in the payment by suffering for our sins. Jesus paid it all, All to him I owe, Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow. Amen? Paul isn't saying, "I want to suffer so I'll be worthy to go to Heaven." Well, what is Paul saying there? I believe he wanted the fellowship that was a result of suffering. He wanted the fellowship that suffering produced with Christ.

This may sound funny to some people, but if you respond properly to suffering, and believe me suffering will come...There is no such thing as any human being on planet earth that does not suffer in some way, some shape, some form. Everyone suffers. As a believer, a child of God, we want to know that we're in God's care and under God's providence and nothing can come into our lives but what He allows; so if we respond properly to our suffering and seek after Him, we want to know Him, we want to know His power, then when suffering comes, it drives me to prayer, dependence, and reliance upon God. Nothing more important than learning to properly respond to sorrow.

Someone said, "The same sun that melts wax, hardens clay." I've seen different Christians go through the same trials and some of them come out soft and pliable, shaped and molded by God, with the glory of God radiating from their lives, and others get hard. They get bitter, and they resist God. One of the secrets of the Christian life and the sanctified life is actually experiencing bitterness but not becoming bitter yourself, experiencing hardships but not becoming hard yourself. It's allowing your sorrows to soften you and to get you dependent upon God. If you really want to know God, and you really want to know His power, and you want to know the fellowship of suffering, you're going to say, "Lord, whatever You want to allow in my life that will keep me close to You, keep me relying upon You, keep me dependent upon You, Lord, I'm ready."

If we value comfort over character, your trials will destroy you. If you value character over comfort, your trials will make you more like Jesus Christ. I said a minute ago that the Bible is one of the chief means by which God sanctifies us. Do you want to know another way that God sanctifies us? Some day I'm going to do a whole series on sanctification. I've got all these "some day" sermons. Pray that I live for another 50 years. Another tool in God's tool kit for sanctification is suffering. You say, "I knew I shouldn't have come to church tonight." It's one of His chief ways by which He kind of sands off the rough edges and makes us more like Jesus Christ. It's the way we grow. We cannot grow into Christ likeness apart from suffering. It's just His tool that He uses for us to grow more like Jesus. Paul wanted the fellowship with Christ that suffering brings.

John Bunyan, who wrote the spiritual allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*, was put in Bedford's prison when he wrote that beautiful book. If you haven't read it, you should get a copy and read it. He said, "In times of affliction we most commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God." Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-28, Paul's suffering. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 where Paul describes his, "...thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan," sent by God, "to buffet me." Paul asked God to take it away three times. When he describes that "thorn," he says, "...there was given to me."

A lot of Bible students don't ever stop and say, "Well, who gave it to him?" If Paul uses the phrase, "...there was given to me," the question is, Who gave it to him? If you read the passage, the "thorn" was given to keep him humble and dependent on God and usable. Satan wouldn't want to do that, so I believe that God used for His sovereign purposes the devil to buffet Paul so that Paul would stay humble and dependent on God and usable for His glory, "...there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." God says, "I won't take it away, but I'll give you My grace and it will be made perfect in your strength." Paul said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." That, to me, is such a marvelous truth.

If in your pain, in your sorrow, in your suffering, in your trials, in your afflictions, in your difficulties, in your disappointments you use that to draw you closer to God, stronger in the Lord—rather than running away from Him you run to Him—then you're cooperating with God's sanctifying process in your life. You're coming to know Him better. What a marvelous truth that is!

The great bishop J.C. Ryle back in 1857 wrote these words, "If we are true Christians, we must not expect everything smooth in our journey to heaven. We must count it no strange thing, if we have to endure sicknesses, losses, bereavements, and disappointments, just like other people. Free pardon and full forgiveness, grace by the way and glory to the end - all this our Savior has promised to give. But He has never promised that we shall have no afflictions. He loves us too well to promise that. By affliction He teaches us many precious lessons, which without it we should never learn. By affliction He shows us our emptiness and weakness, draws us to the throne of grace, purifies our affections, weans us from the world, makes us long for heaven. In the resurrection morning we shall all say, 'it is good for me that I was afflicted.' We shall thank God for every storm." I love that. It's so cool that with the Christian life, even your sorrows work for your good. What does Romans 8:28 say? "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Paul wants a personal, a powerful, and painful experience.

Now, I won't tarry that long on the next two verses, okay? Verse 10 is a classic. The next thing we see, verse 11, is the expectation of his goals. This is what Paul expected. "If by any means," whatever God wants to do in my life, "I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." He's already mentioned, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection," now he uses an altogether different phrase. It's a Greek phrase for the resurrection only used here in this verse, "...I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," or out among the dead. Paul wanted

to live the Christian life here and now. In verse 11 it says, "If by any means I might attain," the out resurrection from among the dead.

What does Paul mean by that statement, the out resurrection from among the dead? I don't believe Paul is referring to the resurrection of his body. Paul isn't crossing his fingers saying, "I hope I raise from the dead." That would contradict all of the other teaching Paul has about the certainty of our resurrection. The reason he uses a very unique phrase here for the resurrection, which literally means out resurrection or out from among the dead, is because Paul is alluding to that he wants to live that resurrected life now here on earth among people who are dead. He lives as a living child of God among those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

In Ephesians 5:14 Paul says, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." That verse has always challenged me because he's talking to Christians and says, "Awake thou that sleepest," I thought we are already born again, so he's actually saying, "Wake up out of complacency. Wake up out of apathy and carnality, and live a Spirit-filled, resurrected life among people who are dead in trespasses and sins." Paul wanted to live that resurrected life out from among dead people.

To give you an illustration, and I won't tarry on it, John 11, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Remember when Jesus stood at the grave of Lazarus and said, "Roll away the stone." Martha said, "By this time he stinks." "Did I not tell you that if you believe you'll see the power of God, the glory of God?" They roll away the stone and Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth." Lazarus came forth. When Jesus says, "Lazarus, come forth," Lazarus comes forth. He didn't say it four or five times, "I said, come forth!" Genesis 1:1, if He can speak the whole creation into existence by the power of His Word, no big deal to raise some dead dude from the grave. As a matter of fact, if He hadn't said, "Lazarus," the whole cemetery would have emptied. He said, "Just Lazarus. We'll get the rest of you later." Lazarus came forth.

What was Lazarus wearing? Grave clothes. What did Jesus tell them to do? Loose him and let him go, right? You don't want him to just go all the way home and hang out with everybody for the next three days, "Hey, I'm alive now." "Well, you don't look too alive. You still got your grave clothes wrapped around you." Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go." When Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," that's a picture of justification, regeneration, we have new life; when He said, "Loose him, and let him go," that's a picture of sanctification. There's a lot of Christians that have life, but they're living with their grave clothes on—they're still walking around in the grave clothes of their old life, they're still living the way they did many times in the way they lived before. So, shed those old grave clothes, walk in that resurrected life that, "...I might attain," that out resurrected life. Justification means freedom from sin's penalty, sanctification means freedom from sin's power, and glorification means free from sin's presence. It's so important to understand that.

My third, and last point, verse 12, we see the attitudes or the motivations behind Paul's expectation. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," I haven't

arrived, "but I follow after," there's that fourth key word. "Found in him," verse 9; "know him," verse 10; I want to "attain the out resurrection," verse 11; and I want to follow hard after Him, "if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." He apprehended me for a purpose. I want to apprehend that purpose for which He apprehended me. Paul was not a complacent or apathetic believer, but he was honest about his spiritual life.

I want you to note the three motives or attitudes that controlled Paul's holy ambition that should be ours, verse 12. First, he said he had not yet received everything, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." If you get this idea that, "I've been a Christian for three months, I've arrived. I'm dwelling in Canaan's land. I'm under the spout where the glory comes out. I don't need to grow. I don't need to pray. I don't need to seek the Lord. I'm an awesome Christian." Whenever I meet a young Christian that says, "I've arrived." I want to cover my eyes and say, "I don't want to watch." "...let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Take the most mature saint that has progressed the most in sanctification, and they are the humblest and the first to admit they have not yet arrived. When you meet a Christian that says, "I have arrived, I'm dwelling in glory," that's too bad because I said it's a lifelong process. Paul says, "I have not yet received everything." Thirty years of walking with the Lord, and he was still looking forward.

Have you become bored with the Lord or complacent in your walk? Does Bible study or prayer or fellowship or serving the Lord not mean anything anymore, you're tired with that? Then you need a revival.

Secondly, Paul had not yet become everything. He had not received everything, he had not become everything. Verse 12, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," I have not yet arrived at my goal. I'm not fully mature. That word "perfect" means fully ripe. It was used of fruit that was fully ripe.

Someone gave me some plums the other day. I love plums. I shouldn't tell you that because I'll get too many plums. My wife's always saying, "Don't mention food in the pulpit because the people will just want to give it to you." But I do like plums. They were ripe, maybe a little super ripe, but man they were so good! I love to smell them. I love to feel them. I love to rub them on my lips and just taste and savor them. A plum that's not ripe is no good, so you want to be like ripened fruit. You want to be just right. You want to come to maturity, but he had not yet attained.

That statement, "I have not yet arrived at my goal," or I'm not yet perfect, indicates a truth that there's no such thing as sinless perfection. If Paul had not arrived with perfection at thirty years, neither have you, husband or wife, so don't get to thinking that I'm the super saint. The more you know the Lord, the more humble you should become.

Thirdly, verse 12, Paul had not yet done everything. I love this. He says, "...but I follow after," this is a hard pursuit, "if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." God saved me, he uses the phrase "apprehended of Christ," and I want to arrive at the

goal or the purpose for which God has saved me. That phrase, "follow after," pursue after, was used of a hunter following the tracks of its prey. I'm not a hunter, but many times guys will hunt in winter in the snow, and you can follow the tracks in the snow pursuing after your prey. That's a picture that Paul paints there of following hard after God. That word "apprehended" means to lay hold of and pull down. Many Greek scholars that I read in their commentaries use the analogy of football.

Some of you guys are into the NFL, you watch football every Sunday...by the way, if you want to be sanctified, come to church before you watch your football games. So, you go home and watch football and the player is chasing someone down to tackle them. That's the picture. I'm chasing hard, I'm following hard, pursuing after that like a hunter following prey, like a defensive player following an offensive player down the field to tackle them, pull them down, and they apprehend them. Christ did that with Paul in Acts 9 on the road to Damascus, and from that day on, Paul pursued the Lord, ran hard after the Lord until 2 Timothy 4:7, where he knew he was going to die and said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." This is what it's all about that my whole life through I have fought the good fight, I finished my course, I have kept the faith.

There's a reason for which God saved you. Paul uses the phrase "apprehended," so "...that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus," the purpose for which He apprehended me. Sometimes that thought goes through my mind, it has of late. Have I done all, been all, pursued all that God wants for my life? Have I been everything God wants me to be? Have I pursued Him and yielded to Him and obeyed Him and followed hard after Him? Christ is seeking to apprehend you, if you're not saved. Once you are saved, He's seeking to transform you by the power of His Spirit, so you should pray, "God, I want to know You. I want to experience You. I want to go deeper in You."

St. Bernard wrote these words, We taste thee, O thou living bread, and long to feast upon thee still; we drink of thee, the fountainhead, and thirst our souls from thee to fill! Let's pray.