

Preacher's Pen points

The Joy of Spiritual Growth



In Phil. 3:12-21 Paul sets forth seven important principles that will enable us to experience the joy of spiritual growth. They describe the attitudes with which Paul approached his service to God and suggest some worthy goals for all of us.

We need a consciousness of imperfection.

After serving God for over twenty-five years Paul could have said, "I have nowhere to go, I cannot advance in faith." Rather he said, "*I have not yet become perfect.*" And so like Paul we need to approach our lives as Christians with humility and unworthiness.

We need to make excellence a priority.

We live under the tyranny of the urgent. Thousands of things scream for our attention and time; but only one thing is important. We need to slow down and reflect upon what we are doing with our lives! What is our ultimate priority?

We need to forget the past and live in the present.

Paul did not allow his sins of the past to cause him to wallow in self-pity and inactivity; nor did he allow his accomplishments to lead him to a smug contentment. If anyone could have ever said, "I've done enough" it would have been Paul. Yet Paul was concerned about the present: "*I press on....*".

We need to look for further enlightenment

If we want our joy to grow, we need to make it a priority to listening to God's voice every way we can. Get your Bible out every day and study the word of God personally! Paul speaks of how through earnest pursuit of righteousness God will continue to reveal his will to us.

We need to practice what we have learned.

When we approach the word of God for study, we need to let it have its transforming power in our lives. Essential to our spiritual growth is not only the important practice of listening to God but also of talking to God. As we do that, we find renewed encouragement and power to live as we have prayed! Let us all live by that standard to which we have attained! A life of faith demands no less of us!

We need to model ourselves after godly people.

As we proceed through life we need the encouragement of those who live the life of a Christian well. We need to develop special friends who are spiritual people with whom we can share our faith. Paul urges the Philippians to make him and those like him mentors in their lives: "*...join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us*".

We need to consider where our course takes us.

From time to time we need to stop and ask ourselves, "Where is the course I am taking leading me?" When we follow our own desires and mind earthly things, we are headed for destruction! When we live as a citizen of heaven, listening to the commands of our king, we can look to the future with hope and optimism. "*Our citizenship is in heaven from which we eagerly await the Savior...*", Paul says.

Now is a good time to take a spiritual inventory. Are you living by these principles? If not, you are missing one of the great secrets to a joyous life!

—Johnny Felker