



A Cross-Shaped Life

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Read: Philippians 3:17-4:1

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Philippians 4:1

Paul made a bold statement: “Join with others in following my example.” They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so you copy those you admire most. Paul invites the people in Philippi (as well as us reading this devotion) to follow his example, but should he really be saying that? Don’t you think Paul remembered that he had blood on his hands? Before he believed in Jesus, he was a proud persecutor of the Church. He had hauled off who knows how many people to prison or even death simply for trusting in Christ as Lord. Then one day, the Lord Jesus knocked Paul off his donkey, changed his heart, and brought him to faith. That’s when the trouble really started. Now a tireless missionary spreading the gospel, Paul endured a shipwreck, beatings, persecution, and a constant thorn in his flesh—all so he could tell people about Jesus’ love.

We can learn a lot from Paul’s example because his story is our story, too. I’ve never been shipwrecked or beaten up for my faith. But Paul wasn’t the only one who needed Jesus to change him. Once, we were separated from God, stubborn and thinking we didn’t need him, until the Lord Jesus stepped in to save us. Jesus carried his cross (and all of your sin!) to Calvary where he followed God’s plan of salvation all the way to death. He didn’t try to escape the suffering, but with you on his heart, Jesus looked his eyes on a middle cross. While we were still his enemies, he forgave our sins, gave us faith in him, and then turned us loose into the world to share his love with others.

And just like it was for Paul, so it will be for us. There will be obstacles as we follow Jesus. There will be enemies of the gospel that try to stop us. Our lives will take on the shape of the cross. But don’t give up, because when we keep our eyes on Jesus, we can trust that even hard things will draw us closer to him. Even when life is difficult because we’re Christians, follow Paul’s example and remember—just like Jesus, we know there’s always resurrection on the other side of the cross.

Questions for Considerations

What did Paul want the Philippians (and us) to do?

Who carried the cross to Calvary to take away our sins?

What hard things did Paul go through because he was telling people about Jesus?

When Paul was tired or hurting, what helped him keep going? What helps us when we feel the same way?

How can tough times actually be good for us?

How can we live like Paul and show Jesus’ love to others?