

February 24, 2012

As Gregory [of Nyssa] describes it, the proper end of the Christian life is not represented by the attainment of a particular state. Rather it is continual growth in virtue and the desire for God. In reflecting on Moses' insatiable capacity to desire God and to grow in virtue, even though he had already achieved great intimacy with God, Gregory notes that a soul once set on its upward course "will always make its flight yet higher—by its desire of the heavenly things straining ahead for what is still to come, as the Apostle says." Growth in virtue, which includes an ever-enhanced desire for God, is an activity which "causes its capacity to grow through exertion; this kind of activity alone does not slacken its intensity by the effort, but increases it." (Fowl, p.163, quoting Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*.)

According to Paul's description of such a life, both here in ch. 3 and earlier in the epistle, it is clear that such a life demands the acquisition and display of a variety of skills, disciplines, and habits of thinking, feeling and acting. As with any complex practice we can only hope to acquire these skills, disciplines, and habits to the extent that we submit ourselves to the example of those more advanced in the practice. Hence, for Paul and for all Christians, the only arrogance surrounding the language of imitation would be the arrogance of those so formed by the ethos of individualism that they think they can walk the path of discipleship without observing, learning from, and imitating those who are already farther down that path. (Fowl, *Philippians*, p. 167)

Expressing Our Love and Praise: Worship in Song

Community Together: Prayers of the People

Welcoming Each Other (Kids may go to Sunday School)

Giving Worship to God: Offering

(Gifts to Grace Hill support the life and work of our church community. Twenty percent of gifts also go to local and global mission, including Samaritan Health Clinic, Justice Matters, Young Life, and church planting in N. American and Asia.)

Hearing God's Word: Scripture Reading *Philippians 3.12 - 21*

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Understanding God's Word and Our Lives: Sermon

God's Vision for Us in Christ

1. A Call to Pursue the Prize, v.12
2. Means for Pursuing the Prize
 - a. Journey: Forgetting what lies Behind and Straining Forward, v.13
 - b. Athletics: Press toward the Goal for the Prize, v.14-16
 - c. Imitate: Following Examples, Avoid Opposite examples, v.17-19
 - d. Homeland: Future Glory, v.20-21
3. Practicals
 - a. Pursue one or two of these
 - b. Periodization, add prayer
 - c. Test your pursuit for Relational Intimacy and Virtue rather than Commodity

Recognizing our Brokenness: Confession of Sin

Public Reading

Father, forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (Matthew 6.12,13)

Father, You have a goal for us; but our pursuit of it is weak and relaxed, with our past holding us back and barriers ahead, resulting in commodity rather than communion. We need a clearer vision of what *You* planned for us when *You took hold of us* in Christ: unending intimacy with You and virtue like Yours. Help us behold Your vision, and pursue it with your power. Let us see Jesus, who took hold of us, is coming soon, and holds glory for us and all creation.

Private Reflection

The Grace and Forgiveness of Christ

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phil 3.20, 21)

Remembering Jesus with Bread and Cup: Lord's Supper

Jesus called those who find their life in His death and resurrection to receive the bread and cup as a tangible sign to remember and be strengthened by His Gospel. It is a spiritual meal for all who believe in Him. While Jesus spent time with everyone, he also shared the bread and cup only with those who followed him. Children who have not yet become *communing members* should not take the bread and cup but talk with our pastor or an elder about their personal faith.

On the first and third Sundays of the month, we come forward as families, groups and individuals to receive the bread and cup and for a prayer of blessing. The second, fourth and fifth Sundays, we remain seated, with time to personally remember Jesus' death and resurrection for us with the bread and cup. Whether you take the elements or not, we encourage you to either come forward for prayer or use the time for personal reflection about your relationship with Jesus.

**Juice is in the outer ring; wine is in inner rings.*

Taking hold of the Good Word: Benediction ("the good word")

"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." 2 Thess. 2:16, 17

Prayers for Those Not Taking the Bread and Cup

Prayer for Those Searching for Truth

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the way, the truth, and the life. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reason for doing so. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me and open me to the reality of your identity. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent, convincing, and that leads to the life you promise. Amen.

Prayer of Belief

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am more wicked and sinful than I ever dared allow, but through you I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt on the cross, to give me complete forgiveness and rightness with God. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, in joy I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior and Lord. Amen.

Grace Hill Financial Information:

Average Monthly expenses:	\$14,400
January 2013 giving:	9,296
Average Monthly 2011 giving:	11,621
Average Monthly 2012 giving:	13,664
YTD basic operating budget balance:	(\$5104)

Announcements and Information:

- Interactive Apologetics, Wednesday, February 27th, 6:30 pm. RSVP childcare to randps@gmail.com.
- Leader Training. Saturday, March 2nd, 8:30 am.
- Guys Conversations. Tuesday, March 5th, 8:00 pm. Anna Maria's.