

## Follow the Example

SW10.30.05am

### **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. - Philippians 4:13.**

INTRO: Sharon had a terrible week, and it started off bad when someone attacked her with spray paint. Can you imagine someone just coming up to you and spraying you with a can of paint?

(1. It must have been a very shocking experience! And so far they have not caught the person that attacked her.

1. Soon after that Sharon was kidnapped, but fortunately her kidnappers released her the next day and she was okay.

(1. But they still have not arrested anyone for the kidnapping so she now lives in fear that it could happen again.

2. Now, Sharon has learned that she is in violation of a city ordinance and will have to move.

(1. What a terrible week Sharon has had! And you thought you had a bad week.

3. I guess I ought to tell you that Sharon is a goat. Sharon is a seven-month-old goat who has been the mascot of the Sigma Chi fraternity at Southeast Missouri State University.

(1. And Sharon is having to move because it is a violation of a city ordinance to have barnyard animals living inside the city limits.

4. But you have to admit that even for a goat, Sharon had a horrific week, but even if - Sharon were a human being, we would not have been that surprised to have heard the news about it.

5. Why? Because terrible things and even more horrific things happen to people all the time.

(1. We are bombarded with the bad news on a continual basis of all those bad things that occur so very frequently.

6. The threat and the downside of all of this bad news and terrible things that we hear about to the average person is that we will begin to believe that we are next.

7. Because, we begin to believe that we are next and that something ugly could happen to us - we will curtail, and reduce our activities.

(1. Believing that around the next corner could be a threat to our life, family, or property we become more and more cautious.

I. What does this have to do with living the Christian life? As Christians we are called to go (**Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8**).

1. We have been given this Great Commission, actually it is a command to reach out across this world in the name of Christ.

2. If we believe something bad will happen to us around the next corner it is much more likely that we will not be concerned about those people who live in another state, much less another country.

3. As Christians we are also to be ambassadors for the Kingdom of Heaven representing our Lord here on earth as Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:20, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."**

4. With all the bad things happening are we going to be concerned about our neighbors spiritual condition or will we just shrink down into our foxhole to try to avoid any and every possible and imagined danger?

5. We are to represent Christ to those around us just as Paul was pleading with people to be reconciled to God we should be doing the same.

6. But what happens to us instead is that we are more concerned about our own personal safety and well-being than the spiritual safety and well-being of others.

(1. Especially those that are new to our community or those that we don't know well and those that we think that we can avoid responsibility for.

7. We are to go, we are to be Ambassadors; what else are we to do as Christians? We are to reflect the light of our Lord into the spiritual darkness around us. Jesus says in **Matthew 5:14-16**, **“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

8. Are you going? Are you an Ambassador for your Lord? Are you letting your light shine so that those who come into contact with you know that you are a Christian.

(1. Or, are you because of the world we live in today trying to withdraw and hide the fact that you are a Christian?

9. We are to go, we are to be Ambassadors, we are to let our light shine, and we are to be the **“salt of the earth”**. Also in **Matthew 5** (v. 13) in the *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus says, **“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”**

10. What is the purpose of salt? In the world before refrigeration, salt was vital for preservation and it is still necessary for flavor of food. We know what it is like to eat food that has not been salted.

(1. Our purpose as Christians is to preserve what is good in this world and to add a godly flavor to the lives of those around us.

11. But if we are afraid to say anything or do anything - how can we be the **“salt of the earth”**. We can't.

(1. We have to be vocal and active in that preserving and flavoring process.

12. In the political process if Christians are silent every evil thing would be okay and prevalent in our society today.

(1. It is only because of Christians that we still have somewhat moral society.

(2. Our society continues to deteriorate but it would be at a much faster rate if not for Christians.

13. Without Christians going, being Ambassadors, being the light of the world and the salt of the earth - without Christians being those things it would be a real Halloween every day.

14. So, it is imperative for the fulfillment God's will on earth and for the fulfillment of every Christian's mission, purpose, and call,

(1. not to be deterred by the activity of our enemy, the corruptness of this world, and the weakness of our flesh.

II. The apostle Paul describes how the Lord empowered him to live by saying, **“...for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:11-13).”**

1. Paul is thought to have been in prison in Rome as he wrote those words. Prior to that time Paul had experienced all kinds of terrible things.

(1. Paul had been beaten, stoned (left for dead), put into stocks, jailed, shipwrecked, and bitten by a snake.

2. You may be thinking that an apostle ought to be able to do those things and go through those things but you are just an ordinary Christian.

(1. Here's what Paul told the Philippians and I believe God would tell you through Paul today: **“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern (Philippians 3:17).”**

3. What kind of life as a Christian had the apostle Paul be living? I think we can agree that Paul was busy trying to fulfill the Great Commission because he was going until he was placed in prison.

(1. But even while in prison he was still reaching far beyond the walls of his imprisonment to try to bring people to Christ and teach Christians how they ought to live as children of God.

4. Was Paul an Ambassador for Christ? No doubt about that. Was Paul bringing light to a dark world through the way he lived his life? Yes!

(1. Was Paul a preserving influence serving as **“salt”** to the world around him? Yes, again.

5. So Paul has given us an example of how we - you and I are to live are lives.

(1. We are not to shrivel up and hole up in our foxhole but we are to actively and openly go, being ambassadors of the King of Kings

1. bringing light to the darkness and preserving what light and good there is in the world.

6. How can we do that? How did Paul do that? Paul tells us in **Philippians 4:13** doesn't he?

(1. Paul says what, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”**

7. So now we begin to see how it is possible to follow Paul's example. We cannot and will not be able to do that in our own strength because even Paul could not do it in his own strength.

(1. But it is possible to live a vibrant, effective, meaningful Christian life just as Paul did or God would not have allowed this to be recorded in His Word.

8. We can only live like Paul by maintaining continual contact with our Lord and by having continual input from our Lord.

(1. Only through His Power, only through Christ's supernatural power can we persist in living as we should.

III. The apostle Paul was a Biblical scholar before he was a Christian. He had received the best of training and even secular rulers knew of his great learning.

1. But it was only after his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus that he began to put that training, learning to the proper use.

2. We can know about the Bible but until we know the One whom the Bible is about it will not do us a lot of good.

3. Think back to Biblical times and the conditions then. They did not have computers, typewriters, and even the writing instruments that we have now.

4. Because of that the Bible, the Old Testament was not readily available to everyone. The Jews had access in the synagogues where the Scriptures were read.

(1. But the common Jewish person did not have access at home and probably most Jews had never actually read for themselves God's Word.

(2. The average Jewish person did not know how to read.

(3. And the Gentiles, all non-Jewish peoples had no access or knowledge of God's Word at all or if they did it was very slight.

5. So how would people back then be taught about God and about His Word.

(1. It was through memorization. It was a necessity for the Word of God to be memorized and ingrained into their minds and lives to the extent that it would not be forgotten.

(2. But not only that it would not be forgotten but so that it could be passed on to others including their children.

6. We are blessed because we have so much spiritual information at our fingertips ready and available. All we have to do is walk over to a book shelf or table and pick up a Bible and begin to read it.

7. Most of us are not limited to just one Bible - we have several and some of us have Bibles in multiple translations.

(1. We are blessed! To have the ability to read God's Word whenever we desire to do so to have it available is such a way.

8. But the sad thing is what? The sad thing is that so many of those Bibles in this country are never read. Many are never even opened up.

(1. What the people of Paul's time would have given to have access to the Word of God like we have!

9. Knowing this - can you see that we also have a great responsibility? To those whom much is given of them much is required.

(1. What are you doing with your Bible? Do you ever pick it up? Do you ever read it? Do you ever study it? Do you ever memorize any of those precious words it contains? Do you?

10. Surely, Man does not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God - just like the Bible says.

(1. You can never really live, never go, never be an Ambassador for Christ, be the light of the world, and the salt of the earth.

(2. Until you make a commitment to read, study, memorize and meditate upon the Word of God.

1. It's not going to happen without that commitment.

11. The Word of God - You've got to have the supernatural energy which flows from its words to live the Christian life as it ought to be lived.

IV. Almost inseparable from input from the Bible is our need for prayer to be in communication with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

1. How often do you pray? We ought to be reading our Bibles every day and every time we open up our Bibles we ought pray asking for God to speak to us and empower us.

(1. And we ought to close out our time in the Word in the same way - in prayer.

2. Don't let this world discourage, depress, and frighten you. Jesus says men ought to always pray and not to faint. We ought to always pray and not be discouraged, depressed, and frightened.

3. **Philippians 4:6 & 7** says what? **"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."**



4. Paul tells us not be anxious about anything and to guard our hearts and minds through whom? Through Jesus Christ.

5. That is the only way that we can live like we ought to live and have peace in the midst of turmoil and all the bad news, and bad things that happen on Planet Earth.

(1. Only by maintaining communication with our Lord, through prayer can we have the peace that **passeth understanding** or as it says in the NKJV **surpasses understanding**.

6. Nothing on earth can give that to us. A lot of money cannot give us that kind of peace. A lot of education cannot give us that kind of peace.

(1. A lot of friends cannot give us that kind of peace.

(2. Our family can't give us that kind of peace.

(3. Our job or what we do to make a living can't give us that kind of peace.

7. Think about it - is there anything in your life that can give you that kind of peace except your Lord?

8. I think we know the answer and the answer is that only Jesus can give us a peace that passeth, surpasses understanding in the midst of the turmoil of this world.

9. So, if that is true why don't we pray more? Do you realize how privileged we are to be able to meet here like we are today and to pray out loud without fear of arrest.

10. Do you realize how privileged you are to be able to go directly to God in the Name of Jesus Christ and pray?

11. For centuries of time people could not enter the holy of holies of the Temple where God dwelled because of their unholiness.

12. But that veil of separation was torn apart on the day of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sins.

CONCLUSION - We are privileged people. We have great responsibilities.

1. Are you going as Jesus says in the Great Commission that we are to do? **Matthew 28:18-20**
2. Are you an Ambassador of Christ as the Bible says you are?
3. Are you being a light in the midst of a dark, dark world?
4. Are you the salt of the earth preserving what good there is in the world around you?
5. If not, why not? The power is there and it is available to you more so during this time in which you are living than any other time in history.
6. Take up the Word of God the Sword of the Spirit and read it, study it, memorize it, meditate upon it.
7. Pray without ceasing, pray continually.
8. And do you know what will happen? Not only will you be doing what you know your Lord wants you to do -  
  
(1. but you will find joy, fulfillment, meaning and will no longer fear what this world can do to you.