

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"The *Halakhah* of Yeshua"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Phil. 3:15-17; 3:1-14; 2:5-8, 15; 1 Cor. 11:1; Ps. 1:1

There is a difference between knowing the right way and actually walking in it. We can know what Scripture says, understand the theology, explain the Greek and Hebrew words, and even teach someone else what they mean—and still discover that there are places where the truth we know has not fully taken hold of the way we live. I can look back at things I understood years ago and say, "I knew that—but I didn't really *understand* it yet." I knew it in my intellect, but it had not fully taken root in me. That is part of spiritual growth. The question is not simply, "What do I know?" but, "What kind of life is this knowledge producing in me?"

That brings us to the idea of *halakhah*. The Hebrew root *halakh* means "to walk," and *halakhah* refers to the "way of walking"—the practical pattern by which a person lives his or her life. Paul is essentially pointing us toward the *halakhah* of Yeshua: the way of walking that comes from following the Master. Throughout Philippians, Paul has been showing us what that walk looks like. It is the way of the cross—the way of humility, obedience, self-sacrifice, and laying down self. And now in Phil. 3:15–17, Paul tells us what it looks like to keep walking that path: **have the mindset of the mature, don't go backward, and follow the pattern of those who are following Messiah.**

1. SPIRITUAL MATURITY MEANS HAVING THIS MINDSET

Paul writes, "*Therefore let all who are mature have this attitude; and if you have a different attitude in anything, this also God will reveal to you*" (Phil. 3:15). There is almost a little play on words here. Just a few verses earlier (v.12), Paul has admitted that he has not already been made complete/been perfected (τελειόω, *teleio-o*)—he has not fully arrived. Yet now he says, "Let all who are mature"—τέλειοι, *teleioi*, mature or complete—"have this attitude." In other words, spiritual maturity is recognizing that you have not arrived and continuing to pursue Him. The mature person is the one saying, "I want to know Him. I want more of Him and less of me. I want to take hold of Him because He has taken hold of me." Spiritual maturity is not primarily how much theology we can explain. It is whether the mind of Messiah is increasingly becoming the pattern of our lives.

And I love the confidence Paul shows when he says that if our mindset is different, God will reveal that too. Paul teaches them the truth, but then he trusts the Lord to do the revealing. There is a patience in that. Sometimes once God opens our eyes to something, we become frustrated that everybody else cannot see it yet. "Come on! It's right there! How do you not get this?" But then I have to remember how patient the Lord has been with me. There are things He took years to bring from my head into my heart and life—and undoubtedly there are things He is still revealing to me now. So keep pursuing Him. Keep taking hold of Him because He has taken hold of you. And trust that "*He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion*" (Phil. 1:6). This is what maturity looks like: remaining teachable while continually pursuing the One we still want to know more fully.

2. DON'T GO BACKWARD—WALK IN WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

Paul continues, *"Nevertheless, let us live up to the same standard we have attained"* (Phil. 3:16). Literally, the idea is to remain in line with—to walk in conformity with—what we have already reached. It is almost as though Paul is saying, "Maybe you haven't completely gotten it yet. Maybe God is still revealing some things to you. Fine. But at the very least, don't go backward." They were surrounded by voices that could pull them away from the simple pursuit of Messiah and back toward confidence in the flesh, religious credentials, self-exaltation, and vain glory. It could look spiritual. It could sound religious. But anything that moves us away from the mind of Messiah and the way of the cross is taking us in the wrong direction.

Sometimes the challenge is not that we need some brand-new revelation; we simply need to keep walking in what the Lord has already shown us. The Philippians already knew the story. They knew the mind of Messiah: *"Have this attitude in yourselves, which also was in Messiah Yeshua"* (Phil. 2:5). They knew about the One who emptied Himself, humbled Himself, and became obedient even to death on a cross. Paul is saying, "Stay there. Keep walking that way." And that speaks to us as well. When offense rises up, when our ego gets bruised, when we get bent out of joint because things did not go our way, sometimes that is an engine light coming on that says, "There is still something here that does not look like the mind of Messiah." That is not a call to self-condemnation; it is an invitation to keep pursuing Him. Don't excuse it. Don't go backward. Keep walking the way of the cross.

3. FOLLOW THOSE WHO ARE FOLLOWING MESSIAH

Paul then says, *"Brothers and sisters, join in following my example and notice those who walk according to the pattern you have in us"* (Phil. 3:17). The language is powerful. "Join in following my example" carries the idea of becoming joint imitators—come on, let's do this together. And when Paul says to "notice" those who walk this way, the word conveys the idea of looking closely, of *scoping them out*. Pay attention to people whose lives display this pattern. He has already pointed to Timothy, who genuinely cares about others and does not put his own interests ahead of Messiah's. He has pointed to Epaphroditus, who was willing to risk his life for the work of Messiah. Paul says, "Look at people like this. Pay attention to how they walk. Pattern your life after that." As he says elsewhere, *"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Messiah"* (1 Cor. 11:1).

That is really the *halakhah* of Yeshua. Paul is not saying, "Make me the destination." He is saying, "I am following the Master—come walk with me." Paul is the apprentice following closely behind Yeshua. And what way is Yeshua walking? The way of the cross. Yeshua lived the polar opposite of selfish ambition. His driving ambition was not to save Himself but to give Himself to save others. He did not cling to status, privilege, reputation, or even life itself. He laid it all down in obedience to the Father. So Paul says, "That is the path I want. My credentials? My status? Everything I once relied upon? Compared with knowing Messiah, it is refuse. I want to know Him in the power of His resurrection and in the fellowship of His sufferings." Follow my example because I am following **His** example. That is the way of walking.

CONCLUSION

The *halakhah* of Yeshua stands in stark contrast to the way of the world around us. The world tells us to protect ourselves, promote ourselves, defend our reputation, demand our rights, and make sure we get what we deserve. The way of Messiah says, "Lay yourself down." The danger for believers is that we can give voice to the cross without actually walking the way of the cross.

Believers can wear a cross, sing about the cross, preach the cross, and defend the theology of the cross while living lives still driven by selfish ambition, offense, pride, comfort, and self-preservation. Paul is saying that the gospel is not merely something we confess; it becomes the pattern in which we walk. We are to shine differently against the darkness around us—*“Among them you shine as lights in the world”* (Phil. 2:15).

So perhaps today we simply need to ask: **Where has my walk stopped looking like His?** Maybe there is an offense you have been holding on to. Maybe there is a reputation you are trying desperately to protect, a right you refuse to surrender, a religious accomplishment you are depending on, or some place where self is still insisting on getting its way. Bring that before Yeshua today. Lay it down. Tell Him, “I don’t want merely to *talk* about Your way—I want to WALK Your way. I want to know You. I want more of You and less of me.” We have not arrived. Neither had Paul. But you can press on. Take hold of Him because He has already taken hold of you. And then get back on the path: **follow Paul as he follows Messiah, and walk the *halakhah* of Yeshua—the way of the cross.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Phil. 3:15, Paul speaks about those who are “mature,” even though in the preceding verses he admits that he has not yet fully reached the goal. What does this tell us about Paul’s definition of spiritual maturity?
2. Why do you think Paul can confidently say that if believers have a different mindset, “God will reveal” it to them? How should remembering God’s patience with us affect the way we treat people who have not yet understood something we believe the Lord has shown us?
3. What do you think Paul means in Phil. 3:16 when he tells the Philippians to “live up to the same standard we have attained”? What are some ways a believer can begin moving backward spiritually while still appearing religious on the outside?
4. What do your moments of offense or defensiveness reveal about areas where self still needs to be surrendered?
5. Who are you following as an example, and what kind of example are you giving others?

Closing Prayer

Abba, I want to know Yeshua—not simply know things about Him, but know Him and walk in His ways. Thank You that You have taken hold of me. Give me the grace to keep pressing forward and taking hold of You. Where my mindset is different from the mind of Messiah, reveal it to me. Where pride, offense, selfish ambition, fear, reputation, comfort, or self-preservation are still directing my steps, bring them into the light. Thank You for being patient with me as You continue the work You began in me. Yeshua, teach me Your *halakhah*—Your way of walking.

Teach me to lay myself down, to serve rather than demand, to forgive rather than remain offended, and to seek Your glory rather than my own. Give me faithful examples to follow, and make my own life an example that points others toward You. I do not want merely to speak about the cross; I want to walk the way of the cross. More of You and less of me. Keep my eyes fixed on You, and by Your Ruach, conform my life more and more to Yours.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.