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3/24/21

**PHILIPPIANS**  
**The Letter of Joy**  
**CHAPTER 3 (Verses 8-16)**

**RECAP OF CHAPTER 1:1-3:7**

- Philippi was the church that blessed Paul's heart the most. They were the ones who had reciprocated his love and had lived their faith out in a purity that other churches he established had not.
- The city of Philippi was a miniature version of Rome. It was a "Rome away from Rome" in every respect.
- (1:13) "The whole praetorian guard" came to know that Paul was IN CHAINS FOR CHRIST!

**POWER VERSE: (1:21) "FOR TO ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST AND TO DIE IS GAIN."**

**POWER VERSES: (2:6-8)** Scholars consider this the greatest and most moving passage Paul wrote about Jesus!

**POWER VERSES: (2:9-11)**

**POWER VERSES: (2:12-13)**

- (vs12) The Greek word for "work out" is *katergazesthai*. It means to bring to completion, showing that although we are gifted salvation by grace from God, we have personal responsibility to continue in that work of the Spirit through our obedience in walking out and working out our faith.
- (vs15) A Christian's life should be lived so beautifully that no one could find any fault with it. There is such a purity to it that it stands the test of all those who would try to come against it.

**CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST JESUS (3:1-7)**

- (vs1) The word "further" in the Greek also means "finally." It was used by Paul in several Epistles when he is coming to the practical conclusion after the doctrinal portion of his letter or Epistle.
- "*Rejoice in the Lord.*" This is the proper response to the incredible doctrinal revelation of who Christ fully was on earth, and who He fully is after His resurrection found in 2:6-11.
- (vs2) There were Jewish Christians that were coming to Paul's churches teaching that in order to have salvation the Gentiles would have to go through Old Testament Jewish rituals and become a Jew. They would have to be physically circumcised and earn their way to heaven.
- Paul's teaching was that salvation is by grace and a free gift of God for any who put their faith in Christ.
- (vs2) The physical circumcision Jewish males received was to represent a circumcised heart devoted to God. So once we are committed to Christ in spirit, we have fulfilled the heart of God's command.
- As Jesus told Nicodemus "*Flesh gives birth to flesh. Spirit gives birth to spirit.*" There is nothing we can do in the flesh that will make a spiritual act take place. We are dependent on God to do that work.
- (vs3) Paul gives us three examples of how true Christians are the true circumcision. "*Who serve God in spirit.*" "*Who boast in Jesus Christ.*" "*Who put no confidence in the flesh.*"
- (vs4-6) Paul's saying "if there's anyone who would could brag about having confidence in the flesh, it's me." I was the best of the best. Paul sets out to silence any comparison by the Jews from their standards of righteousness. "*Circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day.*" "*Of the people of Israel.*" "*Of the tribe of Benjamin.*" "*A Hebrew of Hebrews.*" "*As for the law, a Pharisee.*" "*As to zeal, a persecutor of the church.*" "*As for righteousness based on the law, faultless.*"

**POWER VERSE: (3:7) BUT WHATEVER WERE GAINS TO ME I NOW CONSIDER LOSS FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST.**

- Paul sets all of his accomplishments like a credit account on one side of a ledger. All of the positive, right things I've done in my attempts to earn salvation and please God, I count as nothing. They mean nothing in comparison to knowing Christ and His grace and goodness.

## THE EMPTYNESS OF THE LAW AND THE JOY OF KNOWING CHRIST (3:8-9)

- (vs8) Paul is saying “Just being in relationship with and knowing Christ is worth giving up everything that seemed to make me successful, prestigious, and valuable in the eyes of men because of my previous religious superiority.” He gave up everything he had in his previous life, and it was worth it.
- (vs9) The key word in verses 8 and 9 is “righteousness” which is *dikaiosune* in the Greek.
- It gives a connotation that “righteousness” is found in fellowship with God. It’s being in right standing.
- Paul was trying his whole life to please God in his own efforts and came to the realization that all his pedigree, accomplishments and accolades were “garbage” in comparison to Christ.
- The Greek word for “garbage” is *skubala*. It means more than just refuse. It means excrement.
- Trying to find God, be right with God, or to be godly by merely religious efforts is literally a waste.
- The Law of God is pure. But, trying to live out the Law in human efforts to be godly is futile.
- This is why Paul was so strong when speaking against the legalistic Judaizers who were trying to bring people under bondage through unnecessary religious obligations to obtain salvation.
- Paul is showing how utterly disgusting, worthless, and necessary it is to remove it from our lives.
- Mankind can only find peace and relationship with God by receiving Jesus Christ as who He reveals Himself to be. We must receive the free gift of His righteousness that He offers to everyone who believes and receives Him.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO KNOW CHRIST (3:10-11)

- (vs10) Paul’s goal and aim was simple yet profound. His sole desire was to know Christ! That’s it.
- The Greek word for “to know” is *ginoskein*. It is almost always used when speaking about personal knowledge, not intellectual knowledge. His desire wasn’t to know ABOUT Christ, but to know him.
- *Ginoskein* refers to knowing a person intimately. It’s the same word used to describe the intimacy between a husband and a wife. Genesis... “*Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived and bore Cain.*”
- According to Paul, to know Christ means to know the “power of His resurrection,” the “participation in His sufferings” and “becoming like Him in His death”.
- The “power of His resurrection” guarantees that He is alive and able to continue to do all He has promised to do in us, for us, and through us. If Jesus did not resurrect from the dead, we have no hope in death or in eternity.
- Because Jesus conquered the grave, He has the power to turn death merely into a transition to eternal life in paradise and in perfection. Jesus said in John 11:25 “*I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.*”
- Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:8 “*...to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*”
- Jesus said to the prisoner on the cross next to him “*surely this day you will be with me in paradise.*”
- Our promise and our hope is already guaranteed because of Jesus being the Resurrection and the Life.
- The Resurrection makes this life worth living because His power is available to us every day. That His Kingdom can come, and His will can be done in our daily lives.
- Paul returns to the truth and thought that a part of the Christian walk and life is “*participation in his sufferings.*” Jesus suffered, and so will His body who represents Him on earth. Suffering is a normal part of a life of faith. Suffering is a privilege, not a penalty.
- SINCE CHRIST SUFFERED SO MUCH FOR EACH ONE OF US, IT IS IN A SENSE A WAY OF SAYING “I’M GLAD I COULD SHOW YOU BACK THE SAME LOVE AND COMMITMENT”.
- In a typical daily context “becoming like Him in His death” means self-denial and picking up whatever cross we might have to bear in God’s daily call on our lives.

- Paul saying that to know Christ also means “becoming like him in his death” is identifying that we are not living for ourselves but for our loving heavenly Father and fulfilling His purposes. That even if it means dying a martyr’s death, it is a part of the call of Christ.
- Why? “To know Christ” means that we share in Jesus in the way He walked, the way He bore the cross, the death He died, and to share the life He lives for eternity. We are identifying and intertwining our lives with Him in every aspect because of the life and power available to us because of His resurrection.

**GALATIANS 2:19-21 (NIV)** <sup>19</sup>“For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. <sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. <sup>21</sup>I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

- Paul is showing us how we can truly live, by living in the power and purposes of God regardless whether we are in a time of suffering or blessing.

### **FORGETTING WHAT IS BEHIND AND PRESSING FORWARD (3:12-16)**

- (vs12) Until the day we reach perfection in heaven, none of us have arrived and fully experienced the fullness of what the resurrection life of Christ is in its’ entirety. As incredible of a Christian Paul was, he was far from perfect.
- Another English translation of the Bible words it so beautifully, “I press on to try to grasp that for which I have been grasped by Jesus Christ.” It shows that Christ has fully offered Himself and all His attributes to us. He is grasping us in His hand. But, we must also grasp back.
- No matter where you and I are on our spiritual journey, no matter how long we have served Christ, no matter how much we have done in His name, no matter how much we have grown in knowledge of Him or in His nature, none of us have arrived yet.
- Paul was arguably the most successful missionary and Christian writer of all time, and he knew he had not arrived yet. He knew as long as he had breath and an opportunity to love, speak, write or even become more like Christ in nature his mission in this lifetime wasn’t over.
- I love this. The best of the best of all time knew he had more growing to do, even though he may only have a few days, weeks or months left to live. It’s not over until it’s over.
- (vs12-13) Paul chose to “press on” - to press forward.
- How do we do that? How do we grind it out in our faith when we are tired physically, internally weary or feel we’ve already done enough?
- Paul’s gives you and I the secret to his success in perseverance. “*One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead.*” You and I have to forget about the past and push forward in the present. Not dreaming about the future and someday, pressing on in everyday determination.
- The past is the past. We only have the present.
- No matter what stage of life you are in, or what stage of faith, forget about the past. Press forward.
- Do we wake up with a daily focus and a goal in reaching people around us, and with a passion to continually become more like Christ?
- (vs14) The Greek word for “press on” is *epekteinomenos* was used speaking of a runner in a race straining at the finish line.
- Paul was speaking especially to a group of Christians called antinomians. This group believed that the law did not matter, and God’s commands did not matter. They believed God’s grace covered them and no matter what they did, or even didn’t do, God would forgive.
- These are the type of Christians today whom say they believe in Jesus but there is no change in how they live, no commitment to God’s call or commands and no discipline in the way they live.

- (vs15) The litmus test for Christian maturity is to make sure that we have not become complacent or lethargic. We must have continued passion and commitment to the call and character of Christ.
- (vs16) No matter what, let's make sure we don't go backwards in our faith, or become less mature.
- What is our temperature for Jesus? In seeing Paul's example and teaching, what does success in Christ look like? Are we monitoring our motives? Monitoring our passions? Monitoring our commitment?