

PHILIPPIANS #6 Finding Joy in Progress

Phil. 3:1-11

Phil. 3:1-11 “Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me & is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the 8th day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I’ve suffered the loss of all things & count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ & be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him & the power of his resurrection, & may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:1-11)

Note #1 Paul begins this section by calling the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord (v. 1) but then warns them about the Judaizing opponents of the gospel (vv. 2-3). In contrast, Paul has renounced his spiritual & ethnic privileges for the sake of knowing Christ (vv. 4-11); his righteousness comes through Christ, not the law (vv. 12-16). He then calls the Philippians to follow his example of commitment to Jesus as Lord (vv. 17-21). ESV

Note #2 In contrast to those Judaizers promoting physical circumcision (v. 2), the true people of God (*the circumcision*) are those who *worship by the Spirit of God* (cf. Jn. 4:23-24). They *glory in Christ Jesus* (cf. Phil. 1:26) & *put no confidence in the flesh* (i.e., as Calvin put it, in “everything that is outside of Christ”). This verse mentions all 3 members of the Trinity: “God” (the Father), “Christ Jesus” (the Son), & “the Spirit of God” (the Holy Spirit). ESV

Note #3 *gain...loss* (3:7-8). As a result of meeting Christ, Paul’s accounting has now changed completely: what formerly went into the *gain* column—his power, prestige, & “obedience”—now goes into the *loss* column. Likewise, the crucified Messiah, whom Paul had assumed must be a “loss,” is now seen as the ultimate “gain.” The language of loss & gain probably alludes to Jesus’ teaching (e.g. Matt. 16:25-26) ESV

Note #4 *Foun*

d in him (3:9) means being spiritually united to Christ & therefore found not guilty before God... ESV

- I The true people of God – the real circumcision – 3:3
 - A Serve & worship by the Spirit of God
 - B Glory in Christ Jesus
 - C Put no confidence in the flesh
- II The Flesh – 3:4-6
 - A Our heritage
 - B Our accomplishments
- III Gaining Christ by counting everything loss – 3:7-8
 - A Paul’s mind-set/psychology is that he & all believers should be progressing – 1:25
 - 1 Matt. 16:25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
 - 2 Spiritual progress is being free from everything that usurps the place of God. Brothers and sisters, we must not only be clean but also pure; we should not be occupied by anything other than God. Whenever God’s work removes something from us other than God, we have spiritual progress. We must continually ask ourselves whether we are shedding things. We must remember that if nothing is removed from us, we have no spiritual progress. If nothing has been cast off from us for a month or a year, we have had no progress during that month or year. (Watchman Nee, *General Messages - Spiritual Progress*, pp. 143-144)
 - B Paul actively rejected his past heritage and attainments in order to gain Christ
 - 1 Formerly his heritage and all he had accomplished he considered a gain (advantage, valuable).
 - 2 Now he considers it a loss (detriment, damage)
 - 3 Count and continue to count as loss. The “things that were gains” to Paul, these he “counted as loss...” (3:7) “counted” (considered, reckoned)—perfect tense: a completed action with continuing results—“I have counted (and they are now to me) a loss” (Rienecker)

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- C Suffering the loss of all things but counting the loss as rubbish in order to gain Christ
- 1 “All things” is very inclusive; what previously had value now he lost
 - 2 What he lost he now considers rubbish so that he could gain Christ
- D To gain something there is the need to lose something.
- 1 We buy things because we feel the item we purchase has more value than the money we spend on it.
 - 2 What do we value?
 - 3 “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose”—Jim Elliot
- E His righteousness was based not on his attainments or keeping the law but on living by faith
- IV Endeavouring to Progress – 3:9-10
- A To be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness through law, but the righteousness through faith in Christ. “Paul understood salvation not simply in terms of a changed status [positionally righteous/ justified] , but also in terms of a person being transformed and producing ‘righteous fruit’.” [James Dunn, *Beginning*, p. 1028]
- B To know Christ--“to know, to recognize, to know personally through experience, to appropriate. The word often implies a personal relation between the knower and the known.” (Rienecker)
- C To know the power of His resurrection
- When Paul & Silas were imprisoned in the jail [in Philippi], they were not disappointed & did not lose heart. They did not grieve or weep, but while they were ‘praying, [they] sang hymns of praise to God’ (Acts 16:25). The result was that even the jailor & his household believed in God. This power was also a manifestation of the resurrection power of Christ through them...What was the power that upheld Paul & caused him to suffer so willingly? It was the power of resurrection. Phil. 3 shows us that Paul was able to know ‘the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death’ because he knew Christ ‘& the power of His resurrection’. [W. Nee, Vol. 19, Ch. 11, Se. 5]
 - “The resurrection in Phil. 3 enables us to partake of His death. This ‘partaking’ is “very special... In other places resurrection comes after the cross. But Philippians 3 shows us that we can suffer with Him & be conformed to His death after we have known the power of Christ's resurrection. The sequence between resurrection & death is reversed. Elsewhere death comes before resurrection. Here death is experienced through the resurrection life ...the death in Philippians 3 is a principle. Christ's life on earth bore the element of resurrection... This resurrection is something spiritual” [W. Nee, Vol. 58, Chap. 9, Sect. 1]
 - Sometimes “*God allows sickness and weakness to come to our body in order that we may learn to (1) pray at night... & (10) know that the Lord's resurrection power removes our weakness, sickness, & death. Through sicknesses, God causes us to trust, & obey, so Christ may have the first place in us.*” [W. Nee, V. 11, Ch. 10, Sect. 7]
- D To know the fellowship of His sufferings
- E To be conformed to His death
- “The Christian life for Paul was a process which involved a continually renewed commitment. Victory in the battle between flesh and Spirit was never victory final and complete. There was another battle to be won another day, perhaps the same battle, perhaps tomorrow...Conversion is every day.” [J. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, pp. 496-7]
- F Gal. 2:19-21 “For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.” (Gal. 2:19-21) “In Gal. 2:20 Paul describes himself as ‘living by faith in the Son of God’ Paul was certainly thinking of daily life. He lived his life in and by faith....Paul saw Jesus’ life pattern as the pattern for his own living. To live by faith in the Son of God means to live out of the resources given by the Son of God and out of the motivation inspired by the Son of God’s self-giving.” [Dunn, *Theol. of Paul*, 637]
- V The motivation - Attaining or arriving at the “out” resurrection – 3:11; Heb. 11:35; 1 Cor. 15:41-42
- A “*If perhaps*”—“expresses a possibility [not a certainty] which is the object of hope or desire” (Rienecker). Paul’s “confidence in knowing Christ is tempered by his awareness that full conformity to Christ’s death and hope of attaining the resurrection from the dead is ‘not yet’ and is not finally assured (‘if somehow’). The ‘*if somehow*’ indicating a degree of contingency which... is often underrated by commentators” [J Dunn, *Beginning* n. 298]
- B Not necessarily the general resurrection of all the believers, But possibly a special, outstanding resurrection as a prize (3:14) to those who struggle to gain Christ as portrayed in vv. 9-10 “In Phil. 3:11 Paul did not hope to be resurrected from the dead (for surely all dead men will be resurrected), nor did he hope for the resurrection of the

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spirit (for the resurrection of the spirit is received in regeneration). Instead, what Paul hoped to receive was the 'out-resurrection,' i.e., the best resurrection, spoken of in Rev. 20:5, i.e., reigning with the Lord." [W Nee, V. 16]