

Paul's Lockdown

A MIDWEEK STUDY IN PHILIPPIANS

Yearning for Christ

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Phil 3:1-14

NC3

❖ Rejoicing In Christ Guards Against Self-Boasting (3:1-3)

- *Rejoice in the Lord*: the object of our joy is critical: *in the Lord* (14x in Phil).
 - Paul shows that *rejoicing* dovetails with true spirituality.
 - *rejoicing* is related to “glory, boast, & confidence.”
- *Watch out for* or “pay careful attention to” *evildoers*.
 - *Those dogs*: The irony was Judaizers called Gentiles “dogs.” Paul reverses it to apply to those who are outside, because they don’t know Christ.
 - *evil workers* not workers of good deeds as they viewed themselves.
 - *mutilators* or *castrators* (wordplay): *peritome*: “to cut around,” vs. *katatome*: mutilate.
- *We who are the true circumcision*: Circumcision was to be a symbol of trust from the heart, not an external rite of self-achievement (Jer 4:4; Rom 2:28).
- *Worship, glory, boast* are forms of *rejoicing* (Jer 9:23-24; John 4:21-24).
 - Irony: boasting in our spirituality only proves our lack spirituality.
 - Rejoicing is both a response and a discipline.
- *Put no confidence in the flesh--...*” Religion and pride can get along nicely.
 - What we rejoice in, boast in, glory in, is where we place our confidence.
 - *Flesh* is a greatly misunderstood term.
 - Paul is referring to the fallen, sinful self.
 - Paul’s command here is to not put confidence in the self to redeem itself.
 - We are to treat the old self as dead and greet the new self, alive in Christ.
 - The Christian faith is not a self-improvement program. It is self-abandonment. To find yourself, you must lose yourself. It is a burial and resurrection program (Gal 2:20; 5:24; Rom 6:11; 8:10; Col 2:13; 3:5).

❖ Paul Could Have Boasted In Self (4-9)

- *confidence in the flesh*- performing to obtain God’s approval—trust in self.
 - Striving to achieve God without dependence on God
 - Counting on our performance to obtain God’s approval.
 - What makes us in our minds better or separate from others.
- *I have more...* – Paul has religious accolades if he wanted to boast.
- “*I consider*” (*consider* 3x) a thinking observation.
 - “think, consider, regard”: purposely change our minds
 - Verse 7: perfect tense-> verse 8: present tense
 - Thus: “I considered and still... and even now I consider!”
- “*loss, ... everything, ... rubbish*” Pride in self is antithetical to Christ.
 - *zelia* - “damage, loss, forfeit, disadvantage” (debit, liability)
 - pedigree, religion, position, possessions, power are one gigantic loss!
 - “all things” whatever competes with the loving work of Christ.
 - *skubala*- “refuse, rubbish, leavings, dirt, dung”
- “*gains to me ... I may gain Christ* (2x in vv 7-8)”- business term, tradeoff
 - Paul had misperceived assets and found they were liabilities

- “the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ...”—true asset.
 - *huperecho*--"rise above, surpass, excel"
 - Looking at the spiritual ledger, it is smart to cut our losses for true gains.
- “*knowing*” Him at all cost: intimacy- (see Jeremiah (1:5;24:7; 31:34)).
 - Rightness before God by faith alone in Christ.

❖ Forgetting the Past and Straining Into the Future (10-14)

- We can feel Paul’s longing through the print.
- We discover God most clearly in the historical Christ-Event (the incarnation, ministry, crucifixion, & resurrection).
- The *power of His resurrection* is connected to our transformation (Rom 6:4).
- Fellowship of (sharing, koinonia) His sufferings, and His death (Gal 2:20).
- An expression of humble but confident hope.
 - *Attain*- not focused on our effort, but on arrival & on the future (20-21).
 - Paul sees his growth into Christ as being ongoing until the resurrection.
- The process is one of losing myself into Him at the Cross and finding myself in Him in the Resurrection.
- Forgetting the past: past achievements and painful failures.
- This is, most likely, a merism, meaning he wants to know not only the bookends (resurrection & crucifixion) but everything in between (character, purpose, his works, his teachings, his love).
- Straining for the future with Christ. Straining for his will not mine.
- Ultimately a decision must be reached. Will I promote myself or Christ?

❖ THINKING IT THROUGH

- Spirituality always has it’s own potential for boasting. As soon as a sinner bows and prays, he can rise and boast in his prayer. Have you ever taken pride in your spiritual behavior? What was it? Do you still sometimes boast about what you have done, where you have been or what you know?
- Religion is often embroiled in the arguments about who is right. Although truth is fixed and we need to pursue truth, being right is often connected to our pride. Can you think of examples of this today?
- Mainstream society has it’s own boasting built around beauty, brains, brawn and bucks. What are some examples? How about in yourself?
- Why is self-boasting antithetical to true spirituality?
- Paul wants to know the profound love of Christ more than anything? Why is it found primarily in the resurrection and crucifixion?
- There is nothing static about Paul’s pursuit of Christ. Do you ever get complacent? What spurs you on to know Jesus more?