

A Study in Philippians – Teacher’s Notes

Lesson Four – Philippians Chapter Three

(from Daily Study Bible Series, Letters of the Philippians, Colossians & Thessalonians, pp50-70, by William Barclay and Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament, by Warren Wiersbe, Victor Books, pp566-569)

I. Review – Phil 2

Paul exhorts us to have the same attitude of humility as Christ Jesus.

Christ humbled himself,

became a man,

a bond servant of God,

obeyed the will of the Father,

took on sin and

was obedient to death.

Therefore...God exalted Him and gave Him the name above all names.

Example of Paul--- gave his life for the gospel.

Example of Timothy... devoted to Paul and teaching the gospel.

Example of Epaphroditus ... devoted to Paul and the local church...no selfish ambition...put himself last.

II. Salvation: The Christian’s Past (Phil 3:1-11)

A. v.2

Who did Paul say to beware of?

- Dogs
- Evil workers
- False circumcision (the mutilators)

Dogs = normally referred to Gentiles. Nothing can be lower – prowl the streets, feed on garbage, attack passers-by. Stands for everything unclean.

Evil workers = thought they were workers of righteousness (by the Law), were taking people further from God rather than closer, propagated their own opinions rather than listening to God.

False circumcision = Circumcision was to be an eternal sign of covenant with God. It became only a sign in the flesh. It was regarded in itself enough to be in right standing with God. God was wanting godly character that comes from a circumcised heart and mind (devotion of heart, mind and life to God).

B. v.3 What is the true circumcision?

1. We worship God in Spirit- not ritual but devotion and sincerity of the heart, love of God and service to men.
2. Our only boast is in Christ Jesus – We boast not in what we have done ourselves, but in what Christ has done for us.
3. We place no confidence in merely human things – The Jew placed his confidence in circumcision. The Christian places his confidence in the mercy of God and the love of Jesus Christ.

C. v. 4-9

Paul has said that the Christians, not the Jews, are the truly circumcised and covenant people.

What are Paul's special privileges and accomplishments?

1. By birth
 - 1.1. God-fearing, law-observing Jew
 - 1.2. Pure Jewish lineage
 - 1.3. Belonged to one of the elite tribes
2. His own achievements

- 2.1. Followed the Hebrew culture and language (even in the gentile city of Tarsus)
- 2.2. Trained a Pharisee – those who separated themselves from common life and tasks to follow the Law – the most rigorous observance
3. Zeal – Jews admired burning zeal for God. Blameless according to the Law.
4. Jewish rabbi – had the best reputation and training.

When Paul met Christ – he wrote all these things off, recognized they were worthless (rubbish) so he could accept the free grace of Christ, to accept in humility the mercy of God.

Paul had experience the height of Judaism and now knows the incomparable joy of Christ. He had to LOSE his religion in order to find eternal life.

Paul had discovered that a right relationship with God is based not on Law, but on faith in Jesus Christ. It is not achieved by any man but given by God; not won by works but accepted in faith.

D. v 10-11

What does knowing Christ include?

To Know Christ: (intimacy = personal knowledge of Christ)

1. The power of his resurrection
 - 1.1. The dynamic power which operated in the life of a believer
 - 1.2. We will also be resurrected (death is not the end of life)
 - 1.3. Christ is alive! – nothing will separate us
2. The fellowship of His sufferings
 - 2.1. To suffer for the faith is a privilege by which we share in the work of Christ
3. Conformed to His death
 - 3.1. We will share His life (we will walk the way He walked)

III. Sanctification: The Christian's Present (Phil 3:12-16)

Paul says he is not complete or perfect, but is pressing on.....

What is he trying to do?

1. Trying to grasp that for which he has been grasped by Christ.
 - For what purpose has Christ taken hold of you????
2. Forgetting the things that lie behind.
 - Paul says he will not glory in his own accomplishments in the past
 - What does this mean?
 - Forget what you have done and remember only what you still have to do
 - Do not relax your efforts or lower your standards, but press on until the end.

IV. Glorification: The Christian's future (Phil 3:17-21)

A. v.17-19

Paul attacks those in the church at Philippi who believed grace covered all sin, so they believed they had liberty to sin. They followed the Roman culture of sin.

B. v. 20-21 What does it mean to be citizens of heaven?

- Match your conduct to your heavenly citizenship – honor heaven
- Our hope is that someday our bodies of humanity will be changed into glorified bodies like Christ's. – We shall be like him!
- Christ will return and mortality will be changed to eternity. We should be watching for His coming.