

Striving Together: Paul's Epistle to the Philippians

Lesson 7: Philippians 3:1-11

Beware of False Teaching (vv. 1-3)

- Rejoice in the face of struggle (v. 1)
 - The recurring theme of joy: 1:18, 2:17-18, 2:28
 - He probably warned them of coming trials while still with them
 - They may be tired of the warning, but Paul isn't
- Be ready for the legalists (vv. 2-3)
 - Paul doesn't have much use for them! (v. 2)
 - Dogs were scavengers and generally hated – looks to verse 8
 - “evil workers” vs. fellow workers (Epaphroditus in 2:25)
 - “mutilation” = to cut up, as opposed to circumcision (“to cut around”)
 - True circumcision is from the heart (v. 3) – Romans 2:28-29
 - Worship God in the Spirit (heart, soul, mind, strength), not just action
 - Our joy is in Jesus Christ, not our good works
 - We recognize the utter frailty and futility of our flesh

Why is it so attractive to emphasize our own good deeds?

Paul's Religious Résumé (vv. 4-6)

- If he wanted to impress, he certainly could (v. 4)
 - He doesn't follow Christ because he had been a religious nobody
- His impeccable heritage (v. 5a)
 - He was born into an orthodox Jewish family
 - He could trace his lineage to the tribe of Benjamin (many could not do this following the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities)
 - He learned at the feet of the great teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)
- Position and performance above reproach (vv. 5b-6)
 - Pharisees were the conservative party of that day
 - Paul had been zealous (passionate) about crushing the Way
 - He had kept the law and was thus “blameless”
 - Rich young ruler – Mark 10:21
 - Zacharias and Elizabeth – Luke 1:6

What do Jesus and Scripture include for one to be considered blameless?

Overturing the Spiritual Balance Sheet (vv. 7-11)

- Gain is loss; loss is gain (vv. 7-8a)
 - “gain” = advantage; “loss” = damage or even destruction (Acts 27:10)
 - The assets of the world can be liabilities for the believer
 - “counted” – not that they are necessarily all bad, but Paul sees them this way
 - Another view of loss (v. 8) is that Paul has seen his influence, status, and respect, not to mention his worldly possessions, all leave him
 - He sees all this as “rubbish” – dung, worthy of the dogs who value these
 - These cannot compare to the excellence of his personal relationship (“knowledge”) with Jesus Christ

In what ways are we spending too much of our time and energy on rubbish today?

- Only the righteousness of Christ matters (vv. 8b-9)
 - To gain Christ is to appropriate all that He is, beginning with justification
 - This is imputed righteousness as opposed to the world’s “gained” righteousness – grace through faith
 - Keep this in mind: since we cannot keep the law (James 2:10) we could never, ever have true righteousness through the law
- The goal: intimacy and fellowship with our Lord (vv. 10-11)
 - Sanctification (v. 10)
 - Walking with Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit through Jesus’ resurrection, and identifying with His suffering
 - This is known as progressive sanctification (completing, perfecting)
 - “conformed” to His death looks back at the kenosis passage (2:5-11)
 - Glorification (v. 11)
 - Why would Paul use “if” here?
 - He may not actually die, if the Lord were to return soon
 - He may be using it to stir the Philippians on to obedience and full trust in salvation through Jesus Christ
 - No one can hope to be sanctified or glorified apart from the finished work of Jesus Christ

How can depending on our own accomplishments be damaging to the cause of Christ and our own sanctification?

Next week: Philippians 3:12-16