**Philippians 3:1-11 – Determining What Really Matters**

As we continue in Philippians, we come to **chapter 3**. Here we are going to focus on two areas in our study this morning. First, our position in life has nothing to do with our salvation, and second, we are going to talk about letting go of things in our past that may still bother us, or worse, control us. Paul will deal with both of those aspects as we dive into this. So, let’s begin.

**First, vss. 1-11**. We will not detail everything Paul says, but we will see enough to make the point that no matter who we are, no matter our education, talents, etc., it surely does not make us heaven worthy.

Pride usually is what keeps people from accepting the gift of salvation or having excuses for not doing so. And if anyone could brag about their life, it would be Paul. But **first**, note how Paul begins the chapter with a couple of statements that we must note.

I like **vs. 1**. Paul sounds like a teacher. His **“finally”** will take two more chapters of the book. It actually does not mean that he is planning to be done in a few verses. It has the idea of what comes next, what **“remains, the rest”** of what he has to say. He transitions in his thoughts and directs the reader there.

**1) Rejoicing helps us to keep moving forward.** We are talking about our Christian life.Note that he begins with the phrase **“rejoice in the Lord.”** The theme of joy we have mentioned before. Joy is not based on circumstances, people, or situations, it is connected to our relationship with God. It is an inner calm knowing that no matter what is going on, we can rest in God’s unending grace, love, and care.

Rejoicing in the Lord means focusing on Who He is. If we truly believe Who He claims to be, the things we see around us will not control us. We will trust in the Lord that He is in control, and we can count on Who He is no matter the situation. Again, this is not a promise of never having difficult times. Paul was experiencing those. It is the promise of Who is with us when even hard times happen.

Again, our joy is not based on circumstances. If it was, we would be up and down constantly in our emotions and actions. Paul goes on to say that some of the things he is saying he had mentioned to them before but he was concerned for this church as he was for all the churches he ministered in. He notes that his writing to them, his instructions, were **“safe” (suited to confirm, can be relied on).**

Paul wanted these believers to know that what they had been taught and some of the things he was repeating was for their safety, and contrary to what the false teachers said that they had encountered, could be relied upon. We need to focus on Who God is and rejoice in His thoughts of us.

**2) Be on guard for those trying to steal our joy.** In **vs. 2** Paul told the believers at Philippi to look out for dogs, whom we will describe momentarily. Many in the church in this city would be Gentiles and there were legalistic teachers trying to pull people back under the OT law and then there were those who simply were not teaching the truth regarding Christ, salvation, God.

There are three groups, really, that Paul mentions in **vs. 2** that each of us need to watch out for. The word translated **“look out” (guard against, be alert)** is a command. Paul is strongly encouraging the Philippian Christians to be on guard, to be aware of those they encounter.

**Note:** Some commentators believe that all three terms used in **vs. 2** describe Judaizers, legalists. I can see that because these legalists followed Paul around trying to undercut his ministry and message but I think it goes beyond just that one group since Paul and the churches dealt with non-Jewish false teachers and people whose opposition to Christianity was pretty strong.

**First**, there are the **“dogs.”** It means a person of **“impure mind, a religious corrupter.”** False teachers, false believers, or just people whose way of life is not one that we want to follow. Philippi was a city of idolaters as well. It does not refer to a particular false teacher, but to all who were undercutting the truth, by life and word and who did not follow the Lord. They were corrupt in their thinking.

**Evildoers**, the **second** group mentioned, are **wicked, bad individuals**, seen in their actions and words. They are corrupt morally and ethically. We cannot allow them to influence us. We face these types of people in our life. We work with them, go to school with them, they are in our community, hopefully not in our churches. But as something to note, this is also most likely referring to false teachers of all kinds.

**Third** are the legalists. We encounter people who will try to make us come under some manmade rules and beliefs. All cults are like this. But in church, there are legalists also and we have talked about them. They judge others on their list of what makes a person spiritual or add to how we get to heaven.

**Key:** Paul says that God’s people are those who know the Lord **(vs. 3)**. We worship by the leading of the Spirit, we glory in our relationship with Christ, and we know we cannot earn our way to heaven. This statement goes contrary to the individuals mentioned in **vs. 2**. The fact we have the Spirit of God living in us proves we belong to the Lord **(Rom. 8)**.

**3) All we have is because of grace alone.** Beginning in **vs. 4**, and going through **vs. 10**, Paul talks about the fact that if anyone could probably gain their way to heaven, it would be him. There are things that he mentions in **vss. 4-6** that, from a human perspective, he could brag about and others would be impressed with. But as we shall see, it meant nothing to him once he met Christ.

Note **vs. 5** where Paul talks about if anyone could boast about their spirituality and life before God it would be him. He was under the law (meaning he lived it to the best he could), He was of the tribe of Benjamin (second son of Rachel), and this tribe, along with Judah, stayed loyal to the Davidic line when Israel split into two nations (Israel and Judah). The Benjamites were highly regarded in Israel.

Being a Hebrew of the Hebrews could mean that both his parents were Jewish, or he was educated as a Jew or that he was a role model for Judaism. He was a Pharisee, a keeper of the law. He followed it to the best of his abilities. He wanted to earn God’s favor and did what he believed he needed to do so.

In **vs. 6** he talks about his zealousness, and how he persecuted the church (though he was forgiven for what he had done to the church, it was a reminder of misplaced religious beliefs and why he was so adamant about the grace of God).

He was **“blameless”** when it came to keeping the law. He could say he did it as well as one could humanly speaking. Imagine the pressure to be perfect, to keep every aspect of the OT laws in addition to the extra rules and regulations piled on you by the Jewish teachers over the centuries. Yet Paul said he had worked hard to be found blameless, free from fault when it came to the law.

We could say that if anyone could work their way into heaven and God’s favor, it would be Paul. But as we see in **vss. 7-10**, none of that mattered. It was all about God’s grace.

In **vs. 7** Paul said that all these things, all the titles, popularity, religious standing, meant nothing when he came face to face with Jesus. Whatever the world may see as important, he learned it was not. When compared to what Christ had done in his life, these things meant nothing.

The same is true today. What are we leaning on, not even necessarily to save us, but to prove our spirituality. Titles, positions in churches, popularity. We are saved by grace, and we humbly live and put others above ourselves by grace. Some people allow their education, presuppositions, subjective beliefs, and more, to get in the way of being willing to pursue the truth about Christ.

If anything, all that Paul had could have been a detriment, damaging his pursuit of knowing Christ but he did not allow that to happen. **Vss. 8-10** are important when it comes to helping us forget the past. So, let’s continue with another point.

**4) Nothing matters more than our relationship with Christ.** This sounds trite because as a Christian we should agree with that. But knowing or saying it does not mean we are doing it. It is easy to get sidetracked with all that is going on in our lives and from the pressures around us.

Paul says he counts everything as loss when it comes to knowing Christ **(vs. 8)**. This does not mean we cannot have houses, cars, etc. But if we are leaning on anything for our spiritual growth or salvation that is man-centered then we need to re-think our position.

This is also true when it comes to spiritual growth. There are so many things in our life that take the place of God at times. We don’t spend time in the Word, praying, serving, and we allow stuff to get in the way. That is why it is okay to do a spiritual inventory and look at what is important in our life and spiritual development and do what we need to do to grow.

Yes, **Phil. 2:12** reminds us that we have a part to play in our growth but that is centered in the Word of God, not on self-righteous achievement. Paul says all the stuff that he leaned on meant nothing and he counted them as loss because they could get in the way of knowing Jesus.

What is in our way of knowing Christ? I am not saying anything is but do we have things that are so important to us that the Lord has been set aside, shall we say, in our growing as a Christian. We have other things that have become idols in our life. It can be anything. Money, people, hobbies, job. You name it. Have they taken the place of Christ as center of our life? Only we can answer that.

**Vs. 8** challenges us to think about what really matters. As Paul analyzed what he had just said, he notes that these things he counted as **“rubbish” (worthless, garbage)** when it came to knowing Christ better.

The word **“gain”** is in the subjunctive mode in the Greek meaning that Paul’s **“gaining”** Christ was dependent, for him, on counting all these things he had noted as garbage, as getting in the way of his spiritual life. These things could have kept him from salvation, but he refused to allow that to happen.

In **vs. 9** Paul is clear. Being right with God is based solely on faith in Christ alone. We are not righteous, we need God’s righteousness, His life, to make it possible for us to have a relationship with Him.

The word for **“righteousness”** in **vs. 9** can refer both to being accepted and approved by God through faith in Christ and the word also describes **“integrity, virtue, being right in our thinking and actions.”** But here it is dealing with our being saved through faith in Christ.

**Vs. 10** is a good verse for us to remember. Paul desires to know (personal, experiential knowledge) Christ and the power of His resurrection. It is the same power that raised Christ from the dead that enables us to live the life God wants for us, including, as we are about to see, a letting go of the past.

**Romans 6** talks about the new life we have because of the resurrection of Christ, for we were raised with Him to this exchanged and changed life. Sin and death have no power over us, per se, because we are identified with Christ. And Paul wanted to understand that as much as possible. Paul was willing to suffer for his faith because he knew his future was with the Lord **(vss. 10b-11)**. Christ’s resurrection ensures our being made right with God through faith in Christ.