



PHILIPPIANS: JOY FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY

LOSS IS GAIN • PHILIPPIANS 3:7-11 • 5/22/2022

MAIN POINT

Hope for the future rests in Christ and His sacrifice on the cross.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

If you were to name two things that you focus your life on, what would they be? Why are those two things so important to you?

How would you have answered these questions before you were a Christian?

Paul's claimed that his relationship with Christ was more important than everything else in his life. The things of the world—all human accomplishments—are viewed as rubbish in comparison to gaining Christ. In verses 9-11, Paul tells his readers why.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 3:7-9.

Ask volunteers to read verses 7-9 from a variety of translations. In your own words, how would you describe Paul's feelings toward the credentials in which he had formerly taken pride?

Why did Paul's view of his spiritual credentials and qualifications change?

Prior to his conversion experience, how did Paul define success in life? How did he define it after knowing Christ?

With what did Paul replace his good works?

What is righteousness? How do you become righteous before God? Does God consider you righteous right now? Why or why not?

What does “the righteousness from God that depends on faith” look like in your life?

Why such single-minded devotion to Christ? Because He is the only source of righteousness—that is, of right relationship with God. Righteousness comes as a gift from God by faith in Christ, the true way to God in contrast to human merit or works. This is Paul’s doctrine of salvation and philosophy of life. In regards to eternal salvation, humans deserve nothing, can achieve nothing, and have no reason for pride or self-assurance. God has done everything: created, disciplined, graced, given His Son Jesus on the cross for our sin, raised Him, declared us righteous and justified, adopted us as His children, and promised us resurrection and eternal life. The only human part in all this, in faith, is to accept what God has done.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 3:10-11.

According to these verses, what does Paul make the focus of his life?

Does Paul’s goal in Philippians 3:10 sound possible for most people? For you? Why or why not?

What things do you do to get to know Christ better?

Demonstrating the lack of importance of earthly things, Paul expressed what life truly meant to him. He desired resurrection from the dead, so he pursued the only way that promised resurrection. The Damascus road experience transformed him. He discovered that Judaism with its traditions, regulations, and rituals could not guarantee resurrection. Only the resurrected One could. This changed Paul’s aim in life. He wanted to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. To know Christ meant much more than knowing about Him in his mind. Knowledge is a relational term of intimacy. Paul wanted the closest possible personal relationship with Christ.

What does it look like for you to share in the suffering of Christ in your daily life? How may this be different for believers in other countries?

Read Galatians 2:20. How does this verse help us better understand Paul’s goal in life when it comes to suffering with Christ?

On what do you base your assurance of resurrection to eternal life? How does your conviction affect your daily life?

Knowing Christ involves a dynamic relationship with Him at a deep level, one that experiences the power of His resurrection—what His power over death means for Christians as they live life now. Scripture also indicates that Christians will experience difficulties and struggles in their lives because they are followers of Christ, and this is what the fellowship of His sufferings is all about. He suffered for us; we suffer for Him—albeit for an entirely different reason. Believers can enjoy Christ’s resurrection power today in the full assurance that they will experience their own resurrection from the dead at His return. In everyday living, Paul maintained that his life and the lives of his readers should reflect the difference that Christ makes.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How can you determine whether or not you value knowing Jesus as your Lord?

What hurdles keep believers from making every effort to know Christ more and become like Him? Which one is the biggest challenge for you? How can you combat that this week?

Do you view yourself as sharing in Christ’s sufferings? If so, in what specific ways? If not, what might that look like in your life?

How can you keep the future hope of eternity and the resurrection at the forefront of your mind this week? What specific things in your life will be different if you do?

PRAYER

Close by praying for Christ to reveal Himself to all who open themselves to know Him during the coming week. Pray that like Paul, you will rest in God’s righteousness, seek to know Christ and share in His sufferings, and live for the hope of the resurrection this week.

COMMENTARY

| PHILIPPIANS 3:7-11

At one time, Paul considered the factors he listed in 3:5-6 to be religious assets or pluses (gains, profits). When he met Christ, however, he considered these elements as loss—minuses to be discarded as one package (v. 7). Paul stressed the finality of his turning away from a works-righteousness to salvation by grace (v. 8). Not only did he count his former religious credentials as minuses, but more than that he continued to consider everything a person could conceive of

as religious pluses to be a loss. What Paul jettisoned was everything on which he had depended for self-generated goodness. He recognized that an intimate relationship with Christ was of supreme value. Paul used his full designation for Christ: Christ (Messiah) Jesus (Savior) my Lord (Deity). Paul had chosen to forfeit what he had counted as religious assets. In fact, he considered these to be filth (dung, refuse). He disposed of what he saw as worthless garbage to experience the greatest gain: an ever-deepening relationship with Christ.

Above everything else, Paul wanted to be found in Christ (v. 9). That is, at any point in his life, at death, or at Christ's return, he wanted to be judged as having a vital union with Christ. Dispensing with his pursuit of a works-righteousness, Paul would present a righteousness that came through faith in Christ. Such righteousness is from God based on faith. Righteousness is right standing with God that He gives by grace. Through Christ, God makes us right with Him and expects us to live rightly. Faith is not mere intellectual acceptance of facts about Christ; it is trust in and commitment to Christ. Only this response makes us right with God.

Paul wanted to know Christ in the sense of experiencing an ever-deepening relationship with Him (v. 10). In that intimate relationship, Paul wanted to have the power of His resurrection. He wanted his life and service infused with the same power that raised Christ from the dead. Resurrection power would enable him (and all believers) to be victorious over sin, to grow spiritually, and to minister effectively. In union with Christ, Paul wanted to experience the fellowship of His sufferings. Paul viewed his hardships as Christ's emissary to be an extension of Christ's sufferings; he readily shared those sufferings, albeit to a lesser degree than his Lord. Part of Paul's goal was to be conformed to Christ's death. As did Jesus (see 2:7), Paul wanted to pour himself out in service to others. Paul wanted the same kind of obedience, selflessness, and self-sacrifice Christ demonstrated. This attitude involved Paul's death to sin and self in order to live for God and others.

Paul was not expressing doubt that he would experience believers' resurrection from among the dead (v. 11). Rather, his words expressed humility. They also may have reflected his uncertainty about his trial's outcome. He might die, or he might be allowed to live. Either way, sooner or later, he would experience resurrection to eternal life. Continually developing our relationship with Christ reflects the reality of heaven and is one of the highest goals we can have. Thus deepening our relationship with Him is to be a daily priority.