**Philippians: To Live is Christ**

Theme: Life in Christ.

Theme verse: Philippians 1:21 For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Outline:

Phil 1:1-30 To Live is Christ

Phil 2:1-18 Living Like Christ (ie what does it mean to live like Christ)

Phil 3:1-21 Put Your Confidence in Christ

Phil 4:1-23 Practical Living in Christ

**Philippians 3 Put Your Confidence in Christ**

Philippians 3:1

(humorous note: Paul says “finally” when he is almost exactly half way done with the letter)

Phil 3:1 Rejoice in the Lord (as opposed to rejoicing in your accomplishments). This is a bridge to the next section. (Phil 4:4 is the classic passage on rejoicing in Philippians. The context there is very different).

Paul is about to head into a discussion of something which will surely steal our joy. He is launching on an uncomfortable topic, but he does it to safeguard them.

So, what do you rejoice in?

Now read Phil 1:1-3

(aside: the “mutilators of the flesh” are those who were trying to force male circumcision on the church. Here we see some parallels with Galatians and Colossians, implying at least some influence of Judaizing Christians in Philippi)

Paul shows some real anger here. “Watch out for those dogs.”

Q: What did Paul get angry about? (Those who would replace grace with law-keeping Gal 1:8-9)

Q: What did Jesus get angry about? (those who do not forgive others Matt 18:32-35, those whose religion leads people away from God Matt 23;15)

Q: What do YOU get righteously angry about?

v. 3 Q: What does Paul mean when he says “we are the circumcision”? (see Colossians 2:11-15) Romans 2:28-29 True circumcision is circumcision of the heart.

(And, of course, the Old Testament often pointed toward a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34, Ezekiel 37:26-28.)

We are the circumcision—the promised ones of Genesis 17:11-12 and 17:19

v. 3b Paul says “we put no confidence in the flesh (in the things the world values).

Q: Can you say that about yourself? What do you put your confidence in?

We are the opposite of these “dogs”—these circumcisers/Judaizers.

The opposite of putting confidence in the flesh is to “boast in Christ Jesus.” v. 3.

v. 4-6 Q: Why is Paul giving his resume here?

These guys think they are something special—that they have something to boast about—that they have a great spiritual resume. If anyone is something special, it is me.

Paul: I have more reason to put confidence in the flesh.

Paul:

I was circumcised in the right way at the right time.

I was a Jew among Jews.

Righteousness? A Pharisee of Pharisees. If legalistic righteousness could bring joy and a relationship with God then Paul would know.

A student of Gamaliel!!!

I was very zealous! I was very committed.

Parallel: Solomon and Ecclesiastes. Solomon: If happiness could be gained through having the things of this life, then Solomon would know. He can save us the trouble of trying it out.

Paul: If happiness and/or righteousness could be gained through being religious, then Paul would know. He can save us the trouble.

He had the right background.

He had the right training.

Phil 3:7-8 All this stuff of the flesh is garbage (v. 8), compared to knowing Jesus Christ.

Paul: It is not only man at his worst, but man at his best that is “flesh” (v. 5)

Analogy: It is kind of like switching accounting software. People always look back to the time when we changed over to the new system of accounting.

Our whole system of spiritual accounting changed when we came into Christ.

v. 7 Whatever I had considered gains, I now consider loss.

Paul added up all his accomplishments and they added up to exactly zero!

Actually, less than zero!

Q: Is that how you feel?

When Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus, all his accomplishments became filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)

Q: Would you like to spend your life living on a garbage heap? Paul had no regrets about what he left behind.

Q: What do you value????

Phil 3:8 all a loss compared to knowing Christ

3:9 to be found **in Him.**

3:10 I want to know Christ. How powerful!!!!!!

Our goal: TO KNOW HIM

*Ginosko*. OT yada Adam knew Eve. 947 times in OT *yada* = to know, to experience, experiential knowledge, to know intimately, as in a marriage relationship. (note: A Paper by Glenn Giles on the use, meaning and importance of yada is at the end of the notes on Philippians and Colossians)

Outside of Christ, your degree, your accomplishments, your experiences, etc. are garbage!!! In Christ, they have meaning, but that meaning comes only from being in Christ.

Q: How badly do you want to know Christ?

3:8 How much is knowing Christ worth? “Surpassing worth.” Incalculable value. Infinite value.

Anything divided by infinity is equal to zero.

3:8 How much is knowing Christ worth? Paul: “I have lost all things.” (his status as Hebrew of Hebrews, as a Pharisee, his right to a family, a stable life, a home, comfort, safety) Some of these things Paul gave up willingly—he walked away from them—and others were taken from him. For Paul, it is all more or less the same.

v.9 Q: How do we come to know Christ/ to be righteous? Not by obeying the Law! No, it is through faith. Romans 4:1-3.

Motyer: We reach the goal, not by stairs but by an elevator.

Q: Where do we find righteousness? Answer: in Christ (in Him v. 9) 2 Cor 5:21 no eye has seen….

Let’s recite Phil 3:10 together.

Phil 3:10b Becoming like him in his death.

The result of knowing Christ is to possess power—resurrection power.

The result of knowing Christ is to suffer like him. (1 Peter 4:12)

The result of knowing Christ, is becoming like him!!!!

Christlikeness leads us to the cross.

We will die like him, but we will be raised in glory like him.

v. 11 and so somehow… This sounds like Paul is uncertain about attaining to the resurrection. This is not the case. As before, he is uncertain about the path to this end, but not about the end.

To paraphrase, I want to know Christ and so, by whatever route he so chooses, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

(rem: Phil 1:6 I am confident that he will bring to completion. Phil 1:19-27 I am confident, but even if I am wrong, I am confident)

Philippians 3:12-14 Paul: I know where I am going, but in the meantime… Not that I have already obtained this. He knows where he is going, but he is not there yet.

I press on (literally pursue). Paul is not sitting back idly. He is pursuing righteousness—he is pursuing what God perceives him to already have.

v. 13 Forgetting what is behind… Q: What is he forgetting? Not dwelling on the past in ways that will hinder the progress of the gospel—that will cause us to doubt what God can do in our lives.

v. 14 I press on to the goal. What goal? To hear “Well done, good and faithful servant (Luke 19:17). The crown of righteousness 2 Tim 4:8 1 Cor 2:9

Q: Are you pressing on to the goal? Do you keep the goal in mind?

3:15-16 This reminds me of Phil 2:1 If you have any encouragement…, any comfort…, any sharing in the Spirit… Then surely all of you will agree with me on this!

Again, unity is in mind. We may not agree on everything, but surely we can agree on this—that all of us what to have the mind of Christ and that all of us want to know Christ.

If we have this in common, then our petty differences of doctrine, practice and even theology will work itself out in time.

Paul does not want us to major in the minors. He wants us to bear with one another—including one another’s differences.

Paul’s solution: Let us live up to what we have already attained. Let us all seek to know Christ. This we have in common.

Q: What are some of the things we may disagree on which can take away this unity?

Do not worry about small disagreements, and be busy about doing what you already know to do.

3:17 In this, follow my example. What example? His putting off of the flesh, counting it garbage and seeking with all his energy, pressing on to know Christ.

3:18-19 There are some among us and out in the world who are not of this mindset. (v. 18 “even with tears” implies Paul has examples in the church in mind)

Q: Who are the enemies of the cross? Those who value the things of the flesh/of this world over knowing Christ.

v. 19 their god is their stomach. Focused on self. Self-indulgent.

v. 19 their glory is their shame. They call good evil and evil good. (Isaiah 5:20)

v. 19 Their mind is on earthly things.

Q: How to be an enemy of God? Set your mind on earthly things.

v. 19 Their destiny is destruction. Paul: I have lost all things, but will gain all things. These people have refused to let go of worldly things, so they will lose everything.

Titus 1:16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.

Practical application: Find someone who exemplifies this and imitate them. We need the scriptures, but we also need worked-out examples as models. I think of Ron and Linda Brumley. I think of Luis and Silvia Mendez. Joe and Mindy Plum.

Phil 3:20-21 The solution: Put your mind on heavenly things.

3:20 Our citizenship is in heaven. Really!

Hebrews 11:13-16

My passport says USA, but that is not true.

Here, we live as in tents.

We do not put down roots. We are on a bridge, so we do not plant trees.

Our constitution is Matthew 5-7

Our king is Jesus

3:20b-21 We eagerly await/expect the return of Christ.

They are waiting for the things of this life. We are waiting for Christ.

They are devoted to the physical body. We are devoted to the heavenly body.

The early church had a much stronger sense of the immanence of the return of Christ.

3:21 We will have glorious Christ-like bodies. We will be like him.

Again, we see the recurring theme of becoming now what God sees us as already being and which we are confident we will become.

Paul: While we wait here, we should live as if we were already there.