

Philippians 9 - Pressing Forward

In Philippians 3:1-3, Paul wrote a strong warning to beware of false teachers. The way to beware of false teachers is to be strong in safe doctrine. Once you have set your heart to withstand the false teachers, you are ready to move forward. It's kind of like the military or the police. They have to have training they can depend on. They don't just go charging into a situation without getting their bearings and assessing what they are facing. It is then that they move forward. That is what this chapter is about.

1. No glory in the flesh -

The first thing Paul did was to take stock of where he had been. He first compared himself to the Judaizers who tried to force the Gentiles to enter Christianity through Jewish rituals. We examined that in the previous sermon and found that not only were the Gentiles not required to do that, but neither were the Jews! Their error became the occasion for Paul to examine himself. If anyone understood the error of the Judaizers, it was Paul.

Phil 3:4-6 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

He had great "street cred" amongst the Jews. He had "made his bones" with the Pharisees. He had a Jewish pedigree to be envied. Even today, there are some Jewish people that feel they are in a good

position before God just because they are Jews.

This is similar to what some people are depending on to this day. They assume they are going to heaven because they had a great-grandfather who was a deacon. They assume that they were *born* Christian (no one is *born* a Christian, you can only be *born again* to become a Christian). They assume they have practiced all the right rituals, bowing, kneeling, and knodding at all the right times. They have loved the right people and hated the others. They have all the religious jargon down.

This is not the only time that Paul spoke this way for effect. In 2 Corinthians, he plainly declared that he was speaking this way to point out the foolishness of such talk. Paul had his critics who boasted about themselves as a way to diminish his work and puff themselves up.

2Cor 11:21-23 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. 22Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I. 23Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

In Philippians 3, Paul used strong language against the Judaizers calling them dogs and deceivers. Paul used strong language to describe what he *might* glory in in the flesh. Paul used *just* as strong language to describe that *now*, since Christ came into his life and heart, how worthless that former life and theology was.

Phil 3:7-8 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,

All the things that are considered gain in this world are directly the opposite of what is true gain.

Matt 16:24-26 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

25For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

26For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

This is why the rich young ruler could not understand Jesus.

Luke 18:22-24 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

23And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

24And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

Prov 11:24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.

Prov 13:7 There is that maketh

himself rich, yet *hath* nothing:
there is that maketh himself poor,
yet *hath* great riches.

Paul learned that all of those things are *dung* when compared to what we have in Christ. If there were a harsher word than *dung* there is no doubt he would have used it. It is good to periodically take stock of where you have come from. This should not be done in a way not to dwell in the past, living with old grudges, regrets, and defeat. It should be done in a way to rejoice that you *don't* live there any longer and with appreciation for where Christ has brought you.

2. The excellence we have in Christ -

Phil 3:8-11 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,
9And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Paul spoke of *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ* with opposite language to describe the comparison of what he *now* had to the dung that was his old life. There are at least four things he identifies as part of that excellence.

- He is found *in* Christ.

This is the great foundation and grounding of the Christian life. Whatever follows is because of the fact that we are

in Christ. If you are *one* with Him, then all that you have that is Godly is because of Christ in *you*.

- He has the righteousness of Christ

Paul had nothing to glory in in himself. One of those things that he did not claim to have was any righteousness. All righteousness that he had derived from Christ in him. Before salvation, people worry about being good enough for God so they have enough points or credits to be allowed in to heaven. To make sure they have enough, they appeal to "saints" who they assume have gone on to heaven before them to use some of *their* "points." When you *are* saved, God does not merely make you righteous, He gives you the righteousness in *Christ*.

2Cor 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

- His relationship was founded on faith

The excellence he had was not tainted by the things of this world. This has always been a consideration and a struggle to man's understanding of the cosmos. The description of the relationship between the spiritual and the physical has taken one of three forms: the materialist, the idealist, and the dualist. The materialist looks for a physical explanation for everything in the world. He is generally a hypocrite who believes in evolution but talks about "mother nature." He often thinks he is an atheist but can't explain the spirit of man. The idealist thinks the material world is a delusion. Pure idealism is not commonly taught. The dualist acknowledges both the spiritual and the physical world. We are dualists with regard *to the nature of the world*. When it comes to God, He is in a *special* class by Himself because he *transcends* His creation.

John 4:20-23 Our fathers

worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in **spirit and in truth**: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

The faith that saves is pure and does not regard the obstacles of this world. It looks only to God and desires a relationship with Him above all else.

- He had a growing relationship

Paul expressed how he was coming to know Christ and the power of the resurrection as he went through suffering. When he said "That I may know him," Paul used a word that suggests that he was in the process of discovering and growing in his knowledge. What makes earthly relationships so interesting is that there is always something to discover about someone else. How much more excellent it is to discover more and more about Jesus. Some things we discover about another person *here* might be disappointing. But, the excellence of discovering more about Christ will *never* disappoint. Realizing the power of the resurrection strengthens us.

3. Pressing forward -

With the world behind him and the excellence of Christ in front of him, the natural progression was to press forward, which should be the focal point of this passage.

Phil 3:11-14 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection

of the dead.

12Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul was not suggesting that he had any doubts about where he was going to end up. To *attain* unto the resurrection of the dead does not mean to *obtain* the resurrection. To *attain* refers to arriving at your final destination. What he has in mind to *attain* to is the high calling we have in Christ. Later, in vs. 20-21 he would bring in the ultimate goal. His concern in vs. 11-14 is about his outlook and focus. It is similar to the focus in Heb 12:

Heb 12:1-3 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

This is why Vs. 13-14 are such favorite verses to preach at New Years. While forgetting those things which are behind and casting off the sins that do so

easily beset us we are able to *then* press forward. There are plenty of things worth regretting in our pasts. However, they become a snare to trip us up and hang us up if we dwell in the past. When we let the old doctrines go and the old regrets go we can be free to focus and press on in the race that is set before us.

When we are telling someone about the Gospel, your failures are of no concern to his eternal destiny. Our job is to turn those souls to Jesus, not sit back and lick our wounds over *our* past. That soul who rejects your witness is not going to care in Hell about your grievances, and neither will that soul who rejoices in heaven care. What *will* be significant to him is your *Gospel* message.

Finally, Paul commended the Philippians to follow his example in vs. 15-16. In vs. 18-21 He pointed out to them the ultimate end of those who remained behind in the world in contrast to those who walked in the excellence of Christ.

Phil 3:18-21(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* *their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.) **[This is the most apt description of those who are centered on self]**

20For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Vs. 20-21 marks the ultimate end of

our race. He will change our vile body, which is the only thing left of the old man, and turn it into the glory of the new, heavenly, body.

Gal 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

In any sport, one of the more important things is follow through. If we follow through, pressing on and not fainting, we *will* reap.

We have to be careful to not stagnate in our spiritual life. We are supposed to be engaged in a spiritual *walk*. I would like to suggest that we turn it into a "power walk" as we press forward. We not only have a calling, but the *highest* calling there is. Don't be paralyzed by your past, whether it is past regrets or past beliefs. Purpose to move forward to God. One of the first steps forward might be the step you take as you come forward to pray and commit or re-commit your life to God. For someone who has not ever asked Christ to save them and to forgive them for their sin, it might be the first step you take to eternal life.

1. No glory in the flesh - Phil 3:4-6, 2Cor 11:21-23, Phil 3:7-8, Matt 16:24-26, Luke 18:22-24, Prov 11:24, Prov 13:7
2. The excellence we have in Christ - Phil 3:8-11, 2Cor 5:21, John 4:20-23
3. Pressing forward - Phil 3:11-14, Heb 12:1-3, Phil 3:18-21(For, Gal 6:9