

22S15 Philippians 3:1-11 Goal of Life

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I hope everyone is doing well. Today I want to continue our study of Philippians with Philippians 3:1-11. Goal of Life.

Before we start, let us remember this short letter was most likely written by the Apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome. Paul had first visited Philippi during his second missionary journey, and he has great affection for the church in Philippi. This letter is sometimes called “the Joy Epistle” because of thankful and joyful tone. But remember Paul is in prison in Rome, not very happy circumstances.

I’m reading from the New King James version (NKJV) today. But of course, you can use whatever translation you choose.

Let’s read Philippians 3:1-11 (NKJV) *¹Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. ²Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! ³For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, ⁴though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

Let’s pray. Dear heavenly father, guide our discussion today such that your message is clear to each of us. As we read your word from Philippians, help us see why Paul is so thankful and joyful despite his situation. I pray that you help me stay out of the way so your hope and peace can be shared with us. I pray this in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

So, before we start studying today. This section in many of our bibles has a heading. Of course, these headings are not part of the original letter Paul sent. But I do find these interesting. I like to see what the many translations say to round my understanding and prepare me for the text, Like this title “All for Christ” (NKJV), or “The Priceless Value of Knowing Christ” (NLT) or “Righteousness through Faith” (KJV) or “No Confidence in the Flesh” (NIV) or I like the what the NAS says, “The Goal of Life”. Regardless of your translation title, Paul is about to tell us how we should be seen by others as a representative of Christ.

So, let's break these verses down a little more. Starting with Philippians 3:1-4a (NKJV) *¹Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. ²Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! ³For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, ⁴though I also might have confidence in the flesh.*

Paul is addressing a specific situation but will use it as an example to us to stay focused on Jesus. He starts this section with "*rejoice in the Lord*", then he gets straight to the point. Beware of dogs. Beware of evil doers. Beware of the mutilation. It appears people had been coming to Philippi and teaching Jewish traditions were required to be Christian. These are commonly called Judaizers in the Bible, referring to those who taught to be Christian you had to be Jew or follow the Jewish traditions. Paul knows this is not true. This teaching is not from Jesus. In fact, in Acts Chapter 15, the early church address this it was called the Jerusalem Council. Please read it but what they concluded was you do not have to be a Jew or follow Jewish tradition to be a Christian. In fact, circumcision is not mentioned in the list of things the Council advised gentile Christian to do. The list was short, they said this is Acts 15:28-29 (NKJV) *²⁸For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: ²⁹that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from acts of sexual immorality; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.*" For us, sexual immorality is the one that applies to us today. We no longer have foods that had been offered to idols in our market, we have better hygiene practices so the blood and strangled things don't really apply to us either but are probably a good practice. And that's it. Paul actually says in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, that following your conscience is best. Food offered to idols was cheaper in the markets, so people often bought these things. Paul is saying eating it is fine but be careful that you don't do it openly because people are watching and might think you are worshipping those false gods or other Christians might have strong opinions about this, so avoid the conflicts.

Back to Philippians. Let's see how Paul addresses this issue of circumcision. Philippians 3:4b-6 (NKJV) *If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

Paul is boasting a bit here but He is right to do so. If anyone had credentials it was Paul. He knew the Jewish law as well or better than anyone of his day. He was a Pharisee, in his zeal for God he had persecuted the church. But Paul new, following the law of Moses means nothing. Only Jesus matters.

Let's continue reading. Philippians 3:7-11 (NKJV) *⁷But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the*

excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Everything Paul had is rubbish compared to Jesus. He was educated, He had a position of effluence in Jewish society and he threw that all away because it meant nothing. Only the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord matters. We have nothing of worth in ourselves only through faith in Jesus. Faith in God, that we may know Him. Think about that for a moment. God has made a way for us to know Him. The creator of everything. We know Him. We know the power of His resurrection. We know the fellowship of His sufferings. We know sacrifice He made for us in His death on the cross. And we know that through our faith in Christ we attain eternal life.

Let's review.

- 1) Why is Paul angry? Judaizers had been teaching false doctrines in Philippi. This concept of having to be both Jew and Christian to be saved. We have the comfort of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 as well.
- 2) What was the specific issue? Circumcision. I'm not going to explain it to you. But for adult males. The concept of being circumcised as an adult was very troubling. Painful. But Paul calls this mutilation and unnecessary to follow Jesus.
- 3) What about Paul's credentials? Paul says rubbish. Even though few had better credentials than Paul, he knew knowledge of Jesus was far more valuable. This is an important lesson for us today.

Let me leave you with this, credentials are important in our world today. People with degrees, PhDs and MDs. Pastors with fancy degrees from XYZ schools. People who know important people or people who have written books, etc etc. These are worldly credentials and they are all rubbish compared to our Lord Jesus. I agree with this. I have many of those worldly credentials myself, PhD, PE, I've written books, I've meant and know some very powerful people in this life. I've traveled, I've made money, I've lived in a big house, etc etc. It's all rubbish compared to my Lord Jesus Christ. I don't treat people differently based on their credentials. We are all just sons and daughters of God. The Kingdom of God is simple. There is Jesus our King and then the rest of us servants. No hierarchy. We are all at the same level. Servants to the King of kings, and Lord of lords, King Jesus.

Let's Pray. Heavenly Father thank you for this letter from Paul. Help us to read and meditate on this letter so we can hear the message you have for us. Help us to remember who you are Lord. You are our king, king of kings. You are our Lord, Lord over everyone. We can trust you, Lord. Help us to do what you ask and not worry about what others are doing. I pray this in your Name Lord Jesus. Amen

I hope you will join us for the rest of our study of Philippians. Please email me comments or feedback. Thank you for joining me today. Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.