

Finding Gain in Christ

Philippians 3:1-14

I. We are going to spend some time together in **Philippians 3**

- A. In writing to the Church at Philippi, as he often did with other churches, Paul shared some very personal information about himself as a way of getting across a point that he needed to make;
- B. Chapter 3 is one such example; The faith of the group in Philippi is being threatened by the teachings of a group of Jews, and in response, Paul is going to share some details of his background, his conversion to Christ, as well as his daily battles as a Christian to help steer the brethren their on the right path;
 - 1. And while we should read and remember the passage in that context, there is another theme that comes about by Paul making his point; *Paul had no regrets over anything he lost to follow Christ; He has nothing but joy in everything he has gained by laying hold of Christ.*
 - 2. This is the idea that I want us to take hold of tonight;

II. Verses 1-3

- A. These first few verse establish the setting for the chapter;
 - 1. In the first verse Paul is preparing to re-address a problem in order to help the brethren there stand firm;
 - 2. The end of verse two tells us what that was; the false teaching of the Jews that if one was to truly be a child of God, then they must also keep the covenant of Circumcision;
 - a) Paul makes no attempt to hide his feelings about these men who were threatening the stability of his children in the faith;
 - b) They are evil; they are false; they are dogs;
- (1) I don't know that this is what Paul envisioned but it calls to mind the image used more than once of a dog eating the scraps from the master's table-- These men had followed at Paul's heels from town to town just

waiting for him to leave so they could rush in behind him and devour whatever they could find;

(2) There is no hiding how passionate Paul is about defending the truth for the sake of his brethren;

3. In verse three he points out that the circumcision those men practiced and taught, was nothing but a physical act; It was those such as Paul and other Christians that had circumcised their hearts that were pleasing to God;

How this relates to our context:

- *This is the context that our theme of Gain in Christ starts to surface;*

- *Paul is again being faced with the challenge of defending against these Jews;*

- *He is trying to demonstrate that there is no point in boasting in the flesh; we can only boast through Christ--*

- *In order to do that; he will use his own life as an example:*

III. Verses 4-6

A. I can almost imagine someone objecting to Paul; well its easy for you to say that there is nothing to be gained by boasting in the flesh; *you don't have anything to boast about!*

I. As Paul transitions from verses 3 to 4, he is essentially saying *there is nothing to be gained by trusting in the flesh; trust me I know-- If anyone could have confidence in the flesh, it would be me:*

a) He begins by stating that not only was he circumcised; it was on the 8th day; in other words; when my parents circumcised me; they did everything exactly according to the law;

b) Furthermore he was a natural born member of God's chosen people; The tribe of Benjamin; a "Hebrew of Hebrews"

(i) Our equivalent would be saying that someone is a true patriot; they bleed red, white, and blue:

c) Not only was he born into God's chosen people, into a family that kept the law, he himself chose to devote himself to the pursuits of the Pharisees;

- (i) He sat at the feet of Gamaliel; he knew the law front to back;
 - d) But Paul did more than learn the Law; he sought to put it into action and uphold it;
 - (i) Paul demonstrated his love for the Jewish way of life by carrying out extreme persecution; Beating, arresting, and executing an untold number of Christians;
 - e) he ends verse 6 by stating that no one could lay a charge against him when it came to matters of the law:
- B. **Not even the most zealous** of Paul's Jewish opponents could argue with his physical heritage and accomplishments;
- 1. Paul's resume stood head and shoulders above others; He was the Jewish equivalent of someone who had been born into well known wealthy family, attended Harvard and graduated at the top of his class; and was destined to be elected to a high political office; only to decide at the last moment to walk away from everything;
 - 2. If someone were to do that today the new's cycles would carry it non-stop; there was be rampant speculation that there was some scandal, or that he had gone mad; but what is Paul's perspective?

IV. Verses 7-11

- A. Verse 7 should always make an impact on us as readers; we live in a world where the average person isn't willing to budge an inch in order to take hold of the Gospel;
 - 1. Its a struggle simply to get most people to set aside one day out of their week to worship the Lord; There is too much else to do!
 - 2. The idea that someone would give up everything they held dear in their life to act on faith that they are inheriting something better is completely foreign to most;
 - 3. But Paul did exactly that; and he did it on a level that few can relate to; not many of us are in such a high position in life;
 - a) But in spite of how much he let go; he didn't consider it to be a sacrifice; He counted it as loss;

- b)** In other words it was nothing; it was worthless; it didn't hurt him in anyway to have to part with it;
- (r)** Verse 8 seems to further emphasize his point by saying that all things are loss compared with the greatness that is gained through Jesus;
 - (a)** I would take that to mean that there is nothing that you could have added to Paul's situation to where he suddenly would have no longer been willing to part with his physical accomplishments;
 - (b)** All things-- whatever it may be that you have to give up-- in comparison to Jesus Christ-- is garbage;
- 4.** Because nothing can compare to a righteousness that comes from God through faith;
 - a)** Because it brings with it the power of the resurrection from the dead;
 - (r)** Now, I don't believe that Paul is saying that this is an attitude that comes naturally; it is something that we have to give ourselves over to; it takes work, and I believe that he is at least in part, addressing that in the verses that follow:

V. Verses 12-14

- A.** It is almost as though Paul switches gears, to quickly make the point that he is not boasting in himself having already achieved all this;
 - r.** For Paul to maintain this frame of mind is a decision that has to be made on a day to day basis
 - a)** The key is found in focus: "One thing I do:
 - (r)** Not "these many things I dabble with"... Paul's focus was on the prize that had been set before him
 - (2)** Anything that came up and obstructed his view has to be cast aside
 - 2.** Must not only put it behind; but must forget it; no longing for the past
 - 3.** What is it that we are holding on to? Let go!