

Identity and Purpose (Philippians 3:1-16)

Where is a follower of Jesus' confidence supposed to rest? That he/she is forgiven, accepted, loved and welcomed into God's family? When it comes to their identity as followers of Jesus, the apostle Paul warns the Philippian Christians about putting their confidence in the wrong things. Whether it's "good" works, religious activities or personal achievement, Philippians 3 reminds us that our confidence is to be rooted in something else altogether. The result is not only a renewed perspective filled with joy, but a deep resolve filled with purpose.

1. Watch out! | The danger of misplaced confidence (Philippians 3:1-3)

The Philippians were told by some they had to follow certain Jewish customs in order to be a part of the people of God. Faith in Jesus was great BUT there was more needed in order to be "secure" / confident. V3 "Confidence in the flesh" = human ability apart from dependence on God.

"Any human credential that one might try to gain God's acceptance / approval."

"The pride of physical descent cherished by the Jews."

2. Make the comparison | The surpassing value of Jesus (Philippians 3:4-9)

"They want to boast huh? Well..." VV4-6 Rattles off a list of accomplishments

VV7-8 Accounting, financial terms. Imagine two columns titled: "GAIN (profit) and LOSS"

V8 *"I consider them rubbish (dung)!"* *"Because of the 'surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.'"*

Have you made the comparison? Matthew 16:25-26; Luke 18:10-14

V9 *Righteousness* is a loaded Old Testament word. Describes God's character; he *always* does what is right and good. He's faithful and just to fulfill his promises. = a "right-ness" before God. Romans 3:21-26

3. Press on! | A deep resolve filled with purpose (Philippians 3:10-16)

V10 know = experiential knowledge

VV12-14 *"This is what I'm running after, this is what I value!"* 1 Corinthians 9:24-26; 2 Timothy 4:7-8

V14 This "heavenward call; upward call" is NOT some "cloud in the sky" existence we wait for. It's a life "in Jesus" to be lived in the here and now; it's "resurrection life."

What if we adopt Paul's perspective and make it our own?

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Read Philippians 3:1-16. What stands out to you? How did the Spirit of God use this passage and sermon to speak to you? What encouragement or conviction did it bring?
2. The badge of family, ethnic membership for the male Jew was circumcision, a mark on the physical body. There was a group saying the Philippians need this mark in order to be acceptable to God. In response who does Paul say are the true "circumcision"? See Philippians 3:1-3
3. Many people have the idea in their heads that if they do "good enough" God will accept them and if they do bad he won't. That thought is loaded with all kinds of problems like who actually determines what is good or bad and how do we know if we've done good enough? It also brings uncertainty, shame and leads to a performance based relationship with God. Can you relate to this? Why is it so easy to fall into a "performance" based relationship with God? Where is a follower of Jesus' confidence supposed to rest?
4. Read Philippians 3:7-11. What were Paul's "profit" and "loss"? What is he comparing everything else to? Have you made the comparison? See also Matthew 16:25-26
5. When we forget the value of something we can find ourselves treating it poorly or neglecting it altogether. This can easily happen when it comes to our relationship with Jesus. Why is knowing Christ Jesus so valuable to Paul? How can we ensure it remains the most valuable thing to us?
6. In Philippians 3:9 Paul talks about "not having a righteousness of my own." What is "righteousness" and where does it come from? How is it given / received? See Romans 3:21-26
7. Read Philippians 3:12-16. What is the goal of Paul's life? What motivates him to keep pressing on toward the goal?
8. How does a clear grasp of your identity in Christ (that you are part of the family of God, accepted and loved) bring with it strength and purpose to "press on"?