

Sunday, February 6, 2022 | Standalone Teaching

Philippians 3:1-16 | "What's Next?"

Announcements:

Be in prayer for my family as we'll be heading to OH for my Granddad Strouse's funeral this week. There will be no Wednesday Night service, and Pastor Bob will be speaking for me next week.

Celebration: Joe Cuocci cancer free and already an offer on their house. They need help loading up a pod on Saturday, February 12th. See Joe for details.

Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." In this, he pointed out that one of the biggest hindrances to progress is the fear of the unknown. "What if we fail?" "What'll it be like when we get there?" "All change is bad!" And, it's worth pointing out these are legitimate concerns. After all, just because something is new doesn't mean it's better.

Examples:

- **New Coke** <INSERT PICTURE> - "Over the 15 years leading up to 1985, Coca-Cola's flagship cola drink had been losing market share to Pepsi Cola. To compete, the company changed the drink's formula for the first time in 99 years -- but the move today is considered one of the greatest flops of all time. New Coke was met with public outrage and lasted only a few months. The company reintroduced its older formula, rebranded as Coca-Cola Classic."¹
- **The DeLorean** <INSERT PICTURE> - "In 1973, auto executive John DeLorean left General Motors to form the DeLorean Motor Company. After years of production delays, the DeLorean DMC-12 was released in January 1981. The car's unique design was poorly received, however, and by 1982 less than half of the 7,000 DeLorean units produced had been sold. The DeLorean is widely recognized due to its use as a converted time machine in the "Back to the Future" series. However, the first of these films was

¹ Sauter, Michael B., Evan Comen, Thomas C. Frohlich and Samuel Stebbins, "When product launches go awry: 50 worst product flops of all time," September 27, 2018, *USA Today*, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2018/07/11/50-worst-product-flops-of-all-time/36734837/>, [accessed February 4, 2022].

released in 1985, far too late to save the ill-fated brand. DeLorean filed for bankruptcy in 1982.”²

But while Roosevelt was right, an uncertain future does have a way of incapacitating us; I’d argue that nostalgia is far more effective at neutralizing improvement than fear. How many of us have an “old dog” in our life who may be capable of learning “new tricks” but just simply refuses to? They are so nostalgic for the good ‘ol days that they refuse to believe that there are better days on the horizon.

But our God is a creative God. Every day he's at work building something new. And he doesn't want to do it alone. As we talked about two weeks ago, he engages us in the work of the ministry. **Jesus recruits sinners to help him rescue sinners.** Those who genuinely believe they have been called into a new and thriving position will not be satisfied with monotony. Like William Carey—the father of Modern Mission—faithful followers of God will not only “expect great things from God” they will also “attempt great things for God.” Why be satisfied with a sub-par life when God came “that [we] might have life, and that [we] might have it more abundantly” (Jn. 10:10).

Today, we'll dive into a passage that speaks to this very thing.

READ: Philippians 3:1-16 (ESV)

¹Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

²Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes

² Ibid.

from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Paul said we're doing one of two things...

i. Looking backwards.

The false teachers in Philippi claimed superiority based on their credentials. Paul quickly puts this argument to rest. Interestingly, he does so by **not** comparing them to Jesus, though that undoubtedly would've worked. Instead, Paul compares the false teachers to himself. And even by this standard, they were not as "worthy" as he was.

READ: Philippians 3:4-6 (ESV)

If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Like a list of references on a resume, Paul detailed 7 things that would set him apart from the Judaizers:

1. **"...circumcised on the eighth day..."** – unlike these Judaizers who circumcised people as adults, Paul had been circumcised for his entire life.
2. **"...of the people of Israel"**- Those who converted to Judaism were often viewed as "second-class" Israelites. Paul here distinguishes himself by pointing out he had always been a Jew.
3. **"...of the tribe of Benjamin..."** – Paul was not just any Jew; he had a firm grasp of his lineage. He could trace his family line all the way back to Joseph's baby brother, Benjamin.

4. **“...a Hebrew of Hebrews...”** – Unlike many Jews who had incorporated Greek culture into their life, Paul stood apart. It did not matter where he was; Paul spoke, looked, and acted like a Hebrew at all times.
5. **“...as to the law, a Pharisee...”** – While, strictly speaking, the Jews were mostly united in their religious practices, there were different sects within the religion. But of them all, the Pharisees were regarded as not only the strictest offshoots of Judaism, but they also seemed to be the most faithful to the Scriptures.
6. **“...as to zeal, a persecutor of the church...”** – Before Paul converted to Christianity, he was so committed to the Jewish faith that he actively pursued and persecuted Christians.
7. **“...as to righteousness under the law, blameless...”** – Paul wasn’t saying he was sinless. Considering the claim before this one, Paul was utilizing sarcasm. Instead, Paul was claiming that he was perceived to be above reproach. As far as the Jew’s teaching about such things, Paul was perfect.

But even these impressive credentials were of little value compared to knowing Jesus.

READ: Philippians 3:7-8 (ESV)

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

There is a clear progression to Paul’s words. After Paul met Jesus, he thought these seven things were not only worthy of abandonment (“counted as loss”), but they were “rubbish.” “Rubbish” is the Greek word **σκύβαλον** (*skoo'-bal-on*) which, literally translated, isn’t “rubbish” but excrement (i.e., “dung” KJV). These things which Paul prided himself on before Christ were now, in his mind, seen as a bad investment. So bad was this investment that it was like he had dumped his life savings into buying a pile of manure. Paul takes his impressive pedigree and says it's like "dung" compared to knowing Jesus. The moment we start viewing our crowning achievements as manure is the moment we've begun to grasp the actual value of salvation.

EXAMPLE: Lego house

Rather than see Jesus, these false teachers only saw themselves. They were too busy looking backwards at their own accomplishments. In doing so, they blinded themselves to what God was trying to do in their midst. This is why, unlike them, Paul directed his attention elsewhere. He would not be bogged down by the past. Instead, he would look to the future, to something far better.

ii. Pressing forwards.

Leaving behind the “old ways,” Paul presses forward into a new and better life. What follows in this passage is the single greatest description of what theologians call soteriology. Commonly known as the “Christian walk,” it is the process by which Jesus makes us more like him.

READ: Philippians 3:9-11 (ESV)

...be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but [having] that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Paul explains that the Christian walk is comprised of three parts:

- a. **Justification** – Like us, when Paul put his faith in Jesus, he no longer stood on his own merits. Instead, his righteousness was that of the Lord. God credited the perfection of Christ to Paul's account. Salvation became a gift given rather than a reward earned.
- b. **Sanctification** – Just as a child takes time to grow; when Paul got "saved," he was not instantly made into a mature Christian. That is a process that takes time. This does not mean that salvation is progressive. Had Paul died immediately after getting saved, he would've gone to heaven. However, to mature in our Christian walk takes time. Not only that, it is, as Paul explained, to know "the power of his resurrection." That is to say, the new life. It also meant that Paul would have to "share [Christ's] sufferings, becoming like him in his death." That is to say, Paul would suffer for his attachment to Christ. In a manner of speaking, the process of sanctification is a paradox. To be sanctified through Jesus is to experience new life in this life and, simultaneously, to experience death in various ways.
- c. **Glorification** – Whereas being justified in faith was the beginning of Paul's walk and being sanctified through knowledge and persecution was the middle bit of Paul's journey, his final destination was that glorification where all believers will experience “the resurrection from the dead.” Death for the unbeliever is the most depressing part of life, whereas death, for the believer, is the most uplifting part of life. This is not to discount the sadness we feel when losing a loved one. But when a Christian dies, our mourning is tempered by the knowledge that we will not only see them again but, when we do, they'll be perfected. They will not be in pain. They will not be in bodies ravaged

by time. They will be in their glorified state where sin and death no longer have any sway over their life.

Paul refused to look backwards, instead choosing rather to press forward. From his beginning on the road to Damascus where he was justified in faith, through the countless miles of travel as a missionary where he was being sanctified, all so that he might “win” a prize that had already been promised to him where he would be glorified once he’d finished his race.

SO, WHAT’S THE TAKEAWAY?

Forget the **past** and forge ahead for the **prize** of Christ.

READ: Philippians 3:12-16 (ESV)

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: **forgetting what lies behind** and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ **I press on toward the goal** for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are **mature** think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

At the time of writing this, Paul had yet to be glorified. He was still in the process of sanctification. And the one thing that pushed him forward was the prize at the end of that proverbial race. Jesus Christ had already gone before and showed the way. He was already at the finish line, awaiting those who take up their crosses and follow him. Paul wanted to finish that race well, and the only way he knew how was to...

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Video Description

Standalone Teaching | "What's Next?"

TEXT: Philippians 3:1-16

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: