

Philippians 3:1-11 Discussion Questions

Sermon Outline

Introduction

- Define irony
 - *Irony-a state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what one expects and is often amusing as a result.*
 - Example- The Battle of Yorktown
- Read Philippians 2.5-11
- Table of Contents
 - An urgent exhortation
 - Contrasting identities
 - Pursuing surpassing worth

An urgent exhortation (v.1-2)

- Rejoice in the Lord- not a call to just positive mental attitude, but outward expression of contentment and joy in the Lord in the midst of difficulty
 - Philippians 1.18- in the face of those preaching the Gospel for wrong motives, Paul rejoices
 - Philippians 1.18- considering his potential death, Paul declares he will rejoice
 - Philippians 2.17-18- Paul's willingness to be used sacrificial to affirm the complete work of Christ in the Philippians is reason from him to rejoice and an invitation for the Philippians to rejoice with him
 - Philippians 2.28- A call to rejoice, though Paul was losing proximity to a brother who was suffering alongside him and in the face of Epaphroditus' near death experience
- Dogs, Evil doers and Mutilators of the Flesh
 - Dogs- unclean beast that wander and scavenge in trash
 - Often a Jewish sentiment regarding Gentiles
 - Evil doers, more properly translated evil workers
 - Comparison to statements about Epaphroditus who was a worker for the sake of the Gospel, these are workers who are not doing morally evil actions, but rather working against the Gospel by their instance on earning righteousness through tradition and effort
 - Mutilators of the flesh- different word than circumcision

- Because they are not the covenant people of God by way of trusting in Christ, their action of circumcision is merely a destruction of their bodies not a sign of covenant.
- Example- Omega Psi Phi//Military tattoos

Contrasting Identities (v.3-6)

- We are the circumcision- Contrast between the faithful believers and those who would force legalistic practices and traditions on believers
 - We worship by the Spirit
 - We glory in Christ
 - We put no confidence in the flesh
- Examples of false confidence in the flesh (adaptation of the thoughts of Peter O'Brien)
 - Circumcised on the eight day
 - Natural born son of the covenant, not a pagan convert
 - Of the people of Israel
 - Clear racial descent
 - Of the tribe of Benjamin
 - An elite family
 - Benjamin was the only son of Jacob born in the Promised Land
 - Saul, Israel's first king was from the tribe of Benjamin
 - The only tribe that stayed with Judah after Israel separated into two kingdoms
 - A Hebrew of Hebrews
 - A model Hebrew, not some lesser version
 - A Pharisee
 - Trained to be among the class of those who upheld the strictest adherence of the law. These were the descendants of those who fought the Greek invaders to keep their ancestral traditions
 - A persecutor of the church
 - Expended the effort to fight those who he believed to be the enemies of God
 - Blameless
 - As could be discerned by the flesh, Paul lived an exemplary life according to the Law

Pursuing Surpassing Worth (v.7-11)

- Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of God's plan to subdue all authorities that would oppose him and bring to fruition the transformation of those that belong to him

Lyrics to Jesus is Better by Aaron Ivey

Implications

- Christ is the ground and goal of our faith
- Misplaced confidence is one of the most dangerous deceptions in the life of the believer

Discussion Questions

Read Phil 3:1-11

1. This passage is essentially about putting our confidence in Christ instead of our inherited qualities/privileges or personal achievements.
 - a. If Jesus is clearly the only perfect person and accomplished what we could never do, why are we even tempted to put our confidence in anything besides Jesus? What in our nature leads us to find our value in or put our hope in anything besides Jesus?
2. In vv. 5-6, Paul lays out a list of things that could easily give him grounds for confidence in himself. This list is organized into inherited qualities/privileges and personal achievements.
 - a. Take some time to reflect and answer this in your own mind: if you were to make your own list of things that you could put your confidence in, what would you put on it? What inherited qualities or privileges do you view as an asset or positive? What personal achievements stand out?
 - b. In v. 7 Paul explains how all the things which he used to view as his assets he now views as loss in comparison to knowing Christ. What does that mean?
 - c. Which of your "gains" is it most challenging for you to view as a "loss" in comparison to knowing Christ? Another way to put it is what are you most tempted to find your validation in? What do you point to "prove" yourself?

d. Why do you struggle so much with this particular item? In other words, why is it so valuable to you that you trust in it?

3. Paul speaks of “knowing Christ.” What does it mean to know Christ?

a. Paul unpacks this concept with the following phrases:

1) That he would know the power of the resurrection

2) May share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death

3) That I might attain the resurrection from the dead

b. While the “resurrection from the dead” is a future event that none of us have experienced yet, both resurrection power and Christ’s suffering are present aspects of the Christian life.

1) How have or are you currently experiencing the power the resurrection?

2) How have or are you currently experiencing his suffering?

4. Pastor Mike spoke of making Jesus both the “grounds and goal of our faith.”

a. What does this mean?

b. What does this look like? How has this looked in your life?

1) What did the process of putting all your confidence in Jesus look like?

2) How have you been learning to value Jesus more than anything else?
What has this process looked like?

5. For many of us, the temptation to put our confidence in others things is complicated and subtle. In their case, the false teachers that Paul is dealing with were relying on religious and symbolic acts and outward behavior as the grounds of being confident before God.

a. What religious ceremonies or symbolic acts do we have today that we might tempted to rely upon as signs of our salvation?

b. If ceremonies and symbols (e.g. baptism and communion) don't save us, what is their value?

c. While good works don't save us, they are evidence (the fruit) of our salvation. How can we tell when we are doing what is right in order to somehow earn our salvation versus doing what is right out of love and gratitude toward God for saving us already?