

NOTES FOR SPEAKING

Meeting: Freshwaters Christian Fellowship

Date & Time: 20/09/09

Title: Phil 3:1-11

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Introduction

The temperature is raised in the passage we are going to be reading this morning. Paul gets worked up as he passionately warns the Philippians not to be misled by those who claimed salvation came through a physical act of circumcision rather than through their faith in Jesus.

Although Paul here challenges a heresy that was common in the early church because of their Jewish background, the principle that he was highlighting was that we are saved by our faith in Jesus and what He has done – not by faith in our own works – in what we have done.

We may not be troubled by people today trying to persuade us that we need to be circumcised to be saved – but there are plenty who claim that salvation is through our own efforts rather than what Christ has done.

It is very tempting to believe that we have to pay for salvation somehow – by doing good, by following rules, even by going to church, or telling others about Jesus. Somehow it is easier for us to accept something we have earned, rather than a gift we don't deserve. The truth is that this ultimate prize, this gift of eternal life and eternal relationship with God can never be earned and can only be received by faith.

As we look at this passage let's examine our own understanding and attitude – do we value human effort above faith and relationship to God? – If we do we need to have a change of mind.

Phil 3:1-11

Rejoice in the Lord

Our passage this morning begins with Paul's encouragement to 'rejoice in the Lord' – or to 'delight yourself in the Lord'. This was not so much a call to worship as an encouragement to find our pleasure or delight in God. This may cause us to worship, but it is much more about where our heart is day to day.

Where do you find your greatest pleasure – is it in loving and knowing the Lord, or is it in the attractions the world has to offer – fame, riches, power – or even in good things like relationships with friends and family, or even in serving God?

Psm 37:4 says '**Take delight in the Lord and He will give you your heart's desires**' – what is your heart's desire if you are delighting in the Lord – yes it is Him - & so what will He give you – yes Himself! – What a wonderful promise – **the more we delight ourselves in her Lord the more He will give of Himself to us.**

The Old has passed the new has come (Obedience to the Law was no longer the root to salvation – it is faith in Jesus)

Paul goes on to talk to the Philippians about those who were saying that they need to be circumcised in order to be saved – and he gets a bit worked up using very strong language.

What was he worked up about? – It wasn't the act of circumcision itself – he had been circumcised – of course all of the early Christians – and even Jesus himself would have been circumcised because

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they were Jewish. The problem was not about being circumcised, it was about saying that people had to be circumcised in order to be saved.

This topic comes up a number of times in the New Testament because as the gospel spread amongst the non Jewish peoples, there was a band of Jewish believers who went from place to place saying that faith in Jesus was not enough – believers also had to be circumcised.

Paul reacts so strongly against this heresy because it placed an emphasis upon an outward show of obedience rather than upon someone's faith. It also confused the new covenant which is based on faith in what Jesus has done, with the old covenant which was about observance of rules and rituals.

Hebrews 8 to 10 goes into some detail to show that the new covenant replaces the old – it is not to supplement the old – it completely replaces it.

The reason why this was so important is that the clear message of good news, that salvation is through believing in Jesus and what he has done and accepting Him as Lord, was being confused and undermined by reliance upon an external physical act – or even worse by a belief that the old covenant was still in operation.

Our own efforts are rubbish at gaining salvation

Paul goes on to say quite clearly in **v 3** We rely upon what Christ Jesus has done for us, we put no confidence in human effort – Paul then goes on to describe all of the things he was once so proud of and says guess what – they're all rubbish at gaining salvation. Paul wasn't saying that those things were bad in themselves – indeed many of them were either unavoidable (e.g. family line) – or were good to do in themselves – to try to keep the laws God had given – like the 10 commandments – was not wrong – but it could never save you.

What are you relying upon for your salvation? – every effort we make to try and save ourselves is rubbish – they may well be good things in their own right – but they can't save us.

Many people who have a belief in God but do not yet know him will say something along the line of **'well I do my best, I'm a good person, I try not to hurt others, I help others as much as I can – I give to charity'**. All those things are great – but you won't be saved by doing good things.

Others may be church goers, **if you talk to them about salvation they may talk about regularly coming to church, about money they give, songs they sing, prayers they pray**. All these things are great – but they cannot save you.

As long as we hold onto any notion that our own works contribute to our salvation then we are on dangerous grounds. Salvation rests solely upon what Jesus has done and whether we receive that – there is no other way. **What has Jesus done** – He died in our place and took the punishment for our sins when He hung on the cross – then as He was raised from the dead by the power of God He demonstrated that the power of sin was broken. How do we receive – let's look at and explain the prayer of salvation we often use.

Nothing compares to the priceless privilege of knowing Jesus my Lord more and more

Now let me read verse 8 from the Amplified bible. **'Yes, furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, the supreme advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him (of perceiving and recognising and understanding Him more fully and clearly). For His sake I have lost everything and consider it all to be more rubbish (refuse, dregs), in order that I may win (gain) Christ (the Anointed One)'**

We can see in Paul's language that he is almost bursting with enthusiasm for His relationship with Jesus. It is so much more precious to him than anything else and He is determined to know Jesus more deeply and more intimately as each day goes by.

How much value do we place on knowing Jesus – is our relationship with Him more important than everything else. Do we expect to deepen in our relationship with Him or are we content with where we are.

There are three things that will crucially affect how close will be our relationship with Jesus:-

1. Do we desire it?
2. Do we have faith it can happen
3. Will we pursue it?

As we looked at earlier in Psm 37:4 – if our heart's desire is the Lord then He will give us the desire of our heart.

Our focus is on knowing Christ, experiencing the power of His resurrection sharing in His sufferings and be transformed into His likeness.

As for Paul – he leaves us know doubt about the desire of his heart – let me read to you again from the Amplified version – this time **verses 10 and 11**.

'[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognising and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope] that if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body].'

Would you say your determined purpose is to know Christ? – or is it just an optional extra? Is there a sense of progression – day by day seeing more aspects of His character, day by day growing in our love for Him?

It is so easy to become distracted by so many things – even if good in themselves if they cause our heart to grow cold towards the Lord then the effect is bad.

I have recently realised that my heart has been growing cold, that my love for the Lord has not been burning as brightly as it has done in the past. It is so easy to get caught up with serving Him – even with praying for and seeking for Him to move – while forgetting who He really is and what He desires most -relationship with us.

I'm not beating myself up about this – instead I recognise it as a call, as an opportunity to move to a new level of intimacy. I am asking the lord to touch my heart – to reveal to me Himself.

How about you? – is God calling you to a new place of intimacy? **1 Chron28:9** records David's words of wisdom to his son Solomon – **'And Solomon, my son, learn to know the God of your ancestors intimately. Worship and serve Him with your whole heart and a willing mind. For the Lord see every heart and knows every plan and thought. If you seek Him you will find Him. But if you forsake Him He will reject you forever.'**

Now is the time to seek the Lord, now is the time for intimacy – now is the time to know God not just to know of Him. Let's seek Him with all of our hearts.

Dead with Christ raised with Christ.

Paul goes on to express His desire that He would not just know Christ – but that He would experience the mighty power of God that raised Him from the dead – and that by identification with Christ's suffering he might be transformed into His likeness experiencing, in the words of the Amplified bible, '[spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body].'

Paul is not here primarily talking about physical death and resurrection – he is talking about a death and resurrection that takes place now which will one day lead to physical death and resurrection.

This is what Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about in **John 3** when he said you must be born again. This is what we celebrate and confess in the act of Baptism. We choose to die to our old self, to our sinful nature, to our selfishness and pride – we are cleansed from our sin by faith in what Jesus did for us upon the cross -and we rise to a new life of righteousness -that is right relationship with God – a life where Jesus is Lord not our own selfish desires – and to a life of power through the Holy Spirit.

Paul recognised that Jesus endured pain and suffering in His death which made way for His resurrection – in the same way there can be pain and suffering for us in following Jesus – pain of rejection, pain of persecution and for some the pain of martyrdom – but the reward far outweighs the cost. **Remember our suffering does not earn us salvation – Jesus suffering has already done that –** but suffering can come as a result of our decision to follow Jesus – but what Paul found, as so many before and since, was that where we suffer because of our relationship with Jesus there is a new level of intimacy available to us – and a new level of Christ likeness released in us.

Death & resurrection is not just a one off event – it is an ongoing process – **each time we decide to do what Jesus says rather than what we want, each time we reject what is evil and embrace what is good. Each time we accept suffering for following Christ rather than compromise for the sake of an easy life – then something more dies and something more resurrected** – we become just a little more like Jesus.

Conclusion

Will we make the Lord the greatest desire of our heart – if we will then God will give us our hearts desire.

What are we relying upon to save us – the rubbish of our own good deeds – or our faith in what Jesus has done?

Where is our real focus, are our hearts growing cold? – will we seek the Lord with renewed passion, will we seek Him with all of our hearts?

Are we ready to identify with Jesus death and experience the power of His resurrection day by day as we follow Him?