

The Faith of Paul

Philippians 3:10-14

Life Group Discussion – May 13th, 2018

In this passage, Paul is comparing our lives to a race that contains the best possible prize at the end.

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)

Before Paul encountered Jesus Christ in Damascus, he was one of the most accomplished men of his time. Even his lineage and his teachers were of the highest degree.

Though 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: 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. (Philippians 3:4-5)

Paul's resume may have been incomparable at the time, but his life completely changed once he met Christ. He laid down everything that he thought was valuable; everything that the world said was a priority and instead put Jesus as first in his life.

And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— (Philippians 3:9)

His interests shifted to Jesus and his purpose moved away from the world and onto eternal things.

So how did Paul's purpose in life change?

First, he looked towards the foundations of his faith.

When you say you believe in Jesus Christ, it means you have a new master, a new owner of your life. This means that we become sensitive to what God is telling us and we follow what He says, even when it hurts. We will not fail in life if we are able to follow His voice. I hope that we can be strong in the foundations of our faith so that we can discern the voice of God in our lives.

Second, Paul understood the work of Jesus and applied Jesus' teachings to his life.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11)

Paul wanted to know Jesus Christ. He didn't want to simply know Jesus intellectually, Paul wanted to know the living power of Jesus that raised people from the dead and brought revival to many.

Even though Paul was in jail, he knew true contentment. The peace of Jesus is a peace that cannot be found in this world. The peace that the world is trying to teach is one where no bad things happen. It's a type of peace where everyone stays healthy and businesses flourish. But what the people of God understand is that peace does not come from our situations or whatever state we are currently in. We understand that our faith in God does not change and it is only in His unchanging love for us that we can have peace in all circumstances. This is the peace that allowed Paul to stay content even in jail.

However, in the church of Philippi, there were people who believed that if you only believe in Jesus Christ that your purpose was already set and there was no more work you needed to do in life. That is why Paul is telling the church that their faith was not complete yet.

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. (Philippians 3:12)

Paul believed that he had not yet completed what God set him out to do. This is why Christians don't believe that there is ever an "end" or "completeness" when it comes to our faith life. We can always strive to be more like Christ and there is never a point in this life where we become completely free of all sin and temptation.

This is why Paul is says, "I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."

We must also press on to make our faith our own and to chase after Jesus Christ in all things in our lives. It is only Jesus Christ that we chase after with all that we have.

If we really want to be used by God to the fullest of our potential, then we need to also chase after Him before anything else.

The reason God would not use us is because our own desires take a bigger priority than what we want God to do in our lives. There is no way Jesus can use us if we think this way.

I hope that we can become a people that want to be used by God more than anything else.

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, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)

One of the most important things we can do is to forget our past. When Paul says to “forget what lies behind” he is talking about all the past accomplishments and past mistakes.

When we focus on our pasts, we can either grow prideful in the things we achieved or we can grow shameful in the things we did wrong. Either way, this will hurt our spiritual lives.

The people of this world cannot easily throw the past away, but we are able to with the help of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made on the cross. When Jesus said, “you are mine”, His blood covered every part of your life, and that includes your past, present, and future. We are no longer slaves to sin, but only to Christ.

So that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:21)

The responsibility that a slave has is also the responsibility that the master must carry.

If we are slaves to Christ, then we must remember that Jesus carries our burdens and everything that may weigh us down.

And if we accept that we are slaves to Christ, we must follow after what He says and do what He commands. God calls us to do different things and He has given us our own personal callings. Even though Paul was the Jew of Jews, he was called to be an ambassador for the Gentiles.

What is the calling that God has placed in your life? It is important to understand where God wants you to be and how God wants you to act.

What is the calling that God has placed in our church? We believe that God has placed a special anointing on our church to lead in missions.

We must chase after Jesus and understand the individual calling He has placed in our lives and also do our best to fulfill the collective calling He has placed in our church.

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24)

There is nothing as precious or as wonderful as following after Jesus Christ. It is a long journey we must go through with many ups and downs, but our foundation is unshakeable. What is there to worry when we have Jesus Christ, the Lord over all?

I also believe God will pour out His blessings on us when we follow after Him and pursue the calling that He has placed in our lives. For those who serve in this church, whether you are a member, a teacher, a deacon, or an elder, I hope that we do not look in the past but we can move forward in confidence knowing that we have Jesus Christ.

SHARING-----

1. When Paul encountered Jesus Christ, his purpose changed. As you look at the two purposes of Paul, how has your purpose in life changed after encountering Jesus? It may be the same as Paul or something different.
2. What kind of person is easy for God to use for His glory? Am I a person that is difficult to be used by God or am I someone who can easily be used by Him? Please share.
3. Everyone has a calling placed on his or her life by God. What do you believe is the calling that God has placed in your life? Was there a time in your life when God gave you a sign or made it clear what He wanted you to do? Please share with one another.