

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

FEBRUARY 4 - 8, 2019

TOU

SERMON SERIES

A Study of Philippians

MONDAY

Philippians 3:1-3; Colossians 2:8-23; Romans 14:10

After one of her volleyball matches years ago, my daughter complained about several referees' calls that favored the opponent. This prompted another parent to observe, "She seems to have an overdeveloped sense of justice." If you're inclined toward being judgmental, as I am, and/or self-righteous, you can tend toward a problem which Paul addresses in Philippians: *legalism*, often intertwined with empty religiosity.

Legalism and false piety were issues Jesus addressed regularly, thus His repeated rebukes of the Pharisees (Matthew 12:38-39, John 8, etc.). Legalists later opposed Paul in his ministry. Sadly, these remain contemporary church issues. "It is so gratifying to the religious ego to perform some solemn ritual and to be constantly busy at religious work ... [However, this] is [often] the enemy of true spirituality. It [can] destroy the spirit of rejoicing, and ... make religion an empty, barren mockery." (Ray Stedman)

"[Philippians 2:2-3 is] a warning about the menace of external religion. ... Dwelling on external circumstance ... [and] looking away from the indwelling Lord to the outward events or ritual will inevitably destroy a spirit of rejoicing. ... [Paul] calls [people with such issues] three things: dogs, evil-workers, mutilators ... [those] who continually hounded him wherever he went ... We usually call them 'Judaizers' ... who taught it necessary to observe the law of Moses and the food restrictions of the Mosaic Covenant, and especially to be circumcised

in order to be a real Christian. ... Unfortunately, these people are still with us ... [aiming] to bring [all] under the bondage of legalistic restrictions.” (Stedman)

Among the things most alienating unbelievers are perceptions that churches are money-grubbing institutions populated with hateful, self-righteous faultfinders. The related, perceived hypocrisy repels many—it did for my own father for years. Legalism and empty religion frequently focus upon peripheral matters—e.g., how baptism is administered, “appropriate” clothing and appearance, “proper” worship style—vs. issues truly central to salvation. It’s problematic that the church is often better known for what it’s against—“alternate lifestyles,” etc.—than what it’s for—salvation in Christ, God’s loving-kindness, etc.

Like me, do you ever wrestle with a “toxic need to be right” and/or legalism? The Apostle Paul and Jesus Christ have much to say to us here.

QUESTION

What are some of the symptoms of and problems with legalism?
How are legalism and hollow religiosity related?

PRAYER

Pray for Christina Hack, who is serving with Chi Alpha and ministering to college students at San Diego State University, helping them to love God, love themselves, and love their campus. She especially loves mentoring girls as they become the women of God they were created to be.”

TUESDAY

Philippians 3:3-8; Matthew 19:27-29; Luke 9:57-62

Yesterday we touched upon skeptics' criticism of Christianity as hypocrisy-plagued. Some of the church's wounds here are self-inflicted. Popular "prosperity Gospel" preachers proclaim that "God's will is that we be blessed with material things ... [that] 'To be successful in your walk with God, commit to honor God with your finances [by tithing and] ... He will pour out blessings you cannot contain'... [This melds with] name-it-claim-it ... [theology maintaining that] 'You must rid yourself of ... small-minded thinking and start expecting God's blessings, start anticipating promotion and supernatural increase.'" (GotQuestions.org) Such views feel like thinly-veiled humanism bordering on idolatry.

Today Paul hints at the sacrifices he made in following Jesus. "Was his wife, or family, included in the things he lost? ... [That] haunting possibility exists." (David Guzik) The former Saul of Tarsus had been the prized pupil of Israel's renowned teacher, Gamaliel, and a rising star among the Pharisees ... until he met Jesus on the Damascus road (Acts 9). Paul's subsequent grasp of Christian joy led him to proclaim in seeming paradox, "To live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

In today's Matthew text, Peter voices even the disciples' concerns in forsaking their former lives. The Luke 9 passage reminds us of the costs of following Jesus, our Lord, reminding us that temporal

concerns need to give way to Kingdom living. Jesus lived and taught about a life that was far from the materialism underlying the “prosperity Gospel” and “name-it-claim-it” orientation.

“God is not our servant, standing by ... so He can lavish us with material goods ... [God’s primary aims are not] to make poor people wealthy, sad people happy, and insecure people self-confident. But ... to make dead people live (John 5:24), wicked people righteous (Matthew 9:13), and His enemies His friends (Romans 5:10). Happiness, self-assurance, and eternal prosperity ... result [from] submission to God’s will, starting with salvation [in Jesus Christ].” (GotQuestions.org)

Do you know any believers who seemingly default to self-interest, whose faith appears biased by what they can attain or avoid? Or unbelievers who are repulsed by the hypocrisy they perceive amidst Christendom? How can you show them abundant life in Christ—the joy that is known only in prayerfully, lovingly, and selflessly serving Him?

QUESTION

What is the “prosperity Gospel”? What are some of its problems? What were some of the “costs” Paul experienced in following Christ?

PRAYER

Pray for Christina Hack’s spring semester, which is the beginning of Chi Alpha’s leadership training process. Pray for wisdom as she ministers to the students.

WEDNESDAY

Philippians 3:7-9; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Karl Marx once quipped, “Religion is the opiate of the masses.” Others have labeled Christianity a “crutch.” Paul uses a unique expression “in Christ” [“in Him” in Philippians 3:9] over 150 times in his epistles—Paul’s “in Christ” illustrates how short the above opinions fall regarding what Christianity should entail. Jesus is much more than merely a “crutch” or “strong influence” to His own—He is the platform and bedrock, the enabler and sustenance, the example, the “Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6). He far surpasses what Marx or others dismissively critique.

Acts 16:31 advises that salvation comes by “believing on the Lord Jesus Christ” (emphasis added, KJ translation). Believing on entails more than simple head knowledge and intellectual ascent. It means that your worldview, purpose, and life are built upon the reality of Christ and His saving provision—“believing on the Lord Jesus” captures the essence of Paul’s expression “in Christ.”

It’s likely that you know a “highly educated fool” or two. I’ve been one, and sometimes still am. It’s hard for one impressed with their own intellect to embrace the seeming paradoxes of Christianity, “foolishness to those who are perishing” (1 Corinthians 1:18). The Bible teaches that: abundant life comes only by dying to self

(1 Corinthians 15:31); embracing our weakness, we can be strong in Christ (2 Corinthians 12:10); the first will be last, and the last [committed servants of Christ] first (Matthew 19:30); we're to be in the world, but not of the world (John 17:14-16); the one True and Living God exists in co-equal Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Do you let the challenges of “foolish” Christian truths discourage your witnessing? Though understandable, such orientation disobeys the Great Commission's call to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). Many mistakenly see evangelism only as a “one-shot opportunity.” Those appointments can present themselves, but effective witnessing is relational. The closer you are to someone, the less you need to yell.

Remember: when you're in Christ, His strength is sufficient! (Philippians 4:13). Believe on Him and you'll have access to the faithfulness, power, wisdom and love to share your faith.

QUESTION

How does the view of Jesus as the believers' “crutch” fall well short of how much we truly depend upon Him? What's the difference between believing *in* and believing *on* Christ? What truths stumble you most in sharing your faith?

PRAYER

Pray for students at Chi Alpha San Diego as they fundraise for mission trips during this semester and this summer. Also pray for energy for these students while they are in the mission field.

THURSDAY

Philippians 3:10-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; John 17:14-19

In Philippians 3:11, Paul expresses a desire to “by any means possible ... attain the resurrection from the dead.” Then in verses 12-14 he speaks of a need to “press on,” also emphasizing “straining forward.” Earlier in Philippians 2:12, Paul himself spoke to the believers’ necessity to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” We know that he rejected works-based religion as a means to knowing God’s salvation (Galatians 2:16), thus his turning from Judaism and the Pharisees’ ways toward life in Christ. Was Paul conflicted here?

Paul wasn’t speaking to works and merit-based religion, but to sanctification, the process God uses to develop Christians to: grow in spiritual maturity; be His witnesses in a world He both created and sacrificed for; and prepare for eternity with Him. “The word *sanctification* is related to the word *saint*; both words have to do with holiness. To ‘sanctify’ something is to set it apart for special use; to ‘sanctify’ a person is to make [him] holy ...

“While we are *positionally* holy [‘set free from every sin’ by the blood of Christ, Acts 13:39], we know that we still sin (1 John 1:10). That’s why the Bible also refers to sanctification as a practical experience of our separation unto God ... the effect of obedience to the Word of God in one’s life ... [and] the setting apart of believers for the purpose for which they are sent into the world ...

“Jesus set Himself apart for God’s purpose [which] is both the basis and the condition of our being set apart ... We are sanctified and sent because Jesus was. Our Lord’s sanctification is the pattern of and power for our own. The sending and the sanctifying are inseparable. [Accordingly,] we are called ‘saints’ or ‘sanctified ones’ ... Little by little, every day, ‘those who are being sanctified’ (Hebrews 10:14) are becoming more like Christ.” (GotQuestions.org)

There are so many times that I don’t feel very sanctified. Fortunately, neither my salvation, nor yours, is based upon feelings or our merit. When we are in Christ, God sees us accordingly. It is Jesus Christ’s holiness and atoning sacrifice that assures this. What better news can there be?

QUESTION

What is sanctification? How is it different from works-based religion?

PRAYER

Pray that the students in Chi Alpha’s weekly small groups will be hungry for God and that their discussions will be Spirit led. Pray for student leaders who are leading the groups and discipling students.

FRIDAY

Philippians 3:10-14; Romans 6:9-14; Romans 12:1-2

The most common question people—believers and unbelievers alike—ask God is “Why?” Why disease? Why pain? Why do good people die prematurely or suffer? Why so much evil in this world if the Lord is all-knowing, loving, good and all-powerful? A “Why?” question that I’ve pondered: Why does God put up with us, knowing that even His children will fail Him repeatedly while others deny or insult Him? King David asked in Psalm 8:4: “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him?”

Yesterday we considered sanctification as the means God uses to develop our spiritual maturity, the related “soul-making” preparing us for eternity. But why this process? Why not create us in our “finished state,” avoiding all of the pain—to us, to others, and to God Himself—resulting from the evils presently evident? Why this “boot camp” of earthly life when God knows and sovereignly controls the future outcomes—when He will cast death, Satan and other enemies into the “lake of fire” forever (Revelation 20:10, 14-15)?

If you’re a parent, consider this: If possible, would you rather have your children presented to you already perfected, in finished form as glorified saints? Or would you favor actually living life with them, encountering its ups and downs, enduring trials and joyous experiences

together? Would you want them to appreciate you automatically, or would it be more meaningful for affection to develop despite conflicts, choices and consequences? Would you prefer children or pets?

“Human experience always contains both pain and joy ... [Christianity] allows us to make sense of both aspects of the world. Of both beauty and pain.” (Holly Ordway) David Guzik profoundly states, “God wanted more than *innocent* [children]; His plan was to bring forth *redeemed* [children].”

Paul’s short answer to the “Why sanctification?” question: Love. God’s love, the love we desire, is “patient and kind ... does not rejoice at wrongdoing ... bears all things ... endures all things ... [and] never ends” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). Such love surpasses even faith and hope (v. 13). How can you love the “unlovable” as God has loved you, me and others?

QUESTION

Why does God subject us to sanctification when He could have us be “perfect” at birth? How might parenthood show us about some of the reasons God employs the sanctification process?

PRAYER

Pray for the Chi Alpha San Diego staff and student leaders to be refreshed and inspired as they reach out to other students throughout the campus.

Sources

- Ray Stedman's quotes are taken from www.raystedman.org/new-testament/philippians/dangerous-confidence
- GotQuestions.org quotes are taken from www.gotquestions.org/Joel-Osteen.html and www.gotquestions.org/sanctification.html
- David Guzik's quotes can be found at www.enduringword.com/bible-commentary/philippians-3 and enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-3
- Holly Ordway's quotes can be found at www.bestquotes4ever.com/authors/holly-ordway-quotes

