

Look Up To Heaven
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Philippians 3:1-21

Question: If the house was on fire, after your get the family and pets out, what would you grab to take with you? Discussion.

When the Titanic was sinking, "What people chose to take with them was quite revealing. Adolf Dyker handed his wife a satchel with two gold watches, two diamond rings, a sapphire necklace and 200 Swedish crowns. Edith Russell carried her musical toy pig. Stewart Collett placed his Bible in his pocket. Lawrence Beesley stuffed his jacket pockets with books. Norman Chambers pocketed a revolver and a compass. Steward Johnson took four oranges. Mrs. Dickson Bishop left behind \$11,000 in jewelry, then sent her husband back for her muff. Major Arthur Peuchen left behind \$200,000 in bonds, \$100,000 in stocks and chose warm clothes instead. The five mail clerks diligently sweated their way up the stairs dragging over 200 mail sacks of correspondence--in the vain hope that the post could be saved!"

<http://www.biblical-counsel.org/ga-01.htm>

Statement:

When we become clear about what really matters in life, our view of what we thought was important...changes.

Philippians 3:1

1 Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

- Remember, Philippians is called Paul's letter of JOY! He used the words joy or rejoice 16 times in this book. So, he was happy to repeat that instruction to them in verse 1.
- It's not a bad thing to have someone REMIND US to REJOICE!
- Paul says it's no trouble for him to REPEAT his instructions to us because he's not only ENCOURAGING us, he's WARNING US about some things.
- Then for the next five verses Paul WARNS the Philippians about false teachers in their midst.
- Judaizers - People who said to have eternal life you had to BOTH believe in Christ AND observe all the Jewish laws and regulations.
- Paul said if you're looking for someone who tried the route of being a GOOD JEW...I'm your man! (Verses 4-6) A "Hebrew of Hebrews".
- He recites his "resume" of all the things he had done to try to EARN eternal life.
- He says, if you want RELIGION...I'm was SUPER RELIGIOUS! If you want WORKS, I'll show you some WORKS!
- Dizzy Dean said "It ain't braggin' if you can do it." And Paul DID IT ALL!
- "I tried it all in order to WORK my way into Heaven...and none of it works."
- Ever been there?

- "So Paul, what did your resume as a Hebrew of Hebrews get you? What did it add up to?"
- He tells us in verses 7 through 9:

Philippians 3:7-9

7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

- Paul says, Everything I used to RELY on as to get me to Heaven I now count as NOTHING
- I was DEPENDING on the GAINS I had made through my own efforts...now they are LOSS "for the sake of Christ."
- In fact, look at verse 8, Paul says "I consider EVERYTHING a loss" compared to what? The SURPASSING worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I've lost all things.
- Really, Paul? Go further in verse 8. He uses a STRONG WORD to describe his RESUME of FORMER WORKS. Garbage. Refuse, rotting food from the table.
- Okay, Bible scholars, in the NIV the word is "garbage", they cleaned it up.
- If you have a King James Version what word do they use instead of "garbage"? DUNG
- The translators said, "Look what Paul wrote here!" "Hey they're gonna be reading this in church...we can't say that!" "We'd better write 'garbage!'"
- He's saying, COMPARED TO KNOWING CHRIST, when I sit and CONSIDER...THINK BACK...REMINISCE about all that stuff I used to do to EARN my salvation it's all a stinking pile of DUNG.
- Verse 9 - If I gain Christ and be "found in him" I will NOT have what? "a righteousness of my own that comes from the law"
- What does verse 9 say we WILL have "that which is through faith in Christ...the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

J. Vernon McGee put it this way:

Paul says that since that moment of his conversion he lives for Christ. He has suffered the loss of all things. Jesus Christ is uppermost in his thinking. The things that he used to consider most precious he now considers to be dung —that is strong language! He says he flushes his religion down the drain. He flushes away all the things he used to trust. Now he trusts the Lord Jesus and Him only for his salvation.

Dr. McGee goes on to say...

I remember hearing Dr. Carroll say, "When I was converted, I lost my religion." A great many people need to lose their religion and find Jesus Christ as Paul did. He was so revolutionized that what had been his prized possession is now relegated to the garbage can! (McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson or Logos)

Another Vernon...Vernon Ground writes:

... for many years British author C. S. Lewis had such great difficulty in becoming a Christian. Religion A had blinded him to Religion B. According to his brother Warren, his conversion was "no sudden plunge into a new life, but rather a slow, steady convalescence from a deep-seated spiritual illness--an illness that had its origins in our childhood, in the dry husks of religion offered by the semi-political churchgoing of Ulster, and the similar dull emptiness of compulsory church during our school days."

—Vernon C Grounds (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

C.S. Lewis had to overcome his religious upbringing to accept RELATIONSHIP with Christ.

So, how do we get RELEASED from RELIGION so we can be CAPTURED by RELATIONSHIP with Christ? Verses 10 and 11 point the way:

10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

- I want to KNOW Christ.
- We throw that word KNOW around a lot don't we?
- Oh, yes, I KNOW old so and so. I've known him for years.
- Really? I didn't know you and so and so were so CLOSE?
- Oh, yes, I KNOW so and so.
- What's her favorite color? Favorite food? What's her cell phone number? What kind of music does he like? How well do you know his FATHER? What does she really look like without her makeup on?
- There's KNOW ABOUT (intellectual) and then there's KNOW, personally, intimately,

John 10:27 Jesus said:

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Spurgeon wrote:

Spiritual knowledge of Christ will be a personal knowledge. I cannot know Jesus through another person's acquaintance with Him. No, I must know Him myself; I must know Him on my own account.

- Question: What do Baptists mean when we use the term the "priesthood of the believer"?
- Before Christ died for our sins and the Temple veil was torn, we would not have had direct access to God.
- Because of that you and I don't have to say: "We have to go to the Priest because he knows Christ and will intercede for us."
- I don't need a priest...Jesus made ME a priest.

- Because I KNOW Jesus I can go DIRECTLY TO HIM and He is my ADVOCATE...my LAWYER...making my case with God the Father.
- By the way, a little irony...what is the famous Square and Basilica in the Vatican called?
- St. Peter's. Guess who told me I was priest? PETER.

1 Peter 2:9

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

- Knowing Jesus is what makes this a RELATIONSHIP not a RELIGION
- But we might say, "This is what concerns me." "I know I'm saved but I'm not sure how well I KNOW Jesus yet." "I'm still working on it!"
- So was Paul...verse 12:

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

- We PRESS ON toward the goal! Paul is continuing what we looked at last week.
- We have to WORK OUT our salvation by daily DEEPENING our KNOWLEDGE of Christ.
- This is a RIGOROUS and DAILY WORKOUT!
- Paul gives us the steps:
 1. Forgetting what is behind (remember, it's all DUNG)
 2. STRAINING toward what is ahead...PRESS on
- Verse 14: Question - What is the "picture" the "example" the "metaphor" Paul is using? Running a race...STRENUOUS WORK to better KNOW Christ!
- Another word about "forgetting what is behind" in verse 13.
- Paul was saying he no longer placed CONFIDENCE in the flesh...his accomplishments and abilities...he forgot that part of his past.
- Question: What else do some of us need to forget after we're saved?
- Example: New house, new furnishings, making room for the old broken stuff!
- Christ has forgiven your sins and my sins and we can forget the baggage from our past. Not saying we forget the past...just the junk...the dung...the baggage that is holding us back.
- We don't have to feel like second class citizens...you and I are a child of the King!
- Paul also wrote...

2 Corinthians 5:17 (King James Version)

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

- Living like that comes from the all surpassing experience of KNOWING CHRIST and the power of His resurrection?
- Now, here is PERHAPS OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE in KNOWING CHRIST
- To more deeply KNOW Christ takes being ALONE with Him
- A.W. Tozer wrote a lot on this subject. In fact, one of his classic books is entitled "The Pursuit of God" (Link to A.W. Tozer's classic book (on line) The Pursuit of God
- http://www.theboc.com/freestuff/awtozer/books/the_pursuit_of_god/index.html)
- Here are some things Tozer wrote about this in ANOTHER of his books:

"Modern civilization is so complex as to make the devotional life all but impossible. It wears us out by multiplying distractions and beats us down by destroying our solitude, where otherwise we might drink and renew our strength before going out to face the world again.

"Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still" is a wise and healing counsel, but how can it be followed in this day of the newspaper, the telephone, the radio and the television? [At this time Al Gore had not INVENTED THE INTERNET] These modern playthings, like pet tiger cubs, have grown so large and dangerous that they threaten to devour us all. What was intended to be a blessing has become a positive curse. No spot is now safe from the world's intrusion."
Of God and Men, 125

- Verse 14 Paul says: I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
- Question: Now, Paul is speaking to BELIEVERS so we are already promised ETERNAL LIFE...What do you think he meant when Paul used terms like "the goal" and "the prize" for which Christ had called him heavenward?
- John MacArthur says: *The goal is Christlikeness here on earth (which we will never fully reach here) but the prize will be "The time when God calls each believer up to heaven and into His presence will be the moment of receiving the prize which has been unattainable in earthly life.*

Warren Wiersbe wrote:

Each believer is on the track; each has a special lane in which to run; and each has a goal to achieve. If we reach the goal the way God has planned, then we receive a reward. If we fail, we lose the reward, but we do not lose our citizenship. (Wiersbe, Be Joyful)

- So, what are we going to DO about what we've heard? It's one thing to come here on Sunday morning and LEARN this good information...but WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO DIFFERENTLY THIS WEEK BECAUSE we heard it?
- Give me some suggestions. What are some GOALS we might set for ourselves this week to KNOW CHRIST in a deeper way? How can we do it this week? (Discussion)
- Paul summarizes all this in verse 17-21:

Philippians 3:17-21

17 Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- There is no higher goal for the Christian than a DEEPER KNOWLEDGE of Jesus
- But we can't WIN THE RACE by SITTING IN THE STANDS
- It's one thing to KNOW these things...it's another to SET A GOAL and DO SOMETHING ABOUT it this week.
- Will you and I "press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called (us) heavenward in Christ Jesus." starting TODAY?