

Philippians: Rejoice in the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Session 10: Examples of Christlike Mindset, Part 2: Paul Himself

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Abstract

In this session, Dr. Matthew S. Harmon explores Philippians 3:1-14, presenting the Apostle Paul as a primary model of the Christlike mindset. The discussion is structured into a negative example focusing on Paul's past religious pedigree and a positive example highlighting his current single-minded pursuit of knowing Christ. Harmon emphasizes that righteousness is a gift received through faith rather than human performance, utilizing athletic and accounting imagery to illustrate these spiritual truths. Ultimately, believers are called to forget past successes and failures alike, pressing forward toward the ultimate prize of resurrection and total conformity to Jesus.

Outline

I. Introduction and Structure of Philippians 3:1-14

- A. Recap of Session 9 (Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples of Christlike mindset)
- B. Macro structure: Negative example (vv. 1-6) and Positive example (vv. 7-14)
- C. Warning and Summons: Joy as a safeguarding command (vv. 1-2)

II. The Negative Example: Warnings and Confidence in the Flesh (vv. 1-6)

- A. The Summons to Rejoice (v. 1)
 - 1. Joy as a command and safeguard against spiritual danger
- B. The Warning Against False Teachers (v. 2)
 - 1. Use of Greek Kappa-alliteration (dogs/mutts, evildoers/malefactors, mutilators of the flesh/mutilators)
 - 2. Historical context: Dogs as scavengers, and the threat of circumcision demands
- C. The Contrast: Characteristics of True Believers (v. 3)
 - 1. True spiritual circumcision of the heart
 - 2. Worship in and by the Spirit of God
 - 3. Glorifying in Christ Jesus rather than human performance
 - 4. Putting no confidence in the flesh (relying on achievements or pedigree)

D. Paul's Pre-Conversion Pedigree and Accomplishments (vv. 4-6)

1. Circumcised on the eighth day (observant covenant compliance)
2. Of the people of Israel (covenant identity and promises)
3. Tribe of Benjamin (faithful Southern Kingdom heritage)
4. Hebrew of Hebrews (cultural, linguistic, and ancestral purity)
5. Pharisee (strict adherence to Mosaic law and oral traditions)
6. Zeal (persecutor of the church to preserve purity of Israel)
7. Law-righteousness: Blameless (exemplary outward standing within covenant)

III. The Positive Example: The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ (vv. 7-11)

A. Accounting Imagery of Gain and Loss (vv. 7-8)

1. Shifting spiritual assets from the "gain" to "loss" column
2. Counting all accomplishments as rubbish (Greek: skubalon / sewer-bound waste)

B. The Gift of Righteousness (v. 9)

1. Contrast: Law-keeping vs. righteousness from God through faith in Christ

C. Three Dimensions of Knowing Christ (vv. 10-11)

1. Experiencing the power of His resurrection (transformative life-from-death power)
2. Sharing in His sufferings (identifying with Christ through trials)
3. Attaining the final resurrection from the dead (the "already and not yet" dynamic)

IV. The Single-Minded Pursuit: Running the Christian Race (vv. 12-14)

A. Pressing On in Imperfection (v. 12)

1. Acknowledging that the final state has not yet been obtained
2. Motivated by being laid hold of by Christ Jesus

B. The "One Thing" Strategy (v. 13)

1. Forgetting what lies behind (refusing to let past successes or failures define or determine the present)
2. Straining forward to what lies ahead

C. The Goal and the Prize (v. 14)

1. Pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
2. Athletic imagery of running: Locking gaze on Christ to naturally increase pace and avoid tripping

V. Big Idea and Applications

A. Big Idea: A Christlike mindset rejects confidence in the flesh (pedigree or performance) and pursues Christ single-mindedly.

B. Practical Application (Think, Believe, Desire, Do)

1. Think: Knowing Christ is worth more than anything else
2. Believe: Putting confidence in the flesh profits nothing
3. Desire: Long to press on in our pursuit of Christ (learning from seasoned saints)
4. Do: Identify and confess things we are tempted to put confidence in