

Home Group Leader's Notes  
Philippians 3:1-11

Share it

What do you think of when you hear the word "religion?"

- There are many possible answers.
- One thing that we find in this passage is that false teachers were trying to convince the Philippians that they needed works to attain a right standing before God.
- We will see below that righteousness is by faith in Jesus alone. Religion cannot earn a place of right standing before God.

Learn from the Bible

Read Philippians 3:1-11

What is the author's warning? (2-6)

- To "watch out" for people who were imposing religious requirements to be right before God.
- Specifically, they were teaching that to be right before God, they must practice Old Testament laws .
- Religion quickly becomes dangerous. I just had a conversation with people about a church who claim to be Christian, but had a list of rules on their website about attending any other church, about dress, etc.
- Religion can be a way of saying that I can earn my right standing with God.

List the reasons Paul could have "put confidence in the flesh" (reasons why he might be self-confident before God).

- See verses 4-6
- Circumcision on the 8<sup>th</sup> day (OT law, superior to a proselyte)
- Heritage of being an Israelite (pure pedigree)
- The tribe of Benjamin (the first king, stayed with Judah when the other 10 tribes separated)
- Hebrew of Hebrews (fluent in Hebrew, educated, cultured)
- Pharisee ("separated ones," the sect that were strictest followers of law)
- Zealous (persecuted those not following the law)
- Summary: faultless in his law-driven attempt

How does Paul describe what he has lost and gained? (4-10)

- He lost (no longer considered important / valued) all of the list above, abandoned the idea of righteousness that comes from the law
- Gained: Knowing Christ Jesus, following Jesus as Lord, being "in Him,"
- Gained righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith in Jesus and His resurrection.
- Gained: He was resolute on his love and commitment to Jesus' alone. He gained a willingness to joyfully suffer even to the point of death .

How would you explain “a righteousness that is through faith in Christ?”(9)

- Suggestion: This is a good exercise to do together
- It is good practice and preparation for sharing this amazing news

What is his hope and goal? What will this mean?

- Paul’s ultimate hope is to know Christ (10),
- To know the power of His resurrection and participate in His sufferings
- attain the resurrection of the dead (10-11)

Let’s Discuss Together

How is Paul’s warning still relevant today? Why does religion lead toward confidence in ourselves instead of in Jesus? What does Paul say to do?

- Most people (the majority) believe that they are OK to meet God, that they are good enough that they better than some people they know
- Religion abounds in the world. All of them believe that they will attain some eternal status through the efforts of the people
- Religion is about us earning, evolving, deserving a status. Thus, our confidence is in our works.
- This fatal flaw is still heard in Christian churches. Check the news: Even Christians drift toward rules, regulations, human efforts. Legalism still abounds in our churches.
- Paul says to consider our self-efforts as rubbish (dung) and put all of our confidence in Jesus and His finished work.

What does Paul want instead of religion? How could we share this?

- Paul wants us to believe /practice the teachings of Jesus Christ. He made it clear that His work alone can attain a right status with God and that we can receive the benefit of His work through faith in Him and His work.

Paul’s calling (gospel to Gentiles, prison, death) is unique, but not his passion. What fueled his passion? What might this look like in our lives?

- Paul’s passion was fueled by His understanding of who Jesus is, what He accomplished for us, the eternal value of our God-given salvation, and his joy and anticipation of living with Jesus forever.
- As Americans, we are attracted and distracted by so many things. These other things (material, status, security, significance, position, etc) supplant the truth of Jesus and His works and making these the core of our lives.
- To sum up: What this looks like is (1) to be like Paul who valued these things above all else, and (2) to be willing to suffer to in this life.
- Suffering comes in many forms. It can be sacrificing, humbling ourselves, making others more important, how we invest our resources, willingness to love the unlovely, giving ourselves fully to God with no reserve.

May the glory of Jesus and His good news fill your hearts,  
Steve