



Philippians

Living a Happy and Holy Life

Week 6

The Christian Life – Part 2 (cont.)

3:12-4:1, Keep Going!



Debits and credits (3:7-11)

- ❖ All the “privileges” which Paul once claimed – his Jewish identity, his keeping of the law, his zealousness – are actually not to his credit at all. All of it is moved to the “debit” side of the ledger. It was “rubbish.”
- ❖ His “credit” is comprised solely of Christ, and Paul’s covenant membership among God’s people which is his by virtue of Jesus’ faithfulness – even to death on a cross.
- ❖ Paul is “in Christ” (status), “knows Christ” (personal relationship), and conforms his life to Christ (sharing in Jesus’ suffering and death).
- ❖ His hope is to attain “the resurrection of the dead.”
 - This is the Day of the Lord, the second coming of Christ, the arrival of the “new heavens and the new earth.”



Press on! (3:12-14)

- ❖ Paul's goal is the Big Day, the "resurrection of the dead," and he keeps pressing on to that goal.
 - Why? Because of Christ's work in him. This takes the focus off Paul and his efforts and puts them on Christ and his work.
 - The Greek word translated "goal" in v. 12 is *teleioma*, which is the state of completion or perfection. This is the same root as "Be *perfect*, as your Father in heaven is perfect" from the Sermon on the Mount.
- ❖ Paul forgets what has past (his persecution of the Church?) and "strains forward" like a runner who reaches for the tape at the end of a race.
 - How hard this forgetting can be for us!! We carry so many burdens around with us.

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"The Same Mind" redux (3:15-16)

- ❖ "In these verses, Paul continues his appeal for unity. Compare this to 2:5ff! There many "internal echoes" within this letter.
 - Paul desires unity among the more mature Christians as they go on, with Paul, toward the goal.
 - As seems always to be the case, there is discord in the church. See 4:2-3 again.
- ❖ What is that mind? What mind is perfect and complete? Chapter 2 needs to be held in own minds.
 - The mind of Jesus, a mind without "selfish ambition or conceit." A mind that puts the interests of others ahead of its own, regarding others as better.

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The imitation of Paul and some “enemies”

- ❖ Christians have a long tradition of seeking to be like Christ. One of the most famous Christian writings is Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ*.
 - See 1 Corinthians 11:1. Do you think that Paul’s imitation of the Lord is implied in Philippians 3:17?
 - Why would Paul urge these believers to imitate him? Doesn’t it seem sort of arrogant?
 - Why does Paul urge them to “observe” those who live in Paul’s example?
 - What does this say to us about the nature of discipleship?
 - Is it something to be undertaken alone?
- ❖ Who are the “enemies of the cross of Christ?”
 - Perhaps believers who oppose Paul’s theology of the cross, embracing self-indulgence rather than self-giving. Paul seems to imply that the Philippians need to know about these people, but none are in Philippi.

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“Citizenship in heaven?”

- ❖ Heaven and the Kingdom of God
 - Heaven is God’s realm, God’s “dimension.”
 - Jesus ushered in the kingdom of God and we anxiously anticipate its consummation, when God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven.
- ❖ The Good News that Jesus is Lord is a theopolitical gospel.
 - The Christians are not citizens of the Roman empire but of God’s kingdom.
 - They are God’s colonies, not Caesar’s.

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A “Theopolitical” Gospel

- ❖ This Jewish message for a pagan world is both theological and political.
 - “Good News/Gospel/evangelion” is a term used in the Jewish community (such as from Isaiah 40-66) and in the Roman empire.
 - An inscription from 9BC: “Caesar [Augustus] through his appearance [*ephiphanein*] has exceeded the hope of all former good news [*evangelia*] surpassing not only the benefactors who came before him, but also leaving no hope that anyone in the future would surpass him, since for the world the birthday of the god was the beginning of his good news [*evangelia*].”
- ❖ Paul’s vocabulary is “theopolitical” – the confrontation is inevitable. Acts ends with Paul preaching God’s Good News in Rome under the nose of Caesar.
 - *kyrios* (Lord -- YHWH v. emperor); *pistis* (faith -- covenant faithfulness v. loyalty between Rome and its citizens; *parousia* (coming/going -- presence of God v. an imperial arrival)

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The Transformation of our Bodies (3:21-4:1)

- ❖ Here we are again – THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY
 - Do you see why it is so odd that most people reciting the creed don’t understand that it is their own body?
 - What are some of the larger implications of ignoring this key doctrine?
- ❖ Verse 4:1 – “Therefore . . .”
 - What meaning is conveyed to you by the “therefore?”
 - A crown was often awarded to winners of athletic competitions.
 - Do you hear Paul’s fondness for the Philippians?

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