

A Small Group Study and Discussion in the Book of Philippians 03 - WHO AND WHAT IS YOUR CONFIDENCE IN?

(Philippians 3:1-6 NKJV) “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. {2} Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! {3} For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, {4} though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: {5} circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; {6} concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

Paraphrase: I have given you a lot of truth my brothers. Rejoice, it's good for you. {2} Be careful of people who try to convince you that religious obligation will get you to heaven. {3} We are God's people because we put our confidence in Christ and not in religious appearance or activity. {4-6} I (Paul is speaking) have far greater religious credentials than anyone, because of my family background, my training and even the wrongful things I did in the name of God.

I. WHO ARE YOUR TEACHERS?

Be careful whom you take instruction or counsel from. Be aware that not all teachers, pastors, government officials or even friends have the truth of God in them. Always do these things:

- Examine the character of the person who wants to influence your life.
- Pray until you get assurance in the matter (and peace about what they spoke over you).
- Compare what he or she has said with what the Word of God says.
- When in doubt, bring it to a proven leader in the church. Then follow their advice!

✂ Share an example of instructions or advice that sounded good but proved wrong. Was the person sincere in trying to help you? (Probably so, but you can get very sincere advice that has no basis of truth.)

✂ Be extremely careful whom you let speak into your heart. Can you think of Bible verses that warn us about this? What does the Book of Proverbs say?

- Be careful to put your confidence in Christ. When in doubt, refer to the Holy Spirit. He will always be there for you.
- Be careful to measure yourself by what Jesus said and not by your education, position or spiritual gifts. Human ability always has limitations. There is a built-in drift toward error in every one of us because of our sin nature.

🗑️ **When have you drifted into difficulty because you underestimated the situation and overestimated yourself? How can you prevent this?**

If you measure your decisions and actions by His example and Word, you will have the confidence to fulfill the will of God, knowing you are walking in safety and truth.

(Suggested end of your First Session in Chapter 3)

II. HOW CAN WE BE ALL THAT CHRIST WANTS US TO BE? (Part One)

(Philippians 3:7-10 NKJV) “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. {8} Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ {9} and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; {10} that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,” {11} if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. {12} Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.”

🗑️ **How would you paraphrase Philippians 3:7-12? Give it a try!**

🗑️ **What did Paul mean by the term “the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus?”**

🗑️ **How would you apply Verse 10 to your life?**

“having... that which is through faith in Christ”

1. *“that I may know Him...”*
2. *“the power of His resurrection?”*
3. *“the fellowship of His sufferings”*

When we please God because our motives are pure, we are all Christ wants us to be. God is the source of all righteousness. Faith in Him is the only way to get it!

(Verse 11, 12 Living Bible Paraphrase) “So whatever it takes, I will be one who lives in the fresh newness of life of those who are alive from the dead. {12} I don’t mean to say I am perfect. I haven’t learned all I should even yet, but I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ saved me for and wants me to be.”

Have you been trying to win God's approval by your own goodness? Yes, you should try to be good, but God has accepted you based on one fact alone:

(Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV) “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, {9} not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

*“Press on” = “To pursue”
(not just go ahead, but pursue something that is worth pursuing.*

“Lay hold” = “To apprehend” or “To overtake what I pursue and capture it!”

God accepts you because you put your faith in Jesus (nothing more or less). You will only be all that Christ wants you to be by knowing Him within the following context:

(Ephesians 2: 10 NKJV) "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings,"

🗨️ **What does "to know Him" mean?**

🗨️ **How would you define the fellowship of His sufferings?**

The fellowship of His suffering occurs in the midst of your willingness to endure whatever pain or price it costs to join with and follow Him through even the most difficult of times. You never pay this price alone. He travels through your suffering with you, as close as He possibly can get. It is a unique experience (though we wish we did not have to suffer). It cannot be duplicated any other way!

(Ephesians 3:20 NKJV) "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,"

Think about the awesome meaning of the power of His resurrection. The miracle working power that is now in us enables us to be all He planned us to be... and more than we could ever think of asking to be. Take the limits off yourself!

🗨️ **Do you know the power of His resurrection?**

🗨️ **What is that power?**

🗨️ **How does it work in us?**

(Suggested end of your Second Session)

III. HOW CAN WE BE ALL THAT CHRIST WANTS US TO BE? (Part Two)

Be a Forward Thinking Person

(Philippians 3:13, 14 – New Living Bible Translation) "No, dear friends, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, {14} I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven."

Paraphrase these two verses. Try to elaborate or "unpack" what Paul is saying.

🗨️ **Think about why Paul says to forget the past. How much of the past is he referring to? Are we supposed to forget the good things too?**

🗨️ What is the Apostle really saying?

(Philippians 3:13-14 NKJV) “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, {14} I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul was a forward thinking person. He did not see forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead as two separate issues, but as one way of life. He says, “My every effort will be to go ahead with life and in doing so I will not look back.” Dwelling in the past will keep you in the past, will keep you from being teachable and will keep you from revelation. You will miss God’s best! There is value to our experiences. Denying that is as bad as not looking ahead. However, living in the past is different than learning from the past. Too many of us live with the limitations, constraints and condemnations of our pasts. God wants us to learn from them, put them away and go on to new things.

(Isaiah 43:18-19 NKJV) “Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. {19} Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert.”

🗨️ What memory of a past experience might stop you from living a life of joy today and hold you back from achieving your destiny tomorrow?

🗨️ How could you “lay aside” what is stopping you.

We all have personal weaknesses. Every one of us has experienced failures. It has been said that the world defines “quitting” as “an opportunity” (look at the job market today.) but the Kingdom of God defines “quitting” as “*the only way* you can lose.” Are there any past failures or personal weaknesses that are intimidating your move into a future of success and significance? **Always remember, the past is never qualified to determine your future!**

(Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV) “... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, {2} looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

(2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV) “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Three Keys to Moving Ahead (even when you are stuck)

1. Lay aside the weights and sins. Then walk away from them.
2. Run the race with endurance. Find your endurance through commitment to the Word of God.
3. Look to Jesus. Keep your spiritual eyes on Him, trusting Him and relying on His presence, provision and promises.

(Suggested end of your Third Session)

IV. WHAT IS THE PATTERN WE MUST FOLLOW TO BE ALL CHRIST WANTS US TO BE?

(Philippians 3:17-19 NKJV) “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. {18} For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: {19} whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who set their mind on earthly things.”

Paul’s use of the use of the term “brethren” tells us he continues to speak to the church. We have a pattern in the lives of those who are in servant-leadership to the church. He encourages the Philippians (and us) to stay focused on the examples of such people - to learn from them and walk as they do. He warns us **not** to imitate or walk as many do, “*whose god is their belly... who set their minds on earthly things.*”

A. The Value of Community in the Church - It Reveals Godly Patterns

Philippians 3:17, paraphrased: *Look for others in the church who are living examples of how we should live our lives. Then join these people and be part of what they are doing with their lives. Duplicate them in yourselves.*

The key idea of Philippians 3:17 is to enjoy an active community life in loving unity, as we learn from each other. Without relationships, the church is just making noise. With relationships, the church is making changes in people’s lives.

- Paul speaks as part of the community of obedient and faithful believers. He says that theirs is a walk together. This is a pattern that imitates Christ and his disciples.
- Paul identifies some as enemies of the cross of Christ. They worship something other than Christ. Their patterns do **not** imitate Christ. Their patterns destroy unity.
- Verse 19 says that in the end these people will be destroyed. Their emotions have become their gods. They take pride in the shameful things they do. Their minds are set on worldly things. They do not hold themselves accountable to God’s standards.

- ✂ **What patterns does society try to impose on us that do not please God?**
- ✂ **Is there any kind of pattern in your life that opposes Christ?**
- ✂ **What patterns of community life should be put in place that would help us to grow? Be specific in your answer.**
- ✂ **What would your part be in these patterns? Would you commit your time and resources to your part?**

(Philippians 3:20-21 NKJV) “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, {21} who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

(This is the end of 03 WHO AND WHAT IS YOUR CONFIDENCE IN? Please go on to Chapter 4.)