

Jesus Christ & the Transformed Apostle

Intro

Phil 3:1-14

- This is a rare moment with the great Apostle in which he answers in the most explicit terms possible what his life is all about.

Paul, Defending & Clarifying the ‘One Thing’

- Knowing, enjoying and making much of Christ is Paul’s ONE THING, his all-consuming passion.

“Look out for the dogs!”

Phil 3:2

- Notice how different this sounds compared to 1:15-18.
 - ▶ There, he was rejoicing, even though their motivations were misguided.
 - ▶ Here, he’s calling names and telling the church to shut their ears.

“I out-dogged the dogs!”

Phil 3:3-6

- Paul points out that he can play the game of religious one-upsmanship – actually better than any of these teachers – but that those accomplishments are meaningless compared to knowing Christ.

Christianity: *Christianity*-conscious or *Christ*-conscious?

- We read books on how to be a good Christian rather than books about Christ.
- Paul's Christianity had a profoundly objective starting point.

There is no such 'thing' as grace! Grace is not some appendage to His being... All there is is the Lord Jesus Himself... Do not let us fail to understand that, at the end of the day, actually Christianity is Christ because there isn't anything else. There is no atonement that somehow can be detached from who the Lord Jesus is. There is no grace that can be attached to you transferred from Him. All there is is Christ and your soul."
-Sinclair Ferguson, Jn 15, Banner of Truth Ministers' Conference 2008

- For Paul, "Christianity" is shorthand for knowing, fellowshiping with, enjoying and obeying Jesus Christ. This objective Christ-centeredness, however, brought in its wake deep, experiential realities as well.

Transformed by Christ My All

Paul's Greatest Gain: a new approach to personal priorities

Phil 3:7-8

- The Christian is, at bottom, one who has been arrested by God's love in Christ and therefore wants to be with Him no matter where that leads or what is lost.

When I say that *God is the Gospel*, I mean that the highest, best, final, decisive good of the gospel, without which no other gifts would be good, is the glory of God in the face of Christ revealed for our everlasting enjoyment. The saving love of God is God's commitment to do everything necessary to enthrall us with what is most deeply and durably satisfying, namely himself.... The gospel is not a way to get people to heaven; it is a way to get people to God."
-John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, p.13, 47

- There's no such thing as a Christianity centered on something other than Christ.

- This truth, when embraced, will begin to alter the way we live.
 - ▶ Viewing habits...
 - ▶ Christian friendships...
 - ▶ Friendships with non-believers...

Paul's Only Hope: a new approach to acceptance with God

Phil 3:8-9

- When Paul became a Christian, though he was resolved to live a godly life, he did not link his obedience to God to his acceptance by God.

“The glory of the gospel is that God has declared Christians to be rightly related to him in spite of their sin. But our greatest temptation and mistake is to try to smuggle character into his work of grace. How easily we fall into the trap of assuming that we can only remain justified so long as there are grounds in our character for justification. But Paul’s teaching is that nothing we do ever contributes to our justification.”

-Sinclair Ferguson

- When looking for a righteousness whereby God would accept him he didn't look inside. He looked outside, to Christ.
- Paul is pointing us to the life-transforming hope that is only found in the objective work and person of Jesus Christ.

Paul's Treasured Companionship: a new approach to suffering

Phil 3:10-11

Heb 13:12-13 "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."

- When Jesus invited Paul to come, Paul said "Yes."

Paul's Ultimate Prize: a new approach to death

Phil 1:23; 3:11ff.

- Paul loved the church in Philippi. He loved his friends in ministry. But, he never had trouble identifying which was better: staying here or being with Christ? That was easy. Death would bring Paul into unbroken fellowship with the great Treasure of his life. Even his view of death was shaped by his 'One Thing'. If death gets me closer to Christ that's a really good thing.

- ▶ Are you increasing in your passion for Christ, such that your perspective on what is valuable and beautiful is being transformed?
- ▶ What about your sense of having to perform to be accepted? Is your knowledge of Christ killing legalism?
- ▶ What about the pains of life? Do you allow *them* to call your trust of *Christ* into question or do you allow them to push you into deeper communion and dependence on Him so that you know Him better b/c of them?
- ▶ And death? Is there ever a tinge of envy when a believing loved one goes to be with Christ? Do you believe to be there is 'better than' to be here?