



Restored to Contentment and Joy Part 3: Pressing Towards the Mark!

Happy Father's Day!

June 21, 2020

Reading Philippians Chapter 3:1-21

As we arrive in Chapter 3, prayerfully we do so:

- With rejoicing despite our circumstances (1:20)
- With a heart declaration that for us, "to live is Christ and to die is gain!" (1:21)
- With increase consolation in Christ, comfort in love, fellowship of the Spirit, and renewed "bowels and mercies" one to another! (2:1)
- With a refreshed like-mindedness in our homes and church (2:2)
- With a "lowliness of mind" wherein we esteem others better than ourselves (2:3)
- With the mind of Christ! (2:5)
- With a willingness to lay down title/status, make ourselves of "no reputation" and be servants (2:6-7)
- With a determination to be obedient to God unto death! (2:8)
- With hearts and tongues ablaze with worship, bowing our knees unto Christ! (2:10-11)
- With acceptance of this fundamental Kingdom truth: the way up is down! (2:9-11)
- With fear and trembling (2:12)
- Without murmurings and disputing (2:14)
- With a desire to be lights in the world! (2:15)
- And with hearts like Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30), wherein we care deeply about one another, put Christ's interests above our own, prove ourselves faithful, and are willing to risk our lives for the Gospel.

AMEN!

I pray you are seeing the true Christian contentment and joy comes from knowing Jesus Christ and trusting in His sovereign plan. Paul takes us further into such a mindset in chapter 3:

Pressing Towards the Mark

Philippians 3:1 (KJV) Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

1. So after all that has been said so far, through every circumstance, Paul encourages rejoicing!
2. He says he doesn't mind encouraging them over and over and that for them, such encouragement produces "safety." The word in Greek means "certainty" or to be "sure."
3. Having the mind of Christ, being willing to die to self, and having unity of mind within the church causes surety in the faith! And they will need such surety...

Philippians 3:2-3 (KJV) Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

1. Even in a good church like Philippi, there were false teachers...likely "Judaizers" who labored to return Christians to the works of the ceremonial law.
2. Paul called them dogs! Evil words! They believed circumcision ("concision") was necessary for salvation.
3. Paul proclaimed clearly that the church of Jesus Christ are the true circumcised (of the heart) which truly worship God. Human effort (the flesh) does not and cannot save.
4. In order to keep our contentment and joy we must not allow anyone to influence us towards "another gospel." (Gal 1:9)

Philippians 3:4-6 (KJV) *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

1. Paul goes on to prove that he practices what he preaches. He listed his spiritual resume; if anyone could boast about human effort it was him!
2. Amazingly, all his "accomplishments" were washed away; all his "success" subsumed under the blood of Christ.
3. These things came to mean nothing to him compared to knowing Christ. Is this your heart as well?

Philippians 3:7 (KJV) *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*

1. Again, this is mind and heart we need, willing to lose any and everything to gain Christ!
2. MacArthur said on this verse, "The Greek word for gain is an accounting term that means "profit." The Greek word for loss also is an accounting term, used to describe a business loss. Paul used the language of business to describe the spiritual transaction that occurred when Christ redeemed him. All his Jewish religious credentials that he thought were in his profit column, were actually worthless and damning (cf. [Luk 18:9-14](#)). Thus, he put them in his loss column when he saw the glories of Christ (cf. [Mat 13:44-45](#); [Mat 16:25-26](#))."
3. Jesus told us this would be so:

Matthew 16:24-26 (KJV) *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

4. This is what's missing in the lives of so many believers. We are wired to think of ourselves first...what makes us happy, comfortable, etc. "Loss" or "lose" are dirty words; gain is what we want! Increase! :)
5. But to walk in true contentment and joy, we must have a *Pauline Experience*, certainly in heart...possibly in practice. We must be willing to lose all to gain Him....

Philippians 3:8-11 (KJV) *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made*

conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

1. Again, let us be amazed at Paul's attitude, his heart condition, and his joyful faith!
 2. Everything he mentioned is worthless IN COMPARISON to knowing Jesus. (v8)
 3. For Christ, Paul not only lost "everything," but counts his losses as dung (rubbish, garbage). (v8)
 4. Paul's attempts to keep Law to save himself were over; grace through faith had come! (v9)
 5. All the labor and losses...the degradations and humiliations...the persecutions and pain...all were worth it to Paul in order to know Christ! (v10)
- Paul mentions the power of His resurrection. MacDonald says:
"The **power** that raised the Lord from the dead is set forth in Scripture as the greatest display of might which the universe has ever seen ([Eph 1:19-20](#)). It would seem as if all the hosts of evil were determined to keep His body in the tomb. God's mighty power defeated this infernal army by raising the Lord Jesus from the dead on the third day. This same **power** is placed at the disposal of all believers ([Eph 1:19](#)), to be appropriated by faith. Paul is stating his ambition to experience this power in his life and testimony.
 - He writes on the fellowship of His sufferings:
In the life of the Lord, suffering preceded glory. So then it must be in the life of Paul. He must share Christ's **sufferings**. He realized that there would be nothing of an atoning value in his own sufferings as there was in Christ's, but he knew, too, that it would be inconsistent for him to live in luxury and ease in a world where his Lord was rejected, scourged, and crucified. Jowett comments: "He was not contented to share the triumph of Olivet; he wanted to feel something of the pang and chill and loneliness of Gethsemane."
 - Is this what we want...to know Christ so badly that we are willing to suffer the loss of all things? To desire to walk in the power of the Spirit regardless of the cost? To know our LORD intimately even if the path to such knowledge is paved with suffering?
 - Are we willing to be "conformable unto His death?" Yes, this means living a crucified life, but Paul was willing, and in fact did, die for His LORD. John Henry Jowett writes:

Many Christians are satisfied with expenditure in which there is no "shedding of blood." They give away what they can easily spare. Their gifts are detached things, and the surrender of them necessitates no bleeding. They engage in sacrifice as long as it does not involve life; when the really vital is demanded, they are not to be found. They are prominent at all triumphant entries, and they willingly spend a little money on colorful decorations—on banners and palm branches; but when "Hurrahs" and "Hosannas" change into ominous murmurs and threats, and Calvary comes into sight, they steal away into safe seclusion.

But here is an Apostle who joyfully anticipates this supreme and critical demand. He is almost impatient at his own dribblings of blood-energy in the service of the kingdom! He is eager if need be to pour it out!

Philippians 3:12-14 (KJV) Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which*

are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

1. In humility, the apostle isn't claiming he's got it all down. He, like us, was still pursuing. It is noteworthy that he considered his present circumstances as part of the journey towards Jesus. (v12)
2. Verse 13 is important: even though he hadn't made it yet, he was determined to press on! How?
 - Forgetting his previous good works. This helped him guard against pride and offense.
 - Reaching forth, or moving forward. This kept his focus on the LORD's mission and kept him mindful of the need for the LORD's power.
 - Intentionally pressing...
3. To press is "to pursue with vigor" or "to run after" as in a race, hence the "prize" language.
 - The PHC states: *"The racer, fixing his eye upon the goal, leans forward, and turning his back upon things behind, presses with all speed towards the prize he covets. If he turns aside, he misses the mark and loses the garland. The great prizes of life are gained only by persevering labour. The prize of the Christian race—the crown of eternal life and blessedness—is worthy of the most laborious and self-denying efforts. When at times the heart grows weary in the struggle, a glimpse of the diadem of beauty obtained by faith revives the flagging energies."*
4. The word "mark" in verse 14 is "skopos" in Greek. It looks like the word "scope." In this context, it implies keeping one's eye on end of the race...the finish line! Perhaps our "end look" (also known as an eternal perspective) needs to sharpen? There is an ending point for us beloved, where our earthly sojourn ends and eternity begins! Look there and work backwards to regain joy and peace!!
5. Saints, let us press! Let us press forward! Let us run the race for the prize is great and the calling High!
 - What greater calling is there than hearing "well done" from our LORD and entering into His rest and joy?
 - Matthew Henry said, *"The prize we fight for, and run for, and wrestle for, what we aim at in all we do, and what will reward all our pains. It is of great use in the Christian course to keep our eye upon heaven. This is proper to give us measures in all our service, and to quicken us every step we take; and it is of God, from whom we are to expect it."*

Philippians 3:15-16 (KJV) Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

1. **Philippians 3:15-16 (NLT)** Let all who are spiritually mature agree on these things. If you disagree on some point, I believe God will make it plain to you. **16** But we must hold on to the progress we have already made.
2. What a wonderful exhortation! Let us work to agree! Let us be patient with one another as the LORD reveals His truths to us! Let us hold on to the progress we have made!
3. Good days are ahead...Kingdom days. The church is being pushed back to its roots, the normal platforms of stability and hope having been snatched out from below us: politics, employment, money, education, societal harmony, and even our health, which as it turns out, is much more fragile than we thought!

4. **Our hope must now be rebuilt on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness!**
5. It is time to build the Kingdom!

Philippians 3:17 (KJV) *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

1. Insofar as we have good examples to follow, let us follow them. Let us walk after Christ and His apostles. Let us respect and follow our pastors as they follow Christ.
2. Let us be mindful of our associations. Are they following the apostolic teachings and patterns?

Philippians 3:18-19 (KJV) *(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 mind earthly things.)*

1. Paul, with his pastor's hat fully on, pleads with Philippi not to follow false teachers! It won't end well!
2. This particular kind of teacher prove themselves enemies of the Cross of Christ by their antinomianism. MacArthur:

Implied in Paul's language is that these men did not claim to oppose Christ, His work on the cross, or salvation by grace alone through faith alone, but they did not pursue Christlikeness in manifest godliness. Apparently, they were posing as friends of Christ, and possibly had even reached positions of leadership in the church.

3. So Paul essentially warns of two types of false teachers in this chapter: legalists and antinomians. Both hurt Christ's bride!

Philippians 3:20-21 (KJV) *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

1. Instead of following falsehood, let us live as like citizens of heaven!

Philippians 3:20 (ESV) *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

2. "We are going somewhere with this!" We shall be changed!

Philippians 3:21 (ESV) *who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

Final thoughts:

Believer, you are a citizen of heaven! You are a stranger and pilgrim on this earth (1 Pet 2:11). Therefore, we must "pass the time of (our) sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." **1 Peter 1:17-20 (KJV)**

Be content with the knowledge that you belong to Christ and rejoice! Live as unto the LORD. Self-govern. Build your household in faith and purity. Preach the Gospel. Make disciples. Take up the cause of the oppressed and the poor. Serve the church.

We are made for a time such as this.

Press towards the mark!!