

PHILIPPIANS: REPLACING SELFISH AMBITION WITH GODLY ACHIEVEMENT

Part IX: Paul's Testimony Of Striving For Spiritual Maturity In True Spirituality

(Philippians 3:8-14)

I. Introduction

- A. As we have often noted in this lesson series, the Philippian believers lived in a culture marked by selfish ambition and strife, what tempted them to relate to one another in a sinfully selfish way, cf. Philippians 4:2.
- B. Paul addressed this issue by presenting a sharply contrasting goal in life, that of **losing** all things in this life that a selfish person would desire to gain instead true spiritual maturity in Christ, Philippians 3:8-14.
- C. We view Paul's presentation of this goal that remarkably *contrasts* with a self-centered life for our insight:

II. Paul's Testimony Of Striving For Spiritual Maturity In True Spirituality, Philippians 3:8-14.

- A. Having explained that he had counted as loss all that he as a Hebrew would most desire to possess for the sake of Christ (Philippians 3:4-7), Paul then explained his reason for making such an astounding claim in v. 8-14.
- B. That explanation is given in two main parts, one dealing with the salvation of his soul in Philippians 3:8-9 and the other with true spiritual maturity in true spirituality in Philippians 3:10-14 (as follows):
 1. Paul explained how he had given up everything he as a Hebrew would most desire for salvation, v. 8-9:
 - a. The Apostle Paul claimed he considered everything he as a Hebrew would most desire to possess in his heritage, lineage and works (Phil. 3:4-7) for the surpassing worth of knowing Messiah Jesus his Lord, v. 8.
 - b. Specifically, Paul had suffered the loss of all things, counting them as "rubbish" (v. 8 ESV) to gain Christ, being found in spiritual union with Him in not having his own righteousness as a Hebrew that came from the Law, but that comes through God's grace through faith in Christ, Philippians 3:9.
 2. Paul then explained how he had given up all he as a Hebrew had for true spiritual maturity, Phil. 3:10-11:
 - a. Beyond knowing Christ as personal Savior by grace through faith without works, Paul claimed he longed to experience the fellowship of Christ's life in his walk, experiencing alignment with the power of Christ's resurrection by sharing in His sufferings and becoming like Him in His death, Philippians 3:10-11.
 - b. The life Paul asserts here is the life planned by God the Father to conform the believer to the Lord Jesus Christ through a constant repeat of Christ-like sufferings, death and powerful resurrection, what other passages in the New Testament on Paul's experiences illustrate for us (as follows):
 - i. In 2 Corinthians 1:8, Paul reported that in the Roman province of Asia, he and his coworkers were pressed out of measure by some trial or trials to where they actually despaired of losing their lives. Nevertheless, Paul observed that he and his co-workers had the sentence of death in themselves that they might learn not to trust in themselves, but in God Who raises the dead, 2 Corinthians 1:9. In accord with this truth, Paul related that God delivered him and his coworkers from death, and he was confident God would continue to do so in their future, 2 Corinthians 1:10.
 - ii. In Acts 14:18-20, Paul experienced Judaizer foes turn an initially very supportive audience at Lystra into an angry mob that actually stoned Paul and left him for dead, Acts 14:18-19. We do not know if Paul actually died in this stoning, but as the believers stood around his body, he rose up and walked into the city of his own power, and later walked to nearby Derbe, Acts 14:20. Paul thus faced life-threatening suffering, either an actual death and resurrection or a near-death and near-resurrection to rise up from the ground after his attempted execution to walk into the city of the people who had stoned him, experiencing a death-resurrection experience for His Lord!
 3. Paul clarified that he had not yet fully attained spiritual maturity in his Christian walk, but that he pressed on to make that maturity his own as Christ had made Paul His own, Phil. 3:12. Paul thus forgot what was behind him, namely, what he had willingly abandoned in his background to strain for the goal of the prize for which God had called him heavenward, v. 13-14. That goal in this context refers to being rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ for conformity to Christ in life and service, Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 661.

Lesson: Paul explained that he counted all that he as a Hebrew would value in life as loss that he might be found in Christ, justified by faith by God's grace versus relying on his own works, and then to live a life that experienced conformity to the selfless sufferings, death and resurrection power of His Lord. In other words, his passion was NOT what he could selfishly possess in this earthly life, but what he could lose to experience Christ by grace through faith in salvation followed by alignment to His sacrificial death and resurrection in the Christian walk.

Application: May we believers like Paul aim to mature in Christ by identifying with our Lord in our walk.