

We continue in the book of Philippians, studying Paul's confidence that both he and the Philippians would always have blessings to glory in through their union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, such communion, even in sufferings (Philippians 3:10), is really the source of all our confidence and joy in this life. May the Lord cause our joy to grow as we dwell on what it means to have Jesus so close to us at every stage of life.

Monday: Read Philippians 2:12-16 & Philippians 3:1

The Spirit in the Word

There is a wonderful safety for the believer as he is surrounded and protected by the Word of God. As Paul says in Philippians 3:1, it is not burdensome for him to write (and re-write) instructions regarding the Gospel, since it is for the spiritual safety of the Philippians. The reason that we find such safety in the Word is because in it we find Christ (Romans 10:8-9) and therefore the spiritual security which comes from fellowship with Him.

Meditate and Pray: The goal is to find our Savior in His Word so that "Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:17). No wonder the Philippians are described as "holding forth" (KJV) or "holding onto" that Word as their source of life in Philippians 2:16. May our Lord also use His Word in our lives to quicken us daily through the Spirit of Christ.

Tuesday: Read Philippians 3:1-3

The Healthy Word

Rejoice in the wholesome influence of the Word of God! The more we find nourishment in it, the more like Christ (and our true spiritual selves) we become. The Word of God, in short, is humanizing, conforming us into holy men and women.

What a contrast there is between such wholesome godliness and the subhuman, false teaching of the Judaizers in Philippians 3:2, requiring as they do external rule-keeping instead of pursuing the Holy Spirit's inward principle of a new life in Christ!

No wonder Paul exclaims that they *mutilate their followers* instead of leading them to God's inward circumcision of the heart. That's what "concion" in the King James version means: a rending or harming of the flesh instead of a healthy cutting away of the hardness of our sinful, hard uncircumcised heart.

Meditate and Pray: Ask God to give you a sensitive, circumcised heart, attentive to His Word and Spirit, instead of a maimed and spurious form of merely external godliness. Use hymn # 376:

1 Open now thy gates of beauty,
Zion, let me enter there,
where my soul in joyful duty
waits for him who answers prayer.
Oh, how blessed is this place,
filled with solace, light, and grace!

2 Lord, my God, I come before thee,
come thou also unto me;
where we find thee and adore thee,
there a heav'n on earth must be.
To my heart, O enter thou,
let it be thy temple now!

3 Here thy praise is gladly chanted,
here thy seed is duly sown;
let my soul, where it is planted,
bring forth precious sheaves alone,
so that all I hear may be
fruitful unto life in me.

4 Thou my faith increase and quicken,
let me keep thy gift divine,
howsoe'er temptations thicken;
may thy Word still o'er me shine
as my guiding star through life,
as my comfort in my strife.

5 Speak, O God, and I will hear thee,
let thy will be done indeed;
may I undisturbed draw near thee

while thou dost thy people feed.
Here of life the fountain flows,
here is balm for all our woes.

Weds/Thurs: Read Philippians 3:1-3 and John 4:23-24

The Spirit of Truth

This experience of circumcision of the heart points us to the internal, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit – a work often referred to in this prison letter. For example, note that Paul’s confidence that “all will turn out for His deliverance” (Philippians 1:19) is tied to the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (KJV).

That same work of the Holy Spirit lays the foundation for Paul’s great ethical appeal in which He implores the Philippians to “have the mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:5) as they put each other’s interests before their own. After all, it is only the Holy Spirit who can give the Philippians “any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit,” as well as an experience of the “bowels and mercies” of Christ toward them. Thus Philippians 2:1 describes *incentives* in following Christ in His humility for the sake of the unity of the church.

But most of all, Paul underlines that it is only by the Holy Spirit that we are able to worship and glory in Christ in Philippians 3:3. Paul’s words here take us back to Christ’s words to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:23-24:

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Meditate and Pray:

Jesus empowers His people to worship the Father in spirit and truth. They will worship from their inner being, not by outward rituals or visible images. They will adore Him with souls overwhelmed by the love of God and purified from sins by His powerful grace. They will come into His holy presence with hearts consecrated to honor and serve Him alone as Lord and Master. Their worship will be filled with reverence, love and joy in the presence of their glorious Savior. What a glorious picture Jesus gives of the coming blessings of communion of His people with the living God!

For He speaks of the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church. They will offer spiritual worship with their spirits made alive by the grace of God’s Spirit. The people Christ has called and redeemed will worship in the power of the Holy Spirit whom Christ gives to those who believe in Him. Only the work of the Holy Spirit can bring about such radical renewal of sinful hearts. God’s Spirit stirs up and energizes our soul by teaching us God’s truth and making His gracious promises a reality in our lives. He is the Spirit of Truth.

Chris Liff, Notes on John 4:

Fri/Sat/Sun: read Philippians 3:3-11

All for Jesus

We saw in our notes two weeks ago on Philippians 3:4-6 that Paul could not have been more prominent or privileged as a “Hebrew of Hebrews and a Pharisee.” Before Christ had confronted him and changed his name, Saul was known to be impeccably religious in his upbringing and in his convictions. Like the rich young ruler, he sincerely (though mistakenly) believed he had obeyed the law so well as to earn God’s favor, and by his

obedience to earn salvation. Moreover, he hated those who insisted that *his* self-righteousness was as filthy rags and could not avail to purchase God's grace.

Those followers of The Way, who proclaimed the Gospel of free-grace alone through the righteousness of one Man alone – were called Christians. Saul persecuted them for possessing an assurance of salvation in Christ which condemned his efforts to keep God's law. See 1 Timothy 1:13-16 for Paul's retrospective view of his days' persecuting followers of The Way – a way to be found only in Jesus Christ.

But when Christ met him on the road to Damascus, Paul realized that all His attainments were as nothing. They were loss to him once he bowed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we see an Apostle who wants all glory to Jesus instead of to his self-righteous, carnal pride.

Meditate and Pray: Are you as “Christo-centric” as Paul is? Is Jesus your all in all? Ask the Lord to make it so, using this hymn (# 174) of commitment?

1 O Christ, our King, Creator, Lord,
Savior of all who trust thy Word,
to them who seek thee ever near,
now to our praises bend thine ear.

2 In thy dear cross a grace is found
(it flows from every streaming wound)
whose pow'r our inbred sin controls,
breaks the firm bond, and frees our souls.

3 Thou didst create the stars of night;
yet thou hast veiled in flesh thy light,
hast deigned a mortal form to wear,
a mortal's painful lot to bear.

4 When thou didst hang upon the tree,
the quaking earth acknowledged thee;
when thou didst here yield up thy breath,
the world grew dark as shades of death.

5 Now in the Father's glory high,
great Conqu'ror, nevermore to die,
us by thy mighty pow'r defend,
and reign through ages without end.