

- **\*Read Philippians 3\*** Years ago, I happened upon a video of this evangelical preacher named Francis Chan. He was teaching from this text here in **Philippians 3**, and I have never forgotten the illustration he used to make his point. For those who have never seen that video, I'd like to share his illustration with you this morning as we begin our study.
- Inside the podium, I have a rope. You have no clue how long this rope is, but for our discussion's sake let's imagine that this rope goes on forever and it represents the timeline of your existence. In my hand, I hold the length of rope that represents your life. Now obviously, this 2 inches of taped rope pales in comparison to the length of the rest of this eternal rope. I show this to you because it is a true statement when I say that many, if not most, people will live their lives focusing only on this little two inches of rope. It is also a true statement for me to say that once we get to the end of this tape, there will be a point where we will either have many regrets or we will receive a great reward based upon what we do in this little section of tape.
- As I mentioned, far too many people live their lives focusing only on this little time that they will be on this earth. The here and now is the only thing that truly matters to them and they make no plans for the future because they live only with an earthly perspective. Ladies and Gentlemen, might I suggest to you that this ought not be the case of disciples of Christ. Christians should not live with an earthly perspective, but we ought to be living with an eternal perspective. What I mean by this, is that each and everyone of us ought to be considering our actions in this life in light of the fact that there will be a next life. We know it to be true that each and every one of us will be called to stand before the judgement seat of Christ where we will give an account for the deeds done in this body on this earth in this life. **(II Cor. 5:10)** Might I ask you this morning...are you living with that sort of perspective? That each and every decision you make here in this life can have a bearing on where you spend eternity? This is the question we want to explore this morning together from this letter to the Philippians.
- The setting for this letter should speak mightily to this question and lifestyle. It is universally accepted based upon **1:12,13** that the apostle Paul was in chains, he was in prison during the writing of this letter. Therefore, it ought not to surprise us that he focuses so much in this letter on the fact that this world is not our home, and that the things of this life are only temporary. Throughout the whole letter, he speaks in different ways about striving through tribulations for Christ and focusing on eternity, and this third chapter is no different. Let's consider some learning points from this chapter that will hopefully help us to live with this eternal perspective.

### **I. Our confidence should not be in the things of this life. (vv.1-6)**

- A. The things of this life are so temporary and weak in their nature.
1. As Paul begins to conclude this letter to the Philippian brethren, his admonition for them is to rejoice in the Lord. Again, Paul himself is in a difficult situation. He is in prison and facing tribulation, but he still understands the importance of rejoicing in the Lord.
  2. The Philippians were to be on the lookout for those who would teach falsely that they were of the true circumcision. This could not doubt be anyone else than the Jews or the Judaizing teachers of Paul's day who continually troubled him in his work for the Kingdom.
  3. Paul makes the point that these people might try to put some confidence in the flesh, in the Jewish roots, but if anyone was able to put some confidence in his Jewishness then it would be Paul.
  4. But Paul wasn't putting his confidence in the flesh. His confidence was in Jesus and the true circumcision that is the circumcision of the heart. **(Rom. 2:29)** Paul knew that confidence in anything other than Jesus would be failure.
- B. Our confidence should be fully and completely in Jesus.
1. But why? Why was Paul's confidence only in Jesus, and why should we do the same thing? I'll suggest that there are numerous reasons why we should not put our confidence in these other things, but only in Jesus.
    - a) This life is so short compared to the next life. **(James 4:14-16)**
    - b) The things of this life will be destroyed. **(II Peter 3:7-10)**
    - c) The things of this life will let us down. **(Matt. 6:19,20)**
  2. These statements are true about things concerning this life, but they are not so when it comes to Jesus and an eternity with Him and our Father.

3. Eternity is just that....it is eternal and forever. When considering eternity, is anything in this life truly worth giving it up? Again, this life is so short when we consider the never ending nature of eternity. Do we really want to put our confidence in something that is fleeting at the expense of eternity with Jesus?

## **II. We ought to be willing to count all things as loss for the next life. (vv.4-11)**

- A. Paul counted his entire life up to the point of Christ as if it held no value to him.
  1. Again, Paul, during his life as Saul, was set up for success in regards to living a life where he was a pretty important person within his community of Jews. He states that if anyone could have confidence in their flesh as a Jew then it could be himself.
  2. He was "circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews." These physical qualities of Paul demanded respect from others. He was not a proselyte, but he was a pure blooded Jew. He was from the tribe of Benjamin which was of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel. Benjamin brought forth the first true king of Israel and that tribe was the core of Israel's existence going forward. He was a true Jew.
  3. But he wasn't just a Jew by blood, but he truly behaved as a Jew and did everything for his people. He was zealous and to the extent that he persecuted the Lord's people in the name of protecting his own faith. His faith according to the Law was blameless.....yet he walked away from all of this.
  4. He did so because he recognized that there was something worth far more than his past ways of living that have caused him to be set for life as a Jew. He knew that giving that up here, would give him something so much more in the next life. He knew that it would give him life in the next life through the resurrection of Jesus and his own resurrection to life. **(vv.7-11)**
- B. We must be willing to give up anything that might hinder us here in this short life for an eternity in heaven with God.
  1. Obviously, Paul had to give up the persecution of Christians if he wanted to be found in Jesus, but those other qualities weren't necessarily things he had to let go of. Yet, he did so because he knew that those parts of his life were not things that were necessary in his endeavors of getting to heaven.
  2. There are a lot of things that we can choose to do in this life that aren't necessarily bad things. However, I believe Paul teaches us that when we are making decisions, we must make decisions with eternity in mind. We must ask ourselves, "will this decision help me get to heaven?"
  3. \*\*\*When we are choosing who we marry, are we looking at that decision with an eternal perspective? When we are choosing a way to make our living, are we looking at that from an eternal perspective? When we are choosing how we spend our free time, are we looking at it from an eternal perspective? When we are choosing whether or not to commit our lives to Jesus, are we looking at it from an eternal perspective?\*\*\*
  4. We might think that our spouse, our job, where we live, or what we do only affects this life....but that just couldn't be anymore false. Sure there are things that we could enjoy in this life, but is a life of enjoyment worth more than an eternity in heaven with God? Everything we do in this life, can have an effect on the next life. Are we making choices that show we value the next life more than this one? Paul's actions showed that and ours must do the same.

## **III. Our main focus should be on pressing on towards the goal. (vv.12-14)**

- A. Paul recognized that he still had a lot of work to put in and he wasn't going to allow things of this world to stop him from reaching the goal of being like Jesus.
  1. Paul recognized that even he still had some work to do in regards to his maturing as a Christian and his striving to become like Jesus. He didn't want to be misunderstood and have people think that he was at a point where he no longer had to put work in.
  2. However, it was very much the opposite. Paul says that he was going to continue to "press on" towards this goal of becoming like Jesus in all respects. He wasn't going to allow his time and energy to be sucked out of him because of his weaknesses.
  3. Instead, he was going to continue to press or strain for that goal of being like Jesus. Every ounce of his being was being devoted to his efforts to be like Jesus. That was his focus in this life. Not education. Not health. Not profession. Nothing else was more important than Paul's focus on being like Jesus. He knew this was what Jesus had called him for and he was going to give everything to achieve that purpose.

B. There are many things in this life that would cause us to fall short of being like Jesus. We must give every effort to get past those obstacles.

1. Paul was facing and did face many obstacles that could cause him to give up on his goal of trying to be like Jesus. It caused him to give up a big portion of his life. He was persecuted because of Jesus. He was thrown in prison multiple times because of his faith, but he wouldn't be stopped.
2. Do we live with the type of mindset and perspective that will help us to do the same thing? Will we press on for Jesus? Will we strain with every muscle to be like Him?
3. Or will I give that time and effort to other things? Will I strive for excellence in Christ, or will I strive for excellence that will bring me glory and pleasure in this life?
4. We only have some much time in this short life. Are we using that time with our focus on Jesus? If we do, then this short time will help set us up for eternity in heaven. Paul was willing to forget what laid behind him. May we be willing to do that same thing.

#### **IV. We will obtain the prize by living according to God's standard.**

A. Paul knew that the prize of heaven could be gained by living according to God's standard.

1. The goal was to be like Jesus and the prize for living to achieve that goal was the prize of an eternal home in heaven with God and Jesus Christ. To strive for this goal and prize was the attitude of those who are mature in their faith. **(v.15)**
2. Paul recognized that there is a standard that Christians are to live by. That standard and pattern is to be established by "us" which we understand to be the Apostles. Paul held himself to this high standard, and he would have all people who profess Jesus to live to this same standard. **(vv.16,17)**
3. Sadly, he also mentions that there were many who are not willing to live according to the patter of the Apostles. He says that they are enemies of the cross. He states that their end will be destruction because their appetite for the flesh is their god, they glory in their shame, and they set their minds on earthly things. They are a people who focus only on the things of this life. If they see it and want it then they will have it. They have no shame, but they flaunt their "freedom" to live as they want. Paul says that these people will end in destruction because of their fleshly minds and deeds. **(vv.18,19)**
4. Paul seeks to contrast those people with the Christian who recognizes that their true citizenship is in heaven. Disciples don't set their minds on this life because this place isn't their permanent home. But they instead set their on spiritual things and they eagerly wait for the next life to come. They are dedicated to living according to Jesus so that this next life will be the best life.

B. We will only be judged according to God's standard when it comes to whether or not we will reach the prize of an eternal home in heaven with God.

1. When this life is ended and we stand before the Great Judge, we won't be judged by anything else except how well we lived according to God's standard. We must use our short time on this earth to make sure that we are prepared for that time when we will stand and be judged.
2. There are so many people, even some Christians, who spend this short life being focused on anything and everything but the prize of heaven. They, like the people that Paul points out, are people who love themselves more than anything else. They are going to do what they want to do no matter what. They don't care if people approve of what they are doing or not. They are set only on the things of this life and they couldn't care less about anything beyond this life. They are the exact people that Jesus speaks of in **Matthew 6:19,20**.
3. We must be a people who are seeking to be successful according to the standard of God and not this world. This world seeks the prizes of fame, wealth, and fortune, but our God desires us to be more than just those things. The ultimate prize in our eyes must be heaven. If that is our ultimate prize, then we will suffer through some of the junk that this life throws at us because we recognize that perfection is waiting in the next life.

Paul's mind was fully focused on the eternal destination of heaven, and he encouraged fellow disciples to do the same. He encouraged them to persevere through this life because they recognized that it is so short and fleeting compared to heaven. His prize was in heaven and he knew that everything he did in this life could affect that one. May God help us to have that type of eternal perspective. Nothing in this world is worth missing heaven. It has been said before and I'll repeat it. If we miss heaven then we have missed it all. May we ever keep that in our mind.