

The Gospel According to Philippians
Gospel Passion
Philippians 3:1-11
Sermon Outline

I) Paul's passionate commitment to Christ

A) He rigorously repudiates those who would remove Jesus from the center—vv.2-3

Watch out (3x)

Dogs

Mutilators

B) He suffered the loss of everything because of Christ, and it does not bother him—vv.4-8

Paul's world of achievement

Parallels in ours

C) He made knowing Christ the consuming aim of his life – vv. 9-11

Entering Christ's world

II) Problems with Paul's commitment

A) Doesn't it encourage bigotry?

v. 2: Dogs...evil doers...mutilators

Bigotry isn't just a Christian problem

Paul is vigorously defending against bigotry here.

B) Are we really supposed to trash everything for Jesus?

Paul did not set out to trash everything. He had it taken from him

Paul loved life

Jesus is so valuable because he opens up life to us

To be *found in him* (v. 9) is to be found in a whole new order of life

To be free from the need for *a righteousness of my own* (v. 9)

To experience the *power of his resurrection* (v. 10) now and to find ourselves *becoming like him in his death* (v. 10)

III) Learning to share Paul's passion more fully

Count... (v. 7, 8a, 8b)

Neither complaining nor clinging

Counting as a gift

A word of encouragement

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) For a Pharisee like Paul to call those who advocate circumcision mutilators is as shocking as an American patriot spitting on the American flag and burning it. How do you explain Paul using such language?
- 2) In the social world that Paul knew he had reached the pinnacle. List his achievements and pedigrees. List what it would mean for you to reach the pinnacle in the world that is important to you.
- 3) How does Paul think of the loss of all his gains in the light of gaining Christ? Why? Can you honestly say that you share Paul's attitude? Why? Why not?
- 4) In verses 9-11 Paul expresses a longing to know Christ, by which he seems to mean, at least in part, a longing to share in Christ's experiences—his power, his sufferings, his servant death. How like Paul are you?
- 5) Analyze bigotry. What is it and why do people indulge in it. Illustrate it. People who claim that Jesus alone is the way to God are sometimes charged with bigotry. Is this charge ever justified? If so, why? Is it ever not justified? Why not?
- 6) If we are to follow Paul's example must we really trash everything for Jesus? If this is not the case, then what does it mean to imitate him in his love for Christ?
- 7) Paul says he wants to be "found in Christ not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law." What does he mean by a "righteousness of my own"? What other sort of righteousness does he desire? Differentiate between them. Why is Paul so happy to let go of the first kind?
- 8) How do you deal with losses in life? With bitterness? With nostalgia and clinging? In some other way?
- 9) Paul dealt with his losses as the opportunity to discover the surpassing value of the great reality that is often hidden by good times—that God in Christ is the only permanent and ultimately the most satisfying reality in all of life. Have you ever made this discovery? Are you making it in any way now? Spend some time thanking Christ that he is "the same yesterday, today, and forever."