

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Paul's Spiritual Accounting Practices Philippians 3:4-11 Part 7**

What is your most important long range goal? Is it completing school? Is it getting a good job? Is it getting out of debt? Is it getting married? Is it buying a home? Is it entering into a secure retirement? What is it? What is that singular goal that occupies much of your thinking and your energies; that transcends all other goals?

Some of you might have had difficulty with this question. You may not be particularly strong in this area of goal setting. You might even have problems simply setting and accomplishing short term goals. But let me share with you a person that had no problem with this area at all. And that person is the Apostle Paul. He was a very goal-oriented person. He always seemed to have a plan before him. He not only knew what he wanted to get done on a particular day, but he also would even know what he would want to get done the next week, the next month and the next year. He always seemed to have a very long list of goals at any given point in time that he was working towards. But overshadowing all of these various goals was one singular overarching goal that molded and shaped everything else in his life. It is a goal that every single person here this weekend needs to embrace and we find this goal in **Philippians 3**.

In **Philippians 3:1-3** we considered Paul's warning concerning the Judaizers. The Judaizers were individuals who were saying that in order for Gentiles to be saved, they, in addition to believing in Jesus, needed to be circumcised and adhere to Jewish Law.

In order to focus attention on the danger and futility of that message, Paul compares the Judaizers' willingness to place confidence in circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law with his own past personal experience. All of this is described for us in **Philippians 3:4-11**.

In describing his own personal experience he begins by listing his own so-called spiritual advantages that he at one time valued so highly prior to his conversion. Paul gives this list to us in **Philippians 3:4-6**. Let me read these verses for you, **“Although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: (5) circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; (6) as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”**

After listing for us these so-called advantages he enjoyed in the past, he speaks of a very dramatic change in his thinking in **Philippians 3:7-8**. Let me read these two verses for you, **“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.....”** Paul came to see that everything that he had once considered so valuable needed to be viewed as rubbish. And Christ, who he had at one time thought to be rubbish, needed to be his singular treasure surpassing everything else in value.

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This dramatic change in Paul’s thinking led him, as an expression of his faith in Christ, to make an adjustment in his spiritual ledger. What was that adjustment? Paul transferred everything in his life that he had ever considered important to the loss column in order to gain Christ. This adjustment in his spiritual ledger totally changed his life and produced a number of very positive ramifications which he details for us in **Philippians 3:8-11.....** WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE RAMIFICATIONS OF GAINING CHRIST? We have already covered four of them.

The first positive ramification of gaining Christ is knowledge. In **Philippians 3:8** Paul declares that he counts all things as loss **“in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ.”** As we have noted, when Paul speaks about knowing Christ he is simply speaking of entering into a personal relationship with Christ the Lord of glory. This was the first positive ramification.

The second positive ramification of gaining Christ is righteousness. Let us read **Philippians 3:9**, **“And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”** A relationship with Christ and taking possession of the righteousness of God are inseparable. We cannot have one without the other. We will therefore, when we exercise faith in Christ, experience both of these positive ramifications at the same time. Knowing Christ and taking possession of the righteousness which comes from God are the first two positive ramifications of gaining Christ. These two initial benefits or positive ramifications are experienced immediately when we exercise faith in Christ and provide for us a very certain future hope. But these are not the only positive benefits that we should expect when we exercise faith by transferring everything that we ever felt was important to the loss column in order to gain Christ.

We see these two positive benefits or these two positive ramifications producing in us a spiritual appetite. And what is that appetite? We will want to know Christ better. We see this appetite at the very beginning of **Philippians 3:10**. How does it start? **“that I may now Him.”**

We have already seen Paul’s desire to know Christ in **Philippians 3:8** when he said that he counted all things as loss **“in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ.”** The reason why he repeats his desire to know Christ again is because he wants to communicate how important it was to him not only to know Christ but to know Him better. Knowing Christ was Paul’s magnificent obsession.

This desire to know Christ better led to our next two positive ramifications of gaining Christ and both are found in **Philippians 3:10**. What is the third positive ramification of gaining Christ that Paul lists in this passage of Scripture.

The third positive ramification of gaining Christ is power. Let us look again at **Philippians 3:10**. What does it say? **“that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.....”** Paul begins this verse, **“That I may know Him ....”** This repetition of his desire to know Christ clearly communicates to us Paul’s appetite to know Christ better. In order for Paul to know Christ better or more fully he wanted to experience the power of God that raised Christ from the dead.

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Sin is a cruel master but sin does not have to rule our lives. We can continue to transfer everything that we have ever considered important and valuable to the loss column and as we continue to make this adjustment to our spiritual ledger, we will find ourselves not being ruled by sin but by Christ and enjoy in our pursuit of holiness the power of God that raised Christ from the dead but even more importantly we will come to know Christ more fully.

But Paul is not done with telling us how he wanted to know Christ better and this leads us to the fourth positive ramification of gaining Christ.

The fourth positive ramification of gaining Christ is suffering. Let me again read for you **Philippians 3:10** but this time I will continue to read a little further, **“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings .....**” Those who want to know Christ better will not be satisfied with simply knowing him in His power but they will also want to know him in His sufferings. They will want to participate in His sufferings. And certainly this was true for Paul.

Yes, tapping into the power of Christ certainly will allow us to enjoy a deep and intimate relationship with Christ but nothing will be as important in helping us enjoy a deep and intimate relationship with Christ and getting to know Him better than participating in His suffering.

We learned last week that we will know the sufferings of Christ, or in other words participate in the sufferings of Christ when we choose to get serious about the great commission. When we get serious about going and making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that the Lord has commanded us, it is only then that we will participate in Christ’s sufferings.

We might not be imprisoned, or beaten, or face the possibility of execution, but if we are serious about our obedience to the commission of Christ we will suffer. We will suffer in terms of our time. Will our serious pursuit of the great commission cause us to suffer in terms of our time? ..... Will it cause us to suffer in terms of our energy? ..... Will it cause us to suffer in terms of our resources? ..... And beyond all of this we will have opportunity to suffer personal attacks as well. Just because we live in America does not mean that we will not suffer with Christ if we take His commission seriously.

When we suffer with Christ in this way we are being conformed to Christ’s death. The verse says, **“that I may know him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings .... being conformed to His death.”** When we suffer in our pursuit of obedience to the commission of Christ we are demonstrating to ourselves and the world that we have been willing to take up our cross very much in the way Christ took up his cross in serving the Lord and others.

This leads us to the fifth positive ramification of gaining Christ. What is the fifth positive ramification of gaining Christ?

The fifth positive ramification of gaining Christ is the resurrection (Philippians 3:11). Let us read **Philippians 3:10,11 “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (11)In order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”**

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Why did Paul want to know Christ and take possession of the righteousness of God? Why did Paul want to know Christ better by tapping into the power of Christ's resurrection? And why did Paul most importantly want to participate with Christ in His sufferings, being conformed to His death? It is all about the resurrection from the dead.....Paul's expressed desire to experience the resurrection from the dead is Paul's singular overarching goal that determines every other goal in his life.

Paul's expressed desire to experience the resurrection from the dead is interesting. It is interesting because ultimately the Scriptures teach us that every human who dies will ultimately be resurrected. And if every individual who dies will ultimately be resurrected Paul would not have to be concerned about attaining it. It would happen no matter how Paul lived his life.

Obviously Paul must be referring to something that is a little more specific when he speaks of attaining the "**resurrection from the dead.**" If this is true then what specifically is he referring to?

There are two basic resurrections described in the Scripture (John 5:26-29). There is a resurrection of life and there is a resurrection of judgment. Let me read for you **John 5:26-29**, "**For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; (27) and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. (28) Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, (29) and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.**"

How many resurrections did Jesus identify in **John 5**? He identified two and everyone will participate in one or the other. Let me take a few moments and give you a little more detail about these two different resurrections.

The resurrection of judgment will take place at the end of the Millennial Kingdom and involves all the unsaved dead (Revelation 20:11-15). Let me read for you **Revelation 20:11-15**, "**And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them, according to their deeds. (14) And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**" The resurrection to judgment will take place at the end of the Millennial Kingdom and will involve all of the unsaved dead who have ever lived. But it is not quite this simple when we consider the resurrection of life.

The resurrection of life has several phases. What are those phases?

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The resurrection of Christ is the first phase (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). In **1 Corinthians 15:20-23**, Christ's resurrection is referred to as the "first fruits" which would indicate there will be another or other resurrections to follow which would have a similar outcome. Therefore when we think of the resurrection of life we need to think of it as being composed of several phases with the resurrection of Christ being the first phase. What is the second phase?

The resurrection of church age saints at the rapture is the second phase (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The resurrection of church age saints is wonderfully described in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**. Christ could at any moment return and catch up His church to Himself but those Christians who are alive at His coming will not precede those who had fallen asleep in Christ. Rather those who have fallen asleep in Christ Jesus or in other words have died, will be resurrected to meet the Lord in the air first. This is the second phase of the resurrection of life. But this is not the last phase.

The resurrection of saints who died in the tribulation (Rev. 20:3-5), together with the resurrection of OT saints at the second advent is the third phase (Dan. 12:2; Is. 26:19). Following the rapture there will be a seven year period of tribulation in order to prepare Israel for the Millennial Kingdom. There will be many individuals who will exercise faith in Christ and will die for their faith including a very large number of Jews. At the conclusion of this period there will be a resurrection of these tribulational saints which we see spelled out for us in **Revelation 20:3-5** plus the saints from the Old Testament period which we see spelled out for us in **Daniel 12:2** and **Isaiah 26:19**. This is the third phase of the resurrection of life.

These are the three phases that the Scriptures spell out as being a part of what the Bible calls the resurrection of life.

There are two basic resurrections that are described in Scripture that everyone who dies will ultimately participate in. They will either participate in the resurrection of judgment and have their resurrected bodies cast into the lake of fire or they will participate in the resurrection of life and be ushered into the presence of God in their newly transformed resurrected bodies.

When Paul speaks of attaining the resurrection from the dead he is expressing his desire to be a participant in the resurrection of life, which the church will experience at the rapture. This was Paul's singular overarching goal, the resurrection from the dead. This hopefully is our singular overarching goal as well. And certainly I believe it is pretty obvious to all of us the importance of attaining this goal.

If we fail to attain our weight loss goals for this year we may end up feeling a little sluggish, we may open ourselves up to various weight related health issues, we may not feel good about ourselves but all of this would be inconsequential in comparison to failing to attain our goal of participating in the resurrection of life and by default be cast into the lake of fire.

How can everyone in this room this weekend attain this most important long range goal? It is by transferring everything that we have ever felt was important or valuable as an expression of our faith to the loss column in order to gain Christ. The Scriptures teach us that we are saved by grace through faith and faith alone.

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However if we have done this and have come to know Christ, we will want to know Christ better. This will mean that we will want to know Christ in the power of His resurrection and also in the fellowship of His sufferings. This pursuit of knowing Christ better in these ways gives us assurance that we truly know Christ.

But of these two desires, the desire to know Christ in His resurrection and the desire to know Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings, it is the latter that is most significant of all in truly assuring us that we know Him and have the certain hope of eternal life. Let us go back and read **Philippians 3:11** but this time let us read **Philippians 3:10** as well, **“that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (11) in order that I might attain to the resurrection from the dead.”** Paul’s point is simply this before we can have the assurance that we will participate in the resurrection from the dead, we need to be conformed to Christ’s death by knowing the fellowship of His sufferings.

When our relationship with Christ is confirmed by our participation with Him in His sufferings, it validates our future participation in the resurrection of life (Philippians 3:11).

Why did Paul want to know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings while being conformed to His death? Not only because it allowed Paul to enjoy Christ on a personal level that he longed for but more importantly it would confirm to him that he would attain to the resurrection from the dead.

When we look at the phrase “in order that” it may seem to introduce a note of doubt but it is best understood as an expression of expectation.

Christ certainly had the expectation of participating in the resurrection of life after his suffering. Paul had the expectation of participating in the resurrection of life after his suffering. And we also should have the expectation of participating in the resurrection of life after our suffering.

Because Paul desired to know Christ in the power of His resurrection and in the fellowship of His sufferings he had the expectation of attaining the singular overarching goal of his life.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let us remember that there is no resurrection without death. Just as Christ had to suffer on the cross before He experienced His resurrection we must suffer with Him as He builds His church through us before our resurrection. There is an intimate partnership between us being conformed to Christ’s death in the fellowship of His suffering and our resurrection when Christ returns for His church.