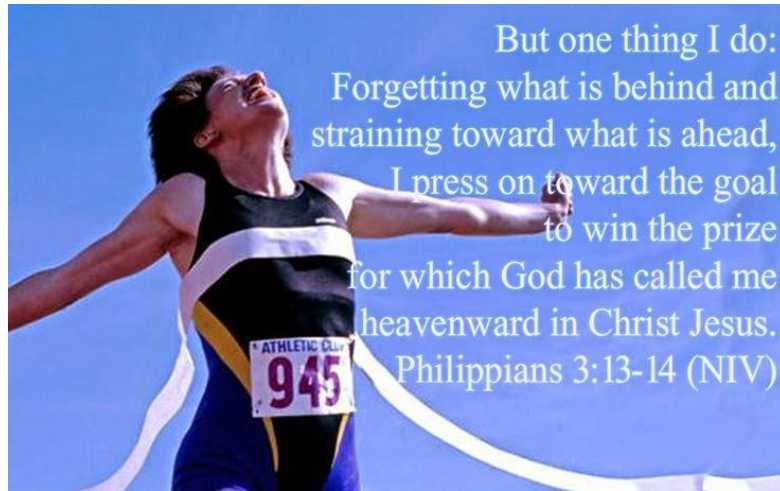


Philippians 3 Study notes



Opening Prayer:

Gracious Father

We thank you for the opportunity to come together to study your word.

We pray you will help us learn from Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Help us to understand the letter, and may we, with prayer, apply it to our lives. May we be challenged and encouraged, just as the Philippians were, when they read this letter.

In Jesus' name. Amen

Just a minute:

Each person is to take 1 minute to note how last week's study engaged them. Did anyone take up the challenge of a diary of Joy talking about reconciliation or unity and / or writing a testimony of a time when God challenged them about grumbling. (one or two short ones could be shared)

Paul and the Judaizers (have this read by someone)

The Judaizers were a faction of the Jewish Christians, both of Jewish and non-Jewish origins, who regarded the Levitical laws of the Old Testament as still binding on all Christians. They tried to enforce

Jewish circumcision upon the Gentile converts to early Christianity and were strenuously opposed and criticised for their behaviour by the Apostle Paul, who employed many of his epistles to refute their doctrinal errors.

In Ch 3 Paul articulates the basis that the Judaizers were resting on: the works of the flesh (3:1-2). He then points out that he would have a greater claim to boast in the flesh than they since he had the proper Jewish credentials (3:3-6). Yet Paul does not boast; in fact, he very graphically explains that the only thing the flesh can produce is dung (3:7-11; especially v. 8). The basis of his righteousness, therefore, is the faithfulness of Christ (3:9) and the goal is Christ's resurrection power (3:10-11). Paul commends them to follow his example that he gave them when he lived with them and to focus on the things of Heaven and not the flesh.

Read (have this read by someone)

Philippians 3

Take 10

Discuss the sermon and the readings. What was new, a surprise or a challenge? How has the tone of the book changed?

Take 2 mins

One of the greatest challenges of Christianity is the tension between works and salvation. No works bring about salvation...people struggle to see Jesus without our works... how does this challenge your views?

Now Share

In what circumstance do works and deeds enhance or detract from the Gospel? Is there a point where some actions become our dutiful or guilt ridden obligation and not the leading of the Holy Spirit...if so why do we keep doing this?

Pauls focus on the Spiritual

Paul addresses a tension that exists between that of the world and that of the spiritual realm. In V.11, 13b, 14 Paul looks to the eternal life as a dominant point. Do Christians focus more on the here and now or the eternal home? Discuss.

Society and Culture

In the sermons the main theme for the series is on Joy. Ch3 does not seem to have the tone of Joy flowing through it yet Paul writes and starts to compare the Judaizers and society and what their assurances are or are not. He brings to the fore a deep foundation for Joy. How does this chapter build a foundation for Joy (vs that of society), even though it's not explicitly spoken of?

Church

Paul has a great challenge from within the church with Judaizers. Be they from the Jewish heritage or not they have taken on an elite / extreme theology that is causing issues. Does the church still wrestle with these types of theology and how could we as a church best address them?

Extension:

18 For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.

Paul's second challenge from the church came from the other religions and the greater society, one that encouraged the fulfilment of power, lusts and hedonistic desires. Our society has changed rapidly over the past 40 years and society once again calls people to power, lusts and hedonistic desires being fulfilled.

How can we as Christians engage and preach the gospel without becoming victims ourselves?

How do we defend our faith and the faithful?

How do we ensure we live a Christian life in society without being pious, elitist or disconnected, all for the sake of protecting or shielding ourselves from society's hedonism?

Encouragement

When we hold the focus as people who live in society - the more we gain in status and the like brings us honour. When we lose this we have shame. Paul challenges that the values of society have been turned upside down as he is prepared to lose his status and the like for the knowledge that he is in Christ. (V7-9) How is Paul's words about loss here encouraging for us in the church today?

For the week ahead

Diary of Joy – Take a moment each day to think of times when God has brought you Christians who loved and cared for you above and beyond your dreams and expectations. Write a letter to God with thanks for these people and how there is a deep joy that wells up in you from these experiences.

Write a short testimony on a time when you relied more on your Christian traditions and heritage than on God. Can you explain through this how God became more real and personal that people outside of the church would understand?

Read: Philippians 3

Prayer

Father God, we thank you for your servant Paul and for his letters to different communities. Paul was continually focused on you. He believed that you are the source and goal of all, and we should live and work moment by moment in your presence. May we too believe and act similarly. Thanks for this study and be with us now as we go our separate ways.

Amen