



## ***Paul's Final Example***

- I. Introduction.
  - A. The Philippian church was in turmoil, and the answer to the division was humility. In 2:5, Paul states that our attitude should be the same as the attitude of Christ. He gave up the benefits of deity to humble himself and die on a cross for our salvation. If Christ can humble himself for us, then we should humble ourselves before God for the sake of other people. In 2:19-30, Paul gives two stellar examples of men who humbled themselves and made sacrifices for other people- Timothy and Epaphroditus. In 3:1-11, Paul concludes his thought by giving one last example- himself.
  - B. Philippians 3:1 gives us some insight into the letter to the Philippian church.
    - 1. The Greek word translated as “finally” could be translated “in addition.” Paul is not wrapping up his letter; Paul is wrapping up his thoughts about 2:1-4.
    - 2. Paul is writing to them again. Paul had written to them before. We do not have all of Paul’s correspondence with the early churches. We only have what the Holy Spirit has saved for us in scripture.
    - 3. Paul is writing to them again, and he is going to address what he has mentioned to them before. He is doing it for their own good. We know that Philippi had less than 10 Jews living in the city. However, it was a common practice for Jewish Christians to come into a city after Paul had left and try to convince the new believers to follow Jewish customs, especially circumcision. He calls those people who tie circumcision to faith “mutilators of the flesh”. Paul had written to the Philippian believers about this issue in another letter, and now he wants to remind them to not allow those false teachers to get a voice in the church. Their false teaching provides Paul an opportunity to reaffirm the gospel through his personal testimony.
    - 4. What are some areas in the church today where Christians confuse cultural customs with matters of faith? What is the result of this practice in the life of the church?
- II. Paul’s Story
  - A. Paul’s pedigree- 3:3-6. Paul states that no one has a better religious pedigree than him. If Christianity is about rule keeping and physical adherence to the law, then Paul should have great pride in his accomplishments.
    - 1. Hereditary pedigree: Paul was born a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin. He was circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day according to Jewish law. He was raised as a culturally pure, Hebrew speaking Jew. He had a pure Jewish blood line.

2. Professional pedigree: Paul's attitude toward the law was that of the strict sect of the Pharisees. He zealously persecuted the church. He strictly lived according to the law to the point of being considered "faultless."
  3. In what ways do we practice religious pedigrees in the church today? Why are "religious systems" enemies of Christianity?
- B. Paul's change- 3:3-9. In spite of all of Paul's impressive titles and accomplishments, he still did not have the heart of God. He was prideful, legalistic, loveless, and disobedient to the gospel. The law is powerless to change the heart. Then he met Jesus, and Jesus changed him forever. When Jesus changed his heart, Paul realized that his past accomplishments and legalistic righteousness did not matter at all; he now considers them meaningless. Why was Paul willing to give up everything for one thing? Because that one thing gave meaning to everything.
1. Paul sacrificed knowledge for relationship. His Jewish faith was based on knowledge of the law. He gave up a religion based on knowledge and performance for a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul calls it "the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord." He had to die to a faith system tied to performance in order to receive the incredible greatness of a walk with Jesus.
  2. Paul sacrificed pride for humility. Paul was prideful in his righteousness. He was judgmental toward others and had confidence in his own abilities. When Paul died to his pride, Jesus reigned in his heart and transformed him into a humble servant. Paul's humility allows him to be an example of Philippians 2:1-5.
  3. Paul sacrificed flesh for faith. Paul's former life was a life of fleshy accomplishment. He died to his flesh and took on faith in Jesus Christ. Paul makes an impassioned plea that everything he lost from a fleshy perspective in order to gain Christ was worth it. Every sacrifice, every struggle, every loss was worth the resurrected life of living in Christ Jesus. Faith in Jesus trumps selfish control every time!
- C. Paul's conclusion- 3:10-11. We all want the power and glory of a resurrected life, but we cannot receive a resurrection until we are willing to die. When we die to our flesh, our own selfish pride, and our performance based legalistic knowledge, Jesus will resurrect our hearts to the abundant life in him. The path of faith may be hard at times, but it will be worth everything we give up in order to walk in the presence of Jesus! What does it mean to "die to ourselves?" What are some things you continue to die to in order to walk in the resurrection power of Christ? What have you received in Christ that has made it worth giving up the fleshy things of this world? What is your takeaway from this lesson?

