

Reflection Questions: Philippians 3:1-11 (Part 1)

For the message, “The Surpassing Greatness of Knowing Christ Jesus”
Given at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on February 12, 2023

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Philippians 3:1-11

1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. **3** For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— **4** though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: **5** circumcised on the eighth day, of the people 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 righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— **10** that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, **11** that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

A summary of the message:

- Spiritually speaking, either we can have confidence in our selves OR in Christ. One leads to the deadly poison of self-righteous pride; the other to the priceless treasure of personally knowing the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let's get started...

- What initially grabs your attention as you read through this text?

QUESTIONS

1. Let's think about how this text applies to our lives as individuals.

- (1) The Apostle Paul begins this section with the directive to “rejoice in the Lord,” but then immediately gives his attention to the danger of having our “confidence in the flesh,” that is, in our works / effort. Why are these two things at odds with one another?

- (2) In verse 2, Paul alerts his readers to the clear and present danger of the Judaizers—people who taught that Jesus is not enough for salvation, but you must add to him what were known as “the works of the law,” things that set the Jewish nation apart. In fact, they bluntly said, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Why is Paul so concerned about them that he warns his friends three times in verse 2, “Look out...look out...look out...”? What is at stake?
- (3) The Apostles clearly taught that “the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus” (cf. Romans 6:23). What are some ways that Christians today fall into the temptation to add their own “works of the law” to Jesus in order to earn grace? What are some ways that Christians today are tempted to put their “confidence in the flesh”?
- (4) After meeting the resurrected Jesus, Paul considered all that he had previously trusted in as “rubbish” (i.e., dung) compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord. How does this inform the way you think about your life?

2. Let’s think about how this text applies to us as a community of Jesus’ followers.

- (1) Good works are not bad things in and of themselves, but good things. But when we trust in them, they become dangerous for us spiritually. Check out these two verses:
- Isaiah 64:6, “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy rags.”
 - Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his [i.e., God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
- In Isaiah 64, righteous deeds are bad news, and in Ephesians 2, they are what God has designed for us to do. How do you reconcile these two verses, and how should they inform our life as disciples of Jesus?
- (2) What role does the community of faith have in helping us experience “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”? In other words, how can we help each other in this endeavor?

3. Let’s think about how this text applies to our city.

- Paul was a self-righteous prig before he met Jesus. He was the epitome of those Jesus described as “confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else” (Luke 18:9). How do Christians obscure the Good News of Jesus when they come across this way to others?
- How do you think our mission to our city might change if we were overflowing with experiencing the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord?

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?