

## Introduction

- a) For the past several Sundays, we have been focused on the great reset in the church.
- b) From 2020 to March 2021, it has been a time of tearing and wounding—from the shaking caused by the pandemic; to church coming to a screeching halt; to all the confusion, uncertainty, division, and anxiety in our nation; to the civil unrest in the summer; to the craziness of the election; and to the death of our political and spiritual leadership idols.
- c) The Lord used all of this to bring a tearing and wounding to His people—a deep pruning so that we can bear more fruit. During this time, the Lord has been judging His church. Judgment has come to the house of God.
- d) Hosea 6:1-3 is a key verse the Holy Spirit is highlighting in this season. Hosea prophesied, “Come, let us return to the Lord. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him. So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth” (Hos. 6:1-3).
- e) I believe the Lord is speaking Hosea 6:1-3 to His remnant church—the ones who truly long for Him. As we emerge from the shaking and pruning of 2020, I believe we are poised for a great revival, resurrection, reset, and release of fruitful ministry.
- f) In the last message, we looked at *a reset in our vision*, where we once again see the Lord sitting on His throne in His radiant glory and transcendent majesty.
- g) As when King Uzziah died and Israel’s political hope died with him, there’s presently no political solution to the crisis our nation faces. Nor is there any spiritual solution for the crisis in the church. But here’s the good news. . . only when our hope in earthly messiahs die are we able to see the glory of the Lord enthroned in the temple. The death of political solutions means we are about to see the glory of the Lord, for only He is our ultimate solution. Only He is the stability of our times.

## Press on to Know the Lord

- a) Hosea said, “So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord” (Hos. 6:3).
- b) The Hebrew word for *press on* means *to run after*, including to *chase*, *follow after*, or *pursue*. It can be used to convey *pursing ardently* or *aiming eagerly to secure*.
- c) Taking this Hebrew word and inserting it into Hosea 6:3, here’s my paraphrase of this verse: “So . . . let us pursue the Lord ardently in order to secure an intimate relationship with Him.”
- d) When you read Hosea 6:1-3 and compare it to Philippians 3, my hunch is Paul’s message to the Philippians was inspired by this Old Testament passage.
- e) Consider the similarities in language.

Hosea	Paul
Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him (Hos. 6:1-2).	That I may know . . . the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11).
So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD (Hos. 6:3).	I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may know Him. . . . I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. . . . I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:8-14).

- f) Seeing this connection between Hosea’s message and Paul’s message, I want to talk today about a reset of pursuit, where we reorient our lives to know Christ intimately and to be identified with His crucifixion, death, and resurrection.

## What and Who Are You Living For?

- a) Before diving into Philipines 3, let me ask you: What and who are you living for? Be honest. Are you living to have:
- A blessed family;
  - A nice house and beautiful things;
  - A successful career or ministry;
  - A fun and adventurous life;
  - Awesome vacations and travel the world;
  - Great friends;
  - A blessed country;
  - Your team win a championship?
- b) What drives you? What are you chasing after? What are you living for? To borrow the words of Hosea and Paul, what are you ardently pressing on to obtain?
- c) After the tearing and wounding of 2020, there is a great need for a reset of pursuit. That is, to change what and who we are living for.

## Paul’s Counsel to the Church in 2021

- a) After all we have been through in 2020 and 2021, what counsel would Paul give to the church? What would he say to us today?
- b) My hunch is he would say something similar to what he said in Philipines 3—one of the greatest chapters in the Bible. Paul wrote this while under house arrest in Rome, a few years before his death, after serving faithfully for over twenty-five years. At the time, Paul was perhaps the most seasoned man of God in history. He had preached the gospel in many nations, led multitudes of Jews and Gentiles to Christ, and planted numerous churches. Paul had encountered the risen and glorified Christ multiple

times, had been taken to heaven where he received unprecedented revelation, and he bore the marks of suffering in his body. After writing much of the New Testament, Paul came to the end of his earthly life and realized there was so much more of Christ available to him. Despite his remarkable resume, Paul was fully aware that he hadn't experienced Christ in fullness.

- c) In essence, while under house arrest, Paul had a great reset of pursuit. He recalibrated his heart and soul around the one thing of utmost importance—to know Christ intimately within his spirit.
- d) In a similar way, this time a year ago, we were under house arrest from the pandemic. Therefore, I think we could learn many valuable lessons from Paul out of Philippians 3, when he had a great reset of pursuit while under house arrest.
- e) This in mind, let's spend some time now looking at 11 vital lessons from Paul, written in Philippians 3, that can help us in our reset of pursuit. We will look at 5 lessons today and the remaining 6 next week.

## 11 Vital Truths from Philippians 3 About Resetting Our Primary Pursuit

### 1. Don't put confidence in the flesh.

- a) Paul said, "For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and *put no confidence in the flesh*" (Phil. 3:3, emphasis mine).
- b) Paul spelled it out clearly. To gain more of Christ inwardly I have to surrender the things I cherish. The things that make me who I am. The things that form and shape my identity. The things that create "confidence in the flesh."
- c) "Confidence in the flesh" is a feeling of self-assurance that arises when we glory in our abilities, qualities, talents, knowledge, intelligence, or admirable characteristics. It is pride in who we are and what we have achieved.
- d) Before encountering the risen Christ, Paul had taken pride in his Jewish roots. After all, he was "circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5). When it came to the Law, Paul was a Pharisee. When it came to zeal for his Jewish roots, he persecuted the church. When it came to obedience to the Law, he was blameless (Phil. 3:5-6). Paul's Jewish lineage had been his source of confidence and had shaped his identity.
- e) For us, the possibilities of putting our confidence in the flesh are endless. We can take pride in our salaries, job titles, business connections, and the number of people we influence. We can take pride in our physical appearances, houses, cars, vacations, friends, heritage, nationality, success, fame, or children. We can take pride in the size of our churches, how many Facebook fans and Twitter followers we have, how many best-selling books and albums we've released, and in being a sought-after conference speaker. We can take pride in our knowledge of the Scripture, denominational affiliation, how many people we've led to Christ, or in knowing famous Christians. We can even take pride in our lack of pride! The list is endless.
- f) But here's the point: Pride in who we are and what we have achieved blocks us from gaining more of Christ. Our pride, rather than Jesus' life, takes up residence in our hearts and souls.
- g) Where are you putting "confidence in the flesh"? Are you tempted to take pride in some achievement and keep Christ suppressed in your spirit? Are you taking pride in your scriptural knowledge, evangelistic success, the size of your church, or the famous people you know—and thus imprisoning Christ by your self-focus? Do you need to shed the very religion of Christianity to gain more of Christ?

### 2. Surrender things so you can gain more of Christ.

- a) Paul said, "But whatever *things* were *gain* to me, those *things* I have counted as loss for the sake of [gaining] Christ. 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 so that I may *gain* Christ" (Phil. 3:7-8, emphasis mine).

- b) There are two prevailing themes in these verses. *Things* (mentioned 4 times) and *gain* (mentioned 2 times).
- c) Here's what we need to realize. As born-again, Spirit-filled believers, we can *gain* more of Christ. Here's Paul, just a few years before His death, writing one of his last books—after planting numerous churches throughout the Roman Empire, performing astonishing miracles, leading multitudes to Christ, writing much of the New Testament, and suffering immensely for Christ—telling us that he still had more of Christ to gain.
- d) Get this in your mind. We can gain more of Christ in this life. We can gain more of Christ's indwelling life as we surrender our things.
- e) What does it look like to gain Christ? Paul is not talking here of gaining new gifts, ministry opportunities, or a greater anointing—though important. Instead, Paul is talking about something even greater—gaining more of the person of Christ inwardly. Paul is describing Christ increasing within him through a deeply personal, internal relationship with Him in the secret place.
- f) What does it look like to gain Christ? Or stated another way, what does it look like for Christ to increase within us? As we yield more of our self-life to the indwelling Spirit, He comes into those vacated places and fills those areas with His resurrection life. The indwelling Spirit of Christ comes and possesses more of our thoughts, more of our emotions, more of our will, and more of our desires, until we are literally filled to the full measure of Christ internally.
- g) What *things* do you need to surrender to *gain* more of Christ? For us, the possibilities are endless. Here's some examples of *things* we can cherish above our relationship with Christ: Sleep, work, family, entertainment, fun, vacations, ministry or business success, influence, fixing up our house, food, or sports. There are many other things I could have listed.
- h) Carefully considering the language Paul used in this passage, where he talked of losing and gaining, it's likely he was referring to Jesus' teaching about the salvation of the soul (Matt. 16:24-26).
- i) Jesus described a person who gained the whole world but forfeited his soul. Paul reversed this and spoke of gaining Christ by losing what was important to his soul. Paul wanted to deny pride from creeping into his soul so that he could progressively gain more of Christ in his mind, will, and emotions.
- j) Here's how it works as born-again believers. Our souls will either be filled with ourselves or with Christ. There is not room for both. If self increases in your soul, Christ decreases. But if you deny yourself, you will gain more of Christ in your soul. Like John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). As those with the indwelling life of Christ in our spirits, we decide who fills our souls: self or Christ.

### 3. Knowing Christ intimately is superior to everything and everyone else.

- a) Paul wanted to know Christ so that he could gain Christ. Continuing with his theme of losing to gain, Paul said, "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 so that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8, emphasis mine).
- b) The Greek word for *surpassing value* means *to be superior, better than*. Jesus is superior to everything and everyone else.
- c) What are the things that are most dear to you? Perhaps it's your family, house, career, or ministry. Whatever it is for you, meditate on this truth: Jesus is better than your family; Jesus is better than your house; Jesus is better than your career; Jesus is better than your ministry.

- d) Take a second and fill in the blank with the things that are most dear to you: Jesus is better than \_\_\_\_\_.
- e) When Paul contrasted knowing Christ to pride in his Jewish roots, there was no comparison. He said knowing Christ was of “surpassing value.” The same is true with us. Knowing Christ experientially transcends every area where we could glory in our achievements. There’s simply nothing like knowing Christ. He is of “infinite value” (Phil. 3:8, NLT).
- f) Since most of us are not Jewish and are not tempted to take pride in our Jewish roots, it’s different for us. But here’s something we can relate to in the church, which aligns with what Paul was expressing.
- I don’t love prayer. I love Jesus and I love meditating upon Him and having deep conversations with Him.
- I don’t love worship. I love Jesus and I deeply desire to minister to Him in the holy of holies.
- I don’t love theology or the Bible. I love the Word, to whom theology and the Bible point to, describe, and reveal.
- I don’t love prophecy, miracles, and spiritual gifts. I love Jesus, who pours out His Spirit and releases prophecy, miracles, and spiritual gifts, so that Jesus would be exalted and glorified.
- I don’t love going to a two-hour service we call “church.” I love Jesus, who is the head of the church, and I love His body, who is actually the church. I love when we gather together under His headship and receive from His Spirit, express His organic life together in interdependence, worship Him, and hear His voice.
- I don’t love the kingdom. I love Jesus, who is the King of the kingdom. I love Jesus’ rule and reign in my heart and soul and in every place where people submit to His absolute lordship.
- I don’t love revival. I love Jesus, who is the goal and purpose of all revivals.
- g) For those born of the Spirit, knowing Christ doesn’t require a trip to heaven, a vision, a dream, a trance, or some other supernatural experience. Each of us can know Him internally, for the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirits. Gaining more of Christ hinges upon knowing Him deeply.
- h) Paul said, “You were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). How do we have fellowship with Jesus who lives in heaven? Through “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” who dwells within us (2 Cor. 13:14).
- i) Intimacy with Christ is internal. Knowing Christ is internal.
- j) Surrendering our precious things is much more difficult when we don’t have a vision of knowing the Lord intimately. If we have never experienced Him as life, only knowing information about Him, the idea of surrendering things sounds awful. Without experiencing Christ as life and having an ever-increasing revelation of who He is, knowing Christ sounds boring.
- k) But when we experience Him inwardly, when we taste His love, kindness, grace, joy, peace, wisdom, and the deep things in His heart, it stirs a hunger within us that can only be satisfied by having more of Him.
- 4. Knowing Christ makes everything else like poop in comparison.**
- a) Paul said, “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” (Phil. 3:8).
- b) Paul’s Jewish roots were a constant source of temptation. If Paul took pride in this, it would hinder the fullness of Christ in his soul. After comparing the two, Paul counted his Jewish heritage as “rubbish so that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:8).

- c) Rubbish is a nice way to translate what he actually said. Dung. As in cow manure, horse poop, the excrement of animals.
- d) When we have a true vision and revelation of what it really means to know Christ intimately in the secret place—to experience a dining relationship with Him of communion and fellowship—to have an ongoing conversation with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit in your human spirit—then every other *thing* is like horse poop in comparison.
- e) Once you start down this journey, get ready to be forever ruined by anything else. Even the things of God pale in comparison with the God of all things.

## 5. Lay down your natural impulse to do things to gain God's love, acceptance, and favor.

- a) Paul said, "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" (Phil. 3:9).
- b) It's astonishing that Paul, at the end of his life, has not moved away from the glorious truth of justification by faith. This truth was still the anchor and bedrock of his soul.
- c) Legalism is "having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law."
- d) First-century legalism sounded like this: "To be right with God, you must obey all 613 commandments contained in the Mosaic Law. This would include all the commandments of the moral, civil, ceremonial, and dietary laws. You must be circumcised. You must perfectly obey the 10 commandments. You must observe the feasts. And if you fail to obey one commandment, you are guilty of breaking the entire law."
- e) Twenty-first-century legalism sounds like this: "If you want God to like you, love you, accept you, and be pleased with you—if you want to be righteous in His sight—then you must pray, fast, read the Bible, witness, go on mission trips, and obey the Bible's commands with teeth-gritted compliance."
- f) But "the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" shatters both Old Testament and New Testament legalism into a thousand pieces. The gospel is not Christ plus something else. It's not Christ plus obedience. Christ plus Bible reading. Christ plus prayer. We are justified by faith alone by grace alone. It's not by any works of the Law or any acts of obedience.
- g) *Justification* is another way to say "the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."
- h) *Justification* is a legal declaration by the Judge that you are not only innocent in a matter, but are completely righteous.
- i) *Justification is not based upon obedience to God's commands.* No amount of commandment-keeping can ever make us acceptable to God.
- j) *Justification is by grace alone through faith alone.* We do not achieve justification by what we do. We receive justification by what Christ did. The Law condemns the best of us while grace saves the worst of us. Justification is therefore by grace alone through faith alone. Grace is the free and undeserved gift of God that justifies us and the unmerited and unearned power of God that sanctifies us as the Spirit prepares to glorify us. Faith is the conduit that allows the endless supply of supernatural grace to flow into our lives.
- k) *Justification precedes obedience.* Obedience before faith is what Paul termed the works of the Law. This type of obedience results in being severed from Christ, nullifying grace, and placing ourselves under a curse. For this reason, it is vitally important that our obedience proceed from our faith rather than precede our faith. The obedience that proceeded from faith was the goal of Paul's ministry and he called it "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5).
- l) Here's the difference between *obedience that precedes faith* and *obedience that proceeds from faith*.

## Obedience that precedes faith...

Obeys to gain God's approval

Obeys to become righteous

Obeys for acceptance

Obeys for favor

Obeys to avoid condemnation

Obeys so that God will love us

Obeys to prove our love for God

Nullifies grace

Leads to self-glorification and boasting

Places us under a curse

Severs us from Christ

## Obedience that proceeds from faith...

Obeys because we have God's approval

Obeys because we are declared righteous

Obeys from acceptance

Obeys from favor

Obeys because there is now no condemnation

Obeys because God loves us

Obeys because we love God

Is empowered by grace

Leads to God-glorification and worship

Positions us for blessings

Connects us to Christ

- John Stott said, "The Law requires human achievement. The gospel depends upon Christ's achievement. The Law makes demands and bids us to obey. The gospel makes promises and bids us to believe."
- The Law is all about us gritting our teeth, striving to please God by our obedience. The gospel is all about Christ's Spirit coming to dwell within us and Him living Christ's life in us and through us—giving us the power to obey.
- To know Christ and become Christ-like, we have to lay down our natural impulse to do things to gain God's love, acceptance, and favor, resting instead in His justifying declaration over us that we are righteous in Christ.