

Phillipians 3:1-11

Philippians 3:1-11 is a passage where Paul warns against false teachers and emphasises the importance of knowing Christ. Here's some background history:

Context

In Philippians 3:1-11, Paul is writing to the Philippians church, a community he founded during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:9-40). The Philippians were a beloved church, and Paul is writing to them from prison (likely in Rome or Caesarea).

False Teachers

Paul warns the Philippians about false teachers who are promoting circumcision and Jewish legalism (3:2-3). These teachers are Jewish, who believe that Gentile converts need to adhere to Jewish law and customs, including circumcision, to be fully accepted as Christians.

Paul's Credentials

Paul shares his own credentials as a Pharisee and a persecutor of the church (3:4-6). He had an impressive resume as a Jewish leader, but he counts all of this as loss compared to knowing Christ (3:7-8).

Knowing Christ

Paul's focus is on knowing Christ and gaining a deeper relationship with him (3:8-11). He wants to know Christ's power and share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and possibly attaining resurrection from the dead.

Key Themes

1. Warning against false teachers: Paul warns the Philippians about the dangers of false teachers who promote legalism and undermine the gospel.
2. The importance of knowing Christ: Paul emphasises the importance of knowing Christ and gaining a deeper relationship with him.
3. Counting all as loss: Paul counts his impressive resume as a Pharisee as loss compared to knowing Christ.

1. Warning Against False Teachers (Philippians 3:1-3)

- Paul encourages the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord.
- Paul warns the Philippians about false teachers who promote circumcision and legalism.
- Paul contrasts the true circumcision (Christians) with the false teachers.

This section warns the Philippians about false teachers and emphasises the importance of serving God by the Spirit.

2. Paul's Credentials (Philippians 3:4-6)

- Paul shares his credentials as a Pharisee.
- Paul lists his impressive resume as a Jewish leader.
- Paul was zealous for the law and persecuted the church.

This section highlights Paul's credentials as a Pharisee and a persecutor of the church.

3. Counting All as Loss (Philippians 3:7-8)

- Paul counts his credentials as loss compared to knowing Christ.
- Paul emphasises the importance of knowing Christ.

This section shows Paul's willingness to count all as loss for the sake of knowing Christ.

4. Gaining Christ (Philippians 3:9-11)

- Paul has lost all things for the sake of Christ.
- Paul wants to gain Christ and be found in him.
- Paul wants to have a righteousness that comes from God through faith in Christ.
- Paul wants to know Christ and share in his sufferings.
- Paul's ultimate goal is to attain resurrection from the dead.

This section highlights Paul's desire to gain Christ and know him more intimately.

Application

This passage encourages believers to:

1. Be cautious of false teachers: Be aware of teachings that undermine the gospel and promote legalism.
2. Prioritise knowing Christ: Focus on gaining a deeper relationship with Christ and knowing him more intimately.
3. Count all as loss for Christ: Be willing to let go of worldly credentials and achievements for the sake of knowing Christ.

This passage provides insight into the early Christian church's struggles with false teachers and the importance of prioritising a relationship with Christ.

Questions

1. What are some ways we might be tempted to prioritize external credentials or achievements over our relationship with Christ, and how can we resist this temptation?
2. How does Paul's warning against "dogs" and "evil workers" (Philippians 3:2) relate to our own experiences with false teaching or misleading influences?
3. What does Paul mean by "confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3-4), and how can we avoid putting confidence in external things rather than Christ?
4. How does Paul's testimony in Philippians 3:4-6 illustrate the tension between external achievements and a relationship with Christ?
5. What does it mean to "count everything as loss" (Philippians 3:8) for the sake of knowing Christ, and how can we apply this principle in our own lives?
6. How does Paul's desire to "know Christ" (Philippians 3:10) and "gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8) inspire you to deepen your own relationship with Christ?
7. What roles does suffering play in Paul's understanding of the Christian life (Philippians 3:10-11), and how can we apply this perspective in our own experiences of suffering?
8. How can we balance the pursuit of spiritual maturity and growth with the recognition that our salvation is already complete in Christ (Philippians 3:12-16)?