

Philippians - October Class

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[0 : 00] And we will be starting a new chapter in Philippians, chapter 3, The Goal of Life. Several months ago, we began this tiny epistle written by the Apostle Paul and referred to as one of his prison epistles, which is really not a correct designation because he was not in prison when he wrote Philippians or Ephesians or Colossians.

But he was under house arrest in his own private villa there in Rome. And more correctly, we would call the prison epistles 2 Timothy because he was clearly in the Mamertine dungeon in Rome at that time, and then he was awaiting his execution.

And that's when he talked about having fought a good fight, kept the faith, finished his course.

There's a crown laid up for him. So from the time we are reading Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, after Paul wrote these, he was released from his house arrest and enjoyed perhaps as much as two years of freedom before he was rearrested under Nero, and then he was sentenced to execution by beheading.

And that second letter that he wrote to Timothy was, so far as we know, his last correspondence to anyone. But he gave us some wonderful information in Philippians, which is commonly referred to as the epistle of joy, and we will see why that's the case.

So let's have a word of prayer. Thank you, Father, for this gathering, and thank you for the truth that is set before us. We pray for a facility of appreciating and understanding it, as well as its implications.

[1 : 55] We give you thanks for this text and for the day that lies ahead in Christ's name. Amen. All right. This would be page number 1397 up in the upper right-hand corner, and we have taken the liberty of providing this simply because there are numerous different translations of the Bible represented here, and you're welcome to use whatever one you have.

But we provide this simply so we can all be on the same page, and we will follow the same methodology that we always have as we attempt to expound this passage verse by verse.

If anybody has a question or a comment, feel free to interrupt me. You will not be considered rude for doing so, and sometimes the questions that are asked and where that leads us to turns out to be more profitable than what I was going to say.

So I want you to feel perfectly free to do that. And as we begin this new chapter, it deals with an issue that is probably as critical and as important as any we can find in the Word of God, and it has to do with the goal of life.

What's it all about? Why are we here? Where are we going? What for? Why is there something rather than nothing? What is the plan and program of God all about? And here it is set forth as succinctly and as clearly as it is anywhere.

[3 : 14] Reminding you once again that in the original autographs that were inspired of the Spirit of God, there were no chapters and there were no verses.

It was just a straightly written epistle like you would write a letter. You wouldn't break it down into chapters or verses. You just write it from the beginning to the end, and that's what the Apostle Paul did. And over the years, men saw fit to break it down into chapters and verses, if for no other reason for the convenience of locating a particular place.

Because when you put a chapter and a verse on a portion of Scripture, it gives it an address so that you can find it more readily. So ignoring the chapter division, as we should, which sometimes destroys the continuity, we'll pick up with what Paul says in verse 1 of chapter 3, Finally, my brethren, and a lot of commentators have noted that when Paul says finally, you would think that he's coming to the end of what he's writing.

Not necessarily. Paul is a typical preacher. And when he says finally, it may mean that he's got several more points than he wants to make. And finally is just a word that sometimes doesn't mean anything.

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

[4 : 36] And all this tells me is that there is a validity to repetition. And as you read the Pauline epistles, you will see that there is a considerable amount of repetition in all 13 of the letters that he has written.

And yet there is no apology offered for that. Matter of fact, you'll find a lot of repetition all throughout Scripture. And the principle is this. I call it the principle of proportionate mentioning.

And that is, the things that God wants to emphasize the most are the things that you find most frequently recorded in Scripture and most often talked about.

There are a whole host of issues that you and I cannot help but wonder about, such as, what are people doing in heaven? What do they know? Etc. We're given information about that, simply because God does not consider that vital to our being here and now.

But the things that are most important for life and living are the things most prominently and frequently mentioned in Scripture in the Old and New Testament.

[5 : 46] So, we ought to make much of what God makes much of because that's what's really important. And we would be hard-pressed to find something more important than this so far as day-to-day living is concerned, and that is the goal of life.

What are you aiming for? What does life have to offer you? And what are you trying to make of it? I remember over probably 20 or 25 years ago, had a young man sit in my office, and he wanted to talk to me about setting goals.

And I said, okay, we'll talk about setting goals. I said, what goals have you set so far? What are you thinking? And he said, well, my main goal is I want to become a millionaire by the time I'm 40 years old.

And I said, well, okay, we'll put that down as a goal. And I said, and he said, what do you think of that? And I said, well, if you're willing to aim that low, I guess it's okay.

But there are much higher objectives to realize than being a millionaire by the time you're 40. And this is the passage that I turned to to give him some encouragement, some counsel from the Scriptures, because what the Apostle Paul has to share here in Philippians chapter 3, so far as a goal for living, is so much nobler and so much higher than the accumulation of wealth.

[7 : 20] And our Lord has already talked about the futility of laying up for yourselves treasures on earth. Not that there's something wrong with wealth, because there isn't. Some of the wealthiest men in the Bible were also godly individuals.

So it's not necessarily wrong to have money. And that verse that Paul wrote to Timothy is very frequently misquoted. And I don't know how many times I've heard people say that money is the root of all evil, which we know is not true.

It is the love of money that is the root of all evil, not money. Money can do great things. One of my favorite Bible teachers of a day gone by, Bill Ford, used to say, Money is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.

And indeed it is. So, Paul is going to be talking about the goal of life here in chapter 3. But before we get there, we have a couple of other things to cover. Noting the validity of repetition, he is going to repeat again some of the things that he has already said.

And he begins with, Beware of the dogs. What a curious expression. Beware of the dogs. But let me assure you, these are not the four-footed variety that he is talking about. These dogs are those who have been described earlier in Philippians.

[8 : 43] Come in, Thelma. Glad you could make it. Have a seat wherever they will let you. Amen.

And thank you for joining us. We are in Philippians chapter 3. I don't know if you have a sheet or not. Would you pass that down to her, please? Okay.

And when Paul talks about Beware of the dogs, he is likening his opponents to the vicious, angry curs that frequented the Mediterranean marketplaces scavenging for food.

And these were not the cute little fluffy things that people have for house pets. These dogs were wild dogs, vicious. And he is likening some of his opponents to these.

And they are those whom he is characterizing as the dogs, the evil workers. And beware of the false circumcision. And that is a curious expression. It is remarkable how many times the word circumcision is used throughout the Bible and how frequently it is misunderstood.

[9 : 53] By the way, I do not know if you noticed this or not, but I noticed in the news just a few weeks ago where there is a big hubbub in some places over the right of Jewish circumcision.

And some are actually opposing it on grounds of child cruelty. And some have actually filed suit against some Jewish people who practice ritual circumcision for their eight-day-old baby boys. And if you know anything about Judaism, ritual circumcision for a Jew is part of what makes a Jew a Jew.

And without it, you are not considered a child of the covenant. The law of Moses made it very, very specific that male baby boys were to be circumcised, the flesh of the foreskin cut away, and it was to be done on the eighth day.

Not the seventh day, not the ninth day, but the eighth day. And nowhere did Moses give any indication as to why that is. But God made it very specific.

[11 : 04] And I just want to make this point. In the scriptures, God levels a number of requirements without giving any rationale or any reason for it.

As you read Leviticus, for instance, he gives a rationale, he gives a methodology, not a rationale, but he gives a methodology for how they were to clean their utensils, how they were to dispose of human waste and all of that.

But he never tells them why. He just says, do this. And as it comes to the issue of circumcision, he says, you circumcised the baby boy on the eighth day.

And of course, that was a symbol that this child in his very flesh and being was dedicated to God and was a child of the covenant in a covenant relationship with him.

And if the child didn't have that, his mother may be Jewish, his father may be Jewish, but if he's not circumcised, he is not a legitimate Jew. And nowhere is there an explanation given.

[12 : 08] And God didn't say, do this because, he just said, do this. And we as a parent to a child may say, because I said so. That usually never suffices for the child, but the parent knows something that the child doesn't know.

So he says, just do it because I said so. So when medical specialists began examining this thing, lo and behold, they discovered this. And I got this from Dr. S.I. McMillan, Christian physician in his book, None of These Diseases.

And he said, the most interesting thing they discussed, or they discovered about circumcision and about the baby boys, and that is when they examined, took blood samples of these babies, newborn babies, they discovered that the prothombin in the blood that contributes to the clotting of the blood reaches its maximum peak in the life of a man on the eighth day of his birth.

Not the seventh, not the ninth, but on the eighth day it reaches its peak. The blood more readily clots on the eighth day than it does any other day.

And then on the ninth day it starts down again. Now, they didn't have any way of knowing that. And it was only medical technology probably the last 50 years that could discover something like that about this.

[13 : 32] But it just goes to show you that God has his reasons for telling us what he wants us to do. And he doesn't explain it many times. He just says, do this. Well, why should I do that? And it's as if he's saying, trust me.

Just do it. And circumcision is one of those things. And then Paul goes on to say, in contrast to the false circumcision, for we are the true circumcision.

And you'll note the word true is italicized. And all that means is that the translators are telling us that that word true does not appear in the original manuscripts. And they gave us a clue as to that by italicizing it and letting us know that.

So it stands out. So what Paul is actually saying is beware of the false circumcision, for we are the circumcision. And the the is the articulated.

And it means the true circumcision who worship in the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. And there I think he is also talking about the circumcision thing again.

[14 : 38] Because you can't get more fleshly than circumcision. And yet flesh is spoken of in a couple of different ways. And in this context here, what Paul is saying is, remember in Romans

when he said they are not all Israel that are Israel?

He's simply saying there that they are not all Jews who claim to be Jews. There are Jews who are circumcised.

Yes, they've had the ritual right of circumcision. and that legally makes them a member of the Jewish race. But that does not mean that they are rightly related to God just because they are circumcised.

And yet, many of the Jews thought that was the ticket. If you were circumcised, that admitted you to the household of Israel. And if you were in the household of Israel, you were automatically rightly related to God.

Now, we've got the same mentality in Protestantism and in Catholicism. How many people are there today who think if you are in the church, if you are related to the church, a member in good standing, you are automatically connected with God?

[15 : 55] Well, it wasn't any more true for the Jews than it is for Roman Catholics or for Protestants. Many people think that salvation is an institutional thing, but it is a personal thing.

It is justification by faith and only an individual can exercise that faith. An institution cannot do it for you. So, when Paul talks about the circumcision here, he is relating to those of whom our Lord spoke when he addressed the Jewish group of scribes and Pharisees and he said, this people honor me with their lips.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.