

The Goal of our Faith Going Deeper Series

Introduction

We end our “Going Deeper” series by looking at how we need to be focused on the goal of our faith.

When things seem to be going well, we don’t want to fall into the trap of becoming complacent.

The same warning applies to us as it did to Israel see Deuteronomy 8:

¹⁰ “When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ Be *careful* that you do not *forget* the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. ¹² Otherwise, when you eat and are *satisfied*, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your *heart* will become proud and you will *forget* the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery”.

As we read Philippians 3: this passage will always remind us and keep us from complacency.

Context

Paul is writing this because people are coming into the church leading people astray. They were saying you need Jesus and “fill in the blank”... circumcision, is one of those things. They were saying be like *them* instead of being like Jesus.

Paul; basically says; “you want to play the resume’ game? I can do that”.

Then he lists all the things that he did and was and included keeping all 613 requirements in the law. Paul was saying I was the “gold standard”. Paul will show us what these things are worth and the real goal of our faith.

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“For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put 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; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. 7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, 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 is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. 15 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.” (Philippians 3:3-15)

V15 Paul challenges those of you that are mature. We should be seeing things this way, not blown around by false doctrines, teachers, etc.

Paul totally lives for Jesus; Paul’s life is not about Paul or anything else.

We have to ask; “what gets *us* out of bed in the morning? If it’s anything else it is rubbish, dung... “skubalon”

Comparing losses and gains

Paul shows us this is like an accountant weighing and measuring things.

In one column Paul’s “righteous” his zealous persecution of the

things.

In one column, Paul's "righteous", his zealous persecution of the church, etc.

All these came to nothing, He says I gave myself to these things and it was a loss, its gone.

What is it in our lives that fill this column?

For us today it's a little different than in Paul's day.

These things may be to my advantage, maybe ethnicity, upbringing, economic situation...what would you throw in the trash?

In this column we may find good things, a long marriage, or faithful ministry.

The word he is using is "skubalon" literally; excrement of animals.

In the other column is Jesus, losing everything gained everything.

Really I haven't experienced loss, only gain.

Like the pearl of great price, you sell all to gain the treasure.

- **Righteousness by faith (:9)**

This speaks to a union with God now united with him, dead to old life.

God looks at us and sees Jesus because we're united. When we consider "righteousness", many times we think of morality, but it is a legal term where we are declared righteous.

But a future date is coming when we stand before a holy God. We have to ask ourselves do we really want to read off *our* column or *say* I'm with Jesus, standing in his righteousness.

We have received his righteousness by faith and we're walking with him.

- **Knowledge of Christ (:10a)**

For Paul the gain is at the end of his life, it's not just data or facts.

In fact the Lord himself taught him for 3 years. But the word used here is similar to the intimacy between a husband and wife on their wedding night, really knowing him.

When people know you, they know the good, bad and the ugly, not just classes, but "hands on".

- **Suffering and Glory (:10b)**

This is the pattern of how we live our life.

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Jesus knocks Paul off his horse, (Acts 9:15-16) "I will show

Paul was a violent hunter, rigid only able to see his rightness. Jesus knocks Paul off his horse, (Acts 9:15-16) “I will show you how much he will suffer”. We share in the fellowship (*koinōnía*) in his suffering.

At the stoning of Stephen, he experienced a special fellowship with Jesus in his death.

We become like Jesus when we share in his suffering. How do we pray for those dying around the world, that they would experience the presence of Jesus in their suffering.

- **Resurrection from the dead (:11)**

There is still something coming, the resurrection of your body. Then your resurrected body and your soul will be reunited.

We’ll be free from sin, sickness, disease, pain and sorrow. Even creation groans waiting for the day of the resurrection. It is the end goal; we must remember this when you have to face a bad job or chemotherapy or other difficult things in life.

“Christ’s humility and death are both the basis of our Christian life and its pattern.”

“Jesus is free, but it will cost you everything to follow Jesus”

This is what Paul gave up, what will you and I give up?

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.”

(Luke 14:26)

Pressing on towards the goal

In the Olympics of that time they put a wreath on your head. The reward Paul is referring to is so much more

- **Forgetting**

Illustration: Sam Remington, looking over his shoulder during a race.

Forget what’s behind, don’t let it shape your identity.

Don’t judge your current life on your past life.

- **Straining**

Don't judge your current life on your past life.

- **Straining**

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.” (1 Corinthians 9:25)

“All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently (differently than I do), that too God will make clear to you.” (Philippians 3:15)

Life Group Sermon Application Curriculum Leader's Guide

Week of **03/1/15**

The Goal of our Faith

I feel so privileged to have been with several people in their last weeks, days and hours on this earth. I especially enjoyed those times with people who have walked with the Lord and are certain and peaceful about their time to go be with Jesus. Without exception, they never talk about things in the first column Randy described. You know the column I'm talking about, jobs, finances, education, possessions, awards and a thousand other things that in the end become nothing. But they will talk about the peace and assurance that they have because that's in the column with Jesus. Also in that column are the things that he has given to us because we gave up our lives when we chose to follow him. Things like family, close brothers and sisters in Christ, etc. Lastly I noticed that all of the suffering, loss or trials that they suffered during this life had already begun to fade with the reality that they were about to see Jesus face to face.

Main Sermon text: (Philippians 3:3-15)

There are some **consistent themes**, and key points, that emerge from these passages:

- When things seem to be going well, we must guard against falling into the trap of becoming complacent. The same warning applies to us as it did to Israel see Deuteronomy 8
- Paul is addressing a challenge in the church, people were teaching “yes you need Jesus and...(fill in the blank). One of the main demands of the false teachers was in relation to circumcision. They wanted the believers to be like them instead of Jesus
- These teachers were parading their “credentials”; Paul challenged them with some pretty impressive credentials and zealous activities of his own. But Paul isn't about Paul he is all about Jesus. It's gut-check time, what motivates you or gets you out of bed in the morning, if it is any of these things and more, its rubbish, dung.
- Paul separates these in two categories, like an accountant. For him in one column is his “righteousness”, his zeal persecuting the church, his heritage and education, study and more. He came to a conclusion that all these came to nothing, He says I gave myself to these things and it was a loss, its gone. In the other column is Jesus, losing everything gained

He says I gave myself to these things and it was a loss, its gone. In the other column is Jesus, losing everything gained everything.

- In our column we have the *righteousness by faith* that Jesus gave us. When we stand before God one day that is the column we want to read from.
- We also received the *knowledge of Christ*, not a collection of facts and data, but an intimate relationship with him.
- The pattern of our lives will be *suffering and glory*. As we share in the fellowship of his sufferings we will be more like him.
- We wait in anticipation for the *resurrection* with all of creation; this is what makes our difficulties and sufferings worthwhile and worth the wait.
- It will cost us to follow Jesus, Paul gave up everything, what are we willing to give up? We are called to run the race, press forward don't look back, forget what's behind, don't let it shape your identity today and moving forward.

Discussion questions/prompts for your group: (These questions are designed to help your group go deeper, understanding and applying the Bible passage(s) and the sermon)

- 1) Maybe you have noticed that some believers become complacent when things seem to be going well. This has been a pattern for some throughout recorded history and the scriptures warn us about this. What are the signs of complacency in our Christian walk and how can we avoid this? *No wrong answers, God's people have always struggled to continue to pursue, seek and love him when they have everything they need and things are moving along smoothly. Having said that, the scriptures are full of people God blessed in every area of their lives and they continued to serve him. Lazarus, Mary and Martha come to mind in the N.T.*
- 2) In the first century church false teachers were telling believers that they needed more than Jesus. During that time period, the issues were things like circumcision, foods, festivals, etc. What are those things in our day?
- 3) Paul uses the two categories or columns to show us that all the things in one column (even good things) are trash, dung, like filthy rags. In the end they all come to nothing. The other column is Jesus, it will cost us everything to follow him, but in doing so we receive everything. Discuss what this means in a practical way in your life. *Some will trust in their own works, knowledge, character, history in a church, etc. Also explain what it means that it will cost us everything, but gain everything...more than a clever catch phrase, its eternal truth.*
- 4) Four of those things we gain are; *righteousness by faith, knowledge of Christ, suffering and glory and resurrection.*

Using the sermon notes and those listed on this document and

knowledge of Christ, suffering and glory and resurrection.

Using the sermon notes and those listed on this document and discuss what each of them mean in your life.

For those who might like to use visual aids in their Bible storying, or study preparation, especially for groups with children, here are some helpful links:

<http://ministry-to-children.com/many-silent-years/>

<http://www.raisingourkids.com/coloring-pages/printable/bible/index-02.html>

Log on and check “Right now Media” there are several good resources that will relate to this study for the kids. Some are for pre-school and older, so go surfing and see if you can find something for your group.