

Fact Sheet for **“Pride or Permanent Press?”**
Philippians 3:7-15

Pastor Bob Singer
09/13/2015

There are times when walking the Christian walk can get quite tiring. There can be a multitude of reasons for this... family, job, finances, health, age, stuff, sleep, nutrition, no time off... You may even think, “I can’t go any further.” Here is an encouragement from Paul to stay the course and press on.

Paul has just briefly written of his credentials as a Jew (Philippians 3:4b-6). This was Paul’s experience of pride for several years. But he had a change of heart on the Damascus Rd. That change blossomed into Paul’s following words.

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Gain (advantage) – his credentials as a Jew.

Loss (damage), the same word used in Acts 27:10.

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--

Let’s interrupt Paul mid-sentence here.

Rubbish... *refuse, dirt, dung*

It is impossible to gain salvation by works. A Jew could obey every command in the Mosaic law rigidly and still be a sinner. Consider the statements in Matthew 5... ” You have heard that” and “But I say to you”. Jesus’ words show that the Mosaic Law has a far greater application in God’s eyes than just the exact meaning of the words themselves (for instance Matthew 5:27-28). Then look at the last verse of that chapter. If anyone thought the Mosaic Law was impossible to obey this would push it far beyond that!

Our salvation is clearly and only by faith! But here’s the problem. When someone places their faith in Christ... and stops there... are they saved? Shouldn’t there be smoke where there’s fire? Shouldn’t there be a visible change in their life? Here’s the difficult answer. Yes, there should be change in their life. But just because I don’t see it doesn’t mean their faith in Christ is not valid. The bottom line is that only God knows. The individual however would be well advised to revisit their commitment to Christ. Why does this happen? There is something that affects Christians just as much as non-Christians. It is called original sin or the sin nature. It is tempting and easier for all of us to rest in our salvation by faith... and live like we want to. But Paul doesn’t stop there. Let’s pick up from where we interrupted his sentence.

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.

Know... *know by experience*

Paul wanted to know Christ more intimately.

power of His resurrection...

See Ephesians 3:20-21

share His sufferings...

See Acts 9:16 and 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

Tradition has it that less than 10 years after Paul wrote this he was beheaded in Rome.

becoming like Him...

The word translated here means being conformed inwardly.

This thought is illustrated in Paul's letter to the Romans (6:3-7).

Now we come to verse 11.

¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Does Paul express doubt here? Hardly! He strongly affirms our resurrection elsewhere, for instance in 1 Corinthians 15. Instead of doubt it is possible to translate Philippians 3:11 to express expectation.

^{NIV} **Philippians 3:11** and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul now continues with his own example.

¹² ¶ **Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.**

And this is a "permanent press".

¹³ **Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

Paul frequently uses athletic illustrations, and this is one of them. He then adds...

¹⁵ **Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.** ¹⁶ **Only let us hold true to what we have attained.**

Keep up your permanent press toward spiritual maturity. When you think you just can't take any more, God is there to help (1 Corinthians 10:13). If you begin to think God isn't listening, He is (Philippians 2:13). If you think that you've messed up too badly, remember 1 John 1:7 and 9. If you think "what's the use" think also of Hebrews 11:6.

Be encouraged and keep up your permanent press!