

Week 7 Philippians 3.1-6, 3.7-11

*Warning: Don't Trust in the Flesh*

*Gaining the Messiah*

- I. Prayer
- II. Opening Question
  - a. What are some things you have treasured or benefited from? Consider not only physical objects but also achievements, honors, and privileges.
- III. Read N.T. Wright Commentary p.114-121
- IV. Scan Aesthetic Commentary p.145-166
- V. Discussion Questions
  - a. *Read Philippians 3:1-6.* This section and the second half of the letter is introduced by verse 1, which sometimes seems a little cut off from what follows it. What is the connection between “celebrate in the Lord!” and the warnings which follow?
  - b. The badge of family, ethnic membership for the male Jew was circumcision, a mark on the physical body. Paul sees some of his contemporaries obsessed with this, particularly with inflicting it on Gentiles to try to make them acceptable to God. By contrast, who are the true “circumcised” (v. 3)?
  - c. *Read Philippians 3:7-11.* What were Paul’s “profit” and “loss”?
  - d. What relationship does Paul draw between resurrection and suffering?
  - e. Why do you think a “Christ and” understanding of salvation might be dangerous to growth in faith in Jesus Christ?
  - f. What difference does it make in your daily life that Jesus Christ was raised from death?
  - g. What does it mean to you that God in Jesus Christ “takes hold” of you? Is it encouraging to know that God does not expect us to reach the goal of a completed life in Christ?
  - h. In what ways do you think such a steady, realistic, and ongoing journey of faith could be misunderstood?
  - i. What, from your past life or in your present reality, keeps you from eagerly participating in the epic adventure of faith in Jesus Christ?
  - j. What is the difference between running away from your past and running toward your new future in Jesus Christ?
  - k. How has Jesus Christ “taken hold” of you personally? What is there about Jesus that you would fully like to explore, to understand, and/or to trust?
  - l. Paul instructs the Philippian Christ followers to “Rejoice!” saying it will safeguard them from “Christ and” teaching. Why do you think this is true?
  - m. For many people, the promise of receiving God’s unconditional love by faith alone is a difficult thing to believe. Why do you think that is?
  - n. What does hope mean to you? What, specifically, is the source of your greatest hope?
  - o. Where are the outer limits in your life of faith right now? What things do you know about Jesus that you do not yet trust? Do you live in hope because of your achievements or because of God’s promise of eternal life?
  - p. Paul suffered the loss of everything, including all his remarkable accomplishments, for the sake of gaining Jesus Christ. Is there a significant difference between “losing” everything because of Jesus and “giving up” everything because of Jesus?