



SBC Sunday 10th May 2020

Philippians ch 3 v 1-14

Title: God has a purpose for each one of us.

Text: 'I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus' Philippians 3 v 14

This section of Paul's letter the church in Philippi reminds the recipients to focus on heavenly things more than on the earthly things and the desires of the human body. Sometimes if we are honest it's much easier to focus on our human needs rather than the heavenly things that God has for us, especially when things are tough as much of the world is finding in these current times. Remember that when Paul wrote this letter, he too was in a time of great distress, he was in prison and to add to his own personal trials, Epaphroditus who is one of his disciples and well known to the church in Philippi had been very ill, nearly dying. Paul's emotions are all over the place and it would be understandable for him to be focusing on his own personal needs, rather than the needs of others. Yet this is what Paul is doing focusing on others rather than himself.

This section that we have read today starts with Paul reminding the people of Philippi of what he has already told them, most likely in person while he was with them. He tells them that they need to be on the lookout for false prophets, those who try and speak against God, turn people away from God, in verse 2, Paul refers to these people as evildoers, or even dogs (not the pet animals!), the people who are the lowest of the low. He then goes on to say that those who believe in God, referring to them as the circumcised, are the ones who God will reward. At this time, people were adjusting to the idea that God's message of love, peace and reconciliation was for all people and not just the circumcised Jews, as in Old Testament times.

In verses 3 to 14 Paul is giving part of his testimony and his Christian confidence in God, through his Jewish roots. Paul was born into the Jewish tribe of Benjamin, and because he was born in Tarsus he was also a Roman Citizen, giving him dual nationality so to speak (see Acts Ch 22 v 2&3).

Paul is very much saying that the church should follow his thinking, that whilst they must do whatever God's wants of them here on earth, they should not be thinking of earthly rewards or doing the work to gain the praise of others. The only praise and reward Paul is interested in and encourages the readers and us to be interested in, is the heavenly reward. In some churches there have been and probably still are, people that will do the jobs that show them in a good light and not necessarily the one(s) that God actually wants them to do. These sort of people look for earthly rewards that will perish very quickly, whereas heavenly rewards last forever. I am not pointing the finger at anyone, just using this as a generalisation.



I get the feeling that some people in the congregation at Philippi, may think that Paul has achieved all that he can in God's eye's on earth, but look at verse 12, Paul says I have not achieved this, I still have more to do. Even from prison, he is still able to work for God; he is able to write letters, such as this one, he is able to hear from church representatives of how the early Christian church is growing. He is able to offer words of encouragement and teaching either through writing or verbally passing a message through his visitors. Many people, especially those in authority, thought that with Paul under arrest the church would stop growing and go away. God had other ideas and used Paul to help the church grow.

Paul was constantly looking for the next piece of work he could do for God – he was constantly striving for the heavenly goal (v14).

In these very different times that we are encountering now, how are we helping the church to grow? How are we helping to spread the message of God's love? How are we getting on with earning our heavenly reward?

I hope and pray that each one of us, are still able to focus on God and the work that he still needs us to do for the glory of his kingdom here on earth.

Amen