

Title: WORDS OF EXPERIENCE, PHILIPPIANS 3:3 – 16
(Chatham, NJ; 03/13/16, AM) [Pc – Exegesis/Narrative]

Theme: Paul's advice in Philippians is not only inspired by the Holy Spirit, but I believe it comes from the experiences of his life as a dedicated servant of Christ.

Purpose: To see Paul as a model for Christian behavior to strive for, and to adopt his strategies for faithful living.

Introduction:

1. Great athletes, the ones who elevate the games by their expert play and work ethic, make everyone else better: Peyton Manning, Tiger Woods, or Michael Phelps.
2. They give us a model of new possibilities.
3. Though we don't compete against Paul, his life challenges us to be better.
4. Paul began his life as a Jew, zealous for the Law, approving the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1), dragging off Christians to prison (8:3), giving the Jews a much needed leader in opposing the Gospel.
5. On the road to Damascus, his internal hard drive crashed: Christ appeared to him and he realized his life was a lie.
6. In Philippians 3 he speaks about his reordered life and why he pursues a new goal.
7. Several of his statements give us keys to his actions: these can make us better.

I. "I Count Everything as Loss," 8 (even rubbish)

A. What he lost

1. One, his confidence in earthly things
2. Jewish heritage meant everything in his previous lifestyle, and no one could outdo him in these things, 4-6
3. These meant prestige, social standing, and power: all garbage in his mind
4. Two, he lost his righteousness based on the law, 6 – perfection, at least according to the Jewish traditions
5. He was willing to give these up, 8
6. What he thought was righteousness in reality wasn't
7. If he had not heard Christ directly, he knew what Jesus meant: "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul."

B. What he obtained through losing

1. One, righteousness which is by faith, 9
2. The only righteousness that justifies us with God
3. Two, knowing Christ and the power of his resurrection, 10
4. Eternal life was worth the trade off
5. Paul experienced what Jesus narrated in the Parables of the Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price

II. "By Any Means Possible," 11

A. Necessary steps

1. One, share in his sufferings: a disciple is not above his master
2. Blessed are you when you suffer persecution for my name's sake, Mt. 5:11-12
3. Two, becoming like him in his death
4. We die at baptism and live a new life because we have died to sin
5. Paul has demonstrated this by utterly rejecting that which was hostile to Christ
6. These are the "any means possible"
7. But he may have more in mind

B. "I will let nothing get in the way"

1. If it means attaining the resurrection, bring it on
2. Paul wants eternal life more than anything this life can offer
3. He may not be setting a new standard of how to play, but he certainly demonstrates how it is to be done
4. We have to be laser focused on the goal
5. As Payton Manning said, "No one worked harder than I did."
6. Paul could have said the same thing.

III. "Forget the past; focus on the future," 13 (paraphrased)

A. Paul strives ahead

1. In many ways we are products of our past: family, history, experiences, education, social upbringing
2. All those things help define us (whether we want them to or not, we are products of our time and place)
3. Yet we should neither long for the "good ol' days," nor let the negatives in the past haunt us
4. God is not finished with us yet: our past does not define God's future
5. This is why Paul can say, "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead," 13
6. What lies ahead is a prize, "the upward call of God in Christ Jesus," 14
7. He encourages us to remain true to this mature way of seeing things, 15-16

B. Can we see what God can do?

1. Can we see the future? Can know that with God we have a good one?
2. God creates new things, Isaiah 43:18
3. Psalm 126 – those who sow seeds anticipate the joy of harvest
4. During winter we anticipate spring
5. Paul is confident in all of this
6. He bet his former life on gaining much more

Conclusion:

1. The present is a known quantity and perhaps difficult to give up for that reason.
2. Looking to Paul and Jesus elevates our play in the game of discipleship.
3. We learn that trading this life for the next can be done; it must be done.
4. Repentance, faith in Christ, and baptism are the means by which we start down that road to a resurrected future.
5. Join us as we travel down that way together.