

Topic: A Maturing Attitude: An Exposition of Philippians 3:10-15

Php 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,**11** if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. **12**Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.**13**Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,**14**I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**15** Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.**16**Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. **17** Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

1. Introduction

- i. Paul (Apostle) wrote this letter to believers in the church at Philippi - most likely from his Roman house arrest (prison) described at the end of Acts (**Acts 28:30-31**) as he waited for his court appearance before Caesar. Other letters believed to have been written by Paul at the same time include epistles to the saints at Ephesus, Colossae and a personal letter to Philemon.
 - a) The church was started by Paul eleven years (thereabout) prior to the time of this letter, during his second missionary journey (**Acts 15:36ff**).The scriptural record we have show that this was the first church to be established on the continent of Europe.
 - b) Paul wrote this letter for a number of reasons; one of which was to thank them for the participation in the gospel as they supplied for his necessities - **Php 1:5; 4:14-15**.
 - c) Paul's main goal in the passage we are considering today is set out in verse 14 - **Php 3:14** *press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*. And the mindset or attitude he is inviting these believers to embrace has this as its final outcome. But before we get to the main (but related) facets of the message, we will try to

understand the contextual meaning of some key words or terms. This will help us to have a better understanding of the mindset or attitude Paul is inviting these believers to have.

Php 3:15 *Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you*

- d) The word 'mind' used here (in verse 15) is not the Greek word 'nous' which means intellect BUT the Greek word 'phroneo'; which means 'to exercise the mind' or more simply "to have an opinion with regard to something or form/hold an opinion or a bent or judgment about something". It emphasizes the underlying mental disposition or attitude. This word is used 21 times in Greek New Testament (GNT) – and interestingly a 1/3 of these (7 times) are found in the book of Philippians. Paul wanted the believers at Philippi to have the right opinion about some spiritual matters.
- e) The other word to define is 'mature'. The Greek word used in verse 15 is "Teleois" (an adjective) - used 17 times in the GNT (KJV). Teleioo (a verb), cognate word to this, is used 24 times in the GNT (KJV). The primary Greek word from which these words originate is "Telos" which means "to set out for a definite point or goal; the point aimed at as a limit". Therefore this word (Teleois or Teleioo) carries the meaning of 'to reach its end or complete or finished or perfect or mature or full grown or bringing to completeness etc' – **1 Cor 2:6, 14:20; Eph 4:13; Php 3:15; Col 1:28; 4:12; Heb 5:14** etc.
- These words can be used in reference to persons or things - in our case Paul has in mind the believers in the church at Philippi.
 - The goal of our faith is the salvation of our souls - **1Pe 1:9** *receiving the end [Grk - Telos] of your faith--the salvation of your souls*. NB the Greek for 'end' is Telos. A mind set on this is a mature attitude.
 - Let us now see how this is broken down for us in this passage

2. The Attitude of those Maturing in the Faith

- i. From our head scripture, we see Paul indicating that a maturing believer would embrace an attitude characterized by some persuasions. Paul had come to some considered opinion about some matters and he is now inviting or urging believers in the church at Philippi to come to the same judgment or opinion or attitude concerning the same matters. But what were those spiritual matters he was asking the brethren to be of same mind as his?
 - a. In verse 8 - Paul held an opinion that his well earned and enviable credentials cannot be compared to the joy of gaining or winning Christ. Gaining Christ was FAR superior to whatever gains or benefits obtained from these credentials.
 - **His 7 Credentials** - **Php 3:5** *circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. NB - a number of completion.*
 - b. Therefore, he willingly re-evaluated their worth & relevance (entire set of them) in order to gain Christ – and considered them as rubbish (**dung KJV - from a very strong word in Greek - used once in NT - primarily = excrement; secondarily - rubbish, waste thrown to the dogs; what is good-for-nothing except to be discarded**).
 - Paul thought this ‘rubbishing’ as a very necessary thing for the pursuit of what we see in verse 10-11. He was convinced that if he held on to them as necessary credentials to keep at the centre of his life, he would miss the opportunity to embrace what is higher seen in verse 10-11. To Paul this would have been having confidence in the flesh RATHER than in faith.
 - c. All those credentials are based on the law verse 9, strengthens his persuasion on this matter - he chose to discard the righteousness that would come from observing the law and pursued the righteousness that honors God - the righteousness which comes through believing (i.e. by faith) - **Ro 3:21** *But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference.* When Paul wrote to the believers in the Book of Galatians he

reminds them of His persuasion from the onset - **Ga 2:16** *"knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.* The writer of the Book of Hebrews says clearly the Law cannot bring one to maturity - **Heb 7:18** *For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

- This church at Philippi was having an influence from the Judaizers - he warns them about this in - **Php 3:2** *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!*
- In this passage, he is inviting the believers in the church (and of course us) to have the same judgment or attitude or opinion on the same matters. In a practical sense, we should not allow such things (anything that is not of faith) to be an obstacle or distraction in our pursuit of knowing Christ. **A question here for us - do we still hold on to such stuff?**
- Paul is telling these believers that the law (anything that is not of faith) cannot bring one to maturity and he therefore invites them to have the same judgment or attitude or opinion as his. He tells them to avoid any consideration of the law - this cannot bring anyone to maturity in the faith rather, it would be a serious impediment in their journey to maturity.
- I pray that we will constantly evaluate and re-evaluate such things – denying them to distract us from running the race. Anything that we might have held onto or been socialized in - cultures etc that is contrary to the faith **MUST** be regarded as rubbish - the same strength/voice.

ii. **Knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection (verse 10a)**

- a) After making an evaluation of the matters above and focusing himself on that which is of faith, in verse 10a, he expresses his desire to know Christ and the power of His

resurrection and he encourages the believers at Philippi to desire to have the same persuasion.

- In other words, the ability to know Christ and the power of resurrection would be adversely affected if the choice to ‘rubbish’ the righteousness based on law is not done. But what does Paul mean here?
- b) To get a good grasp of this, we will need to define or describe this word ‘know’ - (**Greek Ginosko**). NB there are 8 different Greek words for ‘know’ (and its cognate terms). We will not get into a definitions expedition but we will pay attention more to the way this particular one is used in scripture.
- This word "know" (Grk - ginosko) is used variously; has many applications and implications - it can mean, *‘be aware (of), feel, perceived, understand, be sure, to learn, to recognize, seeing things as they truly are or an intimate relationship between a husband and wife (Mt 1:25; Lu 1:34)’* etc. The context in which it is set determines which meaning or application to use or consider.
 - It is used about 223 times in NT and about 1/3 of the time this word is used by John. Its significance can also be seen in its prevalence in the NT - occurring in 20 books of the 27 books.
- c) This word in the NT FREQUENTLY indicates a relation between the person "knowing" and the object or subject known. This signifies that, what is "known" is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship.
- **1Co 8:2** *And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.*
 - **Ga 4:9** *But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?*
 - **2Ti 2:19** *Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."*

- **Joh 10:14** "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.¹⁵ "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep...²⁷ "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.
- **Mt 7:23** "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"
- **Joh 7:26** "But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ?"

d) John relates this knowing with obedience in a number of places in the NT e.g.

- **Joh 7:17** "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.
- **1Jo 3:24** Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.
- **1Jo 4:6a** We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us.

e) Comparing scriptures with scriptures, we can see a excellent connection between knowing Christ and the power of resurrection in the letter Paul wrote to believers at Ephesus, - **Eph 1:19** and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power **20** which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

- In these verses Paul is praying for the believers at Ephesus, that they would come to know the exceeding (i.e. that which goes beyond the usual mark, surpasses), greatness (implying magnitude) of God's power (inherent Power), **to those** who believe (tense signify i.e. who continue to believe) which was operational in Christ when God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand.
- We also realize that this power of resurrection in the case of Christ was demonstrated for a purpose – i.e. to sit Him at His right hand - a place of HONOR - waiting for that time when He will rule and reign for a thousand years with His co-heirs (His overcomers -**Re 3:21**).

f) Therefore in this expression “to know Christ and the power of His resurrection” - Paul has two things in mind - a day to day EXPERIENCE and end of the race (future) EXPECTATION.

- As he wrote to believers in Colossae and Rome, Paul points out to the believers – that they were buried and raised with Christ through water baptism - **Col 2:12***buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*
- And in **Romans Chapter Six**, he includes himself in the matter - “**Ro 6:4***Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*
- And in this very important faith action (water baptism), as a believer goes down into the water, he is declaring loud and clear that he has put the man of the flesh in the place of the dead (water) and as he gets out of the water he declares clearly that he has chosen to walk in the newness of life (a life led/governed fully by the Holy Spirit) for a reason. Having a completely different mindset (attitude) i.e. focusing on things above - **Col 3:1***If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.***2** *Set your mind (NB phroneo) on things above, not on things on the earth.***3** *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* **4** *When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

g) In a more practical sense, this MUST be a constant or daily practice (24/7) - a lifestyle, because the man of the flesh – keeps on ‘popping out’ and by our own power we cannot handle him – we need this POWER of God. But how does this play out then? Let’s look at another scripture - **Ro 8:10** *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.***11** *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

- h) In this verse we understand that the Spirit of God (Holy Spirit) raised Christ from the dead. This same Spirit lives in every believer, therefore this POWER will be released to every believer who **continues to believe** (have the faith to the saving of the soul) and therefore is able to deal with the man of the flesh (keeping him where he belongs, 24/7 as pictured for us in water baptism) - NB **Ro 8:12** *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors-not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh* **13** *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* If we cooperate with the Spirit of God, we will be able to put to death (separate ourselves with) the deeds or works of flesh.
- It is therefore necessary to continuously be filled with the Holy Spirit (**Eph 5:18-20**), which we now know is to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom (**Col3:16**). This way a believer can enjoy sustained victory (seeing this power demonstrated daily).
- i) As was the case for Christ, God has the same purpose – for us to overcome daily in order to become Christ’s bride - fully prepared to be His coheirs in His coming Kingdom - **Re 3:21** *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.* This is why this POWER is **TO US** who continue to believe - **Ro 8:1** *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit...* **14** *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God...* **17** *and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*
- j) Lastly on this point of knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection, we can rejoice to know also that when the trumpet will sound – by the same POWER, those dead in Christ will resurrect - **1Th 4:16** *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first* **17** *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with*

the Lord.**18** Therefore comfort one another with these words. Read also **Php 3:21; 1 Cor 15:51**

k) And something else ..., we will notice Paul used the word 'resurrection' twice in the passage -

- In verse 10 the word means 'to rise or stand up' - the general standing up (resurrection) of all who will be dead of all human history - in their order - **1Co 15:21** *For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead...23* *But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.* All men will be raised from the dead to be judged according to their works, and then receive the reward (good or bad), and be consigned to the place, exactly corresponding to their former works (done in the body), and the preparations or qualifications which they possess- **Heb 2:2** *For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward.*
- In verse 11, Paul uses the word resurrection that has a different meaning from the one above - this word should correctly be translated 'out-resurrection' which means that there will be those who will "stand up" "out of" those previously raised (or stood up) from among the dead. This is a further separation out of those who will be resurrected - and this is for a stated purpose as described in verse 14 - those who will attain the reward "*prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*".
- Let's tie this up - when '*Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout*', the Christians who will have slept (dead in Christ) during this dispensation will be separated from the rest of the dead (OT saints and the unsaved). All those raised (will have experienced '*anastasis*') will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSOC). The out-resurrection will happen following determinations at the JSOC - a further separation will occur where the faithful ones (overcomers) will 'stand up' out of those raised from the dead in order to take up their positions of rulership (honor) in the coming kingdom of Christ - thus realizing the goal of their salvation

– the prize of the high call of God in Christ Jesus – **Mt 22:14** "For many are called, but few are chosen." Non-overcomers, unfaithful believers (those of a contrary mindset), will not have a portion in the kingdom – will be separated from Christ and the purpose of their redemption for 1000 years.

- l) Therefore Paul wants to know Christ (to have an intimate relationship with Him) in such a manner as to give him the power to overcome the man of the flesh (and the other enemies of our faith) - so that Christ will 'know' (**NB Mt 7:23**) him in that day - which will guarantee him a place of honor in the coming kingdom of Christ as Christ overcame and now has a name and place of honor. This is a maturing attitude. This is seen in verse 11.
- m) He is inviting the believers of the church at Philippi to have the same persuasion or attitude as his on this matter.

iii. Fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death

- a) In verse 10b, Paul is inviting these believers to have Christ's mind with regard to sufferings. Certainly, He is not asking the believers to be crucified the same way as Christ. BUT what does he mean?
 - a. The word 'fellowship' comes from a Greek root word that means "a joint-participation in a common interest and activity." The contextual meaning here would be that Paul wants to have a common persuasion or judgment or mindset on this matter of suffering as did Christ – it means like-mindedness with Christ on the matter.
 - b. Paul had addressed this matter of Jesus' death earlier in this book - **Php 2:5-8**, highlighting Jesus Christ's humility (in obedience to the Father) - culminating to His death on a cross. And because of the JOY He was seeing beyond the pain of a cross, he endured it and died - **Heb 12:2** *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
 - c. Concerning suffering, Christ became our example - **1Pe 2:21** *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His*

steps. **22** "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; **23** who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.

d. In the verse above, we see Jesus' proper response in times of suffering and Paul is inviting the believers to have this kind of mindset. This is a sign of maturity.

- **Mt 13:19** "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside
- **Php 1:29** For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,
- **2Ti 3:12** Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution
- **1Th 3:3** that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.
- **2Co 4:17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory
- **Ro 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
- **1Pe 4:13** but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.
- **2Ti 2:12** If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.
- **Ro 5:3** And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; **4** and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

e. And being 'conformed to his death' - the word conformed means "to bring to the same form with some other person." This word has been used, three other times in the NT and comes from two Greek words (sum-morphoo) - the first part (preposition) means 'together with' and the second part mean "to take on the character of something or someone". And since Paul was not looking forward to die the same way Jesus died - in terms of process and mechanics of it, he desires to stay

persuaded (have the same mindset) the same way Jesus was as he died on a cross - as seen above.

iv. A mature judgment or attitude described in verse 13-14

Php 3:12 *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

- i. In verse 12-14, Paul invites believers to have same opinion or mindset as his
 - a. In verse 12, Paul states that he is not deceived that he has already attained a level of spiritual maturity beyond which there is no progress. He knew he is continuing to pursue (i.e. exerting himself fully, sparing no energy) in order to lay hold of the prize for which Christ seized him – Read **1 Cor 10:12; 1 Cor 9:24-27; 2 Ti 4:7-8.**
 - b. In verse 13, Paul knows the things of the past can drag someone in the race of the faith. He forgets them and stays focused on the finishing line – goal of the race of faith – **1 Pe 1:9** as seen earlier. He does not elaborate on the things which are behind - BUT we know a few things already.
 - Those credentials that he discarded
 - He is writing from prison and he has suffered a lot so far for the sake of Christ and the gospel. In addition, what he says immediately before and after (under the same breath so to speak) suggest that whatever those things were, could have distracted him from pressing on, keeping his focus on the race of the faith - and all that meant in his case. These things associated with his prison and difficulties current and before could have been some of the things he has to forget.
 - Paul stays focused on the goal – Prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus – **1 Cor 9:24**

v. Finally, keep on learning and maturing

Php 3:15 *Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.* **16** *Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*

- i. Staying on course of learning and maturing
 - a. After describing the mindset of the mature in the faith in this passage, he gracefully and lovingly (in verse 15) encourages them to constantly be of this attitude/mind.
 - And for those who may not have accepted (seen) it for whatever reason, Paul does not encourage them to have a contrary mindset or attitude. He does not ignore it – he addressed it lovingly. He told them that God will correct their erroneous attitude – will reveal this to them.
 - Finally, **Heb 13:20** *Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

GOD BLESS YOU