

Saint Timothy Lutheran – Edmonds, WA

March 21, 2010 – Rev. Craig A. Patterson

“In Order That I May Gain Christ...”

(Text: Philippians 3:8-14)

Context: The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians from his jail cell, most likely, in Rome (his first imprisonment). This letter is a letter that expresses the Apostle’s joy. The fact that the Philippians have supported him in the Gospel ministry and stand with him, even as he is in prison, causes Paul to rejoice. The promises of God and the glories that await Paul in heaven in connection with Christ cause Paul to have joy in spite of his circumstances. He is in prison and yet he is rejoicing. He sums it up in chapter 1, verse 21, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” The Apostle’s heart is yearning to be with Christ in heaven. He confronts the attitude of some who are “enemies of the cross of Christ” and who “set their minds on earthly things...whose end is their destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is their shame,...” (3:18-19). Rather, Paul counts all of his earthly achievements and gains as but rubbish in order that he may gain Christ, to know Him, and to live with Him.

I. **Countless Earthly Rewards Can Lure Even Believers Away From Knowing And Following Christ.**

- A. The trendy appetites of people around us dictate, ‘O, I must have this!’ or ‘I must have that!’ (The latest and best product, food, technology, fashion, house, car, etc., etc.)
- B. The so-called achievements that bring recognition and reward from people.
 - 1. A good education (not bad in and of itself).
 - 2. A certain standard of living.
 - a. Having certain belongings.
 - 3. Honors gained in one’s profession and/or career.
 - a. Reaching a certain level of status.
 - 4. Recognition from one’s peers.
 - a. Receiving the accolades of people (not necessarily good or bad, but people’s standards are not always in harmony with a righteous God.).
- C. Even among believers, people can seek recognition and/or reward from other believers.
 - 1. The devil can lead even believers to take their eyes off of the goal of following and pleasing God.
 - 2. The devil would have us seek the approval of anyone and or any group other than God, Himself.
 - a. Paul takes note of the importance of “the surpassing value of knowing Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things., and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ” (3:8).
 - b.

II. **The Worth Of The Prize Is Beyond Our Imagination And Expectations.**

- A. In heaven an inheritance, “imperishable and undefiled,...” (I Pet. 1:4) awaits true believers.
 - 1. Eternally good things, and good for us, are awaiting us in heaven, at home.
- B. “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20-21).
 - 1. Heaven is where we will live for eternity. Our home is in heaven.
 - 2. As we live our lives here and now, our lives are lived pointed toward our heavenly home:
 - a. Like Paul, we live with the ‘power of Christ’s resurrection’ (Phil. 3:10).
*We don’t live on our own power.
 - b. Like Paul, we live having a ‘fellowship of Christ’s sufferings’ (Phil. 3:10).
* We suffer because He suffered. The world hated Him and it will hate us, also.
 - c. Like Paul, we are ‘conformed to Christ’s death’ (Phil. 3:10).
 - Since Jesus died and rose again, so shall we.
- C. Because of this heavenly goal, we with Paul, can:
 - 1. Forget what is behind us..
 - 2. Reach forward to what lies ahead
 - * This kind of striving in this life is necessary until we arrive home, where there will be no weeping, no death, no worry, no fear, no illness, no sin...
- D. Thus, we have joy now, hope now, courage now, along with eager anticipation of being reunited with our Lord and all those who are in Him.