

Discussion Notes
Philippians 3. 12-16
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Rikk Watts

Following Paul's appraisal of how valuable Jesus and gospel are to him, we see how important it is to understand the origins of our faith. Salvation comes through Israel, at its climax known through Jesus, the crucified Jew. Israel's story is that they had nothing to bring to the table but trust. Jesus models this trust and we are to walk in the awareness of God's grace giving us all we have. We didn't earn salvation for ourselves. God's greatness is revealed in weakness. It is humbling to live a cruciform life and say, "there is nothing that I can bring, only to the cross I cling."

3.12-16

Three times Paul says, "I have not arrived". We live between the times, in the already but not yet.

What God has already done.

- Resurrection
- Life giving Spirit of God in us.

But we have not already attained, arrived, obtained.

- Fullness of the restored creation.
- Living between the times where the powers of darkness still work. God has won, but that working out is still unfolding.

Many texts speak of the Spirit's power in the here and now (on healing, death, miracles, etc), at work. On the other hand these are not the only texts or experiences. This is one of those texts.

We therefore arrive and sometimes feel we have two options:

- Demand that God work our way. A belief that we think we must have "enough faith" for God to heal.
- Passive resignation. A belief that prayer does nothing and God will do what God will do and we can't change his mind.

Both of these responses are focused on outcome. But there is another outcome!

1. God first wants relationship with us.

- Meaning he wants to talk with him not at him. This means that our faith can be the size of a mustard seed, it is not dependent on what we bring to the table, it depends on him. It is about really talking. Sometimes we don't really talk with God. We treat him like a cosmic vending machine.

- Sometimes our prayers will change the mind of God. As Moses did when he spoke with God at Sinai after the golden calf incident (Exodus 32). Sometimes our best prayers won't change his mind, as God says what he does to Jeremiah (15.1). This means prayer is about relationship, not manipulation.
2. Jesus has taken hold of us.
 - This relationship did not begin with us. Consider what Jesus did for us and how God went about loving the world.
 - We can trust (even when God does not act how we might like him to) that he will not play fast and loose with our lives. He knows what is best and is full of compassion.
 3. We must forget what we have left behind (the past) and look forward.
 - The future is the relationship God is bringing us into. He has a better plan for the world and is leading us there.
 - There are better things to come. We live in the already but not yet.
 - This is Christian maturity – thinking with the mind of God. Daily living out of the mind of Christ. This is real trust, as Jesus demonstrated in the garden the night before his death.

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to live “in between the times?” In the already but not yet? What kind of world is that and does it help answer some of our questions about struggles we might have?
- What do you think about prayer, healing and conversing with God? Did Sunday's message challenge any of your thoughts about prayer?
- Which one of the three points matters most to you right now? What have you learned and what is God saying to you?