

MVP
Series: Philippians
Philippians 3:1-11
October 24, 2021

Welcome again to worship.

In our basement at home, there is a small section. Yes, a section, for a Myra Wheeler basement will not be messy; it will be completely organized. Anyway, there is a section of what I call keepsakes. Do you have those, things that you hold on to because they have sentimental value? A favorite toy from childhood. I think there is a Buzz Lightyear down there. Or your school yearbook. How many of you still have your school yearbook? Or newspaper clippings of those moments you made the paper... for good reasons.

When I started elementary school, my mother bought a school years book, something to collect important papers, grade cards, class pictures, etc. When I was young, I used to sit in my bedroom and look through that over and over again. I still have it downstairs.

What would you say is your most prized possession, the thing you would rush back into a burning house to retrieve? A picture? A certificate? A Bible?

Today, we are continuing our series on the Book of Philippians. Kathy began our series by looking at the first two chapters. Today, we look at chapter 3 in a message called "MVP."

Now, normally, when you hear the abbreviation "MVP", you think of "Most Valuable Player." But that's not the case today.

Today, MVP = Most Valued Possession, that thing you want to save from a fire because it is so important to you. Maybe it isn't something tangible. Maybe it's an accomplishment, something you achieved. Having my pilot's license might be mine; maybe publishing 3 books in 14 months.

I want us to look at Philippians 3:1-11, so if you are at home, grab your spiritual journal and your Bible, or if you are in the sanctuary, turn to page 5 in your bulletin as we look at the 3rd chapter of Philippians:

Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.¹

Let me stop there. Paul lists the MVPs he had:

First, the right start.

¹ Philippians 3:1-6 (NLT2)

His parents started him out right by having him circumcised at the proper time.

Second, the right family.

He was a Jew, the chosen people of God, from the tribe of Benjamin.

Third, the right profession.

He became a Pharisee, which was the conservative group in Jewish culture at the time, ones who tried to obey everyone of the Mosaic laws. They gave their lives to following God's ordinances and teaching others to do the same.

People would often congratulate my parents for raising one son who became a pastor and another one who became a neurosurgeon. Those are some kind of professions.

Fourth, the right commitment.

In verse 6, he says:

I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church...²

He believed so much in his faith that he persecuted – mistakenly, of course – this new cult that was forming after the teachings of someone named Jesus of Nazareth.

Finally, the right lifestyle.

Paul said he obeyed the law without fault, blameless in his righteousness.

Now, I don't want to disparage anyone today, but I think I will go out on a limb and say few... maybe I'll go way out there and say none of you in this room can claim any of these. Yet Paul could, but look what he says about them, continuing in verses 7-11:

I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!³

Paul says he considers his MVPs worthless. All that from his past, he rejects the merit of it for what is really important.

Instead, Paul's guidance to his readers is:

First, We must go from being self-centered to being Christ-centered.

Verse 8:

... so that I could gain Christ.⁴

Consider Paul. The risen Christ appeared to him and totally changed his life.⁵ Now, some 30 years later, he still wants to know Christ more and more. Paul reminds us that nothing on earth compares to knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. You will never regret pursuing Christ.

If you visit Memphis, Tennessee, you will find a crazy obsession with Elvis Presley. It's amazing how people are over this person, who is dead. In contrast, in

² Philippians 3:6a (NLT2)

³ Philippians 3:7-11 (NLT2)

⁴ Philippians 3:8b (NLT2)

⁵ See Acts 9:1-9; Galatians 1:11-17; 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Philippians and especially in chapter 3, Paul has crazy love for Jesus, who is alive. This is the love we need also.

Jesus said this very strange and difficult thing in Luke 14:26:

*Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.*⁶

Was He saying that we are to hate our loved ones, our family? No. What He is saying is that compared to what our love for Him should be, our love for anyone else – even ourselves – should seem like hate. The New Living Translation says:

*If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.*⁷

That's the kind of crazy love and attention Paul says we should give Jesus. We must go from being self-centered to being Christ-centered.

Second, all the world's attractions are garbage.

Look again at verses 7-8:

*I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.*⁸

He counts all things but loss, not only his Jewish privileges, but all others of every kind; everything that people and society count as valuable or important, even the things they think they should do to earn their way to heaven.

He counts them as garbage. Now, here comes the 12 year old boy in me. The Greek word here⁹ means the vilest of refuse of anything; at its the worst, it is excrement.

The Message Bible puts it this way:

Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung...¹⁰

Everything Paul once thought was important, his MVPs, he now flushes down the toilet, hoping to never see it again. By losing all that the world calls excellent, he gained Christ, and endless salvation through Him.

Third, Paul says righteousness comes through faith.

Verse 9:

*...I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.*¹¹

No amount of law keeping, no amount of self-improvement, no amount of discipline or religious effort can make us right with God. Righteousness comes only from God, and we are made righteous (or receive right standing with Him) by trusting in Christ. He exchanges our sin and shortcomings for His complete righteousness.

⁶ Luke 14:26 (NRSV)

⁷ Luke 14:26 (NLT2)

⁸ Philippians 3:7-8 (NLT2)

⁹ σκύβαλον

¹⁰ Philippians 3:8 (MSG)

¹¹ Philippians 3:9 (NLT2)

2 Corinthians 5:21 says:

*For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.*¹²

Therefore, Paul says we should want to:

a. Know Christ

Verse 10:

*I want to know Christ...*¹³

This passage is extremely important because it tells us what it means to know Jesus, what it means to find eternal salvation and ultimate satisfaction in life. Paul describes what a Christian isn't, what a Christian is, and how one can become a Christian. Elsewhere in the Bible the idea of "knowing Christ" or having the "knowledge of God" involves the idea of salvation.

Jesus said these very important words in His High Priestly Prayer John 17:

*And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.*¹⁴

So, salvation is about knowing Jesus. It doesn't mean merely to know about Him; it means that you have a relationship with Him. And those who know Christ want to know Him better and better.

b. Experience the power of God.

Again, verse 10:

*I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead...*¹⁵

When we become one with Christ by knowing and trusting in Him, we experience the power that raised Him from the dead. Imagine that: the power that could raise someone who had been dead for days, living in us, helping us in our struggles of life, regenerating our lives into His image.

But before we can walk in newness of life, we must die to sin. Just as the Resurrection gives us Christ's power to live for Him, His crucifixion marks the death of our old sinful nature. We can't know the victory of the Resurrection without personally applying the Crucifixion.¹⁶

And that leads us to "C."

c. Suffer with Him.

Verses 10-11:

*I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!*¹⁷

Paul tells he reads that he wants to do the very thing that most of us do not want to do: suffer.

When Joni Ericson Tada, who has been paralyzed for most of her life following a diving accident when she was a teen, was diagnosed with breast cancer, she said that

¹² 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT2)

¹³ Philippians 3:10a (NLT2)

¹⁴ John 17:3 (NLT2)

¹⁵ Philippians 3:10 (NLT2)

¹⁶ Life Application Study Bible, Philippians 3:10

¹⁷ Philippians 3:10-11 (NLT2)

she did not fear death. She feared pain and suffering. This is a woman who has suffered nearly all of her life. I could relate to her; I don't like pain and suffering. Those of you who have had knee replacements, I admire you. I don't know if I could do that.

But Paul says:

*I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!*¹⁸

He is willing to go through suffering for what is most important: having eternal life through Christ.

After Paul considered everything he had accomplished in his life, he decided to write it all off as worthless, excrement, when compared with the greatness of knowing Christ. We should value our relationship with Christ as more important than anything else.

What do you treasure, your MVP? Is there anything of surpassing value? Is there anything that deserves our life-long, passionate pursuit? The answer is yes. Paul describes it. More than that, we should consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord. Do you know Him today?

¹⁸ Philippians 3:10-11 (NLT2)