

Wednesday 6 April 2022

Philippians 3: 4b - 14

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have none. I circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee; I do for real, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

I but whatever sense gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. If that's more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ. I and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I do want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, if and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

I know that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Just in case you are one of the few who is incredibly happy with who they are or in case yesterday's reading puffed you up a bit too much, Paul brings us some balance. While we are magnificent creations of God, each unique and precious in our own right, this should not make us arrogant, conceited or proud. You may think you are perfectly perfect, you may be the envy of all around you as far as your lifestyle goes – cars, clothes, house etc., you may seem spiritually superior, but in the grand scheme of things none of that really counts if you don't have a real relationship with Jesus. If we're not really connected to Christ then all the wrong things are important to us, names, status, image. We take all the blessings that God gives us and turn them into idols. Instead of valuing ourselves and others as unique magnificent creations of God, we puff ourselves up with pride and look down on others, we rate and compare ourselves and others and we treat those who don't live up to our standards with condemnation and disdain. We take the blessings of talents, gifts, work and wages and we focus them buying more and better stuff for ourselves instead of sharing and blessing others.

While some live with all the insecurities of who they are and the Psalmist writes to boost their self-value, Paul warns us against the other extreme of valuing ourselves too highly and making ourselves the centre of the world. In a world that calls us to post pictures and stories about ourselves daily and that measures our value based on how many followers we have, it's easy to be caught up in the spin of all things. The trick to keeping your balance while you're spinning is called spotting (ask any ballerina or skater). It's when you keep your focus on one particular spot, as your body turns, your eyes keep looking at that same spot for as long as possible and then you quickly whip your head round so that you can again look at that same spot. Paul tells us that spot for us is Jesus. When the world around is spinning if we keep our focus on Jesus, we will always keep our balance. We're not perfect yet but we keep trying our best.

Prayer