

# Thoughts on Philippians 3:1-14

by Eli Brayley

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*Eli Brayley's sermon emphasizes the importance of rejoicing in the Lord, the value of repetition in teaching, and the pursuit of a deeper relationship with Christ through suffering and striving for perfection.*

**Scripture:** Luke 10:20

**Topics:** "Faith And Righteousness", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Eli Brayley preaches on the importance of repetition in teaching, emphasizing how Paul's repetition in his epistles is for the safety and understanding of the readers. He warns against false teachings and encourages rejoicing in the Lord for the salvation received. Paul explains the true meaning of circumcision as a spiritual act of the heart, not of the flesh, and emphasizes the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. The sermon concludes with the call to press forward towards the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, striving to know Him more and be found in Him.

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## Transcript

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."

It is no trouble for Paul to write the same thing over and over, for by repetition does a point get confirmed and imprinted upon the mind. The Bible is full of repetition: 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Deuteronomy (2nd Law)...

Paul repeats himself in most of his epistles, stressing the same point to firmly plant the instruction into the readers mind. Many people have to hear something numerous times before it finally leaves a mark. It is not grievous for Paul to do this, yet, for many of us, and for many preachers and ministers, we fear being repetitious. This is most often because we are working for ourselves and not for God. We feel the need to maintain our reputation. A good teacher will repeat and repeat until the hearers understand fully. This is good teaching. Bad teaching would be to move on before the point is implanted. This may be another cause for the poor condition of the Church today... men in the ministry are trying to please man rather than God. It is for the safety of the people that Paul uses repetition, not for their delight or gratification!

"Rejoice in the Lord." Rejoice, meaning, be joyful, be glad. In the Lord: "Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20, see also Psalm 85:6) Rejoice in what God has done for you!

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision."

The Christian ought always to be on the alert for:

(i) Dogs = lazy and greedy men (Isaiah 56:10-11, see also Matthew 7:6 and Revelation 22:15)

(ii) Evil workers = simply, men who work evil

(iii) the Concision = cutters of the flesh, in this passage Paul is referring to the circumcision group, who by the works of the Law seek to obtain a righteousness of their own (he goes on to explain in the following verses)

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Paul explains here what he meant by concision in verse two. "We are the circumcision..." That is, circumcised in the heart. "But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Romans 2:29, see also Leviticus 26:41 and Acts 7:51) "...Not in the letter..." Whereby our righteousness does not come from the Law, but from Jesus Christ, and has "no confidence in the flesh."

Paul then goes on to explain how if by the flesh a man was justified, he (Paul) would be the foremost example of such a man (verses 4-6).

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

Realizing that no man can be justified by the Law, and that all righteousness is found in Christ Jesus the Lord, Paul counts all his past accomplishment for nothing. "...were gain to me..." And so it is, in the futility of our minds do we think these things to be full of merit, and so often as Christians we find ourselves tending back towards our old way of thinking, believing our works to be of gain. Agree with God that all our righteousness is but "filthy rags" or as Paul says in the following verse: dung.

"Yea, doubtless, and I count all thing but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,"

Doubtless! Without a doubt and with no thought otherwise, all hope lies on Christ's blood and this alone. "...the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord..." The knowledge of Christ Jesus and salvation by that Name, but not only this, also the increasing knowledge of God: the depth and height and width and breadth of the love of God, the unfathomable wisdom of God, the immeasurable glory of God, (and so forth forever) for which Paul counts all loss and agrees that this is the prize which is most excellent and praiseworthy and worthy of all (exertion, sweat, struggle, force, power, energy, strength).

"...for whom I have suffered the loss of all things..." John Wesley says: All things which the world loves, esteems and admires "...and do count them but dung..." Dung being the 'vilest refuse of things.' "That I may win Christ..."

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith..."

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;"

The complete Christian experience:

(i) To know Christ = namely then, to know God, Jesus the Son, by whom we know the Father, by whom we know the Spirit, and His character and His being and His will and His fellowship; to be one in Him

(ii) The power of his resurrection = to be alive by the Spirit which raised Christ from the dead, to live and walk by the Spirit of power and holiness; that which is contrary to law of sin and nature (Romans 8:11)

(iii) The fellowship of His suffering = to know Jesus fully and to be like Him, this most certainly is the decisive fellowship. To take up your cross in identification with Jesus, to deny yourself and to follow Him through the valley of the shadow of death, "being made conformable unto his death."

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Death before resurrection. Resurrection to glory.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

Paul is saying here that he has not yet been perfected, or completed. This does not mean his justification was imperfect, rather, that there is still much more to be attained. Reading verse 16 we are given more insight into this: what he has already attained is perfect, but the increasing knowledge of Christ, the sanctifying work of the Spirit, the ongoing work of his calling, the further revelations of the glory and power of God; these such things find no end until the body is resurrected and all things are made whole.

"...but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." For what aim did Christ apprehend us? To be saved only? No, this conception is false, for we read why Christ died for us in Titus 2:14: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Christ died to save us from our eternal damnation, yes, but also to make us a holy people unto himself, a royal priesthood, that we should "show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9) For this does Paul strive and follow after with all his might.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,"

Literally, 'Brethren, I do not consider myself to have grasped the fullness of all that Christ has saved me for.' There is an abundance to be attained! Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) It is a stirring question to ask oneself: 'Have I achieved all that Christ has saved me for?' Which concludes that there is no reason for you to be resting where you are. Reach forth "unto those things which are before!"

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

And this is the high calling: "That Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." (Philippians 1:20, see also 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12)

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