

Petersburg Cumberland Presbyterian Church

"Pivot"

3-13-16

CTW: Psalm 81

READING: Philippians 3:2-14

INTRO: Paul is writing to undermine a way of thinking and a way of life being taught by "evil workers." The false teaching is that which reduces God to a spectator, glories in religion and has confidence in human works.

In contrast Christians are to worship in the Spirit of God—that is to interact with God, to glory in Christ Jesus (to put one's faith in Him) and to put no confidence in the flesh (to not trust in our activities to make us right with God).

Both Salvation and the Christian life are gifts of grace not earnings from work. We seem to get that salvation (our admission to eternity with God) has to be a gift (where would we even buy a ticket? And how much would it cost?) But we struggle to recognize that the Christian walk is also a work of grace.

Paul lists all the good things that he has done to be right with God.--actions and motivations and birthright. His focus is that he did everything humanly possible to be right with God through religion. "As to the righteousness which is in the Law—found blameless"

Then Paul pivots.

He says that any benefit he found from doing those things he gave up to have Christ. Sort of like I've been collecting lost pennies all my life and have thousands but I just inherited the world's most productive gold mine.

"I used to benefit from a whole bunch of stuff I could do but now I benefit from what God is doing. I used to have a righteousness of my own derived from the Law but now I have the righteousness which comes (as a gift) from God."

Paul knows that so long as we live in these bodies corrupted by sin and in a sinful world that we will not be free of it. He puts his hope of being sinless in the Resurrection of Jesus and the final Resurrection when we will get our bodies back but then they will be free of sin completely.

He says I've not already become "perfect" but I keep walking in the direction I started in. (Paul also wrote in Colossians that "as we began in Christ so walk in Him" that is as we began by a work of grace from God we ought to continue walking in God's grace)

So many Christians believe that salvation is a gift but the Christian life is a work. If that is you then you underestimate sin and are overly confident in your flesh. Paul said his righteous actions prior to faith in Christ were rubbish and that he put "no confidence in the flesh"

What is your confidence level in the flesh? Here's 3 common problems that interfere with having faith for salvation:

1. You think your sins are too bad (and/or too ongoing)
2. You underestimate God's ability to forgive
3. You fail to see that you are a terrible sinner deserving of God's wrath and that you have no power to change it apart from asking Him to save you.

But its not just unbelievers who have too much confidence in the flesh. Even Christians do that. Here are three things that indicate a believer has too much confidence in the flesh:

1. You can't let go of your past.
 - a. You feel guilty for things you've done; "I can't forgive myself"
 - b. You resent others who have hurt you (rather than turn them over to God through forgiveness)
2. You believe your actions make you right with God so you try to regulate your sinful flesh with willpower and religious practices rather than throw yourself again and again up the mercies of God.
 - a. You've got a few religious things that you do to earn some credit with God. Maybe its when you put money in the plate you think God will consider that the next time you get greedy. Or perhaps you come to church so that it will balance the times you sin at home.
3. You believe that God expects you to do things without Him.
 - a. God will give you everything you need to do anything He wants—It's ALWAYS by the Spirit

CLOSE

Paul is sharing the pivot that took place in his life. The time when he went from one way of being to another. We should follow his lead.

Right now God will meet you. God will meet you right here. We can't go back and change the past nor forward to ensure the future but right now, right here, God will give you grace.

If you've always thought of yourself as a pretty good guy (not much worst than most and better than some) and therefore you don't need God to forgive you then you are heading to hell because you will die in your sins.

- But if you were willing, right now, this very place, God would save you. God will not despise a broken and contrite spirit.

If you've been trying to live the Christian life in your own human power then you ought to be able to see that it's not working. You've responded to your failures over and over again by trying harder but that failure is an invitation to shift your faith from your ability to Christ's ability

He can make you whole. He can forgive you. He can empower you to life a different kind of life

These are the things it means to know the power of His resurrection—to understand God has done it all through Christ. And it is faith in Him that assures our own resurrection.

We can pivot too just like Paul did.

- We can pivot away from our sin to salvation in Christ.
- We can pivot away from our dead works to a relationship with Jesus Christ that will mean a life of righteousness and love.
- So church—Pivot!