

Galatians and Philippians

Stern Warning

Interpreting the Text:

1. In chapter 3, Paul recites a list of reasons why he is performing religion “correctly” before reminding readers that all of this is secondary to Christ and his claiming of us. Why is this so powerful for the Philippians? How does Paul use his exemplary qualifications as a reason to convince others that Jesus provides salvation for all?
2. Paul says he wants to know Christ and his sufferings through death and resurrection (3:10-11). How does his current position of imprisonment change how we read this? Does it feel more literal, or more metaphorical?

Applying the Text:

1. How do you or your church understand the relationship between redemption in Jesus Christ and continued progress in obedience, or holiness, or sanctification? Are we supposed to get better as Christians as we go along?
2. For Paul the “fleshly” life seems to have included confidence in circumcision and some kind of dietary mistake, perhaps both related to obeying Torah or Roman societal expectations. Where are places in our own lives when we seem to have put our trust in passing (and even self-centered) values? How can we use this passage of Philippians to remind ourselves to refocus on Christ?
3. Is the suggestion that our stories participate in Christ’s story—his death and resurrection—still a persuasive way of thinking about the Christian life? What other understandings of our relationship to Christ might seem persuasive to you?