

# Sermon- Rev Heflin Jani

The Epistle to the Philippians 3:4b-14 '**New Beginnings**'.

Dear friends in Christ, greetings to you in Jesus's holy name!

It is a great joy and privilege to sharing the Gods' Word on this wonderful day.

Today's bible reading is from The Epistle to the Philippians 3:4b-14,

The Church in Philippi was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey while he was going through some tough persecution and the letter was written from Roman prison and the reason to write the letter is to express his affection for his fellow believers and to thank them for their gift, through his testimony encouraging the Church, victory, joy, to stay in harmony and obedient to God.

The Church in Philippi must be growing Church however as a one of early Church it is also facing challenges in a various ways although the letter is known to be Joy as a main theme of the letter, in chapter 3 Paul's trying to explain from his own testimony and privileges he has as Jews man and how he count them as a liabilities and not as an assets.

As per Paul, in every sense he was a first-class citizen as a Jew and had fulfilled all obligations as a true Judaizers.

- As per Jews traditions circumcised on eight day so he was a true Jew and Jew by birth and not by conversion and he has descended from the nation Israel and possesses all the rights and privileges of God's chosen people.
- Belongs to Tribe of Benjamin, From Jacob's all sons only Benjamin was born in the Promised Land, the tribe of Benjamin was small but the first lawful king Saul came from this tribe and before conversion he was carried the same name Saul, they were remained loyal to the house of David, the temple and Jerusalem were in the area assigned to Benjamin
- He was a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents and follow the Jewish traditional way of life and adopted the Hebrew language as his own language
- As per Paul, his achievements are
- With regard to the Jewish law I was Pharisee, a son of Pharisees and a disciple of Gamliel, who was also Pharisee, the Pharisees was small religious party but strictest Jewish group, which laid great stress upon the observance of rites and ceremonies and they have separated themselves from the common people and for Paul it is like a great honour to be proud Pharisee
- Paul was not only satisfying keeping the Laws but His zeal towards Law of Moses (divine Torah) as a Pharisee leads him towards as the persecutor of the church, so being a good Pharisee, he sees himself as a protector of his own faith and he doesn't found anything wrong to persecute the new believers
- Paul is boasting that he has kept and follow all his commandments as per Law, which makes him righteous person under the law and a pure blameless person

## 1. It's not about me It is about faith in Christ:

Suddenly, in verse 7, Paul is expressing that all his personal, religious and social achievements are not profitable for him anymore whatever good works, the advantages and legacy he possessed from his parents and as a Pharisee, he count them as a liability and not asset any more as he surrendered himself to the Christ.

<sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (ESV)

Paul explaining his reasons why he counts them as a loss in verse <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— (ESV)

Friends, what we can reflect today? are we relying upon our own strength or own achievements? are we fallen in the trap of self-righteousness? what are we boasting about today? Paul has several reasons to be boastful about his own achievements, but he counts them as a loss. For Paul it was new beginning, leaving his old life, where it was all about him and his own achievements, while writing to Church Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul is explaining that, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (ESV)

Are we following the Christ like Paul has decided to follow, even though he was going through persecution and prison, can we say whatever I gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ? I would like you to encourage if you have misplaced priorities in your lives then we must remind ourselves that **It's not about me It is about faith in Christ.**

## 2. Pressing toward the Goal:

Paul is reminding to the Church in Philippi that we are not perfect yet and he continuously giving his own example that he hasn't achieved the ultimate knowledge and understanding of the mystery of resurrection of Christ and full significance of the Christ but one thing he is doing is to forgetting what lies behind and is chasing to know more about Christ. Paul is mentioning that he is forgetting what lies behind, means his whole old life, his achievements and his old legacy but he is focusing the things which are in front which is full and complete knowledge of Christ Jesus.

Paul determined to run the race by not looking back but straining forward, in the New Testament often Christian life described as a race or athletic competition, In last part of Hebrews 12:1, it says "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (ESV) and in 2 Timothy 4:7 Paul is emphasizing that "I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (ESV)

Friends, is there anything that is stopping us from going towards our goal? Instead of forgetting the past are we holding to anything? or we simply lost focus in our Christian race? Or are we thinking to quit the race? In Revelation 2:5 To the church in Ephesus it is written with warning to repent, "to where you fallen; repent" (ESV) and in Acts 3:19 it is written "Repent therefore, and turn back." (ESV)

Today, Paul is encouraging us to do one thing, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. We can start now, and we can join or rejoin the Christian race today, we can do a new beginning by leaving our old past behind and by looking forward and we can reset our focus on Jesus Christ. Paul proudly announced that I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

May our Lord Jesus Christ help us to strengthen our faith and our commitment and help us to forgets what lies behind and pressing forward for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Amen.