

Explore the Bible: Joy In Knowing Jesus

September 8, 2021

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Sept. 26 focuses on Philippians 3:8-21.*

The classic Aesop Fable of “The Tortoise and the Hare” is taught by educators, both secular and Christian, to teach an important moral lesson. The story begins by introducing the hare’s characteristic as boastful, pointing to how he could outrun everyone. The hare constantly teased the tortoise about his slowness and continuously challenged him to run a race. Finally, the tortoise agreed. With excitement, every animal in the forest attended the race, in hopes that the tortoise would win.

At the start of the race, the hare quickly ran far ahead of the tortoise. Being confident that he would win the race, the hare decided to take a break and eat a bit. Afterwards, he decided to nap. When the hare finally opened his eyes from a deep sleep, the tortoise was at the finish line basking in the cheers from all the animals. The moral of the lesson is slow and steady wins the race.

In the Bible lesson, Paul comes to the point of counting everything a loss because knowing Christ Jesus and gaining Christ becomes his top priority. Although King Solomon was the wisest of all and sought to follow the wisdom of God as much as possible, he allowed his wives and concubines to lead him into idol worship (Ecclesiastes 9:11). Sadly, the king battled with fleshly desires which contributed to the downfall of the kingdom (1 Kings 11-16). What a great loss to the kingdom.

To Know Christ (Philippians 3:8-14)

God revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through a perfect plan especially for the three who faced enemies to and in the Promised Land. To Moses, God's name was "I Am" because everything Moses needed for the journey was already provided. To the father of many nations, Abraham, God was the God of covenant and promise. To Isaac, God sent a ram to save his life. To Jacob, his name was changed to Israel who fathered the 12 tribes.

Paul warned the Christians to beware of those who call themselves righteous, but instead, their evil works exposes the plan to guide them away from God. Paul, no doubt studied the life of the patriarchs and understood fully what it meant to uphold the Law. However, he put his Jewish faith aside to live for Christ and was determined to lay aside his childhood upbringing in order to know the true and living God. Worldly possessions no longer ruled his life, but living a righteous life was Paul's utmost desire "to know him and the power of his resurrection" (vs. 10).

Paul sought a right relationship with Christ. Being in right relationship means to allow Christ into your day-to-day experience. When there is a need, Christ is there to provide. When sickness and death happens, Christ is there to comfort us.

Paul also longed to know Jesus in his suffering and death (vs. 10). In our suffering, Jesus is with us, embracing us. and calling us into a deeper relationship with him. Paul took the necessary steps to know him more and more. Paul is in pursuit of the goal, forgetting what is behind, reaching for what is ahead (vs. 13). "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever" (1 Corinthians 9:24).

Will you share with the group your experiences with Christ?

Truth in Christ (Philippians 3: 15-21)

Upon graduation from high school, our youngest son was adamant about joining the military. About two weeks into basic training, I received a panic call from our son stating that he was ready to come home, because he felt the training was too hard. Besides complaining about being hard, his major complaint was that the sergeant treated the whole group like animals. Unknown to me, my husband was listening to our conversation, asked for the phone, and reminded the young man that it was time for him to grow up and be a man. Considering the words from his father, our son chose to serve his country for 10 years with two tours to Korea, (demilitarized zone), and rendered special services in Iraq as first sergeant. Overall, the suffering, discipline and hard work contributed to his maturity. He realized that being true to his dream and trusting God to protect him paid off with great rewards.

Paul instructed the Philippians to mature and live up to the truth that is only in Christ (vs. 15, 16). Jesus is the only truth for a Christian, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Paul lived the life of a Christian, and his desire was that his brothers and sisters imitate him (vs. 17) and not the enemies of the cross of Christ (vs. 18).

What steps should we take to make it our priority to know Christ, regardless of what we may face in the future?

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