

We now arrive at a very exciting stage of this series. We examine this verse in particular;
[Php 3:11 if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead.](#)

To determine exactly what it was Paul wanted to “attain” we will need to review the chapter structurally to help determine the context and then build our opinions from the great theme found within. After that we will examine the Lord’s life and resurrection as a key to deeper understanding.

First of all we need to know the views about this particular verse.

There are many expositors that see this resurrection as being the general resurrection which takes place at the Lord’s second coming. In other words, this is the resurrection assured by faith in Christ and associated with the gift of eternal life. Others feel this resurrection is something “better” in either time or quality or both; something that is dependent upon a life lived in faithfulness rather than the initial faith into Christ.

Before we make any decision one way or the other, let us examine the context which is essential in any diligent study. Here is a structure of Philippians showing the relationship of chapter 3 to the rest of the letter. This structure is based on one by Mr. C.H.Welch, found in his book “The Testimony of the Lord’s Prisoner” pg. 152.

A.1:1-2. Greetings. Bishops and Deacons.

B.I 1:3-26 Fellowship in Gospel from 1st day

C. 1:27-2:5. Manner of life here. Stand fast, mind of Christ now

D. 2:6-11 Sevenfold humility of Christ who endured. Resurrection Glory

E. 2:12-17 Appeal. Work out our Salvation

F. 2:17-30 Example of Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus

E. 3:1-3. Appeal. Beware

D. 3:4-19. Seven fold loss of Paul who presses on. To know Christ’s resurrection power

C. 3:20-4:10 Manner of life there. Stand Fast. Body of Glory then

B. 4:11-20. Fellowship in beginning of Gospel.

A. 4:21-23. Greetings. Caesar’s household.

It is very important that we see the relationship between the two sections marked “D”. The Lord humbled Himself and lived a life of obedience. The cross is not seen as the means of salvation in Philippians but an emblem of endurance in the walk (cp Matt.10:38, 16:24). Having endured the cross our Lord was highly exalted and this balances Paul’s desire “to know Him” and the power of His resurrection.

Philippians is not an epistle about the elemental things of Salvation. It is not about “becoming” a Christian; it is about working out our salvation as a Christian. We do not work for our Salvation. We are saved by grace through faith unto good works, striving to hear the “well done thou good and faithful servant” (Matt.25:21, 23). Look at Paul’s great hunger; he wanted to “win Christ”; to be “found in Christ” and to “know Him”. Paul is an old man who had certainly met and “knew” Christ. Paul did not need to know about Christ’s sufferings but wanted to know the “fellowship” of them. Paul did not need to know about Christ’s death but wanted to be made conformable to it. Paul did not desire to know about the general resurrection which we all have in Christ, but wanted to know the “power of His resurrection” which is linked to a resurrection that could be “attained”. Christ’s resurrection was different to the general resurrection as to time and quality. Our Lord was raised out from among other dead believers who would rise later.

Here is the passage leading up to the resurrection Paul hoped to “attain”:

Php 3:7 But whatever things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Php 3:8 But no, rather, I also count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them *to be dung*, so that I may win Christ

Php 3:9 and be found in Him; not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but through *the* faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith,

Php 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death;

Php 3:11 if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead.

Php 3:12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I am pressing on, if I may lay hold of that for which I also was taken hold of by Christ Jesus.

The following phrases in this passage are not phrases of established fact but phrases of hope with the end uncertain. Paul says “if by any means” and “not as though I had already attained” and (not as though I were) “already perfect” but I am “pressing on if I may” lay hold of something.

If Paul was hoping “if by any means” to attain this resurrection then this resurrection cannot be the general one we all have in Christ.

Paul’s life in the past unfolds in verses 4 through 7. Notice this is about how Paul “worked” in the past, which works he discarded in order that through a walk that pressed onwards “in Christ” he might attain something over and above that which he already had “in Christ”.

Paul’s new life and the gains he wanted to make can be found in verses 8 through 14. Paul’s objectives or gains were not secure when Paul wrote this letter. We simplify the section as follows;

- A1. 3:8. Excellency (higher value) of the knowledge of Christ.
 - b. to Win Christ
- A2. 3:9. Be found “in Him”.
 - b. the faithfulness of Christ. Righteousness by faithfulness
- A3. 3:10. To know Him
 - b. Power of His resurrection. Fellowship of His sufferings, conformable to His death.
- A4. 3:11. If by any means.
 - b. Attain the (out) resurrection from the dead.
- A5. 3:12 I follow, am pressing on
 - b. Not as though I had attained, if I may take hold of....
- A6. 3:13-14. I do not reckon I have taken possession, forgetting, reaching forward, pressing
 - b. for the prize of the high calling.

We cannot escape the thread weaving from verse 8 to verse 14. Paul expresses his heart felt desires and the objective those desires entertain. Please follow the A and b sections to understand the mind of Paul here.

In A1 Paul discards his previous life for the higher value of the knowledge of Christ in order to win Christ. This has nothing to do with Paul’s Damascus road experience.

In A2 Paul wants to be found in Christ where a “righteousness of God’ exists. But every believer is “in Christ” upon believing (Eph.1:13) and is righteous by grace through faith upon believing, see Romans 3:20-22. This is not what Paul is seeking; he already had that righteousness. He seeks righteousness by the same faithfulness of Christ not faith IN Christ.

Remember that Cornelius was a devout man and one fearing God whose fear of God produced “works of righteousness”. These works of righteousness were acknowledged by God who granted this man “repentance unto life”. See Acts 10:1-4, 43 & 11:18. Works of righteousness do not save us, but they should be found in the faithful walk. Please do not recoil from the thought that Peter, Paul and James are on the same page in the matters of the maturing of faith, perfection and a

righteous walk of obedient faith. We don't have space to expand this thought but Philippians 3 is not the apostle Paul desiring to become a Christian again as if he somehow lost the righteousness by faith through grace he received when he first believed. No! It is Paul desiring to finish the worthy walk and attain the righteousness of God by mature faith obedience. In Philippians there was something which may or may not be realized and that is not God's gift of eternal life.

Paul wanted the same faithfulness of Christ who endured all things. It was Paul's desire to be found in Christ with this righteousness. I remind my readers that the crown of righteousness is not awarded by the righteous Judge to all those who have initial faith in Christ but it is for those who have fought a good fight, who have finished their course, who have kept the faith (doctrine) and who have loved Christ's appearing. See 2Tim.4:7-8.

In A3, Paul already knows Christ but wants to know Him, that is, the power of Christ's resurrection. To attain a similar resurrection as Christ's, Paul was willing to endure similar sufferings and death. Compare Phils.1:29-30 and 20-21 where Paul does not say he will gain Christ when he dies, but he wants Christ to gain something by his death.

In A4 Paul wants these things "if by any means" he might "attain" or "arrive at" this resurrection. This phrase "if by any means" is found in Acts 27:12 where the sailors strived to reach Phoenix, they used "any means" but they never made it. If by any means is not a confident assurance of outcome. A5 affirms this uncertainty by plain statement of the apostle.

A6 brings the theme back to its initial objective where "win Christ" now appears as the "prize".

It is my conclusion that the resurrection in this passage is a special resurrection, one that can be "attained". It is in context of winning Christ and the prize and is therefore something we must know about and seek like Paul our pattern. I am certain my readers want to be found in this verse;

[Php 3:15](#) [Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be of this mind.](#)

Since Phils. 3:4-19 is in structural balance to 2:6-11 (see above), next lesson we will examine the "faithfulness of Christ" and the "better" resurrection He "attained". This is the great clue to understanding the timing of this (out) resurrection.

Previous lesson in this series can be found here;

www.bibleunderstanding.com/pastissues.htm