

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
CHRIST TOOK A HOLD OF ME



PSALM 80:7-14 // PHILIPPIANS 3:1-14

MONDAY 10/9/23

Psalm 80:7-15 // Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

Philippians 3:1-14 // 1 Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. 2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.

REFLECTION Paul is saying to the Philippians to stay joyful because he has taught them what is right and true about Christ. The only way to live a righteous life is through Jesus Christ. He is warning them about false apostles who have infatuated the Philippian's church. He points to these impostors as teachers of the Law, not of grace. Watch out for those dogs who preach false doctrine. These evil workers are leading you away from the Lord, instead of building up the Church. They try to destroy everything Christ has done. Stay the course and be filled with holy joy and do not be bitter towards the cross of Christ.

PRAYER Gracious God you have smiled upon me and have given me great joy. You have provided everything for my salvation. Please do not remember my sins, and bring me into your House forever. In Jesus Name, Amen

TUESDAY 10/10/23

Psalm 80:8-9 // You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. 9 You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.

Philippians 3:3-4 // For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; In regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

REFLECTION We who are "circumcised" from above by God's Spirit are the true seeds of Abraham. We are the heirs of God's Kingdom. Our love for Christ is confirmed by the sign of a circumcised heart and mind. Christian circumcision is not cutting the flesh, but a change of the heart by the Holy Spirit. The inward working of our heart is changing us into the image of Christ. Our change in thinking is visible in our actions, words and deeds with others. Romans 2: 29 "No, a true Jew (chosen child of God) is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people." (NLT) We boast in Christ Jesus because he first loved us. We do not put any confidence in the flesh. We all have tried so many times to obey the laws of God but we drastically fail. Who are the truly circumcised worshippers of God? John 4: 23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."

PRAYER Heavenly Father you have created and prepared the earth for planting of food and crops. But more importantly you planted in our hearts the root of Jesus Christ that grows deep in us. This week may we gather in your house to praise Jesus' Holy Name. In Jesus Name, Amen.

WEDNESDAY 10/11/23

Psalm 80:10-11 // The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. 11 Its branches reached as far as the Sea (Mediterranean Sea) in its shoots as far as the River. (Euphrates River)

Philippians 3:1-14 // 7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

WEDNESDAY 10/11/23 CONTINUED

REFLECTION One of the signs of being forgiven by God is that our past no longer haunts our thoughts. Our life before being “born from above” is no longer controlling our future actions. Paul consider it garbage, and now he is moving on to gain Christ. From verses 5 -6 he tells us he was a high ranking Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. At eight days he was circumcised. He studied the Law of God and accepted he has righteousness before God based on his ability to live by the law. He studied under Gamaliel (Pharisee doctor of Jewish Law) to be thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. He said he was zealous for God. Then he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. Acts 22:6-76 “As I was on the road, approaching Damascus about noon, a very bright light from heaven suddenly shone down around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’” In that moment Paul’s heart, mind and soul was changed forever. There is a 70’s love song that goes like this: “I feel the earth move under my feet. I feel the sky tumbling down, I feel my heart start to trembling whenever you're around” That is what it’s like to



encounter Jesus for the first time. Saul (renamed Paul) at that time thought he was living a righteous life seeking to arrest and kill Christians. The day the “voice of Jesus” spoke to him, he realized a righteous life was to live for Jesus Christ. God’s grace has been poured down for all who want to live righteously and face God our creator and judgment day.

PRAYER Lord Jesus, I pray you protect me from myself. Help me to be guided by your Word and wisdom and righteous thinking. Keep me on the right track towards heaven. In Jesus name Amen.

THURSDAY 10/12/23

Psalm 80:12-13 // Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick its grapes? 13 Boars from the forest ravage it, and insects from the fields feed on it.

Philippians 3:1-14 // 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

RELFECTION As we submit to Christ, God fixes our “want to”. As we begin our faith journey we more and more “want to” know Christ. Paul’s transcendent moment on the road to Damascus caused him to desire God’s love. By doing so we will begin to understand the power of Christ’s resurrection. For faith to growth we have to face the truth about ourselves and the pain and suffering we have caused. My sin, your sin, have caused Christ to suffer and die on the cross. Our suffering comes to us as a result of sin in the form of physical, spiritual and emotional conditions. To counter this suffering in our lives we learn faith gives to us overwhelming hope in Jesus Christ. A hope of a future. The knowledge of Christ is one thing, but connecting with the power of Jesus’ resurrection gives us true relief from our condition. Our own resurrection to new life is the completion of our redemption. It is not enough to just know Christ. We need to remember we too will rise with him. It’s like feeling the “earth move under our feet”. That is our true joy. When we experience and taste God’s love it changes us forever. When Christ is rightly known our world of materialism and immoral behavior turns us off. The fruit of God’s grace is found in Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. When we accept the fruits of God’s grace we truly begin to live.

PRAYER All mighty God, the God of an army of angels, I praise you for providing a plan for my atonement. I praise you for blessing me with eternal life. By the power of your Son I now have hope of immortality with you.

FRIDAY 10/13/23

Psalm 80:13 // Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see!

Philippians 3:1-14 // 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

REFLECTION By having faith in Christ we obtain the promise of God's eternal home. We have access now because we are filled with God's Holy Spirit. But it is not complete, because we still live in these bodies. Each day we seek the full prize of spending eternity with Christ. Paul says he presses on to the finish line towards heaven. We too have this desire because "Christ has taken hold" of us. I love that line, "Christ takes hold" of us. By faith we are engrafted into the body of Christ. That means we have already entered the kingdom of God. Ephesians 2:6-8 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." Our hope is the inheritance secured by Jesus. The advancement of our faith creates a desire for Christ to grow in us to the point nothing else really matters.

PRAYER God Almighty, look down from heaven on all your children this day and bless them with your love and grace. Lord Jesus may you return soon to finish the work of redemption. In Jesus Name Amen

SATURDAY 10/14/23

Psalm 80 // Watch over this vine, 15 the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself.

Philippians 3:1-14 // 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

REFLECTION Paul is not questioning the certainty of his salvation, but he is still aiming at making further progress in his faith. That too is our calling; to grow deeper in love with God. We all must follow the path of faith and exercise our calling until death. Each day we live as God's children we ought to remember God promises a seat at the table of the Lord. Paul says he presses forward to that goal and to win the reward. As we turn away from our sins, we want to adjust our lives. This adjustment helps us to stay focused on the goal of heaven. If we continue to look backwards at our disgraceful acts we stop growing in faith. The reason is we are pulled down morally by our memory which impairs our eagerness towards heaven. Looking decreases our earnest desire to follow Christ. Every Christians ought to understand this situation. When I was first asked to teach children about Jesus I thought I was not qualified. I thought of my past and could have easily said no. But I desired to move ahead and that has changed everything in my life.

PRAYER Watch over me Lord Jesus and may the root of your love, compassion and forgiveness take hold of me. May your right hand plant the seed of your Father's love and forgiveness in the hearts of those I live. In Jesus Name Amen



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