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PHILIPPIANS
The Letter of Joy
CHAPTER 3 (Verses 1-7)

RECAP OF CHAPTER 1 AND 2

- Philippi was the church that blessed Paul's heart the most. They were the ones who had reciprocated his love and had lived their faith out in a purity that other churches he established hadn't.
- The city of Philippi was a miniature version of Rome. It was a "Rome away from Rome" in every respect.
- (1:13) "The whole praetorian guard" came to know that Paul was IN CHAINS FOR CHRIST!

POWER VERSE: (1:21) "FOR TO ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST AND TO DIE IS GAIN."

- (2:6-8) Some scholars consider this the greatest and most moving passage Paul wrote about Jesus!

POWER VERSES: (2:9-11) "THEREFORE GOD EXALTED HIM TO THE HIGHEST PLACE AND GAVE HIM THE NAME THAT IS ABOVE EVERY NAME, THAT AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH AND UNDER THE EARTH, AND EVERY TONGUE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF THE FATHER."

POWER VERSES: (2:12-13) "THEREFORE, MY DEAR FRIENDS, AS YOU HAVE ALWAYS OBEYED—NOT ONLY IN MY PRESENCE, BUT NOW MUCH MORE IN MY ABSENCE—CONTINUE TO WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING, FOR IT IS GOD WHO WORKS IN YOU TO WILL AND TO ACT IN ORDER TO FULFILL HIS GOOD PURPOSE."

- (vs12) The Greek word for "work out" is *katargazesthai*. It means to bring to completion, showing that although we are gifted salvation by grace from God, we have personal responsibility to continue in that work of the Spirit through our obedience in walking out and working out our faith.
- The litmus test is easy; are we becoming more like Christ as we serve Him? Or, are we still slaves to the same temptations and wrongful habits, and committing the same sins?
- (vs15) A Christian's life should be lived so beautifully that no one could find any fault with it. There is such a purity to it that it stands the test of all those who would try to come against it.
- (vs20) Timothy was the best expression of Paul's heart and life that he could send to the Philippian church.
- (vs23-24) Paul was waiting to find out what his final judgment would be before he sent Timothy. Once again, we see Paul's hopeful desire "for to me to live is Christ" so he could return to Philippi one more time.

CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST JESUS (3:1-7)

- (vs1) The word “further” in the Greek also means “finally.” It was used by Paul in several Epistles when he is coming to the practical conclusion after the doctrinal portion of his letter or Epistle.
- “Rejoice in the Lord.” This is the proper response to the incredible doctrinal revelation of who Christ fully was on earth, and who He fully is after His resurrection found in 2:6-11.
- Many have taken this verse to mean that Paul had written many letters to the Philippian church and encouraged them every time to “rejoice in the Lord.” Historian Polycarp mentioned of Paul’s letters to the Philippian church. Paul wrote letters for 16 years, but we only have 13. Many were lost.
- Paul wanted to assure the Philippian church that the joy of Jesus would be their strength and protection, because their joy was from the Lord. When we have His joy, we can face anything.
- Even though we can lose everything else in this life, nothing can separate us from the love and joy that comes from Christ. He promises you in His Word “I will never leave you or forsake you.”
- (vs2) There were Jewish Christians that were coming to Paul’s churches teaching that to have salvation the Gentiles would have to go through Old Testament Jewish rituals and become a Jew. They would have to be physically circumcised and earn their way to heaven.
- Paul’s teaching was that salvation is by grace and a free gift of God for any who put their faith in Christ.
- (vs2) The physical circumcision Jewish males received was to represent a circumcised heart devoted to God. So once we are committed to Christ in spirit, we have fulfilled the heart of God’s command.
- As Jesus told Nicodemus “*Flesh gives birth to flesh. Spirit gives birth to spirit.*” There is nothing we can do in the flesh that will make a spiritual act take place. We are dependent on God to do that work.
- Paul calls these legalistic Jewish Christians that are undermining the freedom and access to true faith in Christ three things.
- “*Watch out for those dogs!*” Dogs in Jesus time, and in many countries around the world today, were not pets. They were wild animals that roamed streets in packs hunting, eating garbage and sometimes attacking people. They were diseased, mean, and dangerous.
- A dog in the bible, represented the lowest creature which was worthless. David said to Saul “*who are you pursuing? A dead dog? After a flea?*”

“The dog stands for everything that is shamelessly unclean.” William Barclay

- In the book of Revelation, the word dog stands for those who are so impure that they will never enter the Holy City in heaven.
- The Gentiles were called dogs by Jews. But now, Paul is turning back on them. He called these legalistic Jews dogs for trying to ruin the beauty and power of the gospel by trying to force Gentiles to become Jews before they can follow Christ.
- “*Those evildoers.*” These Jews believed they were righteous by keeping countless laws and rules, but Paul knew the only righteousness able to be received comes from Christ alone. Therefore, they were literally doing evil by undermining the true gospel and gift of salvation.
- Instead of helping bring men and women closer to God, they were driving them further. Instead of encouraging them to be free under God’s forgiving grace, they were binding them by lying to them that salvation comes through works.
- “*Those mutilators of the flesh.*” There are two Greek words used for altering one’s flesh. One is used to describe circumcision in the Old Testament. The other mutilation. There’s a scripture in Leviticus that forbids a man from mutilating himself. Paul uses this word.
- Circumcision was an outward symbol of an inward act of someone who’s heart was completely available to God. But, these Jews believed that the outward symbol was enough and was required.

- Long before Paul had this argument, previous prophets and teachers taught that outward circumcision wasn't enough. That mankind needed spiritual circumcision. In Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6, Jeremiah 6:10 - God tells mankind they need circumcised hearts, lips, and ears to receive God's love, hear His voice, and to speak His truth. Like today, God has always called us to remove that which separates us from Him.
- Paul is saying "You Jews think you are circumcised in your heart. You are only mutilated. You don't have God's heart at all."
- (vs3) Paul gives us three examples of how true Christians are the true circumcision.
- "*Who serve God in spirit.*" A true Christian worships God not with outward religious observations, but from an inward heart of intimacy, devotion, and sincerity.
- "*Who boast in Jesus Christ.*" A true Christian has no pride in who they are in their righteous living. They have an authentic humility that redirects all attention and praise to the One who made it possible for anything good to come from their life. Whether it's talent, accomplishment, or moral character, all of these attributes are given to us by Christ alone.
- A true Christian lives to direct and redirect all praise to Jesus! To make His name great is our aim.
- "*Who put no confidence in the flesh.*" The Jew found their confidence in their being the chosen people of God, in their outward circumcision, in their outward observances of God's Laws and the midrash.
- A true Christian puts their confidence in who Christ is, His work on the cross, His dispensing of grace, and His Holy Spirit's presence in their life.
- Simply put, the Jew's confidence was in themselves and their works, and the true Christian's confidence comes from Christ and His works.
- (vs4) Paul's saying "if there's anyone who would brag about having confidence in the flesh, it's me." I was the best of the best. Paul sets out to silence any comparison by the Jews from their standards of righteousness.
- "*Circumcised on the 8th day.*" Paul was not an Ishmaelite who was circumcised in the 13th year. He was not a proselyte who was circumcised later in life. He was a true Jew from birth whose parents made sure of the exact day he was circumcised. They would've observed all the Jewish feasts & obligations.
- "*Of the people of Israel.*" When a Jew spoke of their most important identity, they used the term "Israelite." They traced their lineage to when Jacob became Israel, because that was the real birth of the 12 sons and tribes which became the nation. Ishmaelites could trace to Abraham. The Edomites could trace their lineage to Isaac. Israel was their distinctive heritage and where the blessing came through.
- "*Of the tribe of Benjamin.*" The tribe of Benjamin were the elite and aristocracy of Israel. Of the twelve patriarchs, only Benjamin was born in Israel. Saul, the first king of Israel came from Benjamin. Benjamin was one of the two tribes that made up the nucleus of the rebirth of Israel after the exile. The tribe of Benjamin was the first on the battle lines and the cry of Israel was "*we follow you, Oh Benjamin!*" Hosea 5:8
- "*A Hebrew of Hebrews.*" Here Paul attests to the fact that even though many Jews that were dispersed throughout the known world had never learned to speak Hebrew, he and his family held their identity, their faith, and their desire to be fluent in Hebrew even though it was not advantageous or necessary.
- Paul was raised in the Gentile city of Tarsus and was sent to Jerusalem by his family to study under the greatest teacher of that time, Gamaliel.
- "*As for the law, a Pharisee.*" Pharisee literally means "the separated ones". They were the spiritual Olympic athletes of Israel. There were never more than 6,000 at any one time. The Pharisees were an exclusive religious elite group. Paul was the best of the best.

- *“As to zeal, a persecutor of the church.”* For a Jew, having tremendous zeal for God, His law or temple, would’ve been seen as the greatest quality one could have. Paul’s zeal for Judaism was so great, he personally tried to kill and wipe out the early Christian church. He was a terrorist for his faith.
- *“As for righteousness based on the law, faultless.”* If righteousness could’ve been gained from following the Law, Paul was as perfect as they came. He, in his own assessment, was perfect in fulfilling the over 600 laws of Moses and the midrash of their day.

POWER VERSE: (3:7) *BUT WHATEVER WERE GAINS TO ME I NOW CONSIDER LOSS FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST.*

- Paul sets all of his accomplishments like a credit account on one side of a ledger. All of the positive, right things I’ve done in my attempts to earn salvation and please God. I count as nothing. They mean nothing in comparison to knowing Christ and His grace and goodness.
- Jesus explained to the teacher of the Law what Paul came to realize. *“Flesh gives birth to flesh. Spirit gives birth to spirit.”* Everything we truly need and want is utterly dependent on Jesus and the work of His Spirit in our lives.
- Paul had experienced Judaism at its highest point, and still found it lacking. When He encountered Christ the void in His heart was filled, and in that void was the all-surpassing joy of knowing Christ.

“Christ with me,
 Christ before me,
 Christ behind me,
 Christ in me,
 Christ beneath me,
 Christ above me,
 Christ on my right,
 Christ on my left,
 Christ when I lie down,
 Christ when I sit down,
 Christ when I arise,
 Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
 Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
 Christ in every eye that sees me,
 Christ in every ear that hears me.”

--St. Patrick

“REJOICE IN THE LORD!” APOSTLE PAUL

3 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. ³ 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—⁴ 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.

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 I 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. 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.

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. 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.

¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. ¹
