

~ Joy In Knowing Christ ~

(Part 1)

Text: Phil 3:1–11

Theme: The joy that can be ours over the things that are ours in Christ ought to make everything else, outside of Christ, seem totally worthless.

Intro:

1. Now we enter the second half of the book of Philippians and begin tackling the issues doctrinal and practical issues the church at Philippi was facing.
 - a. The first chapter contains the introduction to the letter along with a heartfelt expression of thankfulness for the fellowship of the Philippian brethren.
 - b. The second chapter contains Paul's exhortation to the Philippians to be united in the work of the gospel and to maintain a godly testimony before a wicked and perverse nation.
2. Chapter three begins with a warning about false teachers and false doctrine and exhorts the believers to forsake the idea of a works-based salvation in favour of the assurance of total salvation in Jesus Christ.
3. We will consider just the first 11 verses of the chapter this evening and we will consider these verses under two main themes.
 - I. Joy in Forsaking a Life of Works (Vs 1-8)
 - II. Joy in Embracing My Life in Christ (Vs 8-11)

Main:

- I. **Joy in Forsaking a Life of Works** (Vs 1-8)
 - A. The warning against works-based sanctification (Vs 1-3)
 1. Paul prefaces his warning with a firm exhortation to rejoicing in the Lord.
 - a. We've already seen Paul's exhortations to joy in the preceding chapters.
 - i. Joy In Christian Fellowship (Phil 1:1-11)
 - ii. Joy in Difficult Circumstances (Phil 1:12–30)
 - iii. Joy Through Humility (Phil 2:1–30)
 - b. Now the Apostle Paul exhorts the Christians to have Joy in Knowing Christ.
 - i. Paul says, "Finally... rejoice in the Lord". As though everything he has already described to them has not been enough to produce joy in them, Paul finally exhorts

them to be joyful in their relationship with Jesus Christ. Along with all those other things, rejoice in the Lord.

- ii. **John 17:3** *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”*
- iii. Ron Hamilton - “O rejoice in the Lord; He makes no mistakes. He knoweth the end of each path that I take. For when I am tried and purified, I shall come forth as gold.”

2. Paul gives a warning concerning false teachers.

- a. Paul thought it worth his time to repeatedly warn against the same things.
 - i. To write to you and instruct you in the same things as before is not a burden to me, nor am I tired of it, but for you it is the safe thing.
 - ii. Jude issued warnings against false teachers who were creeping creeps in the local church.
 - Jude 1:3-4 *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
 - iii. “It has been said that “nothing can be maintained without a campaign,” and this means that homes and churches must continually teach and emphasize all of the most important things in the Christian life and ministry.”¹
 - iv. The New Testament is literally filled with warnings about error. Terms like “beware,” “Take heed,” “warn,” “forewarn,” and “be vigilant” are used frequently. Every believer needs such warnings. Every family needs such warnings. Every New Testament church will give such warnings.”²
- b. Beware of dogs.
 - i. “Dogs in the east are mostly without masters; they wander at large in the streets and fields, and feed upon offal’s, and even upon corpses; comp. 1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:19. They are held as unclean, and to call one a

¹ Paul’s Prison epistles, Pg 357; David W. Cloud 2021; Way of Life Literature

² Paul’s Prison epistles, Pg 356; David W. Cloud 2021; Way of Life Literature

- dog* is a much stronger expression of contempt there than with us;³
- ii. To beware of dogs is to be on guard against false teachers who are on the prowl looking to take advantage of unsuspecting Christians.
 - c. Beware of evil workers
 - i. Figuratively a teacher of harmful things.
 - ii. These are people whose teachings undermine the work of the gospel rather than further it.
 - d. Beware of the concision.
 - i. The concision refers to a cutting off and is further specified in the next verse as a reference to circumcision.
 - ii. These were false teachers who insisted that non-Jewish Christians must undergo physical circumcision and keep the Mosaic law to be saved.
 - iii. The warning against false teachers was clearly a warning against works-based salvation. These false teachers known as Judaizers would come along behind the Apostle Paul, pretending to have been sent out by the church at Jerusalem, and they would enter the churches he had planted and begin teaching the Christians there that they needed to keep parts of the Jewish law in order to be saved.
 - **Acts 15:1-2** *"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."*
 - The result was that the church at Jerusalem had to write to the churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia and tell them that these Judaizers had not been sent with the authority of the Jerusalem church.
 - iv. It is interesting to note that, since the early days of Christianity, there have been those who try to add works to salvation and the Apostle Paul had his hands full with trying to combat these heretics.

³ Albert Barnes, [*Notes on the New Testament: Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians*](#), ed. Robert Frew (London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885), 190.

- **Galatians 2:11-13** *“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.”*
 - Paul even had to rebuke the Apostle Peter for segregating the gentiles and the Jews as though one were better than the other, because they kept the law.
3. Paul's explanation of the Christian circumcision.
- a. Circumcision was not the means of salvation for the Jews, but was a sign, or token, of the covenant God had made with Abraham.
 - i. **Genesis 17:11** *“And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.”*
 - ii. So, even in relation to the Jews, circumcision was only a sign of their identification with Abraham and the covenant God had made with Abraham.
 - By the way, this is why Joshua had the children of Israel circumcise themselves upon entering Canaan, and prior to the conquest, because it was their identification with the Abrahamic covenant that guaranteed their possession of the land.
 - b. Paul explains that the circumcision of the flesh is not what brings us near to God under the New Covenant.
 - i. It is our identification with Christ that makes us partakers in the New Covenant. He is the one by whom we draw near unto God and find favour in the eyes of God.
 - ii. Our worship of God is not accepted because we keep the law but because we are in Christ, and it is on this basis that we worship God in spirit.
- B. The warning against legalism (Vs 4-8)
- 1. Paul explains that if anyone could boast in their own good works it was him.
 - a. While there were those among the Judaizers who didn't believe keeping the law was necessary for salvation, they instead taught that keeping some of the law was necessary for sanctification.
 - i. The idea would be presented something along the lines of, “It's great that you're saved by grace through faith, but

if you really want to take your spiritual life to the next level, then there are some Old Testament laws that you should really be keeping such as dietary laws and circumcision.”

- ii. They effectively taught that you had to keep certain portions of the law in order to reach that next level of spirituality and be a really good Christian. Paul dealt with the same problems when he wrote to the church in Galatia.
 - **Galatians 3:1-3** *“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”*
 - Having been saved by grace through faith in the power of the Holy Spirit are you now sanctified and made holy by your own self-effort or by your own good works?
- b. If anyone could boast in their keeping of the law, it was Paul. (Vs 4)
 - i. Paul was circumcised the 8th day, which was exactly what the law demanded. If there was anything to be gained from keeping the law in regard to circumcision, then Paul had grounds for such boasting.
 - ii. Paul was not a proselyte from the heathens who had been converted to Judaism, but rather, he could trace his lineage through the tribe of Benjamin back to their father, Jacob (Who became Israel). If anyone could take pride in their lineage, Paul could.
 - iii. When it came to keeping the law, Paul was had been a devout Pharisee. For the Pharisees, they were so strict in their keeping of the Law that they developed as body of traditions that they added to the law which acted as safeguards against breaking the law. (So, if the law demanded that they wash a bowl twice, they would wash it three times just to be sure.)
 - iv. Paul persecuted the church of Jesus Christ, prior to his conversion. This was seen as strong zeal for the law because the church proclaimed the gospel of grace which the Pharisees saw as undermining the Jewish Law.

- v. Finally, as far as the law was concerned, anyone examining Paul's life and comparing it with the law would not be able to find any accusation that they could bring against him.
- c. Despite all the religious standing he might have had in his own good works, Paul counted all of that as being worthless when compared with Christ.
 - i. Here he gives us his own "Profit and Loss Statement." On one side he lists the above-mentioned items, the things that had been **gain to** him. On the other side he writes the single word **Christ**. They all amount to nothing when compared with the treasure which he had found in Christ.⁴
 - ii. Paul clearly called out these false teachers by saying, "You think you having something to boast about in your keeping of the law? Compare yourself with me and all that I could boast in before coming to Christ. Do you really think you have more to boast in than me? And yet, I counted all of those things as being worthless when compared with all the blessings that are mine in Christ."

So, we have seen **Joy in Forsaking a Life of Works** (Vs 1-8)

Next week, we will look at **Joy in Embracing My Life in Christ** (Vs 8-11)

Conclusion:

1. Beware of false teachers and those who want to add good works to either your salvation or your sanctification. Good works do not create a sanctified life but flow out of a life that is sanctified by Spirit of Christ dwelling in us.
2. No matter how good you think you were before you were saved, all those good works are nothing when compared to what you have been made in Christ, and the righteousness that is ours through him.
 - i. **2 Corinthians 5:21** *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

⁴ William MacDonald, [*Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*](#), ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1972.