

Finding Joy

A study of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

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7- *Finding Joy* by Deliverance from False Righteousness..... *Philippians 3:1-11*

Php 3:1-11 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

We often make the false assumption that if we are not in prison that we are free. Many who have dealt with prisoners who have come to know Christ as their Savior assert that freedom can be found even while incarcerated. Spiritual freedom is found in Christ and not simply not its location. Speaking of freedom Jesus said in *Joh 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

One of the great prisons that men often find themselves in is the prison of legalism and self-righteousness. The apostle Paul fought against the group known as the Judaziers all his ministry. They wanted to add works of men to the gospel of grace. The other side of legalism is self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is sitting ourselves and our goodness above others who do not measure up to our standard of holiness.

I- Warning:

Php 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. Paul exhorts them to rejoice in God and in having a Savior.

...*To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.* The HCSB says, "*To write to you again about this is no trouble for me and is a protection to you.*" Paul perhaps had taught them the things he is getting ready to mention when he had been with them. He tells them that he hopes that repeating them is not offensive because it was beneficial for them.

Php 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. He warns them about three things. First were dogs. No, this was not some stray running through the countryside but he was talking about those who would bring them back into bondage of the law for salvation. Peter said *2Pe 2:22* in relation to someone who has known Christ and then wished to return to

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the law, *But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*

The second warning was evil workers. John Gill said this was, *“the same persons, who were deceitful workers, did the work of the Lord unfaithfully, walked in craftiness, and handled the word of God deceitfully, endeavoured to subvert the Gospel of Christ, and the faith of men in it...”*

The last group are called the “concision.” The HCSB says, those who mutilate the flesh. This as we see from the next verse was a reference to circumcision. Many were trusting in the rite of circumcision to make them right with God when in fact it did not. *Php 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

Now here is where the ax meets the tree. Those who are self-righteous are hold to confidence in the flesh. When a man is set free from this prison is when he can find joy in the freedom of Christ. I want to point out that we are talking about righteousness the rises to the level that men can be saved by. We all need to strive to do what is right and to be like Christ but we need to understand it is because we are saved not to get us saved.

II- Paul Credentials for Flesh Glorifying:

We see in the next few verses a resume that puts most men to shame. Paul was a man who worked at religion. He worked at doing what he could to be accepted by God.

Php 3: 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might

trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Not many men today can lay claim to such actions and work. However, if this righteousness is all we have it is still lacking. Paul understood that this was inadequate to be accepted by God.

III- Free From False Righteousness:

When we face a hard look in the mirror of our souls we must admit, if we are totally honest with ourselves that we fall short. Notice what Paul says about all those things he had done in the past.

Php 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Freedom from false righteousness if made possible by a new relationship with the one who gives us His righteousness. Our honor and success spiritually comes from our identity in Christ.

Allow me to relay a story to illustrate this for us.

In the town of Stepanavan, Armenia, I met a woman whom everyone called "Palasan's wife." She had her own name, of course, but townspeople called her by

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her husband's name to show her great honor. When the devastating 1988 earthquake struck Armenia, it was nearly noon, and Palasan was at work. He rushed to the elementary school where his son was a student.

The facade was already crumbling, but he entered the building and began pushing children outside to safety. After Palasan had managed to help twenty-eight children out, an aftershock hit that completely collapsed the school building and killed him.

So the people of Stepanavan honor his memory and his young widow by calling her Palasan's wife. Sometimes a person's greatest honor is not who they are but to whom they are related. The highest honor of any believer is to be called a disciple of Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for all people.

(L. Nishan Bakalian, Beirut, Lebanon. *Leadership*, Vol. 15, no. 2.)

As we get to know Christ more and more we realize that we are less righteous within ourselves and more righteous within Him. We need to be more identified with Him not only by the world but in our own heart.

IV- Paul's Request:

Have you ever been guilty of studying the Bible to know the Bible and not the Savior? I can certainly confess this.

Php 3:10 *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the*

fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

There are a lot of truths in these verses that we will leave unexplored. Paul wanted to know Christ and be found in Him with all his being. When we are free in Him we are set free to quit trying to be good and start being like Christ. Let me close this section with a thought by a professor named Robert Webber.

*Some time ago I was biking in Michigan and met another biker who, like myself, was a professor of theology. In the course of our conversation by the side of the road he said something I will never forget: "Bob, all I really want in life is for the Word fo God to take up residence inside of me and form me into Christ-likeness." I think this statement hit me hard because my seminary training in the Bible was never that personal. We were always asking "What does it say?" and seldom if ever made the step into a deep personal application of "How can that truth take up residence in me?" (Robert Webber in *The Covenant Companion* (Jan. 1990). *Christianity Today*, Vol. 34, no. 4.)*

Have you found Joy in being set free from self-righteousness and false righteousness in the flesh? Have you trusted Christ for salvation and placed you hope in Him and not self?