

PHILIPPIANS

LESSON NINE

JOY IN TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

(3:1-11)

3:1 **Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord**

- A. Note that “finally” does not mean “immediately!”
 1. The word translated “finally” means “as for the rest” or “remaining.”
 2. Paul often used it at the conclusion of his letters.
 3. However, it is also used as a means of emphasizing a point.
 4. Here, it draws the reader’s attention to the theme of this letter – rejoice in the Lord.
- B. The focus of this epistle is true joy found only in Jesus.
 1. The word “rejoice” is used 10 times in the book of Philippians.
 2. The word “joy” is found 6 times.
 3. As we have seen, Paul is teaching how one may have true joy no matter the circumstances of life by keeping proper priorities.
- C. Here, the emphasis is on their rejoicing *in the Lord*.
 1. To be in the Lord, one must know and obey the Truth.
 2. To be in the Lord, one must not trust in the flesh.
 3. To be in the Lord, one must be willing to sacrifice.
 4. To be in the Lord, one must have true righteousness.

To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe

- A. Paul was not afraid or ashamed to repeat himself in his teaching.
 1. It was important to remind them of true rejoicing and joy.
 2. It was necessary to remind them of the danger of false teachers.
 3. Repetition is essential to learning (cf. 2 Peter 1:12-15; 3:1).
- B. In fact, Paul said that it was not grievous – literally, “slothful, sluggish, irksome.”
- C. Instead, he realized that it was a matter of spiritual safety and security.
 1. Notice that the word “safe” is followed by the word “beware.”
 2. Warning someone of danger is a means of securing their safety.
 3. Often, repeated warnings are necessary.

3:2 **Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision**

- A. The word “beware” means “to discern, perceive, understand and take heed.”
- B. Paul used three words to describe the Judaizers who are under consideration in this passage.
 1. Dogs – *the lowest of creatures for they do not respect things holy*
 - a. This was often used as a derogatory term.
 - b. Here, it refers to the nature of those who reject truth for error.
 - c. They do not respect God’s authority.

- d. They bark at truth and bite those who correct them.
 - 2. Evil workers – *they expended much energy for their error*
 - a. Matthew 23:15 would apply to them as it did the Pharisees.
 - b. Mixing the Old Law with the New is grave error (Acts 15).
 - 3. The concision – *they were mutilators of the flesh, cut off from God*
 - a. This is a reference to the practice of circumcision as essential to salvation after the cross.
 - b. Now, what they practiced was just a mutilation of the flesh.
 - c. The act of circumcision could not save.
 - d. Christians are those who have received a spiritual circumcision – having their sins removed by the blood of Christ (cf. Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:11-12).
- C. He not only preached against error, but also was willing to emphasize how dangerous and destructive it was to the church.

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

- A. Paul makes a distinction between the physical circumcision of Judaism and the spiritual circumcision of Christianity.
 - 1. Physical circumcision was required under the Old Testament (Genesis 17:10-14).
 - 2. Yet, even under that Law it was to teach a spiritual lesson (cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:26).
- B. True circumcision is of the heart (Rom. 2:25-29; 4:11-12; Col. 2:11-12).
- C. Thus, the Christian is the true worshipper of God (cf. John 4:23-24; Malachi 1:11; cf. Acts 26:7).
 - 1. This idea would be a great offense to the Jews, who believed that only they were the true worshippers of God.
 - 2. After all, they possessed His covenant, His law and His temple.
 - 3. But, that is exactly Paul's point – they placed their trust in the wrong things.
- D. The Christian – whether Jew or Gentile – rejoices in Christ Jesus.
 - 1. Not in the trappings of Judaism
 - 2. Not in the carnality of idolatry
- E. In fact, the Christian has no confidence (trust, reliance, persuasion, conviction) in the flesh.
 - 1. The opposite was true of the Judaizers (cf. Galatians 6:13; 2 Corinthians 11:18ff).
 - 2. We must be careful to place our trust always in the Lord.

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

- A. If anyone had reason to trust in fleshly things, it was Paul.
- B. In fact, the idea of this passage is that if there were to be a competition over fleshly advantages, Paul would win easily.
- C. This should have been a powerful lesson to the Jews, for Paul truly possessed these things.
- D. Yet, he had chosen to trust in God above all else.

3:5-6 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; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless

- A. Paul was circumcised when he was 8 days old, just as the Old Testament demanded (Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3).
1. This showed that Paul was not an Ishmaelite, for they were circumcised at age 13.
 2. It showed that he was not a Gentile convert, for they were circumcised as adults when they became proselytes.
 3. Thus, if there were anything to be gained from circumcision, Paul had every reason to claim it and hold on to it. *{It also speaks to the faithfulness of his parents.}*
- B. Paul was of the stock of Israel, meaning he was direct descendant of Jacob.
1. Paul was descended from Rachael, a legitimate wife of Jacob, not from a handmaid.
 2. This also indicates that both his parents were Jews of pure blood – neither of them were proselytes.
 3. Thus, Paul was not a descendant of Gentiles, Moabites, Edomites, Ishmaelites or Samaritans.
- C. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, the beloved son of Jacob and Rachael.
1. Benjamin was the tribe of Saul, Israel's first King.
 2. Benjamin remained faithful to the line of David when the kingdom divided.
 3. Benjamin was the only one of Jacob's twelve sons born in the land of Canaan.
- D. Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews – meaning a Jew of Jewish parents.
1. This was not just a statement about bloodline.
 2. Many Jews had abandoned their language and customs for those of the Greeks – the Gentile world in which they lived.
 3. Yet, Paul's family – even though they lived in Tarsus (a Greek city) – remained Hebrews.
 4. They were not Hellenists, but Hebrew-speaking Jews.
 5. Someone wrote that Paul was "Hebrew by race, by religion, by education, and by custom."
- E. In relation to the Law of Moses, Paul was a Pharisee.
1. David Lipscomb wrote: "He observed the law with the minuteness of a Pharisee, the most scrupulous of all in the observance of every minutia of the law" (cf. Acts 22:3; 26:5).
 2. The things previously mentioned Paul had no control over.
 3. But, his religious practices were his choice and demonstrated his seriousness in keeping the Law.
 4. He was not liberal or mystical in his religion.
- F. As proof of his loyalty to Judaism, Paul persecuted the church.
1. Paul's acts against Christians proved his zeal (cf. Acts 8:3; 9:1ff; 22:3-4; 26:9-10; Galatians 1:13-14).
 2. However, it was an uninformed and erroneous zeal (Rom. 10:1-2).
- G. As proof of his faithfulness, Paul kept the legal ordinances and traditions blamelessly.

1. In other words, in outward obedience to the law by which one would seek to justify himself, Paul was diligently devoted.
 2. If there were a test given to rate one's "Jewishness," Paul would have passed with flying colors.
 3. In fact, he would have been at the head of the class.
 4. Paul's claim of blamelessness was not uncommon among the Pharisees (cf. Mark 10:20; Luke 18:11-12, 18ff; 10:29). *{Compare this with Luke 1:6 and Matthew 5:20; 23:25.}*
 5. Paul was blameless in the eyes of his fellow Jews; but, this does not mean that he was blameless in the eyes of God (cf. 3:12-13).
- H. Thus, Paul has demonstrated three ways he might have confidence in the flesh.
1. His pure Jewish blood
 2. His legal preciseness (and accompanying status)
 3. His zeal for the law

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

- A. The things described in the previous had been a source of gain for Paul (in pride, reputation, position, and [he thought] salvation).
- B. Yet, upon learning the truth of the Gospel, Paul counted all those things as one loss so that he might have Christ.
- C. Literally, Paul says, "I have counted loss" – meaning that he did and continues to consider the former things as a loss for Christ.
- D. This does not mean that Paul regretted losing certain things, but that he saw them for what they truly were – a loss, hindrances and obstacles to salvation.
 1. David Lipscomb wrote: "Instead of service to be recorded, and regarded worthy of honors, they were sins and crimes condemned, and sorrowed for through life. All gains out of Christ are losses for Christ."
 2. Paul was willing to sacrifice anything that would keep him from Jesus.

3:8 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

- A. In truth, Paul viewed anything that could separate him from Christ or that would hinder his Christian faithfulness as a loss.
 1. "Not only 'have I counted' those things just mentioned 'loss for Christ's sake, but, moreover, I even DO count ALL things but loss" (JFB).
 2. Paul would let nothing come between him and His Lord.
- B. He declared that the knowledge of Christ is so far greater than anything else that one should sacrifice anything to hold on to it.
 1. J. W. Shepherd wrote: "This sets forth the idea of a business transaction, exchanging what was worthless and even ruinous for what was a treasure of surpassing worth" (Matt. 13:44-46).
 2. This is more than just knowing about Jesus, but indicative of one's knowing Christ in salvation and fellowship.
- C. As Paul's Jewish life had demonstrated his zeal for God, so his Christian life proved his devotion to truth – for he suffered the loss of all things.

1. Robert Taylor wrote: "By his ardent acceptance of Christianity he lost the power and prestige of a high place in Judaism. He lost the fellowship and friendship of all Judaistic colleagues. Friends forsook him. They considered him a traitor.... In all probability his family would have considered him a renegade.... He left pay for poverty, security for suffering, popularity for persecution, applause for adversity, and worldly acclaim for apostolic ostracism."
 2. "Yet he counted any and all loss as nothing in comparison of ... the winning of Christ in life and eternal redemption with him in eternity."
- D. Paul also demonstrated a proper perspective on the things he lost versus the things he gained in Christ.
1. He understood the great value of being in Christ.
 2. Yet, he also understood the lack of spiritual value in his former pursuits.
 3. Paul uses the word *skubalon* to describe their lack of worth.
 4. The Greek word *kuon* means "dog" and the word *ballo* means "to throw."
 5. When joined with *eis* (meaning, "into" or "unto"), this word refers to that which is "thrown to the dogs."
 6. Thus, it can refer to scraps, refuse or garbage.
 7. However, this word also had a stronger meaning if related to the Greek *skor* – dung or manure.
 8. This is similar to Peter's description of sin (2 Peter 2:20-22).
- E. It is important to view anything that would separate us from Christ as filth that is to be avoided.
- F. Paul's motivation was to win (gain) Christ – no matter what was lost in the process.

3:9 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

- A. Upon gaining Christ, Paul could then be found in Him – saved from sin, reconciled to God, hoping for Heaven.
- B. But, the key was to understand true righteousness.
 1. Self-righteousness could not (and cannot) save.
 2. Righteousness that is wholly dependent upon self and ignores or rejects God condemns.
 3. Furthermore, the Old Law had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14) and was no longer a means of being made righteous.
- C. True righteousness is found only in Christ – specifically through the Gospel.
 1. Both times the word "faith" is used in this verse it is preceded by the article in the Greek – thus, it is "the faith."
 2. "The faith" is a reference to the Gospel (cf. Acts 6:7; 13:7-8; Eph. 4:13; Jude 1:3; Rev. 14:12; 1 Tim. 1:2 and 1 Cor. 4:14-17).
 3. Thus, righteousness by faith includes (and demands) obedience.
- D. This righteousness is of God (the source), of Christ (the sacrifice) and by faith (obedience to the truth).

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**

- A. Paul had gained Christ, was found in Christ and now he knows Christ.
- B. The only way to know Christ is to submit to Him in faithful obedience to His Gospel.
- C. Note the four things that Paul desired.
 - 1. To know Jesus
 - 2. To know the power of his resurrection
 - 3. To know the fellowship of his sufferings
 - 4. To know a death like his
- D. He no longer desired the things of Judaism or self-righteousness.
 - 1. Nor did he focus on the things of this world.
 - 2. The mature Christian will desire these same things.
 - 3. Those with these desires will know true joy in Christ.
- E. It is important to know the power of Jesus' resurrection.
 - 1. Its power as a historical fact
 - 2. Its power in Gospel obedience (cf. Rom. 6:3-11; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:12; 3:1)
 - 3. Its power in hope (Rom. 8:11; 1 Thes. 4:14-15; 1 Cor. 15)
- F. It is important to know the fellowship of Jesus' sufferings.
 - 1. If we are going to be in fellowship with Him in the good things, we must also accept the difficult.
 - 2. When we face sufferings, we must view, approach and endure them as Jesus did.
- G. Finally, Paul hoped to die like Jesus did.
 - 1. This does not mean that he desired a crucifixion.
 - 2. Instead, he was willing to give his life for the greater cause – submission to the will of God.
 - 3. He wanted to die in faithfulness to God.

3:11 **If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead**

- A. By such a life, Paul sought to attain the resurrection of the dead.
 - 1. The word "attain" means, "to come to" or "to arrive at."
 - 2. In other words, Paul was following a path that led to a specific destination – resurrection and eternal life.
 - 3. If he followed the map and stayed on course, he would reach the goal.
- B. J. W. Shepherd wrote: "This is the consummation of the whole process of redemption outlined in verses 9 and 10."
- C. Thus, there is true joy to found in true righteousness – and a hope of eternal life in Heaven.