

Paul had just told the Philippians that even if he was poured out like a drink offering, he wanted them to be glad and rejoice with him. He knew where he was going when his time on earth was done. He knew a reward for his service was waiting for him. But most of all, he knew he was going to be with Jesus forever. Yet, his conviction was that the Lord was going to give him more time to strengthen the church. In the meantime, he was sending Timothy and Epaphroditos to encourage the Philippians' faith.

We see in this chapter that one reason behind sending Timothy is that some of the Jewish Christians were trying to get the Gentiles to obey the ritual laws of Moses. This sect was referred to as the Judaizers. These people came from a life and culture that depended on keeping rules to feel they were in good standing with God. It was so engrained in their way of thinking that even when they accepted Jesus as their Messiah, they could not break free from thinking that their rule keeping was somehow making them acceptable to God. So of course, they thought Gentiles that trusted Jesus needed to keep the rules too. (Acts 15:1)

Paul had the revelation that it was never about works, but about faith in Jesus that saves us. (Ephesians 2:8-9) The Law was there to show us our need for a savior, to show that it is God's work to save our souls, as their Scriptures express it, "the God of our salvation" (Psalm 18:6; 25:5; Micah 7:7), and "I am the LORD who sanctifies you". (Leviticus 20:8; 21:8,15; 22:32)

Chapter three begins with another of Paul's imperative commands. *1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.* Rejoice in the Lord. We have one great reason to be the most joyful people on earth. We are *in* the Lord! He has accepted us as his own. We are clothed in Christ. He is our life. (Colossians 3:4) We are made right with God, and what God began He will bring to completion. (1:6) Rejoice! It's not just to make an effort to smile and be happy. It is realizing all that we have in Jesus.

Sometimes we need to stop and take account of what has been done for us and all that we have in Christ. If after doing that you are not rejoicing, there is something seriously wrong that needs to be addressed. Your debt has been paid by the only One that could afford to do it. His payment for your sin debt shows you how much your Creator loves you. He has great plans for you. He will glorify Himself through you and then reward you for yielding to His work in you. He is working in you to will and do His good pleasure. (2:13) Eternity with Him is more awesome than your best earthly experience multiplied a thousand times over. (1Corinthians 2:9) Rejoice!

Commented [Paul1]: Acts 15:1 (ESV)
¹ But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. E

Commented [Paul2]: Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)
⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Commented [Paul3]: Psalm 18:6 (ESV)
⁶ In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

Commented [Paul4]: Psalm 25:5 (ESV)
⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

Commented [Paul5]: Micah 7:7 (ESV)
⁷ But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.

Commented [Paul6]: Leviticus 20:8 (ESV)
⁸ Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

Commented [Paul7]: Leviticus 21:8 (ESV)
⁸ You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I, the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy.

Commented [Paul8]: Leviticus 21:15 (ESV)
¹⁵ that he may not profane his offspring among his people, for I am the LORD who sanctifies him. E

Commented [Paul9]: Leviticus 22:32 (ESV)
³² And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you,

Commented [Paul10]: Colossians 3:4 (NIV)
⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Commented [Paul11]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)
⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Commented [Paul12]: Philippians 2:13 (ESV)
¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Commented [Paul13]: 1 Corinthians 2:9 (ESV)
⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"

Paul is repeating himself in telling them to rejoice, and he'll say it again before he closes the letter. (4:4) He may be referring to repeating points from a previous letter. (possibly Ephesians or some lost letter) We need to hear the truth and these God glorifying instructions again and again. The world bombards us with its way of thinking. We need to encourage one another with godly thinking and reminders of spiritual realities. (Hebrews 10:25) We need to encourage one another with Scriptural instruction. Amen?

Commented [Paul14]: Philippians 4:4 (ESV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Commented [Paul15]: Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)

²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Now Paul begins the warning. ² *Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.* He is speaking of the Judaizers that would try to teach the Philippians that to please God you must keep the Laws of the Old Covenant. That covenant came through Moses to the nation of Israel. (Acts 7:38) There were moral laws, community or civil laws, and ritual worship laws. What the Judaizers did not grasp was that the New Covenant was written on the heart. (Jeremiah 31:31-33) It was not about keeping the letter of the law but of the Spirit of the Law filling the heart. Now that the Spirit of God had come upon every believer because of the work of Christ, instead of obeying written rules to please God, the believer goes directly to the Lord and takes their instruction from Him. (2Corinthians 3:6) Instead of an outward religion, it had become an inward relationship which was always the intent. Many Old Covenant believers realized they could not keep the rules. They then discovered that their faith in God's willingness to accept their repentance along with their faith in the goodness of God was the only way for them to be justified. Without realizing it, they were looking forward to the cross.

Commented [Paul16]: Acts 7:38 (NIV)

³⁸ He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us.

Commented [Paul17]: Jeremiah 31:31-33 (ESV)

³¹ "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Commented [Paul18]: 2 Corinthians 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The Judaizers still looked to rules of religion instead of the wonder and joy of a relationship with the living God. Paul uses language here that indicates that they never had such a relationship.

Each of these descriptions started with the Greek letter kappa so that they could be remembered. The term "dogs" was a way of saying a self-centered, evil person. (Psalm 22:16; Isaiah 56:10; Revelation 22:15) Dogs ate dead animals which was an unclean thing to the Jews. So while the Judaizers prided themselves in eating kosher, Paul is saying they've eaten of false doctrine, such as salvation by works.

Commented [Paul19]: Psalm 22:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet.

Commented [Paul20]: Isaiah 56:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber.

Commented [Paul21]: Revelation 22:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

"Evildoer" was a term to describe those who refused to try to keep the law. Once again Paul is making the point that what they boast in is actually contrary to the Law. By demanding others keep the letter they have missed the Spirit.

"Mutilate the flesh" was a pun in Greek. These people were insisting that Gentile Christian men needed to be circumcised. The word for circumcise and mutilate sounds

very similar in Greek. The pun is saying: "If you have nothing to show but circumcision of the flesh, you are not really circumcised; you are only mutilated. Real circumcision is devotion of heart, mind, and life to God." (Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT)) The Old Covenant declared as much when it spoke of the circumcision of the heart. (Deuteronomy 30:6) It is very similar to the concept of baptism. Circumcision of the flesh was a sign that your heart was made sensitive to God. Baptism is an outward sign of an inward act of death, burial and resurrection to newness of life.

Commented [Paul22]: Deuteronomy 30:6 (ESV)

⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh – Note the three signs of circumcision of the heart, that is, the new life in Christ. First, we **worship by the Spirit** of God. Remember when Jesus told the woman at the well that the day was coming when true worshipers would worship not in a special designated location, but in Spirit and truth. (John 4:24) That day came at Pentecost. If you have been born again you worship by the Spirit of God. You don't just sing a song or pray a prayer. The Spirit of God stirs you to worship with your whole heart. He leads you in worship, as you commune with Him heart to heart.

Commented [Paul23]: John 4:24 (ESV)

²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

The second sign is **glorifying in Christ Jesus**. The truly born-again soul gives Jesus the credit for every good work and testimony. We know it is all by His grace and power. We know that without Him we can do nothing! (John 15:5) Our constant pointing to Jesus irritates some, but we can't do otherwise.

Commented [Paul24]: John 15:5 (ESV)

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

The third sign is related to the second. If we glorify Christ alone, **we put no confidence in the flesh**, but like Jesus, we humble ourselves and become obedient. (2:8) We know our best thinking, our natural talent, and our greatest efforts are nothing unless they are empowered by the Spirit at His leading. We want to join God in what He is doing, not come up with a good idea with no eternal effect. So Paul is implying that the Judaizers really aren't born again and have nothing to assist us in our walk of faith.

Commented [Paul25]: Philippians 2:8 (ESV)

⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Now Paul goes on to say that he knows what he's writing about from personal experience. He was once the Judaizer of Judaizers. *⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:* Paul is being obviously sarcastic here. He puts no confidence in his flesh. But since these people do, Paul suggests they line up their best efforts with his. He had surpassed them all and yet found it was unhelpful, but even more than that, it was a hindrance!

He was *⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;* He is a descendant of Abraham and was circumcised exactly according to the Law. (Leviticus 12:3) He can trace his Jewish lineage to one of the few tribes that remained faithful to God when the

Commented [Paul26]: Leviticus 12:3 (ESV)

³ And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

nation split. (1Kings 12:21) Hebrew of Hebrews probably implies that he retained the Hebrew language and was able to study the Scriptures in their original language. (Acts 21:40) He was a Pharisee. That means he was one of only a few thousand in all of Israel that kept the minutia of the written and oral law. They were the separated ones, highly respected by their people for dedicating themselves totally to God. Very few of the Judaizers could claim such obedience to the Law.

⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

The Jewish leadership considered Christianity a perversion of the true faith. Just like some of the men in the Old Testament who in their zeal slew those who turned from the faith (Numbers 25:11-13; Psalm 69:9), Paul saw himself as a guardian of true Judaism. He led "witch hunts", bringing Christians to trial and even putting them to death. (Acts 26:10) He could say that under the rules of the law he was blameless. No one could find fault in Paul's rule keeping or performance of what the Law required. (Note that Paul did not say he was sinless, but rather that he saw himself as a sinner that was keeping the rules of the Law.) There was probably not a single Judaizer who could make all of these claims.

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Paul was a super religious person. It was hard to top his religious activity. But he declared it to be a detriment. Instead of a credit with God, it was putting him in greater deficit. Why? Because the more he did the more self-righteous and self-confident he became. The more he accomplished the more he thought he deserved God's favor. While at the time he thought he was pleasing God, he was actually sinning against God by his pride and self-reliance. All that religious zeal and dogmatic obedience to what he was taught ended with him killing God's true children! He put to death those who were living in a loving relationship with God. He was doing what God calls sticking his finger in God's eye. (Zechariah 2:8)

The temptation of the world is the one great hindrance we see to spiritual life, but I think Paul would put on par with that, the temptation of religiosity. When we ignore a personal relationship with God and get wrapped up in the ritual, rules, and performance, and programs, we can be just as sinful or more so than the most worldly person on earth. We stop worshiping by the Spirit. We stop glorying in Christ and we begin putting confidence in the flesh. That is the opposite of a true believer. So Paul says all that he worked for all his life he now sees as a detriment. He forsook it all for the sake of Christ. (Luke 14:33) He went from being the most likely to succeed in the eyes of his respected peers, to being the most despised traitor. Paul's conversion and life afterward are a great testimony to the love and grace of God and to the truth and power of the gospel that leads to a personal relationship with Jesus.

Commented [Paul27]: 1 Kings 12:21 (ESV)

²¹ When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

Commented [Paul28]: Acts 21:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying:

Commented [Paul29]: Numbers 25:11-13 (ESV)

¹¹ "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy. ¹² Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace, ¹³ and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel.

Commented [Paul30]: Psalm 69:9 (ESV)

⁹ For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

Commented [Paul31]: Acts 26:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

Commented [Paul32]: Zechariah 2:8 (ESV)

⁸ For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye:

Commented [Paul33]: Luke 14:33 (ESV)

³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

⁸ *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.* Verses 8 through 10 are some of the more powerful verses of this letter that we should commit to memory. Jesus said that if we want to be his disciples we must forsake everything. (Luke 14:33) Paul was a true disciple. Nothing held sway in his heart other than his desire to know Jesus. He gave up all his life of learning and obedience to religion and everything else he valued. Compared to Jesus, he counted it as waste. The word means that which is thrown to the dogs as no longer good for human use. Medically speaking, it means excrement.

I'm telling you, this guy Paul is a radical! Nothing else matters to him. Jesus is all he can think about. Jesus is all he cares about. He doesn't even care if he dies or not (Acts 20:24), as long as he is serving Him. He loves Jesus and just wants to know Him more. It sounds to me like he is madly in love, and I mean mad as in crazy! And how I want to be like him! (2Timothy 1:13)

⁹ *and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith* -- All Paul wants is to be found in Christ. His hope is that when people see him they see Jesus. He doesn't want them to see the perfect rule keeper, or Mr. Religiosity, but a person whose hope and faith are completely dependent on Jesus. If he is in Christ then he is credited with the righteousness of Christ. Clothed in Jesus, God sees Paul with the very righteousness of Christ. How is that even possible? It's by faith, pure and simple. Cast yourself on the Lord and trust in Him just like Abraham (Romans 4:22-25), like King David (Psalm 32:1-2), like Paul the Apostle.

Paul's point is not just for a church in Southern Europe 2000 years ago. People today will tell you some variation of this as well: Jesus plus something. Some will teach Jesus plus this program or that action if you really want to be spiritual. Religiosity is tempting because it's easier to do than to be. It's easier to bow to Mecca 5 times a day and give alms than it is to have a relationship with the living God who will tell you to do something you don't naturally desire or not do something you do desire. It's even easier to go to church on Sunday, Bible study during the week, 15 minutes of devotion every morning and prayer every night than to let Jesus be your all in all, the Lord of your life.

Don't you want to be found in Him? Do you want to know Him, to gain Him? I want to have the mindset of Paul. I want to consider everything that would lure me away from Jesus as leftovers for the dogs. *Then* we can live rejoicing every day because we can say without hesitation, *"I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine."* (Song of Songs 6:3)

Commented [Paul34]: Luke 14:33 (NIV)

³³ In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

Commented [Paul35]: Acts 20:24 (ESV)

²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Commented [Paul36]: 2 Timothy 1:13 (ESV)

¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Commented [Paul37]: Romans 4:22-25 (ESV)

²² That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."²³ But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone,

²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Commented [Paul38]: Psalm 32:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Commented [Paul39]: Song of Songs 6:3 (ESV)

³ I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies.

Questions

- 1 Has the way of salvation ever changed?
- 2 Why should we obey his command to rejoice?
- 3 Why do we need reminders of Scriptural instruction?
- 4 What was the pun Paul used about Judaizers?
- 5 What are the three signs of true circumcision?
- 6 Why did Paul bring up his religious standing?
- 7 How does Paul see his past now?
- 8 What did Paul give up?
- 9 What does the word "rubbish" mean?
- 10 Why did Paul count all loss?