

Digging Deeper, Philippians 3:1-11

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Who You Know

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Intro: Philippians is written to a church much beloved by the Apostle Paul. He takes great care in encouraging their faith as well as warning them about dangers to their faith. These warnings are not only applicable to the church at Philippi but to all of the young believers the apostles are seeing come to a belief in Christ the Messiah.

This warning is also beneficial to modern readers as well. As there were attacks on believers and their beliefs of the early church, there are attacks on the church today. The church today is confronted with assaults on its beliefs, its cultural and moral standards, its legitimacy of a singular faith (i.e. Christ is the only way of salvation), its missionary spirit (reaching the world with the gospel) and a host of other accusations from every ideological corner of the world. This should not surprise us as Christ warned us of this, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:18, 19 ESV)

With that in mind read Philippians 3:1-11 each day as you look deeper into this passage.

Day One: Rejoicing is anticipated in the believer's life (Philippians 3:1)

Read Philippians 3:1-11 as you begin your study today. Recognize that the more you read God's Word you will understand more fully the good news of the Gospel.

"Finally," Paul uses this word to transition his thoughts. He has described to us the person, position and work of Christ as an example to the believer for their own life. Now he wants to give the believers reasons for rejoicing. Paul has often already spoken of joy and rejoicing but this is the first time he is exhorting the believers to be joyful!

While he is going to warn them about some threats to their faith in Christ, he is intent on first pointing to the beneficial attitude of joy in the life of a believer. Let's be honest, there are a multitude of things that will attempt to take away our joy. It was true for the Philippians as well. Paul is redirecting their focus. Notice he says, "Rejoice in the Lord." When we refocus on Christ, refocus on what he has done in our lives, joy can bubble up in our lives.

"Joy is not an accident of temperament or an unpredictable providence; joy is a matter of choice." J. I. Packer

Let's look into our lives for a moment. What is the source of your joy? Undoubtedly this is a message Paul has shared before with the Philippians. It was no trouble (the word can be translated many ways – bothersome, irksome, grievous or even a burden) to him and as a result safe for the believers. Rejoice in the Lord!

“Rejoicing is an activity we *choose* to do; it is not an emotion. If we choose to rejoice, it means we are choosing *not* to do something else.” Runge, S. E. (2011). *High Definition Commentary: Philippians* (Philippians 3:1–4a). Lexham Press.

As you pray today name the ways God has blessed you and spend time rejoicing in his goodness to you.

Day Two: Specific warnings for believers. It’s an issue of freedom. (Philippians 3:2)

Read our passage again today, Philippians 3:1-11.

Paul is giving a very serious warning to these believers, beware. Who is he warning against? There were a group of people that seemed to follow Paul around and insist that these early believers (remember they are predominantly Gentiles) must adhere not only to Christ but to Jewish law as well. They are called Judaizers. Acts 15:1 tells us of these people. To them salvation was not in Christ alone, but in following the law of Moses. Remember the sign of the Mosaic Covenant was circumcision.

The insistence on circumcision and following the law of Moses would be the undoing of the church if allowed to continue unchallenged. Read Acts 15 and see how the apostles resolved this crucial issue. This important chapter in Acts reveals the thinking of the Apostles at the first council for this infant church.

As you read the chapter how did the Apostles resolve the challenge of the Judaizers? Acts 15:28-29 present what seemed good to them and to the Holy Spirit to not lay the burden of the law on these believers. The Apostles recognized God had approved of them. “Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. (Acts 15:14 and 17) God is calling them his own. No circumcision, but trust in the saving grace of Jesus. Faith alone. It would become the call of the church – Faith Alone!

Paul recounts the demands of Judaizers with Titus to the Jerusalem leaders. Read Galatians 2:1-5. Paul would not budge from the truth of the gospel – freedom in Jesus not slavery to the law. Titus was his proof the Spirit of God was not conditioned by circumcision.

“It is not prayer, it is not faith, it is not our doings, it is not our feelings upon which we must rest, but upon Christ and ON CHRIST ALONE!” Charles Spurgeon

As you have read Acts 15 and Galatians 2 do you sense the importance Paul placed on the freedom that comes from trusting in Jesus alone for salvation? In your life, what do you trust in for your salvation? Why not give thanks to God for the provision of his Son that you might be saved?

Day Three: True believers understand true worship (Philippians 3:3-6)

Read Philippians 3:3-6 today.

Paul starts by saying something that seems to fly in the face of his warnings. He says of himself, “we are the circumcision,” Has he just undermined his warnings? No. He quickly refocuses on the person of Christ – we “worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no

confidence in the flesh.” Paul will shortly point out the fallacies of the law for salvation, but here he reminds us we worship Christ. Notice he says we worship by the Spirit of God. Do you remember Jesus’ words as recorded by John? “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23, 24)

Paul’s viewpoint is expressed clearly in Romans – “No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God.” (Romans 2:29) While physical circumcision was a sign of the covenant between God and Moses (and hence the people of Israel) and Paul makes it clear we are saved not by maintaining a set of rules or an outward act, but something that takes place within the heart. This is not a new concept, Moses expresses it in Deuteronomy, “Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. ¹⁷ For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality” (Deuteronomy 10:16) Further he says, “The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.” (30:6)

Paul affirms the supremacy of worshipping Christ, “we glory in Christ and put no confidence in the flesh.” (Philippians 3:3) There is no relying on his own qualifications to be right with God, it is only Christ!

“The single most important thing to understand about worship is that the only worship that is acceptable to God is worship that proceeds from a heart that is trusting in God, and in God alone.” R. C. Sproul in *A Taste of Heaven*

Do you remind yourself that it is Christ who has paid the price for your salvation? Are we willing to rely on Christ alone for your salvation? As you pray today thank the Father for the great love he has for you. Remember He gave his only Son that we might have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Day Four: An honest appraisal of righteousness (Philippians 3:4-9)

Today read Philippians 3:4-9.

Paul takes the time to show us of his pedigree (history or background) which he reminds us is of no avail “whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ” (Philippians 3:7) Paul’s Jewish heritage was a lot to brag about and in some circles made him notable. But he shows us his honest appraisal of self-righteousness. His earnest allegiance to his Jewish ideology all the way to the persecution of believers proved to be insufficient (worthless, liabilities, rubbish is words other translations use) compared to “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”

Here is how The Message conveys it: “The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I’m tearing up and throwing out with the trash—along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ. (Philippians 3:7) Paul came to realize only a faith in Christ rather than a righteousness of his own! When he encountered Christ on the road to Damascus a renewal began in his heart that would burn the rest of his life. As a Pharisee, which he admits he was, resurrection was anticipated. It is no wonder that when he met Christ on that road resurrection was sealed in his heart and mind. He knew it was not only theoretical for he had met the risen Christ. Read Acts 22:3-10 to remind yourself of how specific Paul was about this experience. His life was changed from that moment on. He went from persecuting the church to ultimately building the church!

“Christianity is in its very essence a resurrection religion. The concept of the resurrection lies at its heart. If you remove it, Christianity is destroyed.” John Stott That resurrection could only come about with faith – a faith in Christ.

Does the resurrection drive your faith?

Day Five: The Promise for the believer is cause for rejoicing (Philippians 3:10-11)

Read Philippians 3:10-11.

Did you notice the word *resurrection* is used twice within this passage? Paul knew this was a promise for the believer and he plainly says, “by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:11 ESV)

It is no wonder Paul would write such a positive and joyful letter to this church. Resurrection was not only in his future, but it was in their future as well. Paul said he wanted to know Christ, to share in his sufferings that he might experience the “power of his resurrection!”

Please notice Paul does not merely speak of the promise of Christ (resurrection), but he also reminds us we may share in his sufferings. We don’t like to think of suffering, however suffering often accompanies the promise.

“God has been inaugurated, evil and suffering are on the one hand said to be defeated in principle, and yet on the other are palpably present and in some ways can be expected to increase.” (*How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil* by D. A. Carson) Paul understood and anticipated suffering would accompany his identification with Christ.

All too often modern believers expect everything to be smooth and pleasant in their walk with Christ. It is wise to be like Paul and expect to share in his sufferings. “But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” (1 Peter 4:13 ESV)

As you pray today rejoice in his promise of resurrection and also ask God to enable you to go through suffering giving God the glory he is due.

