

## **The Joy Of Knowing Jesus** **Philippians 3:1-11**

Intro: You discover as you read Philippians that it is a notably personal work. Paul uses the word "I" more in this book than any other of his epistles. It is, of course, natural to do that in personal correspondence with others; but here it points to Paul's methodology in this book. Paul is teaching the Philippians to discover joy by appealing to his own personal experience!

For Paul the truly joyous life is found knowing Jesus Christ! Thus, Paul begins chapter 3 with the words, "Rejoice in the Lord!" And he knows that there is can be no lasting joy elsewhere; so he urges in summary, "Stand firm in the Lord! (4:1)" Sandwiched between those two exhortations is a wealth of information that will help us to experience the joy of being a Christian. Let's read together the first half of this encouraging section as we consider "the joy of knowing Jesus".

Paul wanted the Philippians to know the joy that comes through Jesus. But he felt it important to first issue to them a word of warning.

### **JUDAIZERS—The threat of legalism**

*It is logical for Paul to begin with a warning. If we are rejoice in the Lord we must escape those who would lead us away from Jesus Christ. In Paul's day they were the Judaizers, who professed faith in Christ, but insisted that all disciples must also obey the Law of Moses as a means of salvation. v. 1-3*

Paul holds back no punches in describing them. They who called the Gentiles "dogs" are the true "dogs" as they, like a scurrilous pack of animals, nipped at Paul's heels wherever he went and barked their false doctrine to new Christian they could. Because they stressed "works of the Law" as a means of salvation rather than faith in Christ, Paul calls them "evil workers". And because they stressed the need for Gentiles to keep the Jewish custom of circumcision, but had missed the point of what it was all about, Paul calls them "the mutilators"!

(In contrast Paul describes Christians as the true circumcision--that is, those who by faith in Christ have in baptism experienced a spiritual circumcision of the heart. They worship or serve God by the instruction of the Spirit, and they glory in Christ Jesus rather than rely upon human relationships and human effort.)

### **PAUL—a case study in Jewish legalism**

*No one was better qualified to expose the fallacies of the Judaizers than Paul. He could have used our modern expression, "been there...done that!"*

In v. 4-6 Paul looks back to the past. Among the Jews he had prestige, influence, approval. He was the Jew of Jews and Pharisee of Pharisees. So no one can say Paul does not understand the viewpoint of the Judaizers. No one could know it better. He had obeyed

religious rituals, possessed a religious heritage, enjoyed religious culture, identified with religious organizations, expended religious energy, and followed religious rules!

And yet he was lost. One can be religious and lost! And one can be religious not have the joy of a Christian.

*All that changed for Paul when he met Jesus Christ. V. 6-7. Everything before was loss. Everything of the past was garbage (what was thrown to the dogs or perhaps literally dung). So Paul in effect says, "Don't talk to me about legalism. I wrote the book on it; and I found out personally that it is rubbish!" Paul looks comparatively speaking with utter contempt upon his life without Christ. However, from his experience in knowing Jesus Paul had also learned the answer to legalism and the source of true joy—Jesus Christ!*

### CHRIST--the answer to legalism and the source of true joy

v. 8-10

#### *What Paul gained in Christ*

Not an external superficial righteousness based on keeping the Law but a true righteousness that God gives on the basis of faith in Christ,  
v. 9.

**Before Paul knew well the rules of Judaism but he did not know the God of Judaism. Now Paul had a personal relationship of faith with the Savior as a member of his body, the church. He had the forgiveness of all past sins. He did not have to pretend he was righteous by the keeping of rabbinical rules; he knew he was righteous because God had forgiven him of his sins through Jesus' death on the cross.**

A new power to put away sin! v. 10

**Paul speaks at length in his epistles of a power available to the Christian to grow, to become better. It is a power that is measured according to the demonstration God gave of it in Christ when he raised him from the dead (Eph. 1). It is a power that enables us to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3). It is what enabled Paul to say in trying times "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).**

A fellowship with Christ based on sharing his sufferings for living right!

**As Paul grew in righteousness, so he also increased in persecution. The more he loved the Lord, the more the devil opposed him and persecuted him by the Jews. But Paul considered this a great joy. For every pain he felt, for every moment of anguish in his soul, he could know a little better what Christ had done for him on the cross.**

A real hope of immortality through Christ!

**Conforming to the Lord's death. Crucifying selfishness and pride, Paul gave himself completely to the Lord. And as he did, the hope of eternal life with God loomed larger in his mind. At some unknown future time, he would die. But Christ would raise his body from the grave to immortality, ever in the presence of the Christ he loved so much.**

**US—What we can learn from Paul's experience?**

***Religion apart from Christ cannot bring joy.***

We may, like Paul, practice religious rituals, possess a religious heritage, grow up in religious culture, identify with religious organizations, expend religious energy, and follow religious rules and be spiritually bankrupt, joyless, and LOST!

Legalism destroys the joy of being a Christian. When we think that our salvation rests upon our perfect performance of all God's laws, it is disastrous either way. Either we construct a self-justifying creedal concept of righteousness that we live up to (and that others don't) and congratulate ourselves that we're the only ones right. Or, we realize that we are beset with weaknesses and sins and live in constant anxiety about our failures; and our joy in serving God is destroyed.

***The Christian has joy not because of his confidence in his ability to obey God perfectly but Christ's atonement that makes forgiveness and righteousness possible.***

When we learn about grace and embrace it as the grounds of our standing with God, then there can be true joy in Jesus. His shed blood is always available to those who in true faith seek his forgiveness. If you are a Christian, you have something to rejoice in--the righteousness of faith. You have a power available to you that will make you a better person.. You know more than anyone what Christ did for you, and how much he loves you to have endured what he did! And you have hope that though the struggle against sin will continue to death, there is hope of perfection in the resurrection.

***We must not allow anything earthly to allure us from believing in and following Jesus Christ.***

Anything religious or secular that supplants Christ in our hearts will also supplant the power to rejoice in our lives.

**Conclusion: Things, fame, wealth, and even religion, will not bring true joy to our lives. Only real faith in Jesus Christ can bring real joy to our lives.**