

## Focused on the Faith

Philippians 3: 1-6

As we begin to discuss the third chapter of Philippians, it appears that Paul is seeking to begin concluding his thoughts to the church. While this may have been the beginning of his conclusion, he has quite a bit more to share with them. Following the challenging discussion concerning our obedience to Christ, Paul follows up on that line of thought. He begins to discuss some of the dangers believers face as they strive to walk in submission to the Lord. He wanted them to develop the right approach in their daily walk with the Lord while avoiding the pitfalls that were prevalent along the Christian journey. Like Timothy and Epaphroditus, Paul too left a great example for us to follow.

The goal of every believer should be maturity in the faith. We must constantly strive to grow in the Lord, being conformed to His image daily. Our growth in the Lord will prove beneficial as we face temptation, but it will not remove our temptation. The temptations we face are likely different than what we dealt with as young believers, but they remain nonetheless. We will face temptation and deal with adversity as long as we live in this body of flesh. We can overcome and remain victorious in Christ, but we must remain focused on Him in order to overcome.

Let's take a few moments to consider the [instructions](#) of Paul as we think on: [Focused on the Faith](#).

**I. A Word of Comfort (1)** – As Paul begins to move toward a conclusion, he offers a word of comfort to the church. He mentioned:

**A. Their Rejoicing (1a)** – [Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord](#). There are many approaches Paul could have taken to begin concluding this letter, and I find it interesting that he encouraged the church to rejoice in the Lord. Bear in mind his current physical condition. He was aware of the struggles they faced as well, but he desired them to rejoice in the Lord. Clearly this was inspired of the Spirit, and it has great significance for us as well. Paul knew the Lord had blessed them greatly, even in the face of opposition. Regardless of the adversity they faced, there was reason to rejoice. Paul knew it would be difficult to lose hope while rejoicing in the Lord. A thankful and rejoicing heart would motivate endurance and continued service.

- While our world is rapidly changing, and we are dealing with struggles that previously didn't exist, we too have reason to rejoice. Regardless of what we are dealing with at the present moment, we have much more than we deserve in Christ. If He never offered another blessing, we would have to admit that we have been blessed. Such blessing ought to promote rejoicing. It is

hard to complain when our mouths are full of praise. An attitude of rejoicing will help us maintain our focus on the Lord and aid us in our pursuit of Him!

**B. Their Reminder** (1b) – *To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.* Paul had shared these truths previously on numerous occasions, and yet he felt compelled to share them again. He knew that repetition was not unnecessary; in fact, he felt it was imperative. He was committed to sharing the truths of the Gospel and the Christian faith over and over again. It was not grievous for Paul. He did not mind sharing the wondrous truths again and again. This would prove beneficial for the church. As they were continually reminded, these truths would settle deep with their hearts.

- I once heard of a preacher who felt within four to five years, he would preach all of the Bible he could to a particular congregation. I find that hard to believe; but if it were true, there would be nothing wrong in an encouraging reminder of passages studied before. We can never hear too much of the great truths of God's Word. We need it engrained in our hearts and minds!

**II. A Word of Caution** (2-3) – As the church sought to serve the Lord, being used of Him, they had to remain aware of some present dangers. Consider:

**A. The Danger** (2) – *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.* Paul offers a stern warning to the church. This was literally a warning against false teachers, and the various approaches employed by them. They were to beware of dogs. Now, Paul isn't speaking of a literal dog here. This was a term commonly used to speak of those who behaved like wild dogs, seeking to attack and devour anyone possible. Paul reveals his disdain for false teachers by using this term of contempt to describe them. We too must be aware of those who seek to devour with false teaching and deceptive practices.

- Paul also warned of evil workers, those who purposely sought to deceive others. False teachers were prevalent in that day, and their main objective was to convince others of their message by any means necessary. The church had received the truth, and was expected to be aware of those who taught anything contrary to the truth.

- Finally Paul warned them to be aware of the concision. This literally means "mutilation of the body." Paul is speaking of those who continued to teach that circumcision was essential to salvation. He had been delivered from such legalism and wanted to ensure the church wasn't seeking to add anything to salvation beyond faith in the Lord through His abundant grace. (He

warned against those who sought to devour, deceive, and dilute the truth. We too must be on guard against these false teachings today as well.)

**B. The Discernment** (3) – [For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.](#) He simply affirmed that those saved by grace were already accepted of the Lord. There was no need for further works or deeds on their part. If they had been saved by grace through faith, they were within the body of Christ. Nothing else was needed, and a lack of certain rituals or traditions would in no way dissolve their relationship.

- Paul declared the saved by grace offer genuine worship unto the Father while rejoicing in Christ. These are not dependent upon the flesh and are not looking to perform some extra-biblical act to solidify their salvation. These were confident in their salvation and their lives revealed it through their worship and walk with the Lord.

**C. Their Dependence** (3) – Paul also reminded the believer of their dependence upon the Lord. Their acceptance into the body of Christ and eternal destiny were not dependent upon the works of the flesh, but settled in Christ alone. There was no reason for fear or worry. If they had received Christ in salvation, they had all they needed.

- I rejoice in that great truth and I am totally dependent upon the finished work of Christ to secure my salvation. I didn't work to earn it, and I am unable to work enough to keep it. Granted those who walk with the Lord will desire to serve Him, but our service does not secure our salvation. It merely stands as a living testimony of the grace we have received! [1 Cor.1:29-31 – That no flesh should glory in his presence.](#) <sup>[30]</sup> [But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:](#) <sup>[31]</sup> [That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.](#)

**III. A Word of Counsel** (4-6) – Paul reminds them that if anyone had reason to rejoice in their accomplishments, and depend upon them for salvation, he could. However, he knew salvation was of the Lord, in Christ alone. He mentioned:

**A. His Ability** (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.](#) Paul declared if salvation were possible through the works of the flesh, he would have had opportunity to have been saved according to works. Of all the men he knew, he knew none who had been more faithful to Jewish tradition than him. If anyone could have rested in works, he could have. In the coming verses Paul will reveal what all

his works mean to him. He had been faithful, and yet he remained unsaved. Paul knew one must come to Christ by faith in order to be saved. It isn't in man's ability or works.

**B. His Identity** (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.* Many continued to teach circumcision and adherence to the law for salvation. They were depending on their heritage, being of Jewish descent to obtain salvation. Paul had the pedigree. He was considered a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He was totally committed to the law and living according to its mandates. If anyone wondered what a “good Jew” looked like, Paul was the perfect example. Again, he realized all of this would not secure salvation. It required a personal relationship with Christ by faith. Being a good Jew was not enough. (Knowing the Bible, living a good moral life, and being a faithful church member are not enough today. One must know Christ in salvation!)

**C. His Loyalty** (6) – *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* Paul does not glory in his past actions, nor does he seek to glamorize the life he lived. He is making a point here regarding his faithfulness to the teachings of the Pharisees. He had lived the perfect life as far as they were concerned. He was zealous toward the Law and lived his life in accordance to it. He did everything he thought one could to merit the favor of God. However, as he learned on his way to Damascus, these actions were not what God desired. God demanded loyalty to Christ through salvation instead of loyalty to man's approach to salvation. Paul realized his zealous efforts had not brought salvation. Acceptance of the finished work of Christ on the cross was, and is, the only way of salvation.

**Conclusion:** The passage we have read today is essential in understanding the context of the text for our next study. Following his warning against false doctrine, Paul revealed the life he had lived in deception prior to salvation. In our coming verses, Paul will share where his confidence rested following his divine encounter with Christ.

These verses serve as a challenge for all. Who or what are we trusting for salvation? Are we committed to living for the Lord, rejoicing daily in His provision for us? Are we growing in our faith, mature enough to recognize false teaching when we hear it? I want to honor the Lord in all I do. I want to continually offer Him praise and worship. Are you in Christ today? Have you responded to His call for salvation? If not, I urge you to come to Him by faith. If you are saved by grace, serve Him faithfully each day with a heart of praise!