

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

PASTORAL INSTRUCTIONS ON TRUST, PHILIPPIANS 3:1-21 (Part 1, 1-11)

- A. Paul's exhortation to rejoice (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.*
- Finally*
 - It can indicate *furthermore*
 - It is not Paul's conclusion but a transition to what remains to be said.
 - Paul encouraged Philippian Christians to rejoice in the Lord as he encouraged them throughout the epistle.
 - Philippians 3:1, *Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.*
 - Philippians 4:4, *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.*
 - Gerald Hawthorne, *Regardless of circumstances the Christian can and should always rejoice in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the basis of true joy and the sphere in which it thrives.*
 - He informed them that he was aware that he was repeating his instruction on joy.
 - It was not a problem for him to remind them of the importance of joy in the Lord.
 - It would be good for them to be reminded since repetition is the key to learning.
 - Max Anders, *What he wrote was so important he wanted to make sure they did not miss his points.*
- B. A warning against trusting self (2-3)
- Practices to avoid (2), *Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.*
 - Look out for the dogs*
 - Jesus used the term *dogs* to refer to those who opposed God's truth.
 - Matthew 7:6, *Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.*
 - Matthew 15:26-27, *And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."*
 - Jews referred to Gentiles as *dogs* and now Paul turns the phrase back on them.
 - look out for the evildoers*
 - A similar expression is in 2 Corinthians 11:13, *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.*
 - Their motives were deceitful or their message was false, or both.
 - F. F. Bruce, *They were doing the devil's work by subverting the faith of Gentile believers.*
 - look out for those who mutilate the flesh*
 - This statement clearly identifies Judaizers as those whom Paul had in mind.
 - Judaizers believed a person had to become a Jew before he could become a Christian.
 - Acts 15:1, *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."*
 - Vincent on Judaizers, *...Christ's kingdom could be entered only through the gate of Judaism.*
 - He described circumcision as *mutilating the flesh*.
 - Those who are only externally circumcised are simply mutilated, as those who participated in pagan cuttings forbidden by the law of Israel.
 - Leviticus 19:28, *You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the LORD.*
 - Was Paul unusually harsh toward those with differing views? No. According to Galatians 1:8, *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.*
 - Principles of true faith (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-*

- a. Those who are truly circumcised place confidence in Christ Jesus.
 - 1) True worship comes by means of the Spirit of God.
 - a) When a person places faith in Christ alone, his heart is circumcised by God.
 - b) Deuteronomy 30:6, *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.*
 - c) Romans 2:28-29, *For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.*
 - 2) True worshipers glory in Christ Jesus.
 - a) *glory* here means to *boast*.
 - b) Our boasting is to be in the work of Christ not our own efforts, 2 Corinthians 10:17, *Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*
 - b. Those truly circumcised don't place confidence in themselves.
 - 1) *flesh* refers to human nature, desires, abilities.
 - 2) It struggles against the spiritual, Jeremiah 9:23-24, *Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."*
- C. Paul's personal illustration of the futility of trusting self (4-6)
1. Paul showed that even he could not trust his works (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:***
 - a. He challenged the Philippians and *anyone else* to compare their works to his.
 - b. If Paul had no confidence in his works, why would the Philippians think they could place trust in their works?
 - c. Paul was not trying to impress them with his goodness but to help them see the futility of trust in anyone or anything but the Lord Jesus Christ.
 2. He listed things he did that still could not justify him (5-6), ***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; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.***
 - a. Paul lists seven things which gave him confidence before God when he was in the flesh.
 - b. Some of the benefits were inherited and others were pursued by Paul
 - 1) Inherited benefits
 - a) *circumcised the eighth day*
 - 1] He was not a Gentile circumcised at conversion.
 - 2] He was not an Ishmaelite circumcised in his thirteenth year, Genesis 17:25-26, *And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised.*
 - 3] He was a Jew by birth, having full covenant privileges from infancy.
 - b) *of the people of Israel*
 - 1] He was not a proselyte grafted into the covenant race.
 - 2] He was a descendant of Jacob with the advantage of pure Israelite descent.
 - 3] 2 Corinthians 11:22, *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I.*
 - c) *of the tribe of Benjamin*
 - 1] He was from the tribe which gave Israel its first king, Saul.
 - 2] His tribe was alone faithful to Judah at the separation under Rehoboam.
 - 3] Benjamin was the only one of the twelve patriarchs born in the land of promise.
 - 4] Mordecai, the deliverer of the Jews from Haman was a Benjamite.
 - d) *a Hebrew of Hebrews*
 - 1] He was a Hebrew from Hebrew parents.

- 2] His family avoided assimilation to the culture where they lived.
- 3] J. Alec Motyer, *He was the child of godly, convinced, zealously religious parents, with all the benefit that entailed.*

2) Pursued characteristics

a) Separate - *as to the law, a Pharisee*

- 1] *Pharisee* means separated one.
- 2] It was the strictest group within Judaism, Acts 26:5, *They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.*
- 3] They kept the Jewish law in minute detail with an attitude of superiority producing separation.

b) Zealous - *as to zeal, a persecutor of the church*

- 1] He persecuted those who followed Jesus Christ, Acts 8:3, *...But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.*
- 2] His zeal was noteworthy, Galatians 1:13-14, *For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.*
- 3] Paul's actions were those of a zealot, Acts 9:1-2, *But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

c) Blameless - *as to righteousness under the law, blameless*

- 1] Paul considered himself blameless in relation to the law, doing everything he could to keep it.
 - a] Thomas Constable, *...Paul was not claiming that he had done all that God required in the Law...However, he was very conscientious about what the Law required.*
 - b] Mark 10:20-22, *And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*
- 2] Warren Wiersbe, *Like most 'religious' people today, Paul had enough morality to keep him out of trouble, but not enough righteousness to get him into heaven! It was not bad things that kept Paul away from Jesus—it was good things! He had to lose his 'religion' to find salvation.*

D. The superiority of trusting Christ (7-9)

1. His effort didn't compare to the work of Christ (7), ***But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.***
 - a. Paul had a true conversion experience on the Road to Damascus.
 - 1) What was up went down.
 - 2) What was gain became loss.
 - 3) Trusting in personal effort turned to trusting Jesus Christ alone.
 - b. *for the sake of Christ*
 - 1) This means *for the sake of knowing Christ*
 - 2) Note verse 8, *the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*
 - c. What did Paul gain?
 - 1) Trust in the right object, Jesus, in place of self.
 - 2) Passion for the Person of Christ, in place of religion.
 - 3) Grace from God, in place of human works.
2. He gave up himself so he could gain Christ (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***

a. *indeed*

- 1) This looks back to verse 7, *but whatever gain I had*
 - 2) Not only did Paul count whatever gain he had but whatever gain is possible outside of Christ.
- b. Paul counted human effort as loss because of the *surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*
- 1) *knowing*
 - a) Here the word means *personal knowledge, relationship.*
 - b) F. F. Bruce, *...it includes the experience of being loved by him and loving him in return-and loving, for his sake, all those for whom he died.*
 - 2) Knowing Christ is *supreme*
 - a) Nothing else compares to knowing Christ Jesus as Lord.
 - b) Paul's fullest joy was in knowing Jesus personally not just knowing about Jesus.
- c. What did Paul lose?
- 1) He lost his false righteousness.
 - 2) He lost his standing in society.
 - 3) He lost his self-sufficiency.
 - 4) He lost his false security.
- d. Paul compared the *loss of all things as rubbish.*
- 1) The word for *rubbish* is only used here in the New Testament.
 - 2) In extra-biblical Greek, it describes a half-eaten corpse and lumps of manure.
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *...Paul meant that his former advantages were not only worthless but strongly offensive and potentially dangerous.*
- e. *in order that I may gain Christ*
- 1) Paul does not mean that having Christ is earned by his efforts.
 - 2) He is declaring that having Christ is his greatest desire.
 - 3) Verse 9 shows how one gains Christ which is not by works but by grace.
3. He substituted his trust in the law for faith in Christ (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-*
- a. Gaining Christ is to *be found* in Christ.
 - 1) It comes when trust is transferred from oneself to Christ.
 - 2) A person who is found in Christ is identified by the merits of Christ.
 - 3) What had been looking for in the law he found in Christ.
 - b. When one finds Christ he has found the only way to righteousness.
 - 1) Righteousness is not received by personal effort to obey the law.
 - 2) The righteousness of Christ is transferred to those who are found in Him.
 - 3) Personal righteousness is comes by placing faith in Christ alone.
 - c. The Gospel according to Paul, Max Anders, *Here is Paul's doctrine of salvation and philosophy of life. In regards to eternal salvation, humans deserve nothing, can achieve nothing, and have no reason for pride or self-assurance. God has done everything: created, disciplined, had grace, given his Son Jesus on the cross for our sin, raised Jesus, declared us righteous and justified, adopted us as his children, and promised us resurrection and eternal life. The only human part in all this, in faith, is to accept what God has done.*
- E. The goals of trusting Christ (10-11)
1. Paul chose a growing faith tied to experience (10), *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,*
 - a. He wanted to know Him, not just know about Him.
 - b. Several ways are given to experience Christ more intimately.

- 1) *the power of his resurrection*
 - a) He wanted to experience in his life the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.
 - b) Romans 6:4, *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*
 - c) Colossians 3:1, *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

- 2) *share his sufferings*
 - a) Paul was not saying he could add to the merit of Christ's suffering since that was fully accomplished at the cross.
 - b) Paul believed he could more fully experience Christ in him as he suffered in his service for the Lord.
 - c) Suffering drew Paul closer to the reality of Christ, Who He is and What He did for him.

- 3) *becoming like him in his death*
 - a) Paul had already experienced death in the spiritual realm because he died to self.
 - b) He was even willing to die physically for the cause of Christ.
 - c) Thomas Constable, *He so loved Jesus Christ that he wished to share all aspects of His life, to know Him as intimately as he could. He even was willing to follow Him into the valley of the shadow of death.*

2. Paul looked to the day when faith becomes sight (11), ***that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.***
 - a. This statement is understood in numerous ways.
 - b. The key word is *resurrection*.
 - 1) It is only used here in the New Testament.
 - 2) It is best translated as *out-resurrection*.
 - c. Paul was not uncertain as to whether he would experience resurrection, 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*
 - d. His uncertainty was whether he would die before Christ's return or be transformed at the Rapture, Robert Lightner, *Perhaps he was using this word to refer to the Rapture, thus expressing the hope that the Lord would return during his lifetime.*

CONCLUSION

- A. Always rejoice in the Lord because He is trustworthy.
- B. Trusting self is futile but trusting Christ is beyond compare.
- C. Knowing Christ is not only head knowledge but heart knowledge.