

Philippians, Chapter Three, Lesson One

REJOICING IN THE LORD Philippians 3:1-6

STIMULATE

** In our study together last week, we met an amazing individual by the name of Epaphroditus. Do you recall some of his character traits or how Paul described him to us?

V.25 - a brother, hard worker, a soldier, a trustworthy messenger and a servant.

V.26 - compassionate and sensitive.

V.30 - committed and sacrificial

** Hopefully, when we see such a great example in God's Word of how we are to live, we find that it then becomes part of who He is making us to be. Did you try to be more like our brother Epaphroditus?

We each have opportunities everyday to display the character qualities of Epaphroditus. When we take advantage of those times, it should become something for which we are very thankful.

MOTIVATE

** Over the next four weeks we have the privilege of looking over the shoulder of the apostle Paul as he continues to write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul is going to give us some much needed instruction by showing us how a Christian is to always be:

REJOICING IN THE LORD - Philippians 3:1-6

REJECTING THE WORLD - Philippians 3:7-11

REACHING FOR THE GOAL - Philippians 3:12-16

REPEATING THE PATTERN - Philippians 3:17-21

What types of things can take our joy away? What are those things that will rob our joy if we do not guard our hearts against them? Today, Paul gives us two such concerns for which we are to be on guard that our joy may abound to the glory of the Lord.

Please open your Bibles to the third chapter of Philippians, verses 1-6, as we hear Paul call us to a life that is always "**Rejoicing in the Lord**".

Read passage (V.1-6)

Opening Prayer

Rejoicing in the Lord

INVESTIGATE

V. 1 ** What kinds of things should we watch out for that could rob us of our joy?

Paul mentions two of them in our passage, they are:

- 1) The impact of false teaching or doctrine.
- 2) Depending upon our own natural abilities.

** Before we get to that, what is so unique about Paul's opening word for this study?

Even though he is only half way through this tremendous epistle, he begins with "Finally".

** Why would he do that?

This is his last major section of instruction before he begins the conclusion or application of all he has been saying with "Therefore" at the beginning of chapter four.

** Paul and the Philippians had a profound love for one another. Based upon that close relationship, how does Paul begin this final set of instructions for his brethren? What does he tell them to do?

"...rejoice in the Lord..."

** Paul has mentioned joy eleven times up to this point in his epistle, how is it different here?

This time we are to rejoice (specifically) "in the Lord". cf. Philippians 4:4 (He will say it again!)

** What does being "in the Lord" have to do with our capacity to rejoice?

cf. Philippians 3:9 - being found in Him, we have His righteousness.

and . . .

Colossians 1:27 - "Christ in you, the hope of glory"

Romans 8:10 - "Christ in you, spirit is alive"

Ephesians 3:14-19 - "Christ may dwell in your hearts"

With our life being lived out "in the Lord" and with Christ dwelling in us, ours is a protected environment that should produce the grateful response of joy for all that He has accomplished on our behalf. cf. Colossians 3:3-4

** With some understanding of what Paul is communicating to us when he says to "rejoice in the Lord", we need to realize that he is revisiting this important subject matter, so that we will be able to rejoice. How does he feel about taking the time to review?

- 1) It "is no trouble to me"
- 2) It "is a safeguard for you"

Paul's love for other believers put him in the place of protecting and caring for the spiritual lives of all who would come to know Christ.

V. 2 ** What three things does Paul warn the Philippians and us about?

- 1) "...the dogs..."
- 2) "...the evil workers..."
- 3) "...the false circumcision..."

** Has he referred to these before in this epistle?

Yes - Philippians 1:27-28 and 2:14-15

** The question becomes, is Paul referring to three different descriptions of one group or to three different groups? If we look at the character, conduct and creed of those represented here, I think we will be able to answer that question.

1) character - "the dogs" kuon was used to refer to unsaved, unholy individuals
cf. Revelation 22:14-15

2) conduct - "evil workers" kakos ergates is describing a bad or evil worker. These were the false teachers of Paul's day. cf. 2Corinthians 11:13-14, Galatians 1:8-9

3) creed - "false circumcision" or concision in the KJV. This specific reference is to the Judaizers who put their hope in their external religious service rather than the circumcision of the heart.
cf. Acts 15:1, Galatians 5:12 with 1Kings 18:28

** How is the Christian to view this type of person according to Paul?

Beware (three times) blepo lit. "to look", Paul uses this verb because we need to watch out, pay attention to the enemies of Christ that would want to rob our joy.

** How about our question of is this one group or three?

Certainly all three descriptions could be applied to the Judaizers of Paul's day, but because of the broad scope of people previously referred to in Philippians 1:27-28 and 2:14-16, I feel that Paul is referring here to three different groups.

** Following that thought line for a moment...how could an unsaved or unholy person rob our joy?

1) By the influence of the sinful lifestyle producing grief in the heart of a Christian who follows their pattern. cf. Psalm 1:1-2

2) By envying their gain. cf. Psalm 37:1-2, and 7

** How can a false teacher or perverter of the gospel rob our joy?

By causing confusion or even capturing the heart of a loved one. cf. 2Timothy 3:6-7

** And how can a Judaizer type of individual do this?

Someone who aggressively proclaims that you can work your way into Heaven, strikes at the very core of the gospel. When we see others being led astray, it can be very discouraging in the heat of the evangelistic battle.
cf. Acts 15:6-11

V. 3 ** If the Judaizers were of the "false circumcision", is there a true circumcision? And if so, how are they described?

1) They "worship in the Spirit of God" (John 4:23)

2) They "glory in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 6:14)

3) They "put no confidence in the flesh" (Romans 7:18)

** If that describes us as the "true circumcision", who are not circumcised for salvation like the Judaizer, how are we circumcised?

It is an issue of the heart! cf. Colossians 2:11, Romans 2:28-29 and Deuteronomy 30:6

** If you could maintain this threefold description in your life on a daily basis, do you think you would be more inclined to be "**Rejoicing in the Lord**"?

Absolutely! By worshipping in the Spirit, glorying in Christ and putting no confidence in the flesh I am a vessel fit for the Master's use. cf. 2Timothy 2:21

V. 4 ** How does Paul turn the tables on all of those who think they might be good enough on the basis of their own efforts?

By saying that if anyone could make it on works, Paul could have. In fact, compared to the enemies of Christ...Paul was far more qualified.

V. 5 ** What were his fleshly credentials, all seven of them?

1) circumcised the eighth day - not a proselyte, or an Egyptian/Jewish mix who were circumcised at the age of 13.

2) of the Nation of Israel (Jacob) cf. Genesis 32:28

3) of the tribe of Benjamin (Israel's first King, Saul came from this tribe). cf. 1Samuel 9:1-2

4) Hebrew of Hebrews - His parents were both Jewish

5) a Pharisee - a strict understanding of the Law and enforcer of the Law.

cf. Galatians 1:14, Acts 26:4-5

V. 6 ** Continuing the list...

6) a persecutor of the church - worse than the Judaizers. cf. Acts 8:1-3

7) blameless - amazing! By all who observed "Saul" in his religious effort, he was perfect. cf. Matthew 23:1-3 (followed by 7 "woes")

** With all of these fleshly credentials, how did Paul feel about his worthiness of Heaven?

He "**put no confidence in the flesh**". cf. V.3

and...

54 A.D. - 1Corinthians 15:9 "the least of the apostles"

57 A.D. - Romans 7:24 "wretched man that I am"

65 A.D. - 1Timothy 1:15 "I am foremost of all (sinners)"

EXTRICATE

** Next week we will gain a keen insight into Paul's view of his life long accomplishments, but for now - What was the specific command that he gave to the Philippians and us as well at the opening of our passage?

Rejoice in the Lord! Because of who we are in Christ and all we have through Him.

** While "**Rejoicing in the Lord**", what two things were we to avoid so we could maintain our joy?

- 1) The impact of false teaching or doctrine.
- 2) Depending upon our own natural abilities.

DELINEATE

** What was the three fold description of Christians, those who are of the "true circumcision"?

- 1) They "worship in the Spirit of God" (John 4:23)
- 2) They "glory in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 6:14)
- 3) They "put no confidence in the flesh (Romans 7:18)

EVALUATE

** How can pursuing these help us to be people who are always "**Rejoicing in the Lord**"?

- 1) By communing with the Spirit of Christ in the worship of God, we lose ourselves in His majesty and forget those things that could rob our joy.
- 2) By giving all glory to Christ, we are lifted up and out of the mundane cares of this sinful world.
- 3) By putting no confidence in our own ability, we are trusting solely in Him and are prevented from disqualifying ourselves because we think we have failed.

ACTIVATE

** Let's commit to "**Rejoicing in the Lord**" this next week, as we actively pursue each of these distinguishing marks of a true believer in Christ.

Closing prayer