

By Grace Comes Joy Series

February 24, 2021

Scripture: Philippians 3:1-3, Romans 3:21-28

Philippians 3:1-3

1. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*
2. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.
3. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Summary: Paul refuses to allow anything to be added to the gospel because such things steal the joy that comes from salvation by grace alone.

One of the greatest truths from the Word of God is the truth that salvation is by grace through faith completely apart from any of our works.

Yet there is something perverse within us that even when we know that truth we desire that there be a set of rules or laws by which we can judge if we are spiritual.

I was going through a catalogue of Christian books this week and it struck me how many present themselves like they have the one and only secret for a successful Christian life.

They tell us we can reduce Christianity to seven principles or twelve steps or even one prayer.

If we just do what they tell us is the right path, we will be happy, successful Christians.

Spirituality is reduced to a formula. If you add one plus one it will equal two.

It makes it all so simple - if we read our Bible for thirty minutes, if we pray, if we follow the instructions - presto - we will be spiritual.

If we fail to keep the rules then we are unspiritual.

We end up making the Christian faith a "Honey Do" list.

Check off item one and move on to item two.

Such a life is attractive to us because it makes this thing called faith so simple. But I think as we look at the verses before us in Philippians we will see that Paul would condemn such perspective.

Spirituality is not a formula or a secret - it is a relationship.

When we make a simple set of rules, we ultimately destroy the joy that comes from true faith in Christ.

Verse 1. Paul's Command to Rejoice, Philippians 3:1

Rejoice in the Lord - this last part of the book turns again to the practical subject of how to have joy in your Christian life.

Verse 2. Paul's Command to Beware, Philippians 3:2

2. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision (conciseness).

Who is he talking about?

Judaizers - right from the beginning the church struggled with how much of Judaism to keep.

Acts 15, Galatians, Colossians all have elements of this.

They went about teaching that Gentiles needed to be circumcised and that they needed to keep the dietary laws and to observe the Jewish Holy Days in order to be truly saved.

Why does he speak so harshly here compared to, Philippians 1:15-18?

15. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17. But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

In chapter one - despite bad motives the true Gospel was being preached.

Chapter three - these people undermine the Gospel - they reduce the Gospel from salvation by grace through faith to salvation by keeping the rules.

These people exist today - and not just in the most obvious forms.

If any one comes along and adds some work to the Gospel then they are dogs, evil workers.

Some add baptism, some add speaking in tongues, some add their own set of rules that must be kept, some even add license, reverse legalism.

Anything which adds to the Gospel must be rejected entirely.

All of these will steal joy - faith becomes a tedious preoccupation with the rules.

Self-righteousness takes over from Christ's righteousness.

3. Paul's Confirmation of their Position in Christ 3:3

3. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

For it is we who are the circumcision

Col 2:11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,

The Judaizers were coming around and saying "We're special because we are Jews - God's chosen people." Paul says NO!

Christians are God's chosen people in this age.

We who worship by the Spirit of God

Paul has to be referring to Jesus Statement in John 4:20-24

20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

21 Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

23 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."

The last two are flip sides of the one coin

Who glory in Christ Jesus

Literally - who boast in Jesus

Romans 3:21

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished--

26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

And who put no confidence in the flesh--

If our boast is in Jesus and his righteousness, then we do not trust in our own flesh.

Joy is crushed by adding works to our salvation.

Joy comes when we realize that we are the Chosen, we are the ones who worship in the Spirit, and we are the ones who have the righteousness of Christ and none of our own.