

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-7
JOY IN THE LORD!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Philippians chapter 3 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi.

Keep in mind that Paul is in prison in Rome as he is awaiting his court date with Ceaser. Remember, the Jews wanted Paul dead and Paul, after spending some two years in Caesarea, and nothing was happening with the charges against him, appealed his case before Ceaser Nero and again, he is waiting for his court date!

What I love about Paul is that he was an encourager.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that Paul was not focused on himself, even though he was under house arrest there in Rome, but he was focused on others.

We saw in our study of Philippians chapter 1 that Paul was encouraging the Philippians to work hard in the ministry, not to give up no matter what may come your way and he used his life as an example of someone who forged ahead and the fruit that was born.

Yes, under house arrest in Rome but filled with the joy of the Lord!

Remember what we were told in Philippians 1:12-14, **“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”**

That is a pretty powerful witness of someone who did not give up but forged ahead, knowing that no matter where you are at, even in prison, the Gospel is not chained!

Then, as we moved into Philippians chapter 2, we saw that Paul shows the Philippians the attitude they should have as they work for the Lord, minister the Gospel. He tells them the attitude is one of humility, looking out for others, caring for them. We find that joy of the Lord as we serve others!

Thus, as the work is going forward there is the right attitude in the work, the right motives.

Remember that Paul told us how we should live out our faith in humility, looking out for others and then, if we are struggling with this, he gives to us the example of Christ and what He did.

Paul put it like this in Philippians 2:3-8, **“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”**

If Almighty God was willing to humble Himself and serve humanity, then, as His servants, we should do no less!

Now, as we move into Philippians chapter 3 this morning, we are going to be looking at –
JOY IN THE LORD!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

The joy of which Paul writes is not the same as happiness (a word related to the term “happenstance”), the feeling of exhilaration associated with favorable events.

In fact, joy persists in the face of weakness, pain, suffering, even death (cf. James 1:2).

Biblical joy produces a deep confidence in the future that is based on trust in God’s purpose and power. It results in the absence of any ultimate fear, since the relationship on which it is based is eternal and unshakeable (cf. Ps 16:11; John 16:22).

Nor is it a humanly produced emotion; that Paul commands it shows that rejoicing is an act of the will in choosing to obey God.

The result is a supernaturally produced emotion, the fruit of walking in the Spirit (Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22).

Thus, rejoicing marks true believers (cf. Ps 9:14; 13:5; 32:11; 33:1,21; 35:9; 40:16; 51:12; 70:4; Luke 10:20; John 15:11; 17:13; Rom 15:13; 1 Thess 5:16).

- John MacArthur, Philippians 3

How true that is. As we walk with the Lord, as we abide in Him, as we follow His leading, there is tremendous joy!

I am not saying it is easy, that there are no storms in life that we face and may be facing now, there certainly are. But in the midst of those storms, as we have seen in the life of Paul, there can be tremendous joy!

Let me give you this example to show you what I mean, the importance of joy in our lives.

I hate to put it like this, but way back in 1980 to 1992, that makes me feel old, there was a Salvadoran Civil War that raged on and on for some twelve years!

The battle was intense, it was bloody as wars are, and a group of Salvadoran's fled their village, they then crossed the Lempa River, and they went to seek refuge in Southern Honduras.

And it was a difficult and dangerous journey!

As they tried to cross the river people were gunned down on the beaches and many just shot as they were trying to cross in the water!

It was so bad that the Lempa River turned red, blood red!

But, for those who survived and made it across the Lempa River, set up their camps and tried to settle into this new life, it was a new start for them.

But it was not easy. So to help in this transition and to get established, they established three committees that would help them survive!

There was the construction committee, needed to help establish homes for them.

Then there was the education committee that was needed to help train the children, teach the children.

And lastly, there was the "*comite de alegria.*"

What does that mean?

It means that this was a committee of **JOY!**

This committee was in charge of celebrations!

Imagine all that they needed as they are trying to start a new life.

They had to dig latrines, build homes, teach their children how to read and write and they also saw the importance of joy and celebration!

Why are Christians struggling so much with this today?

Why are they so angry at this and angry at that?

Because their focus is wrong!

I don't want to offend you but if you are in this category, filled with anger and hate, then you need to get refocused and see that there is – ***JOY IN THE LORD!***

Instead of focusing all your time on the evils that are going on, focus your time on the Lord and let Him fill you with a joy that is full!

That is what Jesus said in John 15:9-13, **“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”**

In other words, as we abide in the Lord, as we love the Lord and obey his commandments to us, the joy God has for us will be full or it can't get any better than that! And that joy we have for the Lord is seen by others as we love them with the love of Christ!

“But pastor Joe, look at how evil our government is! They are getting away with murder! Wickedness is growing and growing! Everything is falling apart! What are we going to do?”

Now we may not put it that way, we would be more spiritual about it, but if you are leaning in that direction, you have lost focus!

If we truly believe we are living in the last days, that the Lord's return is getting close, shouldn't we be the most joyful people in the world as Christians?

Absolutely, and yet, I see and hear a lot of anger and people are mad!

Don't act like that. Get refocused upon the Lord and I think from time to time we all struggle here. That is why our study this morning is called – ***JOY IN THE LORD!***

Keep in mind that the city of Philippi was a Roman colony, and they enjoyed the benefits of that.

You might say that Philippi was “***Rome away from Rome!***”

So even the dirt was considered “***Italian dirt!***”

As crazy as that sounds, it was true!

I know, “***Pastor Joe, where in the world are you going with this?***”

Where is our citizenship from?

I will give you a hint, we are not citizens of the United States or even this world!

Now I am not saying we are not US citizens; we are but that is only partially true.

Paul puts it like this to help us have a correct perspective of this. He tells us in Philippians 3:20-21, “**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**”

We are citizens of heaven if we are saved.

Now here's the thing. Since we are citizens of heaven everywhere we step is holy ground, you might call it “***heaven's dirt!***”

Think about it. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and Paul says that these bodies are the Temple of God.

As we walk, keep that in mind.

The point here is that we are in this world, obviously, but we are not of the world.

That means we need to look at things through a heavenly viewpoint. We need to have a spiritual mindset and it is not easy in this world when we are bombarded with so much garbage.

Paul put it like this in Colossians 3:2-4, **“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”**

Where are we to set our minds?

On things above!

And it is interesting to me that in the verse we read in Philippians and Colossians, the focus is the return of the Lord. We should be joyful knowing He is coming! That one day we will be with Him in glory!

Again, and I want to drive this point home, that – ***WE NEED TO LOOK AT EARTH FROM HEAVEN’S POINT OF VIEW!***

And we will see that in our study this morning.

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at here in Philippians chapter 3 into the following main points.

They are,

FOUND IN THE WORD – PHILIPPIANS 3:1

BEWARE OF THE FLESH – PHILIPPIANS 3:2-6

DIE TO SELF – PHILIPPIANS 3:7

So with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Philippians chapter 3, beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic – ***JOY IN THE LORD!***

PHILIPPIANS 3**VERSE 1**

How can Paul say, “**Finally, my brethren . . .**” when he still is only half-way done with this letter?

This is funny to me, and I have tried to be better at this, but when I say, “*As I begin to wrap things up*” you know there is still some 20 minutes to go or so. Again, I am trying to be better at that, as I wrap things up! Sorry, we have only started this morning!

But that is not what Paul is saying here when he says “**Finally.**”

What Paul is saying here, according to classical Greek, is basically, “*And so, my brothers, rejoice.*”

We may think of it like this, “*Whatever else comes your way in life whether good or bad - rejoice in the Lord!*”

Wuest puts it like this, “*Paul’s ‘finally’ here is not the ‘finally’ of the present-day preacher. He has another ‘finally’ in 4:8. He does not mean by this that he is about to close the letter. The words translated by the word ‘finally’ are literally ‘as for the rest.’*”

And what Paul wants from us, the command of Paul for us, and we need to be reminded of this often, is that we are to **REJOICE!**

Now we can think of all kinds of things to rejoice in, like; “*Rejoice in the new car.*” or “*Rejoice in the promotion.*”

But that is not what Paul said. He is very specific in this command. He told us that we are to “**Rejoice in the Lord.**”

Why is that so important?

Because He is the only constant in our life!

Jesus said in John 16:22, **“Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”**

Why can't this joy of the Lord be taken from us?

Because our joy is in the Lord and He will never leave us or forsake us.

In Nehemiah 8:10, as the people heard the Word of God and conviction came upon their lives and they began to weep over their sin, we are told, **“Then he said to them, ‘Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.’”**

The problem for many today is they have lost that joy because their joy is not based in the Lord, but things!

Jesus warned us in Luke 12:15, **“... ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’”**

And isn't that interesting because the world is telling us to go after possessions, have an abundance of things and if this truly would satisfy our lives, why do we keep going after more and more possessions?

Jesus got it right, obviously!

But we as Christian's, we can lose all of our things, but we can never lose the Lord, He is always there if we would only focus back on Him, because, as we do, our joy will be full, our strength will be secure, we will rejoice in Him!

Now, in saying that, let me also say this. There is no way you are going to be able to trust God unless you believe certain things about Him.

How can we know about the Lord?

Paul tells them that it is the Word of God, and he reminds them of these things.

But we also need to understand that ***GOD IS SOVEREIGN!***

He is God and thus, what He says is right, He is in control.

This means that not only is God aware of everything that touches my life, but He is also in absolute control of everything that touches my life. That means nothing happens in my life except what God allows for His purposes.

I need to understand that if I am going to trust God and rejoice in the things that are happening in my life!

We don't have good luck or bad luck, what we have is a God who is working in us so that He can work through us and use us for His glory!

Another thing we have to understand about God is that ***GOD LOVES ME!***

How do I know that God loves me?

His love for me is displayed in many different ways but the greatest way that God displays His love for me is seen on Calvary and what He did for me.

Remember what Jesus said in John 3:16-17, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”**

I need to understand that if I am going to trust God and rejoice in the things that are happening in my life!

Imagine if we didn't know that God is a God who loves us! When bad things happen, we would think that God hates us.

But the Bible says that He loves us, even when we were sinners, and the Holy Spirit drew us to saving faith in Jesus. And now that we are children of God, do you think that He will hate us or leave us? No way!

These are both important, that God is sovereign, and that God loves me unconditionally but in just knowing these two things about God is not enough to comfort me when I am going through times of difficulty, affliction, adversity unless I understood and believed one more thing about God!

And that is - ***GOD HAS INFINITE WISDOM!***

I look at things that happen in my life and I am very short-sighted. I can't know how they will turn out and thus, I respond according to the limited information I have.

But God knows all things, He has infinite wisdom and thus, when things get tough in my life, when things don't go well for me, I have to rest in the fact that God knows what is best for me.

Think about scary movies. The woman is in the house, and she hears noises from a room. The house is dark, and they play that scary music, so you know something bad is going to happen.

And, of course, she starts going towards the door. Closer and closer she gets.

And you know something bad is going to happen and you want to yell out – ***DON'T OPEN THE DOOR!***

But she does and she is killed, just like you knew.

God knows what is going to happen in our lives and He warns us of the danger that is out there as well. That is why we need to be in His Word, the Bible!

For you Star Trek fans. When you see a scene where Captain Kirk and some of his crew members are on a planet and his men are wearing red shirts, what is the conclusion you will come to?

These guys wearing red shirts are all going to die, and they do!

We know the story line of red shirt members of Star Fleet and it is not good.

Again, God knows everything and thus, we need to trust in Him and then obey Him because, with that perspective, as we do, we will have – ***JOY IN THE LORD!***

You see, I need to understand that if I am going to trust God and rejoice in the things that are happening in my life!

Thus, to have this heart that is filled with rejoicing in the Lord means I have to trust in the sovereignty, the love and the wisdom of God that are working together for good in my life. And make no mistake about it, they are!

And notice how Paul closes out this verse, “**. . . For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.**” Philippians 3:1.

We are on our third time through the Bible, and we have covered some books more than that already.

That means we have gone through together these stories and yet, it is not tedious to us, but it keeps us safe as we learn the things of God for our lives.

I have been through the Bible probably over 100 times or more since I have been saved, and it is not tedious because the Holy Spirit is always teaching.

Did you know that golfers probably hit around 500-1000 golf balls a day when practicing.

In baseball a batter will take anywhere from 100 to 150 swings each day for practice.

In basketball Stephen Curry himself makes ***“500 shots per day in the summer and makes 200 to 350 shooter per day during the season.”***

Why?

So that they can get better and thus, we read God’s Word, not to get better but to know what God desires of us so that we can walk accordingly.

Listen again to what Paul said, **“... For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.”** Philippians 3:1.

The Greek word for **“safe”** literally means ***“not to trip, stumble, or be overthrown.”***

How does that fit in with this – ***JOY IN THE LORD?***

We will see this as we read on, but false teachers, proclaiming salvation through ritual, ceremony, and legalism, posed a serious threat to them.

And this was something that Paul had taught the Philippians before but didn’t mind repeating it because it was what was going to be a ***“safeguard”*** for them.

Here is the problem many times and I will use the act of eating food as an example.

In our physical lives do we grow by eating candy, junk food, cake, and ice cream?

We may grow in terms of our girth, but it is not healthy for us.

We grow and are physically strong as we eat a well-balanced diet.

Make no mistake about it, the same is true for our spiritual lives. We must take in a well-balanced diet of the Word of God, prayer and even fellowship with our brothers and sisters in the Lord!

Thus, Paul has no problem reminding them of things, warning them of some of the dangers that are out there because he wants them to grow and be strong in the Lord.

Too often in the church today people want their ears tickled, they want to be entertained, they want new revelations instead of partaking of the solid meat of God's Word by which we will grow!

Sometimes pastor's and leaders don't want to warn their people of the dangers that are out there, but that is wrong.

Paul had no problem doing it, and in the days that we are living in, we should be doing it as well!

And as we will see, Paul does not pull any punches with these false teachers and their false doctrines, and neither should we!

So we see here that there is – ***JOY IN THE LORD!***

As we read on, we will be looking at – ***BEWARE OF THE FLESH!***

I know, you are wondering how these false teachers fit in with that title, but, as you will see, it fits perfectly!

VERSES 2-6

Remember what Paul wrote, “**... For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.**” Philippians 3:1.

And we saw that this Greek Word for “**safe**” literally means “***not to trip, stumble, or be overthrown.***”

He was speaking of the false teachers with their false doctrine that they tried to bring into the church.

And now, as we open up Philippians 3:2, Paul tells them “**Beware**” or “***look out for.***”

It is the Greek word **BLEPO**, (blep'-o) and it is a serious warning that they should listen and heed what Paul is saying here.

And in this verse, he gives us three warnings about the Judaizers who would come in after Paul taught a salvation by Grace through faith and they would tell the people that you must also add the Law through works, you must be circumcised to be saved!

Paul, again dealing with the Judaizers in Galatians tells us, **“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”** Galatians 2:16.

I think that is very clear and yet when these false teachers come around, they can be very convincing, and Paul wants to remind the Philippians that their salvation is not based upon works but upon the finished work of Jesus Christ!

What in the world does that have to do with – ***BEWARE OF THE FLESH?***

Let me deal with these warnings of Paul and I will then show you how this all fits in with the flesh, which is sinful and destructive in our lives.

Paul’s first warning to the Philippians is **“Beware of dogs.”**

To the Jew a dog was an unclean animal, and it was something the Jews called Gentiles in a derogatory way.

In fact, an old rabbinic saying went like this, ***“The nations of the world are like dogs.”***

And please understand these were not cute dogs but they were wild dogs, and they would roam the streets in packs even attacking and killing humans besides feeding on the garbage of the streets.

Thus, when Paul calls these Judaizers “**dogs**” it was to shock the believer to stay away from them because they were dangerous!

Paul’s use of this word to describe false teachers as “**dogs**” is fitting because, like these dogs, false teachers are “*unclean and dangerous*” because they teach salvation by works and therefore should be avoided at all costs!

They also were told to “**beware of evil workers.**”

And again, Paul is speaking of the Judaizers who mixed Law and Grace together and instead of bringing people closer to God; they were pushing them away from God.

I am not saying these Judaizers were not sincere in what they believed, what they were doing, but sincerity doesn’t save you and Paul says that their work is evil because it is not based upon the truth of God.

Paul put it like this, and it is very clear. He wrote in Ephesians 2:8-9, “**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**”

And the third warning is harsh. Paul hits these Judaizers hard and heavy here as he warns the Philippians to “**beware of the mutilation.**”

The Judaizers believed you must believe in Jesus, but you must also become a Jew, become circumcised before you can be saved, you had to keep the Law of Moses!

Paul uses the Greek word *KATATOME*, (kat-at-om-ay’) for “**mutilation**” and it carries with it the idea of the pagan practices that God forbid back in Leviticus 21:5, “**They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.**”

Paul’s point is that they were not circumcising their flesh, but they were mutilating it.

Remember what Paul said in Galatians 5:12, **“I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!”**

He is literally saying that these Judaizers should castrate themselves!

You see, God is interested in removing the hardness from your heart, cutting away the garbage.

In Galatians 6:15 Paul said, **“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”**

God wants to give you a new heart, not the mutilation of your flesh.

And think about it, is God interested in rituals or a relationship?

He wants a relationship of course.

Does God want us to celebrate communion?

Yes, He told us that we should but don't make the mistake that communion will save you. Communion is a celebration of what Christ has done and if He hasn't transformed your life, then communion is meaningless to you!

Paul put it this way in Galatians 2:20-21, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”**

Now think about the false teaching that is going on today, even this idea of adding the Law to Grace, which you can't do because once you add the Law to Grace it is no longer Grace and thus, by what you do God owes you a place in heaven! No, we deserve Hell, but by this Grace gift He gives to us what we don't deserve!

And here's the thing. All these false teachings feed the flesh!

Let me give you a few examples.

First of all, we are aware of this one. God doesn't want you to be sick, He wants you to be healthy. Just have enough faith and you will never get sick!

That is just feeding the flesh!

What about money? God doesn't want you to be poor. Some will even teach that if you are poor, it is because there is some sin in your life or again, you just don't have enough faith!

That is just feeding the flesh!

Hey, we are the King's kids and thus, He wants us to have all kinds of mansions and things, right?

Wrong, that is just feeding the flesh?

And yet, in the church today in America, this idea of feeding the flesh, building it up is at the forefront of false teaching. It is not the only thing, but it leads to other false teaching because the flesh is right, my feelings are right and the door is open to bizarre doctrines, false doctrines that many embrace.

Let me show you what I mean.

We are told,

One of the most serious problems in the church today is what was once called "***carnal Christianity***" or, more accurately, "***fleshly Christianity***."

If the phrase fleshly Christianity sounds like a jarring contradiction, that's because it is.

. . . the Bible teaches that "***the flesh***" is one of the greatest enemies of a true Christian.

“The flesh” is, of course, concerned not only with sins of sensuality but with the whole of our lives lived apart from God in this fallen world; it includes pride and greed and envy and idolatries of all sorts. Surely, one would think, a true Christian would seek to forsake the flesh and earnestly pursue a life of obedient discipleship. Sadly, however, that does not always happen.

Fleshly Christianity is widespread in the American church and well documented by researchers like the Gallup Organization and the Barna Group.

Summarizing their research findings in a 2004 report, the Barna Group said, ***“The ultimate aim of belief in Jesus is not simply to possess divergent theological ideas but to become a transformed person. These statistics highlight the fact that millions of people who rely on Jesus Christ for their eternal destiny have problems translating their religious beliefs into action beyond Sunday mornings.”***

What is a ***“fleshly Christian”***?

First, let’s clarify what a fleshly Christian is not.

A fleshly Christian is not a true believer who struggles with the flesh and is seeking to root out and forsake areas of remaining sin from his or her old life. That is normal.

Rather, fleshly Christians are true believers who continue to live largely in the flesh after conversion and are not seeking to forsake their sins and move toward maturity. Significant areas of sin still dominate their lives, but they are content to continue as they are. As a result, they remain spiritual infants, whose lives show all too little of the transforming power of Christ.

- <https://bit.ly/45zrTFu>

Paul tells us that we are to “**have no confidence in the flesh.**” And yet, look at what Christians are doing today, building up the flesh, which tells me they are confident that they can control the flesh. They can’t and the evidence is seen in what they say and what they do!

Paul shows us in these verses that he had every right to be confident in the flesh and he shows us why.

Calvin put it this way, “*To place one’s confidence, one’s trust, in anything outside of Christ is to have confidence in the flesh; and this would subvert the Gospel and endanger the soul.*”

Like I have said, in going against these Judaizers, Paul, to prove his point, is going to show us that he had more right than anyone else to be justified by keeping the Law but he also shows how worthless that really was in his life.

And let me say this. Paul at one time did have confidence in his flesh, the keeping of the Law until the Lord got a hold of his heart on the road to Damascus as he was going to persecute the Christians in Damascus. And Paul was saved by grace through faith. He no longer held onto a false system of faith!

But just in case anyone wants to challenge Paul on his qualifications in the flesh, like the Judaizers might, he tells them that he had more right than they did to put his confidence in the flesh and he lists seven powerful reasons why. Four things were his possession by birth and three were by his own personal choice and conviction.

First, he lists things that were related to his birth.

They are,

- ***HE WAS CIRCUMCISED THE EIGHTH DAY*** – Paul’s parents conformed to the letter of the Law as Leviticus 12:3 tells us, “**And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.**” He was not an Ishmaelite who was circumcised after the 13th year of his life (Genesis 17:25, Josephus, Antiq. 1. 12, 2).

- **HE WAS OF THE STOCK OF ISRAEL** – He was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and thus heir to the covenant promises of God.
- **HE WAS OF THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN** – The tribe of Benjamin gave to Israel their first King, Saul (I Samuel 9:1-2). Also, when the nation was divided, Benjamin was the only tribe to align itself with Judah in the Southern Kingdom (I Kings 12:21). And lastly, the tribe of Benjamin had Jerusalem, the city of God within its boundaries (Judges 1:21).
- **HE WAS A HEBREW OF HEBREWS** – I believe Paul’s point here was that he was not like many of the Jews who also embraced the Greek culture, but he was a Hebrew, 100%. He knew the Hebrew language and customs, not like many of the Jews of his day.

Now Paul lists three more points, but these are related to his personal choice or conviction.

They are,

- **CONCERNING THE LAW, HE WAS A PHARISEE** – The Pharisee’s were noted for their devotion to the Law. Regarding this sect, Barclay tells us, “There were not very many Pharisees, never more than six thousand, but they were the spiritual athletes of Judaism. Their very name means **The Separated Ones**. They had separated themselves off from all common life and from all common tasks in order to make it the one aim of their lives to keep every smallest detail of the Law.” You see, they tried to keep the Law and in doing so they missed the weightier matters of justice, mercy and-so-on. In fact, Jesus rebukes them for their hypocrisy in Matthew chapter 23. Not only did they try to keep the Law but also the oral law which was nothing more than a vast body of human traditions which have been handed down over the years. That was the life of Paul before he was saved!
- **HE PERSECUTED THE CHURCH IN HIS ZEAL FOR GOD** – Paul loved the Lord; he was very sincere but that was meaningless because he was trying to approach God on a works relationship. Thus, as he saw Christians having an intimate relationship with God that was based upon Grace through faith in Jesus, Paul was outraged because he could never have that kind of relationship with God by works. He therefore persecuted Christians. In fact, as I have said, he was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians when God turned his life around. It is as Paul said in Romans 10:2, **“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”** That was Paul before he was saved. You see, zeal does not equal salvation when it is not based in the truth of God, and many today have a zeal for God but without knowledge as Paul once had!

- ***HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE LAW WAS BLAMELESS*** – This was a standard that was set by man and not by God for in Isaiah 64:6 we are told, **“But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.”**

Notice it is not some, but all the good we think we are doing to get into heaven, is like filthy rags when compared to a holy and righteous God. We can't be saved by our righteousness!

Thus, as Paul says in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** That is how we are saved!

Now, as you look at all that Paul had going for him, he was more qualified than all these Judaizers put together!

But Paul had no more confidence in the flesh. In fact, the Bible tells us that we are to crucify the flesh!

That is what Paul said in Galatians 5:24-26, **“And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”**

We need to walk in the Spirit and the only way to do that is to crucify the flesh. If you feed the flesh, it will want more and more until it consumes your life.

Feed the Spirit, be in the Word, be in fellowship with the Lord and put on the new man in Christ Jesus!

So we saw Paul tell us – ***BEWARE OF THE FLESH!***

Paul is now going to focus on what we are to do – ***CRUCIFY THE FLESH!***

VERSE 7

I think we would all agree that as Christians we are to grow in holiness. That really is the sanctification process as the Holy Spirit is making us more like Jesus!

And yet, today the church is in the business of building up the flesh, feeding the flesh and we see it with how the church has become an entertainment center not only for adults, but for children as well!

The result of that, instead of holiness is worldliness and manifested in their lives is the works of the flesh because the fruit of the Spirit is contrary to the flesh! The flesh wars against the Spirit!

But what does that mean, to crucify the flesh?

Yes, in Christ we are a new creation, but take a look at your body and you will see that the flesh is still with you. That is the problem.

Then what are we to do with this flesh nature that we drag along with us?

Paul tells us in Galatians 5:24, “**And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**”

We are to put that flesh nature to death; and once you do, don’t allow that flesh nature to be resurrected!

Now in Romans 6:6, when Paul speaks of the “**old man**” many believe that is speaking of the “*old nature.*”

Therefore, if that were true, when we come to Christ and that old nature was crucified with Christ, it is dead and gone now! We only have that new nature with us.

One writer put it like this, “*The old you died, there isn’t any old nature anymore. There isn’t an old nature and a new nature fighting it out in you. Our old man was crucified and buried with Christ and you were raised with a new nature. . . . You’re not a spiritual schizoid.*”

(John MacArthur)

I don't think that the "**old man**" and "*old nature*" are the same thing. I don't think he is right on this.

In Ephesians 4:22 we are told that this term, "**old man**" is, "**that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.**"

First of all, our old nature does not grow corrupt because it is already corrupt!

And if you read through Ephesians 4:22 you can clearly see that Paul is speaking of our old conduct, the things we did and not the "*old nature.*"

My pastor summarized it like this. He wrote,

Let me use the illustration of an old steam powered train. You have the locomotive (the old man, with his evil desires), next you have the coal car (the old nature, which fuels the old man), and finally you have the body of the train (my physical body).

Before I knew Jesus my sinful nature (which I received from Adam) was fueling the evil desires of my old man which in turn used the body to satisfy those desires by moving the body in the direction that the old me wanted it to go.

If you take away the locomotive, the coal car has nothing to feed, and the train becomes inoperative.

The same is true with the old man. Take him away and the old nature has nothing to fuel and therefore the body, as the instrument of sin, is rendered inoperative.

- Pastor Phil Balmaier, Romans 6:6

And yes, there is a battle that goes on because we still have that "*old nature*" in us, and it tries to resurrect itself.

Thus, we must take in the Word of God and apply the Word of God to our lives asking that the Holy Spirit work in us and give us the ability to walk according to the high calling by which we have been called!

Martyn Lloyd-Jones offers a helpful illustration of the believer's relation to his old sinful disposition.

He pictures two adjoining fields, one owned by Satan and one owned by God, that are separated by a road.

Before salvation, a person lives in Satan's field and is totally subject to his jurisdiction.

After salvation, a person works in the other field, now subject only to God's jurisdiction.

As he plows in the new field, however, the believer is often tempted by his former master, who seeks to entice him back into the old sinful ways.

Satan often succeeds in temporarily drawing the believer's attention away from his new Master and his new way of life. But he is powerless to draw the believer back into the old field of sin and death.

In other words, we have been delivered from the tyranny of Satan, but not the temptation of Satan.

We have to make a decision not to feed the flesh but put those fleshly, those sinful desires away from our lives and seek God's holiness!

Paul's instruction was inspired by Jesus Christ Himself, who said, "**If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.**" (Mark 8:34)

When Jesus said we are to take up his cross it speaks of crucifying the flesh as the cross spoke of death!

Not only must believers pick up and carry their cross, but they must also make sure their death sentence gets carried out. Crucifying the flesh illustrates the putting to death of selfish, sinful desires.

Here was the problem for Paul. Those things he was holding onto, the Law, were in the way of Paul having an intimate relationship with God.

Thus, he counted them as loss, as nothing, as garbage, as dung!

You see, it is all about Christ and what He has done, paid the penalty for what we have done – sinned! Thus, why are you holding onto dung?

I don't think we think of it that way, but Paul did.

And not only did Paul count all his religious things as a loss but he counted all things a loss when compared to what we have in Christ.

Think about that for a minute. What things are getting in your way of an intimate relationship with Jesus, of growing in Him?

Paul said they were not just worthless, but they were offensive as dung!

That was Paul, his past life; his past reputation was counted as loss because of all he now had in Christ!

That – ***JOY IN THE LORD IS . . .***

FOUND IN THE WORD OF GOD!

But there is the warning – ***BEWARE OF THE FLESH!***

And not just the warning, but what we are to do with that flesh – ***DIE TO SELF!***

Remember that committee of joy that we saw in our opening story. We don't need a committee of joy because we have – ***JOY IN THE LORD!***