CAPITOL® COMMISSION
Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders

Freedom from Religion

March 12, 2024

Dr. John Battaglia • Missouri State Minister • P.O. Box 891, Jefferson City • Missouri, 65102 • (573) 355-4161 • pray1tim2.org

Weekly Bible Study Schedule

Tuesday, March 12, 7:00-7:45 AM

House Hearing Room 3

All Welcome!

Capitol Commission is NON-PARTISAN and NON-DENOMINATIONAL

Introduction

Today's Bible study continues in the book of Philippians chapter three verses one to eleven. Paul extends his teaching from chapter's one and two with a transition statement, "whatever happens", that encourages us to rejoice in the Lord regardless of life's challenges.

3:1 – Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith.

In the midst of resistance to the Jesus community and to the message that Jesus is King, Paul instructs the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord. Their faith was tested, their message was threatened, and their doctrine was polluted.

Rejoicing in God shifts perspective for one's situation. Faith is inspired, hope is elevated, and discouragement is minimized. Paul declared to the Philippians that they have nothing to fear. 'Your opposition will try to intimidate you. Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. Dig your heels into the face of intense pressure. Put forth your energy on the gospel message and relationships. While you do that, share in my joy. Rejoice in the Lord.'

3:2-4a – Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could.

Judaizers were a group of Jewish followers of Jesus that taught you must follow the Mosaic law and the Jesus way of life. They said that faith and works are required to gain right standing with God. They did not believe salvation is found in Jesus alone by faith.

Judaizers were a faction of Jewish Christians in the early church that forced Gentiles to live according to old way of life. This group demanded Gentiles to practice the Jewish customs, and belief, teaching it was God's grace and human works. To follow the Mosaic Covenant subsequent to faith in Jesus, specially circumcision, shifted focus to legalism and away from faith alone. Few Jewish communities were established in Philippi at that time; it is likely they came to Philippi to harass Paul.

Paul described his opponents as dogs, evil doers, and mutilators. They had the character of ravenous wolves. Wild beasts with base passions. They opposed the gospel message. Their motives were impure: selfish ambition, jealous; they inflated themselves and minimized Paul. They maligned Paul's character, his teaching, his love and pure motives to share the gospel and partner with the church. Mutilation was a pagan practice in the day but that is exactly what Judaizers demanded.

Physical circumcision is a procedure that removes the foreskin from the male extremity. The foreskin is cut away from the body. Scripture does not forbid circumcision. People select circumcision for various reasons: religious reasons, parental preference, for hygiene, a preventive measure for future infections and diseases.

> *For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love.* Gal 5:6

Circumcision wasn't the issue the problem was the Judaizers requiring Jewish followers of Jesus to be circumcised for God to recognize them as righteous.

They were distorting the original reason God purposed circumcision of all males in the Abrahamic Covenant. It was a physical mark identifying the circumcised as one living by the covenant as a worshipper of God and only God.

When Jesus sacrificed His life so all humankind could be forgiven and experience salvation through faith and not by works, He fulfilled the law to include the requirement to be circumcised. Jesus established a new covenant. The purpose of circumcision is now fulfilled through the circumcision of the heart. Jesus showed us the way to the

Father, God, through relationship not religion. Jesus did not come to earth to establish religion He came to establish the Kingdom of God. Christianity is not about a doctrine it is about a person. Our faith is in Jesus. It is God's gift of grace that a personal relationship with Jesus is possible. It is not only possible, but millions of people have decided to put their faith in Jesus and follow Him.

> *…a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.* Rom. 8:29

What really matters to God is spiritual circumcision. The Philippians were the true circumcised. When someone comes to faith in Jesus the spiritual foreskin of sin is cut away and discarded and a new heart is established in Christ who established a new covenant.

> *When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature.* Col 2:11

They worship in the Spirit of God, rejoice in Christ, and boast in Jesus, not themselves. With Paul's resume prior to knowing Jesus he could have boasted after following Jesus but he did not. He did not place his trust in: his ethnicity, fulfilling his religious obligation, or position as a Pharisee. That is exactly what the Judaizers did.

3:4b-6 – I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.

- ⇒ Circumcised on the eighth day
- ⇒ Citizen of Israel - selected to represent God and witness for Him on earth
- ⇒ The tribe of Benjamin – alone faithful to God in Judah
- ⇒ Hebrews of Hebrew's
- ⇒ Pharisee trained in strictest Jewish laws and customs.
- ⇒ Zealous to obey the law and honor God
- ⇒ Blameless to keep the law

3:7-11 – I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

His encounter with Jesus changed everything for Paul. His spiritual eyes would open, his heart transformed, and his mind renewed. In comparison to knowing Jesus his former resume was like "dung". His past became worthless in comparison to a personal relationship with Jesus, and not religion.

In order to gain Christ, Paul had to give up the past, letting of the former way of living. You can't have both. You gain Christ when you place all your trust in Him for right standing with God.

To know Christ is to:

- ⇒ surrender one's life to Him.
- ⇒ know the power of His resurrection.
- ⇒ know the followship of His sufferings.

The Christ life finds Jesus in our suffering on earth. It may be resistance to the gospel, physical and mental sickness, financial need, broken relationships, and more.

So rejoice in the Lord in the midst of your suffering. One day you will share in the ultimate resurrection when Jesus returns to earth.

> *Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.* Romans 8:18-19

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