

Session 9—Commending, Correcting, and Challenging Self and Others

Philippians 3:1-3, “*Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. 2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.*”

Writing to Christians (brothers and sisters) he, again, emphasizes the “rejoicing” aspect of being a Christian.

What does this mean in telling them to “rejoice” over and over again? Because...it keeps up the spirit of joy in lieu of intimidation and fear.

Note: Paul was being persecuted, punished, and aggressively tortured physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Fear was gripping the believers who were still being taunted and thrown out of their homes, having to give up their businesses, and grievously attacked by heathens in their own hometown...as well as being spurned by the Jews who still required circumcision as a means of being one of God’s special group of people.

The true people of God and the progress towards the "citizenship of heaven" were those believing Jesus was and is the Messiah (Jews and Gentile believers).

NOTE: *The following statements/belief is entirely opposite from the “Replacement Theology” taught by many teachers of various denominations. Teachers and Preachers teaching that the Church has replaced the Jews as God’s Chosen People are “false teachers.” This can be a person willingly teaching this heresy (Anti-Semites or one who believes Israel is just another nation like any other), or a person who has been drawn into this type of belief*

ignorantly misrepresenting the Scriptures, i.e. Read Romans, chapters 9 through 11 to understand what Paul meant as to who are God's chosen people (The Jews, the branch).

The Gentile believers are grafted into the Root, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God... Which... makes us Gentile believers as joint heirs and adopted children of God. Remember, God's covenant with Abraham was an unconditional covenant and, although Israel was chastened and received just punishment for their sin, there will always be a remnant who will bring and receive the blessings promised by Jehovah God.

In the verses now before us we have false and true Judaism contrasted.

I. CONSIDER THE JEWS FALSELY SO CALLED. (Ver. 2.)

- The custom of the Jews, in their pride, was to regard themselves as children at God's table and all others as only dogs" below it (Matthew 15:26).
- Paul reverses the figure, and has no hesitation in saying that the ritualists of his day, that is, the Jews who were preaching salvation by ceremonies and rituals, were the "dogs" below the table, while believers in Jesus were the children at the feast.
- Moreover, Paul spoke to the Philippian church that the "dogs" were to be avoided by the Philippian converts just as one would avoid dangerous dogs.
- Paul emphatically stated that they had done evil (evildoers) instead of good all through the infant Churches, turning the young converts away from the simplicity that was in Christ.
- Not only so, but the circumcision which they practiced and sought to enforce was only "concision" (mutilation).
- These are not "the people of God," therefore, they are "Jews" only in name, who go about substituting ceremony-keeping in lieu of faith as it is in Christ.

II. CONSIDER WHO ARE THE TRUE REPRESENTATIVES OF GOD (Ver. 3.)

Paul states very succinctly the characteristics of the true believer of God. They are those who are truly circumcised who have been so circumcised in heart as to worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh

1. **The true believer of God have given up confidence in the flesh.** *They have seen that no incision in the flesh can render them acceptable to the Supreme; that no physical breeding can secure a prize in the great Day of Judgment; that nothing that they are or can be or do can win acceptance before God. Self has ceased to be the ground of confidence. It is giving in lieu of getting; it is humility in lieu of pride; it is faith instead of works or things we do for our salvation.*
2. **The true believer of God rejoice in Christ Jesus - rejoice in Him as their Lord. (V. 1, 3.)** *Self having ceased to be a ground of confidence or source of joy, Jesus has become the true Source. Pardon and acceptance are seen to be secured in Him, and in His fellowship there is an unfailing fountain of delight. Out of the invisible comes a joy unspeakable and full of glory. We rejoice in him as all our Salvation and all our Desire.*
3. **The true believer of God worship the Father in Spirit.**
This differentiates them from the formalists, whose delight and hope are in ceremonies.
 - *Unless the Spirit moves reverentially within, all the formality and “hoop lah” is in vain.*
 - *The Spirit realizes that it cannot be accepted by the Supreme on account of any supposed personal merit, but solely on account of the merit of the Lord Jesus.*
 - *The worship which pleases the Father is the joyful worship which has its source in his Son. The outcome of felt obligation unto Jesus, it becomes fragrant in the nostrils of the Most High.*

- *Thus the real believers (those who have given their hearts to Jesus) are made manifest (real Jew). They gather spiritually minded around the feet of the great Father and adore him...just as the Gentile believer.*

Please understand the difference between Jewish traditionalists and Messianic Jews.

Messianic Jews come to the realization that Jesus, indeed, is the Son of God. Their faith is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness.

The Jewish people are still the “apple of God’s eye.” They are the Chosen people of God (Genesis 12:3), CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE (COVENANT). Again, read Romans, Chapters 9-11. In the New Covenant, however, they must come to the saving knowledge required by Jews and Gentiles alike...to accept the fact that Jesus is “the only way to the Father.” The only way to stand before God as His “blood bought” children is to make a personal decision and acknowledge it before God and man.

Philippians 3:4-7, “...though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ *circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. ⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.”*

Paul has just attacked the Jewish teachers, Rabbis, and all who were “staunchly” Jewish via birthright and tradition.

They might be saying, “Yeah, you are a Christian and you don’t understand about being Jewish to the core.”

Paul gives his credentials. I was:

- ***Circumcised on the 8th day; commandment of God to Abraham...***
“He that is eight days old shall be circumcised.” Genesis 17:12. He

stressed the fact that he had been born into the Jewish faith and had known its privileges and observed its ceremonies since his birth.

- **Of the race of Israel.** Jews knew that only the calling/special called people were called Israelites. He was a Pharisee...the separated ones.
- **From the Tribe of Benjamin...**Not only was he an Israelite, he was one of the elitist of the Israelites. It was from Benjamin the first King of Israel had come (1 Samuel 9:1-2). The Tribe of Benjamin had the honor of being the first in the battle line.
- **A persecutor of the church (the Way)...**Paul had been such a staunch and real Jew that he was willing to help wipe out the opponents of Judaism.
- **Blameless...meaning that he was of the highest order of the Hebrew faith.** Strict, disciplined to carry out the Law of God. In speech and in actions, he had a burning zeal for God's laws. "I did not waver in making sure God's name was reverenced."

Paul did not hold back in his stance against his critics. He had been the villain...and now he is the one revealing that he was wrong in his actions against the "Christ followers." All of his credentials did not mean a thing in the life goals he now pursued.

Note: We as Christians should acknowledge that our education, our experiences as an unbeliever, and even our birth into a civilized or even an uncivilized state...will help us to appreciate the privilege of witnessing for Christ. If we have been privileged with a healthy (maybe wealthy upbringing), we should acknowledge that "all of our privileged living and experiences mean nothing if we don't use them for God's glory.

Who are we as Christians?

Do we acknowledge that we are “Sinners Saved by Grace?”

Will we stand up to the ones wanting our heads?



AND ONE TO GROW ON...DON'T EVER FORGET...In the Book of Genesis, Chapter 12, Verse 1-3, we see what God says about His response to how people treat Israel:

"And I will bless those that bless you and curse the one who curses you. And in you shall all families of the earth be blessed."

In the Book of Numbers, where the Bible is telling us about the Nation of Israel that God delivers out of bondage in Egypt, it tells us:

"He crouched. He lay down as a lion, and as a great lion. Who shall stir him up? Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you."

Although many will point out that this Scripture had its fulfillment in the Old Testament days, it doesn't seem to have any time-related limitation on it. It doesn't say, "I will bless those who bless you only until the Messiah comes. . .", or have any other conditions that would limit the result of actions toward Israel.

1 Kings 10:9, "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved **Israel forever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice."**

Question:

Do you love Israel? Do you love the Israeli people? Do you pray for them? Do you stand with them when they are being persecuted? Do you desire that they be with you as a citizen of heaven when we stand before God?

- ✓ **If not, I challenge you to find in Scripture where God reneged on His promises and covenant with this chosen people of God. I want to be on God's side. I want to see every Jew saved. That is my prayer. That is my desire for the apple of His eye.**
- ✓ **If you do, God will bless you. That is a promise!**