Prayer Study #471
PHILIPPIANS 3
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Philippians 3 New King James Version (NKJV)
All for Christ

Have Joy in the Lord

3 *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe*.

The New Century Version translates this verse in modern English:

My brothers and sisters, be full of joy in the Lord. It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it will help you to be more ready.

Paul is writing to a group of people who always face the possibility of persecution, even death, for their faith. The Christian can be joyful, even in negative circumstances, because, even if one loses everything and everyone, that person still has Jesus. The joy of the Lord is our strength:

The joy of the Lord is my strength.
Nehemiah 8:9-10

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra, the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the Law. 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."

And we can find that joy in the Lord in many scriptural ways:

Sources of Joy

1. **Giving willing to the Lord's Work:** 1st Chronicles 29:6-9

   Then the heads of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly, and gave for the service of the house of God, of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver, ten thousand talents and of bronze, eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel, the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced; for they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD, and David, the king, also rejoiced with great joy.

2. **Overcoming enemies:** 2nd Chronicles 20:27

   Then they returned every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies.

3. **Trusting Him and Loving His Name:** Psalm 5:11

   But let all those who put their trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them; Let those also who love thy name be joyful in thee.

4. **Being in His Presence:** Psalm 16:11

   Thou wilt show me the path of life. In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

5. **Receiving deliverance and healing:** The Acts 8:6-8

   And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did; for unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies and that were lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.

6. **Walking in righteousness:** Psalm 32:11

   Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

7. **Receiving salvation:** 1st Peter 1:8

   Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

8. **Being in Zion:** Isaiah 51:3

For the LORD shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places, and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

9. Remembering what the Lord has done: Psalm 126:1-3

When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the nations, The LORD has done great things for them; The LORD hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.

10. Bringing peace: Proverbs 12:20

Deceit is in the heart of those who imagine evil, but to the counselors of peace is joy.

11. Having wise children: Proverbs 23:24

The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice, and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.

12. Seeing the Glory of the Lord: Isaiah 35:2

It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God.

13. Being ministers of God: Isaiah 61:6-7

But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD; men shall call you the Ministers of our god; ye shall eat the riches of the nations and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For you shame ye shall have double and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion; therefore, in their land they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be unto them.

14. Receiving the Word of God: Jeremiah 15:16

Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of host.

15. Bring the Sacrifice of Praise into the House of the LORD: Jeremiah 33:11

The voice of joy and the voice of gladness; the voice of the bridegroom, and voice of the bride, the voice of them who shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts; for the LORD is good: for His mercy

endureth forever; and of those who shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord.

16. Fasting: Zechariah 8:19

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, "The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness…."

17. Being faithful to the Lord and using our talents for Him: Matthew 25:21

His lord said unto him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of the lord."

18. Recognizing the Resurrection: Matthew 28:8

And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy and did run to bring his disciples word.

19. Being persecuted for Jesus: Luke 6:22-23

Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company and shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

20. Smashing the works of Satan in His Name: Luke 10:17

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us through thy name.

21. Seeing a sinner repent and accept Christ: Acts 10:17

And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, and they caused great joy unto the brethren.

22. Worshiping Him: Luke 24:52

And they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

23. Hearing the Bridegroom's voice: John 3:29

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice….

24. Keeping the Lord's commandments & abiding in the vine: John 15:10-11

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These

things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

25. Asking and receiving in His Name: John 16:24

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full.

26. Seeing miracles: Acts 8:7-8

For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city.

27. Being filled with the Holy Spirit: Acts 13:52

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

28. Bearing the fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, against such there is no law.

29. Walking in faith: Philippians 1:25

And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.

Loving one another and walking in unity: Philippians 2:2

Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

30. Having relationship with dearly beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:

Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

31. Seeing those you have discipled in the presence of Jesus at His coming:

1st Thessalonians 2:19-20*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.*

32. Reunion with those you love in the faith: 2nd Timothy 1:4

Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy.

33. Receiving love from others: Philemon 7

For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints are refreshed by you, brother.

34. Knowing our destination: Hebrews 12:2

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame & is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

35. Having your faith tested: James I:2
My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into various trials…
36. Being partakers of Christ's suffering: 1st Peter 4:13
But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.
37. Having fellowship with the Father and His Son: 1st John 1:3-4
…And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.
38. Hearing that our spiritual children walk in truth: 3rd John 4
I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.
39. Being presented faultless before the presence of His Glory: Jude 24
Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.
40. Knowing the grace of God in trials of affliction: 2nd Corinthians 8:1-2
Moreover, brethren, we make known to you, the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abound unto the riches of their liberality.
41. **PUTTING *J*ESUS FIRST, *O*THERS SECOND, *Y*OURSELF LAST.**

Paul ends this verse by defending the necessity of repetition. This verse tells us that Paul has written to them before. Paul wrote letters to churches from AD 48-AD 64-sixteen years so it should not surprise us that he most likely wrote many more letters than the thirteen that are part of canonized scripture.

Evil Teachers and True Circumcision

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

In the Bible, the dog always symbolized the lowest of the low, and to the Jews, the Gentile or non-Jew.

Latter the Christians used the dog to symbolize non-believers. In the Bible times dogs in the Middle East were not lovable pets. They roamed in packs as scavenging stray dogs who had no owner, hunting filthy garbage, quarreling among themselves and attacking any passer-by.

The evil workers, to Paul, were the Jews who put on all the laws many rules, as if the keeping of the law made one righteous. For Paul those Judiazers were evil workers because they were keeping people from coming to the true God who gave salvation to any who would accept His grace.

The party mutilators were those who insisted on circumcision of the flesh, instead of circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16, Deuteronomy 30:6) to make them love Him more, and the ear (Jeremiah 6:10), and the lips (Exodus 6:12).

To Paul the real circumcision was not fleshly but spiritual, and the signs that a person had been spiritually circumcised were the person would worship God in the Spirit, the only boast of that person would be in Jesus Christ, and that person would place no confidence in people but only in the mercy and love of God.

Paul's Qualifications to Speak

4 *though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:* ***5*** *circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;* ***6*** *concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

In this passage, Paul is explaining why he knows what he is talking about, i.e. that he is a Jew with Jewish credentials. He is not someone who does not know the Jewish law or who has not been circumcised, and is in fact both a Pharisee and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

God had commanded Abraham to circumcise every male when that male was eight days old (Genesis 17:12). He was afull bloodied Israelite. Only the true Jews could trace their lineage from Jacob who God renamed Israel. (Father Abraham's lineage included both Jews and Ishmaelites. Isaac's lineage included both Jews and Edomites [from Esau]. Thus, only Jacob or Israel's lineage was only Jewish.) Also, he was from the tribe of Benjamin, who was the only one of Jacob's sons who was born in the Promised Land and the only tribe that remained faithful with Judah when Rehoboam split up the kingdom.

Paul was a Pharisee. There were never more than 6000 Pharisees at one time. It was a small group. They were known as the *separated ones,* because they separated from all common life so that they could keep the most minute requirements of the law. Paul was a person of zeal who had zealously tried to wipe out the Christians and all opponents of Judaism. Paul was righteous in the sense that he fulfilled all the demands of the law.

Paul, however, realized that all these things he was and had done were useless. He had an encounter with Jesus, and had to humbly accept the free grace of Christ and strip himself of all these human

achievements.

The Worthlessness of the Law and the Value of Christ

8 *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ* ***9*** *and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*

Paul is emphasizing that his conclusion that all things are worthless when compared to the magnificent privilege of knowing Jesus was not a snap decision that he later regretted. In fact, he had come to regard all things as rubbish compared to the joy of knowing Christ. The word used for *rubbish* is the Greek word *skubala.* In the common language the word means *that which was thrown to the dogs*. In medicine of that day the word meant *excrement* or *dung.* Barclay comments on this passage: "Paul is saying: 'I have found the law and all its ways of no more use in helping me to get into a right relationship with God than the refuse thrown on the garbage heap. So I gave up trying to create a goodness in my own; I came to God in humble faith, as Jesus told me to do, and I found that fellowship I had sought for so long.' Paul had discovered that a right relationship with God is based not on law but on faith in Jesus Christ. It is not achieved by any individual but given by God, not won by works but accepted in trust."

What It Means to Know Christ

10 that I may know Him and the power of His
resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings,
being conformed to His death, **11** if, by any means, I
may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The verb used, *know,* means more than just knowledge of facts of a person, but also indicates personal experience of another person. It is also used in the Old Testament for sexual intercourse. Paul is saying here that the very goal of his life is to have the most intimate knowledge of Jesus he possibly can, not to know about Him, but personally to know Him. Part of that knowing was to know and to operate in the power of Jesus' resurrection. Barclay says, the knowledge of the resurrection. "…is the guarantee of the life to come. Because Christ lives, we shall live also; His victory is our victory. It is the guarantee that in life and death and beyond death the presence of the risen Lord is always with us. It is the proof that His promise to be with us always to the end of the world is true. The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee that this life is worth living and that the physical body is sacred; it is the guarantee that death is not the end of life and that there is a world beyond: it is the guarantee that nothing in life or in death can separated us from Him."

Then Paul gently reminds us that when we suffer for Him, we are sharing in His sufferings that He took upon Himself for us.

Pressing On

12 *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.* **13** *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,* **14** *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

15 *Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.* **16** *Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*

The word *perfected* here is not to be interpreted as *obtaining perfection.* Paul is saying here that he is not fully mature or complete in the things of God yet, but he is pressing on or keeping on so that he might realize his fully destiny in the Lord. Paul does not look back on his achievements but always is looking ahead to what he still can and has to do for Christ. Like a track star, he is going all out to reach the finish line with his eyes on nothing but the goal. Paul is speaking here of the antinomians, who denied that there was any law at all in the Christian life, similar to the theology of the hypergrace people. Paul is telling us that we have to keep running the race to the goal that is always before us. We must never lower our standards but always press on until the end.

Our Citizenship in Heaven

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note
those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.
18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and
now tell you even weeping, that they are the
enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is
destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose
glory is in their shame—who set their mind on
earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven,
from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the
Lord Jesus Christ, 21 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.

Johannes Bengel, one of the greatest interpreters of scripture, who ever lived, translates this 17th verse this way: "Become fellow imitators with me in imitating Jesus Christ."

We do not know who these *enemies of the cross of Christ* were. They may have been the Gnostics. The Gnostic said that there were only two realities, spirit and matter. Spirit is altogether good. The body is altogether evil since it is composed of matter. Therefore, you can do whatever you want with the body because such sins only affected the body. Therefore gluttony, sexual promiscuity and drunkenness were of no importance, because they affect only the body, which is of no importance.

A variation on this theology was taught by a sect of the Gnostics. They said that individuals were to experience all that life had to offer, good and bad. Therefore, their duty was to go to the depths of sin as well as climb the heights of virtue.

Another group said that, since Christians were not

saved by the law, the law was of no importance and Christians should do whatever they liked. Then again there were the hypergrace people who believed that God's grace covered every sin, so people could sin as they liked and not worry since it made no difference to an all forgiving, graceful God.

The Philippians were Roman subjects. They could never forget that they belonged to Rome. Likewise Paul is saying that Christians could never forget that they were citizens of heaven and should conduct their lives to reflect that citizenship.

Paul ends this chapter with the wonderful hope of the Christian life. Jesus is coming again, and when He does, we will be changed. This reminds me of the wonderful words of the Apostle John in 1st John 3:2: *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, and everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*