

Philippians 3:1-11

Study Questions – Lesson 6

1. This week's memory verse is Philippians 3:10

“that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”

2. Read Philippians 3:1-11. This passage starts with a brief command, “Rejoice in the Lord.” The following statements are examples of what this command does not mean. Comment on each one.
 - “Rejoice only when you feel like it.”
 - “Rejoice in the Lord when the trial is over.”
 - “If you aren’t joyful, just try harder.”
 - “Those who rejoice don’t feel sorrow.”
3. What are some reasons believers can rejoice *in the Lord*? Deuteronomy 26:11; Psalm 31:7, 97:1, 119:162; Isaiah 61:10; Habakkuk 3:17-19; Zephaniah 3:17; Romans 5:1-2.
 - Which passage ministers to you most in your current circumstances?
4. How does the Lord enable a believer to rejoice in Him? John 15:11; Galatians 5:22
5. List a few reasons why believers may lack joy.

6. One author said, “To rejoice in the Lord is a matter of obedience, not temperament.” What is one thing the Lord is asking you to do to rejoice more in Him?

Background of Judaizers

Read Acts 15:1-32 and Galatians 2:6-9, 16, 3:1-3, 6:12-15.

The group Paul was warning the Philippians about in 3:2 was the Judaizers. These were early Jewish converts to Christianity who tried to impose Jewish laws and customs on Gentiles as a condition of salvation. They added “works” to the gospel of grace. They taught circumcision and keeping the Jewish law was required for salvation. In essence, they were preaching another gospel.

Paul warned the Philippians to beware of them three times in one sentence. In the Greek, “beware” means “to be constantly observing with a view of avoiding.” Paul had nothing but words of reproach when he described the Judaizers. His first descriptive term for them was “dogs”. In the East during ancient times, dogs were not viewed as pets as in our culture. They ran wild, roaming the streets sometimes in packs, looking for something to eat, and could be quite dangerous. The Jews used the word “dog” to describe Gentiles in a derogatory manner. Dogs are seen unfavorably in several other Bible passages (1 Samuel 24:14; Psalm 22:16, 20; Matthew 7:6).

He also described this group that was perverting the gospel as “evil workers.” They saw themselves as workers of righteousness. In reality, adding works to the gospel of grace *was* evil.

Paul also said the Judaizers were “of the mutilation.” They taught that circumcision was a necessary requirement for salvation. Their teaching focused on the outward acts of following the law and undergoing circumcision for salvation. Paul reminded the Philippians that salvation is the inward “circumcision” of the heart in 3:3. Without faith in Christ for salvation, circumcision was simply a “mutilation” of the body.

7. What was the great danger of the teaching of the Judaizers?
 - o How does Colossians 2:8-14 refute their teaching?
8. In Philippians 3:3, Paul stated it is believers who are truly circumcised. What are the three signs of this circumcision?

9. What phrase is repeated three times in verses 3 and 4?
- What does this phrase mean?
 - How does Paul connect this phrase to his “credentials” in verses 5 and 6?
10. List Paul’s Jewish heritage and achievements from verses 5 and 6.
- What additional information do you gain from the following?
 - a. His background? Acts 21:40, 22:3, 23:6
 - b. His zeal and commitment to Judaism? Acts 8:1-3, 26:9-11; Galatians 1:13-14
11. Why do you think Paul chose to list his “credentials”?
12. Paul left everything important to him to follow Christ. Looking back years later, how does he feel about it?
13. Verse 10 describes four ways a believer continues to grow in their faith. Read the Scriptures and quotes for each phrase and record what you learn.
- **Knowing Him** – Jeremiah 9:24; John 17:3; 1 John 5:20 (Continued.)

“The word ‘know’ in Greek means ‘to know by experience’, not just intellectual knowledge. It means to gain practical day-by-day acquaintance with Christ in such an intimate way that you would become more Christ-like.” (Bill MacDonald)

- **Power of His resurrection** – Romans 6:3-5, 8:11; Ephesians 1:19-20
“Paul wanted to experience the same power that raised Christ from the dead surging through his own being, overcoming sin in his life and producing Christian graces.” (Kenneth Wuest)

- **Fellowship of His sufferings** – Philippians 1:29; 1 Peter 4:13-14
“To suffer for faith is not a penalty, it is a privilege, for thereby we share the very work of Christ.” (William Barclay)

- **Being conformed to His death** – Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:7-8
“Fruit-bearing involves cross-bearing. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. We know how the Lord Jesus became fruitful, not bearing His cross only, but by dying on it. Do we know much of fellowship with Him in this?” (Hudson Taylor)

14. Ask the Lord to reveal how He wants you to grow in one of these areas in verse 10.

Philippians 3:1-11

Discussion Questions – Lesson 6

1. Paul begins chapter 3 with, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” Explain what it means to rejoice in the Lord and how it is different than rejoicing in ourselves or in circumstances.
2. Paul uses the words joy, rejoice, or glad nineteen different times throughout this small letter. Why is repetition important and how does it act as a safeguard for us?
3. Paul has harsh words for the false teachers. List the three names he calls them in verse 2.
 - Why do you think he uses these particular names and what are their meanings?
4. What are the three signs listed in verse 3 that identify those of the “true circumcision”?
 - Describe some ways we may put confidence in our flesh.
 - According to John 6:63 and Romans 7:18, why should we have no confidence in the flesh?
5. Read verses 7 and 8. Paul was willing to give up everything for the sake of knowing Christ Jesus. What lesson(s) have you learned about Jesus by giving something up?

- What are your thoughts about that experience today?
- What things would you have a hard time giving up even if it meant gaining experiential knowledge of God?

*“Hold everything in your hand lightly, otherwise it hurts when God pries your fingers open.”
Corrie Ten Boom*

6. Explain the difference between a righteousness that comes from the law and one that comes from God by faith.
7. Make a list of your top priorities and your main goal in life.
 - Now read verses 7-11 and make a list of Paul’s priorities and goal.
 - How did your list compare with Paul’s?
 - What steps can you take to make sure your priorities and goals are what God wants for your life?