

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEB 5TH-7TH, 2021 // BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

### FALSE TEACHING (PHILIPPIANS 3:1-3)

Paul marks a transition point in his letter with a term than can mean, "finally", but is probably closer to "well, then" or "furthermore" (vs. 1).

- Paul knows he's being repetitive, but still he continues to encourage his readers to "rejoice in the Lord".
- We have to get into the habit of daily preaching the Gospel to ourselves- we are so quick to forget simple truths.

As a father protects his children, Paul wanted to keep his spiritual children from harm.

- He warned them in strong language ("beware of dogs") of opponents who would tempt them to follow false teaching.
- Paul uses sarcasm to describe those who had lost the true significance of circumcision ("mutilators of the flesh", vs. 2).

### WHY DOES HE MENTION CIRCUMCISION?

As a religious rite, circumcision was required of all of male Jews as a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 17:9-14).

- In the OT, covenants with God were often marked by tangible, physical reminders.
- Every Jewish male was marked by this sign that signified they belonged to a chosen nation.

This religious ritual was an outward representation that pointed to a deeper spiritual reality.

- Just as the flesh was cut away, God's desire for Israel was to remove the stubborn, sinful thoughts from their minds, and to purge sin from their hearts so that they could become obedient to God.

However, just because someone went through this ritual did not mean they actually kept God's commands and were made right with Him!

- Abraham was justified (declared righteous by God) because of His faith (Rom. 4:1-2)
- Circumcision is not a part of God's covenant with Christians (1 Cor. 7:18-19)

However, Christians still have an act that is a physical representation of the inward work of God in our hearts - baptism.

- Col. 2:11-12, "when you came to Christ you were circumcised...a spiritual circumcision...you were buried with Christ when you were baptized."
- Since the emphasis is placed on the removal of sin from a person's life and identifying them as Christ's, it's the closest equivalent to this OT ritual.

Humanity has taken rituals, religion, and traditions and trusted in those things to make us right before God.

- To the Philippian church, false teachers had distorted the gospel by adding the circumcision of Gentiles as necessary for salvation.
- Anytime we try to add to God's work with our own efforts, we prove we don't understand the gospel.

Paul calls them out! The "truly circumcised" (vs. 3) are the ones who worship by the Spirit, glory in Jesus, and put no confidence in external, empty displays of religion to save them.

- Paul would later write to Timothy that many people have a "form of godliness", but that form would have absolutely no power in their lives (2 Tim. 3:5)

### MODERN EQUIVALENTS TO CIRCUMCISION?

- Growing up in a "Christian home"
- Church attendance or membership
- Jesus + \_\_\_\_\_
- Religious rites without inward faith (baptism, communion, confirmation, etc.)
- Walking an aisle or saying a prayer
- Being a "good" person

Any teaching that emphasizes external behaviors as being capable to make one acceptable in the sight of God is a lie and a dangerous heresy.

- If being "right with God" is about our religious performance, we're all damned!
- Even if we succeed in our best religious efforts, it will lead us to self-righteousness and pride ("the ultimate sin", James 4:6).

### THE SURPASSING WORTH (PHILIPPIANS 3:4-16)

If anyone had any right to brag about their religious status and achievements, Paul did (vs. 4).

- He had been circumcised according to Jewish law, born into the Israelite tribe of Benjamin, a devout Pharisee, and faithful to the OT law (vs. 5-6)
- Before Paul's conversion, he'd also been a violent persecutor of the church.

His Jewish heritage and practices had been important to him, but Jesus showed him that simply being religious did not make him righteous before God.

- Paul now says that he counts all of these credentials as "rubbish" (skubalon, quite literally, "scraps of garbage", or "the excrement of animals", vs. 7).

The things he's accomplished in his own strength, he counts as garbage in comparison to gaining Christ (vs. 7-8).

- No longer was Paul's life about personal ritual and religious acts- his life was now focused on knowing Christ!
- In regards to eternal salvation, we deserve nothing, we can achieve nothing, and we have no reason for pride or self-assurance.

God has done everything: created, given us grace, given His son Jesus on the cross for our sins, raised Jesus, declared us righteous and justified, adopted us as His children, and promised us resurrection and eternal life.

- The only part we play in all of this is to receive what God has done for us in sincere faith.
- "The only thing you contributed to your salvation is the sin that made it necessary" - Jonathan Edwards

Demonstrating the lack of importance in earthly things, Paul expressed what life truly meant to him (vs. 8)

- He desired resurrection from the dead, so he sought the only way that promised him resurrection- the resurrected one!
- Paul's encounter with Jesus changed his entire aim in life- he only wanted to know Christ and the power of His resurrection.

### "KNOWING CHRIST..."

- Is to know His love and intimate friendship (Rev. 3:20)
- Is to know the reality of eternity (Matt. 24:35)
- Is to know the only source of contentment, peace, and joy (John 14:27)

In vs. 12, Paul points out that he's not yet "arrived". Not yet mature, he was very much still in the race of the Christian life.

- The perfection he would have at the future resurrection was not yet attained.
- He still had to deal with what in Romans 7 he calls "the flesh", an innate desire to sin.
- There's always room to grow! There's always more God wants to do in us.

Paul talks about himself as a runner who hopes to win a prize.

- He's refused to look back or let himself get slowed down with the guilt of his past.
- He forgets the pain of prison and physical punishment and the frustration of false teachers and difficult people.
- He's only looking ahead to the resurrection, where he will meet Jesus face - to - face.

The things of this earth wouldn't satisfy him - they'd only slow him down.

- We get distracted & crippled spiritually when we turn the good things that God gives us into "goods" themselves.
- Paul knew that the "upward call" of being with Christ mattered more than any of the treasures of this earth.

### THE COMPANY WE KEEP (PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21)

Paul's example was Christ.

- He did everything he could to model his life after Christ, and then appealed to his readers to follow his example, not the examples of those who were lost (vs. 17).
- In the pagan context of Philippi, hedonism, gluttony, drunkenness, sexual deviance, and all out debauchery were commonplace (just like in America today).

Paul tells his readers "through tears" that these people are walking to their own destruction (vs. 19)

- It breaks Paul's heart to think of people who are willingly and proudly refusing Christ's sacrifice and offer of eternal life just so they can indulge in the passing pleasures of sin.
- Does your heart hurt for the lost? Or does it judge and look down on them?

### "THEIR GOD IS THEIR BELLY..."

The desires of their flesh were what they lived for and worshiped.

- Indulgence and physical pleasures are often what the world says will satisfy us.
- Our appetites for pleasure always grow the more we feed them and always leave us empty and unsatisfied.

### "...THEY GLORY IN THEIR SHAME"

In Philippi, worship of "the gods" involved sexual deviance and temple prostitution.

- They were proud of the things of which they should have been ashamed.
- The enemy knows if we can "glory in" (normalize, main-stream) the things that are actually shameful, our consciences will be deadened to sin and repentance will become more difficult.

### "...MINDS ARE SET ON EARTHLY THINGS."

Money, power, material possessions, and fame are what the world says you need to be happy.

- The reality is that not all wealthy, famous, or powerful people are happy.
- These things pass away, and our souls will someday stand naked before a holy God in our spiritual poverty.

Paul pleads with the Philippians to keep their eyes fixed on Godly examples as they continue to run their race.

- We're not to turn our back on our non-Christian friends (1 Cor. 5:10), however, we are to be careful with the company we keep and the people we look to as examples.
- "Whoever walks with the wise will be wise, but the companion of fools suffer harm" (Prov. 13:20).