

Paul's Joyful Letter to the *Philippians*

CHAPTER 3: THE SPIRITUAL MIND

Paul wrote about the *Single Mind* (Chapter 1) on how the believer's mind must only be focused on God. He then used Christ, Paul, Timothy & Epaphroditus as examples of the *Submissive Mind* (Chapter 2). Paul now presents the *Spiritual Mind* (Chapter 3) by describing his own *Past, Present* and *Future* life.

Paul's Past (3:1-11)

A Righteousness of Works (3:1-6)

3:1 Finally, my brothers, 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. The word "Finally" does not indicate an end, but a transition and an emphasis on what is of ultimate importance: rejoicing "in the Lord". The theme of the book is "Joy", but this is the first mention that the Christian's joy must be centered within their relationship with the Sovereign LORD. Also, Paul emphasized the importance of repetition in the gaining of both earthly and eternal knowledge, because constant awareness of the truths of the faith is extremely important in recognizing false teachers.

3:2 Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. Orthodox Jews refer to all Gentiles as "dogs"; however, Biblically, the word alludes to the enemies of God ^{Psalm 22:16, 20, Revelation 22:15}. Here, Paul used "dogs" to describe Judaizers who believed circumcision was a legalistic requirement for Christianity ^{Acts 15:1, Galatians 6:12-18} (the larger issue: faith plus works vs faith alone ^{Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 3:3-7}).

3:3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh –... Paul emphasized that the real circumcision is of the heart and is accomplished, not by a knife, but by Jesus through the power of God ^{Romans 2:28-29, Colossians 2:9-12}.

Paul pointed out in this verse that genuine Christians:

- † Worship God in the Spirit ^{Luke 1:46-47, John 4:24}
- † Glory (boast) in Jesus Christ ^{Luke 18:9-14, Romans 15:17-18, Galatians 6:14}
- † Have no confidence in the flesh ^{John 6:63, Romans 7:14-25, Galatians 6:15}

3:4 ...though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:... Earlier in his earlier life, Paul was the most legalistic person ever, making him the person with the best reason to trust in fleshly works, but he was a "fool" ^{2 Corinthians 11:16-33}.

3:5-6 ...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; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless ¹.

[¹*amemptos*: without blame (lit)] Paul was born an Israelite (not a proselyte), with deep and pure Jewish roots ^{Romans 11:1}. His knowledge of the law was validated by his status as a Pharisee (and, in fact, a second generation Pharisee ^{Acts 23:6}) and his training was under the teaching of the great rabbi Gamaliel ^{Acts 22:3}. Paul continued by stating that he also put his beliefs into action ^{Acts 8:3, 9:1-2}, becoming as legally “righteous” as he could be, and thus gaining a promising, fast rising career as a Jewish leader ^{Galatians 1:13-14}.

Circumcision on the eighth day of life was a legal requirement of the Abrahamic Covenant ^{Genesis 17:9-14}. Both John the Baptist ^{Luke 1:59} and Jesus ^{Luke 2:21} were circumcised on the eighth day after birth.

After his conversion ^{Acts 9:1-22}, Paul (to his credit) often humbled himself to admit his shame of having persecuted the LORD's church ^{Acts 22:4-5, 26:9-11, 1 Corinthians 15:9, Galatians 1:13-14, 1 Timothy 1:13}.

A Righteousness of Faith (3:7-11)

3:7-9 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ², for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith ³ in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. [²*kurios*: one who wields authority for good; ³*pistis*: knowing, assenting and being confident in divine truths] Paul admitted his self-righteous efforts were a waste of time (no eternal value), because prideful/legalistic works ^{Matthew 7:21-23} are actually a “stumbling stone” to salvation ^{Romans 9:30-32}. However, Paul discovered that an intimate knowledge and belief in Jesus ^{John 3:16, 17:1-3} (having a personal relationship with and trusting in the LORD) and a yielding of life to Jesus would result in the salvation righteousness ^{Romans 10:5-19} that leads to discipleship ^{Luke 14:33}. Works are critical to salvation: not man's works, but Christ's work on the cross ^{2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 10:11-14}.

3:10-11 I want to know ⁴ Christ and the power ⁵ of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. [⁴*ginosko*: to know experientially; ⁵*dunamis*: inherent power] Paul reiterated Jesus warnings to Christians about their “sharing” of persecution/suffering with Jesus ^{Matthew 5:10-12}. However, Paul encouraged the congregation in Corinth by explaining that if they follow Jesus, they would not only share in His sufferings, but also in His comfort ^{2 Corinthians 1:5}, which is both earthly (e.g., peace ^{Philippians 4:4-7, John 14:27}) and heavenly (e.g., God's resurrection power that raised Jesus ^{Ephesians 1:15-23} and will also raise His followers ^{Romans 6:3-5}). The suffering of saints and their resurrections glorify God ^{Romans 8:18}. Everyone will experience resurrection, some people raised to “everlasting life” and some to “shame and everlasting contempt” ^{Daniel 12:2, John 5:28-29}.

Paul's Present (3:12-16)

Paul's Future (3:17-21)

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