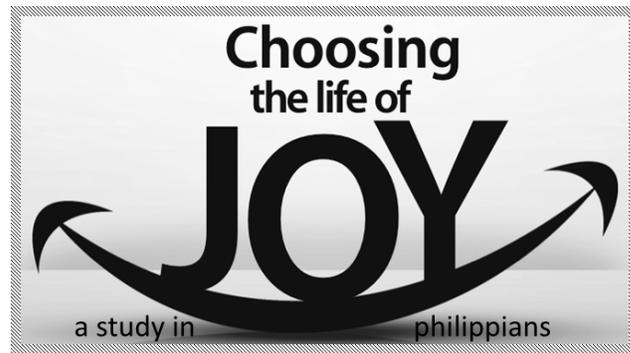


Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, January 9, 2019 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



CHOOSING THE LIFE OF JOY

A Study in Philippians

“The Joy of Learning How to Count – Part 1”

Philippians 3:1-11

Philippians, “a personal manifesto on how to live a life full of joy.” Dr. Warren Wiersbe We began our verse by verse study of the book of Philippians a couple of weeks ago entitled, “Choosing the Life of Joy; A Study in Philippians.” The book is a book of joy, and that is surprising given the circumstances surround the book.

Just for review let’s be reminded of some of the more interesting facts about Philippians that we have been looking at as a background to the book.

5 Important Background Facts on the Book of Philippians: **these may be some things that set the book of Philippians apart from Paul’s other letters and writings*

- 1. The book of Philippians is written by the Apostle Paul** – The apostle Paul wrote the book as clearly stated in Philippians 1:1-2, “¹Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- 2. The book of Philippians is written to believers/Christians at the church at Philippi** – As already stated Philippians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul during his Roman imprisonment to a group of people that were very special to him. These at Philippi had come to know the Lord Jesus through Paul’s witness to them during his “Second Missionary Journey,” and in response to the “Macedonian Call” of Acts 16. Notice who Paul identifies as the recipients of this letter in verses 1-2, “¹Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- 3. The book of Philippians is actually a letter written by Paul to the church at Philippi** – The apostle Paul wrote this as a letter to the Christians in Philippi, from Rome. Paul ministered at

Philippi during his second missionary journey, spending about three months in the city. The ministry at Philippi marked Paul's entrance into Macedonia (Greece, Europe), which came about as a result of a vision he had in the city of Troas, just across the northeastern corner of the Aegean Sea from the port city of Neapolis and its close neighbor Philippi (Acts 16:8–12). During this first stay in Philippi—he later briefly visited the city on his third missionary journey (20:6)—Paul brought to faith in Christ people who would form the core of the burgeoning congregation in the city. Among them were Lydia, a businesswoman who opened her home to Paul and his coworkers (16:13–15), and the Philippian jailer, who was converted under Paul's ministry after an earthquake miraculously broke open the prison (16:22–34).

4. **The book of Philippians was written around A.D. 61/62** – Of the four Prison Epistles, Paul likely wrote Philippians last, near the end of his Roman imprisonment in AD 61 or 62. Paul sent the other three Prison Epistles—Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon—by the hand of Tychicus, as their destinations were near one another. However, the letter to the Philippians was to be delivered by Epaphroditus, who had come to Paul in Rome with financial help from the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:25; 4:18). But during his time in Rome, Epaphroditus took ill, which delayed his return home and, therefore, the delivery of the letter (2:26–27).

Philippians Timeline

A.D. 33/34	A.D. 47-48 <i>1st Missionary Journey</i>	A.D. 48/49-51 <i>2nd Missionary Journey</i>	A.D. 52-57 <i>3rd Missionary Journey</i>	A.D. 61/62
★-----★-----★-----★-----★				
<i>Conversion of Paul</i>		<i>Paul plants Philippian Church</i>		<i>Paul arrested, writes Philippians</i>

5. **The book of Philippians is called a prison epistle, because Paul write the letter while he was imprisoned for his faith in Rome** - The book of Philippians is actually one of four “prison epistles” (or letters) and most likely the last of the four written by Paul. As stated, Paul wrote Philippians while he was in prison in Rome. The four “prison epistles” are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Given the theme of the book it is significant that Philippians was written by Paul at a particularly difficult time in his life... while he was in prison.

Along with these essential background facts surround this letter written by Paul, we have also sated these interesting fact about the book/letter of Philippians:

5 Interesting Facts about Philippians:

- 1. The book of Philippians has no Old Testament quotes** – This is distinction that not only sets it apart from Paul's other writing in the New Testament where Paul is said to have quoted the Old Testament as many as 500 times, just not in Philippians. The Old Testament is quoted more than 1,000 time in the New Testament with half of those being found in Paul's writings. The lack of Old Testament quotes in Philippians could be as simple as Paul's purpose in writing. It is a more practical letter.
- 2. The book of Philippians contains little historical or theological material, and is primarily a practical (*relevant, everyday, pragmatic, useful*) letter** - The only exceptions to this are the historical biographical material contained concerning Paul's life in prison during his Roman imprisonment. And Philippians, chapter 2 that describes the humiliation and exaltation of Christ in theological terms. Philippians is the only of Paul's letter that was not written primarily to address doctrinal, theological issues. The apostle Paul did not write Philippians in response to a crisis (caused by false teachers and false teaching), as he did with Galatians and Colossians. And, in fact, it may be the most practical of Paul's 13 New Testament books/letters. What do we mean by practical? We mean that of all of Paul's letters, Philippians in it purpose and content is the most

pragmatic and common every-day letter he wrote. We will get more into this as we progress through our study, but suffice it to say that the very reason Paul wrote the letter is simple, every-day in its application.

3. **The book of Philippians is essentially a thank you letter** – This itself sets Philippians apart as the most unusual of Paul’s letters. Instead of writing to correct doctrinal matters, he writes a “thank you” letter to the church at Philippi that had been so generous in supporting him over the years. He primarily wrote to express his appreciation and affection for the Philippian believers. More than any other church, the believers in Philippi offered Paul material support for his ministry. Paul’s affection for these people is clear through the letter as he encouraged them to live out their faith in joy and unity.
4. **The book of Philippians contain the word “joy” in some form at least 16 times** – With the common occurrence of this word in some form repeated throughout the letter, it makes it clear that this is the theme of Paul’s letter to the Philippians and to us. And as stated above this theme of “joy” is particularly astounding given the fact that it is a prison epistle, written while Paul was incarcerated and being persecuted for his faith.
5. **The book of Philippians was written to a church and Christians that represent the one of the most important advancements of the Gospel to the west, particularly Europe** - Paul’s “Macedonian Call” in Troas during Paul’s 2nd missionary journey led him to his work in Philippi and the planting of the church there. Philippi was located in Macedonia, in northern Greece, on the continent of Europe. So the “Macedonian Call” and the planting of this church in Philippi through Paul’s second missionary journey, and Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi are very significant because they represent the advancement of the gospel further west, into Europe and ultimately to the entire world through Europe. It is not to be missed that the first converts on the continent of Europe were Lydia and her household, a demon possessed girl, and a Philippian jailer.

I’ve shared this quote with you before, but I want to circle back to what **Dr. John MacArthur** says, **“A believer’s spiritual maturity can be measured by what it takes to steal his joy.”**

New Christians will quite often have misconceptions about God, the Christian life and other believers and the things we face in this life... namely the struggles, the problems, the trials this life can hold, and when those trials and struggles strike they may cause one to lose their joy, or for their joy in their Christian life to be stolen away. They may be left floundering in their faith and wondering, “where is God in all of this?” Has He left me? Why are all of these bad things happening to me.

But that is not only a reality for new Christians, many who have been Christians for years may carry these misconceptions tucked neatly in their back pocket and when trials, and difficulties, challenges and hardships come... when things don’t go as they expected in their Christian world these misconceptions may reveal themselves in a lack of joy and victory in their walk, in their life and witness, and even in their spirit and disposition communicated to others. Ever wonder why some who call themselves Christians look so miserable, unhappy, and downcast... and it may even be reflected in how they treat others? Again, MacArthur’s statement says, **“A believer’s spiritual maturity can be measured by what it takes to steal his joy.”**

What are some “joy stealers” that we allow to rob us of our joy... particularly in the Christian life? In the space provided below see if you can list what you believe are some “joy stealers.” Be prepared to explain your response.

JOY STEALERS*ex. doubt*

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Think about it... **Why do many Christians fail to experience real joy?**

5 Common Joy Stealers:

- 1. Worry** = *“an inordinate anxiety about something that may or may not occur”* - And it usually doesn't... happen that is! Someone has said that 99.0% of what we worry about never happens. And it was the great preacher Vance Havner who said, “Worry is like a rocking chair, it will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere.” And Jesus, Himself, said in **Matthew 6:25**, *“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life...”* And in **verse 27**, *“Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?”* And in **Matthew 6:34** Jesus gives us this strong truth concerning worry, *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”* Worry can certainly steal our joy!
- 2. Doubt** = *“an uneasy uncertainty and questioning self, situations, and others... not really knowing or being able to rest in assurance or security”* – As one person has said “Doubt digs the grave of faith!” It really does! Doubt steals our joy because it keeps us, hinder us, from “enjoying” what God has promised and God's abilities to provide for all that we need. It refuses to believe God's promises that He will never go back on. Doubt is a great joy stealer!
- 3. Fear** = *“dreadful anxiety, trauma or terror over danger, evil, or pain”* - And fear magnifies our problems... and steals our joy. Fear, like doubt, can literally paralyze our faith. And like worry, much of what we “fear” never turns out to be anything. As the Apostle Paul reminds us in **2 Timothy 1:7**, *“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”* And John reminds us in **1 John 4:18**, *“...perfect love casts out fear, because involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”*
- 4. Circumstances** = *“intense strain over a situation(s) or events, some that we can't change or control”* - But God can change our situation and circumstances and He is in control! Some circumstances are our own making and some are circumstances that happen on us suddenly and expectantly. Circumstances are perhaps one of the most common joy stealers and may also produce in us the other afore mentioned... worry, doubt, fear. Family problems, financial problems, health problems... are just a few. Not to mention, the daily circumstances, annoyances of in our daily life. These often are like swatting at gnats that just bug us and set us off, stealing our joy.
- 5. People** = *“sometimes we allow other people... people who are toxic, people who are critical, people who may disagree with us, people who make our lives miserable, people who are angry, or bitter, or abusive, nor difficult to deal with, we may allow them too much power over us and thereby steal our joy”* -

Charles Swindoll says (in his book, “Laugh Again”), “Resist these “joy stealers” that threaten our undoing and take so much of the abundant life out of us.?” Worry, doubt, fear, our circumstances and people can rob us of joy, but so can **things**, and it is this “thief” that Paul deals with in **Philippians 3**. It is important to see the total message of this chapter (**Philippians 3**) before examining it in detail, so perhaps the following chart on this important chapter in **Philippians (Philippians 3)** will be helpful.

CHARTING PHILIPPIANS 3 – LEARNING HOW TO COUNT

BIBLE PASSAGE	<i>Philippians 3:1-11</i>	<i>Philippians 3:12-16</i>	<i>Philippians 3:17-21</i>
PAUL'S LIFE	<i>Paul's past</i>	<i>Paul's present</i>	<i>Paul's future</i>
PAUL'S PICTURE	<i>The accountant</i>	<i>The athlete</i>	<i>The alien</i>
PAUL'S WORDS	<i>"I count"</i>	<i>"I press"</i>	<i>"I look"</i>
PAUL'S CHARGE	<i>New values</i>	<i>New vigor</i>	<i>New vision</i>

What Paul was describing is the “spiritual mind of Christ.” In Philippians 3:18-19, he described professed Christians who “mind earthly things,” but then in Philippians 3:20 he described the believer with the spiritual mind, who minds heavenly things. You will recall that the city of Philippi was actually a Roman Colony... a “Rome away from Rome.” In the same sense, the people of God are a colony of heaven on earth. “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20), and we look at earth from heaven’s point of view. This is the what we mean when we speak of a “Christian world-view” or perspective... we are to see “things” differently, with the “spiritual mind of Christ.”

What “things” may steal our joy and do they do so? *(ex. material things, money, houses, possessions)*

- (1) **List some “tangible” (concrete, physical, real, solid, define, material, visible, actual, noticeable) things that can steal our joy: money, houses, possessions, relationships, jobs, health, entertainment, hobbies, leisure pursuits, etc.**
- (2) **List some “intangible: (subtle, elusive, vague, ethereal, immaterial) things that can steal our joy: reputation, fame, success, achievement, religious achievement, respect, authority, prestige, etc.**

It is easy for us to get wrapped up in “things,” not only tangible things that we can see, but also the intangibles such as reputation, fame, achievement. Paul said in **verse 7** of our passage, **“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.”** Paul also mentions “things which are behind” and “things which are before” (Phil. 3:13). In Paul’s case, some of these “things” were intangible, such as religious achievements, a feeling of self-satisfaction, orality. We today can be snared both by tangibles and intangibles, and as a result lose our joy.

But even the tangible “things” are not in themselves sinful. God made things, and the Bible declares that these things are good (Gen. 1:31). God knows that we need certain “things” in order to live (Mt. 6:31-34). In fact according to Paul in **1 Timothy 6:17**, He (God) **“gives us richly all things to enjoy.”** But Jesus warned us that our lives do not consist in the abundance of the things that we possess in **Luke 12:15**, **“⁵ And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”** Quantity is no assurance of quality. Many people who have the things money can buy have lost the things that money cannot buy.

The key word in Paul words in Philippians 3:1-11 is the word “count” appearing in **verse 7 and 8**, **“⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for 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.”** In the Greek, two different words are used for this word “count,” but the basic idea is the same... it means “to evaluate, to assess. As Socrates said it, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Yet few people take the time to sit down and weigh seriously the values that control their decisions and directions. Many people today are slaves to “things,” and as a result do not experience real Christian joy... those “things” control their lives, hold them captive, occupy their time... more than their relationship with God does anyway.

In Paul's case, the "things" he was living for before he knew Christ seemed to be very commendable: a very righteous life, a strict obedience to God's moral religious code – the law, the zealous defense of the religion of his father. Who could doubt the devout and good religious man that Paul/Saul was? But none of these things satisfied him or gave him acceptance with God.

➔ Warren Wiersbe says, "Like most religious people today, Paul had enough morality to keep him out of trouble, but not enough righteousness to get him into heaven. It was not bad things that kept Paul away from Jesus... it was good things. He had to lose his religion to find salvation."

One day Saul of Tarsus, the rabbi, met Jesus Christ, the Son of God and on that day Saul's values changes (see Acts 9:1-31). When Saul opened his books to evaluate his wealth, he discovered that apart from Jesus Christ, everything he lived for was only refuse. He explained in this section of Philippians in Philippians 3:1-11 that there are only two kinds of righteousness, and only one really counts (really matter when it's all said and done).

2 Kinds of Righteousness:

- (1) Works righteousness**
- (2) Faith righteousness**

This study takes a look at these two, delves in with Paul into which one really counts and which one doesn't. And Paul knew first hand what he was talking about. He had experienced both in his own life, and had even experienced and down battle with false teachers who were promoting one over the other and the dangers involved.

THE COUNT OF WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS (Philippians 3:1-6)

Notice Paul's word again in **verses 1-6** of our passage in Philippians 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. 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, 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."*

3 Claims for A Salvation by Works-Righteousness: For those who may attached some type of works-righteousness for salvation, be that the Law, good works, morality, religious duty, etc., there must by necessity be some claims that must be made... if one is to be saved by "works" in any way.

- 1. Salvation must be conditional** – That is, our salvation must be based on something that we do or have done. It makes... even must make... salvation conditional. Conditional on what you do or do not do... i.e. keeping the law, obeying customs and standards, being good enough, doing enough religious duty, not breaking certain codes or laws,
- 2. One must maintain he or her own salvation** – If salvation is a matter of what we do (i.e. law keeping, rule following, adherence to a moral code of good) the onus (responsibility, burden, obligation, duty) fall us to keep ourselves saved and in good standing with God by adhering to the standard. Further, it may indicate that since God has saved us, we will maintain our salvation as we continue to match up with God's required standard.
- 3. Salvation must by implication become losable (capable of being lost)** – If it is conditional and up to us to maintain it, the implication must be that if we don't live up to the condition and fail to

maintain it we will no longer possess it. Therefore, a works-righteousness system of salvation automatically make salvation a losable proposition, at least possibly.

A Rebuttal of the 3 Claims for a Salvation by Works-Righteousness:

Claim 1: Salvation must be conditional –

Rebuttal: Scripture teaches that salvation is “unconditional” in nature and indeed doesn’t depend on anything that we do or have done.

Scripture:

- (1) **Ephesians 2:8-9** - *“⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”*
- (2) **John 3:16** - *“¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*
- (3) **Romans 6:23** - *“²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Claim 2: One must maintain his or her own salvation -

Rebuttal: Man could never match up or be good enough to match up to God’s Holy standard according to Scripture.

Scripture:

- (1) **Isaiah 64:6** – *“⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”*
- (2) **Romans 3:10, 23** – *“¹⁰ As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one’... ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*
- (3) **Matthew 7:21-23** - *²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

Claim 3: Salvation must by implication become losable (capable of being lost)

Rebuttal: This claim would be in direct violation of Scripture. Scripture clearly teaches that once saved it is forever and cannot be lost in the doctrine of “the eternal security of the believer.”

Scripture:

- (1) **John 10:27-30** - *“²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and My Father are one.”*
- (2) **Titus 3:5-7** – *“⁵ He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”*
- (3) **1 Peter 1:3-4** – *“³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*
- (4) **Jude 24-25** – *“²⁴ Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. ²⁵ All glory to him who alone is*

God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen.” (NLT)

(5) **John 3:16** – *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

The Exhortation (Philippians 3:1-3) – Paul writes in **Philippians 3:1**, *“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 *“finally”* here does not mean Paul is about to close the letter, because he keeps on going. The word means *“for the rest,”* and introduces a new section. Paul’s *“finally”* at Philippians 4:8 is the one that means *“I am about to close.”* Paul warned the believers at Philippi before, but now he warned them again, this time with very strong and forceful words, *“²Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!”* To whom was he referring in this triple warning? The answer takes us back into the early history of the church.

From the very beginning, the gospel came “to the Jews first” (Acts 3:26, Romans 1:16), so the first seven chapters of Acts deal only with the Jewish believers or with Gentiles who were Jewish proselytes (Acts 2:10). In Acts 8:5-25, the message went to the Samaritans, but this did not cause too much of an upheaval since the Samaritans were at least partly Jewish. But when Peter went to the Gentiles in Acts 10, this created an uproar. Peter was called on the carpet to explain his activities (Acts 11). After all, the Gentiles in Acts 10 had become Christians without first becoming Jews, and this was a whole new thing for the early church. Peter explained that it was God who had directed him to preach to the Gentiles, and the matter seemed to be settled.

But it was not settled for long. Paul was sent out by the Holy Spirit to minister especially to the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-3, 22:21). Peter had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles in Acts 10, and Paul followed his example on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:26-28). It did not take long for the strict Jewish believers to oppose Paul’s ministry and come to Antioch teaching that it was necessary for the Gentiles to submit to Jewish rules before they could be saved (Acts 15:1). This disagreement led to the Conference at Jerusalem that is described in Acts 15. The result of the conference was an approval of Paul’s ministry and a victory of the gospel of the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Gentiles did not have to become Jewish proselytes in order to become Christians.

But the dissenters were not content. Having failed in their opposition to Paul at Antioch and Jerusalem, they followed him wherever he went and tried to steal his converts and his churches. Bible students call this group of false teachers who tried to mix the law (works) with grace “Judaizers.” The epistle to the Galatians was written primarily to combat this false teaching. It is this group of Judaizers that Paul was referring to in Philippians 3:1-2. He used three pretty powerful and stern terms to describe them, each one sounding perhaps a bit offensive, but Paul had good reasons for that. Let’s look at each of these.

3 Terms Used to Describe the Judaizers and Their False Teaching: (Philippians 3:2)

- (1) **Dogs** – The orthodox Jew would call the Gentile a dog, but here Paul called the orthodox Jew “dogs”! Paul was not just using names... calling people names here, he was comparing these false teachers to the dirty scavengers so contemptible to decent people. Like those dogs, these Judaizers snapped at Paul’s heels and followed him from place to place “barking” their false doctrine of a works righteousness. They were trouble makers and carriers of dangerous infection.
- (2) **Evil Workers** – These men taught that the sinner was saved by faith plus good works, especially the works of the law. But Paul stated that their good works are really evil works because they are performed by the flesh (old nature) and not the Spirit, and they glorify the workers and not Jesus

Christ. Ephesians 2:8-10, *“⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* and Titus 3:3-7, *“³For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”* Scripture makes it clear that nobody can be saved by doing good works, even religious works. A Christian’s good works are the result of his or her faith, not the basis of his or her salvation.

- (3) **The Mutilation** – Here Paul used a pun on the word “circumcision.” The word translated as “circumcision” literally means “a mutilation.” The Judaizers taught that circumcision was essential to salvation (see Acts 15:1, Galatians 6:12-18), but Paul stated that circumcision of itself is only a mutilation. The true Christian has experienced a spiritual circumcision of the heart in Christ and does not need any fleshly physical operations to become a Christian. Colossians 2:11 says it, *“¹¹In Him (in Christ) you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.”* Circumcision, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, tithing, or any other religious practice or expression cannot save a person from his or her sins. Only grace through faith in Jesus Christ can do that.

In contrast to the false Christians and the false teaching of the Judaizers and their teaching of salvation by works, Paul describes the true Christians, the “true circumcision” in verse 3, *“³For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”*

3 Characteristics of True Believers/Christian:

- (1) **He worships God in the Spirit** – He does not depend on his own good works, which are only of the flesh. In His conversation with the woman at the well we read these words in John 4:19-24... just listen, *“¹⁹The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” ²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* What does it mean to worship God in the Spirit? Our worship is a whole devotion of our heart and life to Jesus, not just an outward expression of activities... orders of service, worship services, 2 hymns and a prayer, tithing/offerings, etc. It is more than that.
- (2) **He boasts in Jesus Christ** – People who depend on religion are usually boasting about what they do or have done. The true Christian has nothing of which to boast. Again Ephesians 2:8-9, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* His boast is only in Christ! In Luke 18:9-14 Jesus gave a parable that describes these two opposite attitudes (READ: Luke 18:9-14). *“⁹Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’”*

¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be ¹⁰humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

- (3) **He puts no confidence in the flesh** – The popular religions philosophy of today is “The Lord helps those who help themselves.” It was also popular in Paul’s day, and it is just as wrong today as it was then. By “the flesh” Paul meant “the old nature” that we received at birth. The Bible has much to say to us in warnings and cautions about the flesh... our flesh, and yet most people today depend entirely on what they themselves (their flesh) can do to please God. Flesh only corrupts God’s ways on earth (Genesis 6:12). It profits nothing as far as spiritual life is concerned. In John 6:63 Jesus says it, ⁶³ *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.* It has nothing good in it according to Paul in Romans 7:18, ¹⁸ *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.* The sooner we get this in our head and heart the better off we are. No wonder we should put no confidence in the flesh as Paul says in our passage.

CASE STUDY: A woman was arguing with her pastor about this matter of faith and works. “I think that getting into heaven is like rowing a boat,” she said. “One oar is faith, and the other is works. If you use both, you get there. If you use only one, you just go around in circles.” **How you respond to this woman’s statement?**

The pastor responded, “There is only one thing wrong with your illustration... nobody is going to heaven in a rowboat!”

There is only one good work that takes the sinner to heaven... the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross:

3 Important Scriptures that Speak to the Finished Work of Jesus:

- (1) **John 17:1-4**, *“Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ²as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He ¹⁰should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”*
- (2) **John 19:30**, ³⁰ *So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.”* What was finished?
- (3) **Hebrews 10:11-14**, ¹¹ *And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being ¹⁰sanctified.”*

The Example (Philippians 3:4-6) – Here is Paul again in verses 4-6 of our passage... Paul says, ⁴ *though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”* Paul was not speaking from an ivory tower... he personally knew the futility of trying to attain salvation by means of good works. As a young student, he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, the great rabbi (Acts 22:3). His career as a Jewish religious leader

was a promising one (Galatians 1:13-14), and yet Paul gave it all up... to become a hated member of the “Christian sect” and a preacher of the good news of Jesus Christ... the gospel. Actually, the Judaizers were compromising in order to avoid persecution (Galatians 6:12-13), while Paul was being true to Christ’s message of grace and as a result was suffering persecution even as he wrote these words from a prison cell in Rome.

In this intensely autobiographical section, Paul examined his own life. He became an auditor who opens the books to see what wealth he has, and he discovers that he is bankrupt. He reveals 3 relationships that he thought counted for something, but found out different:

3 Relationships of Paul That Left Him Bankrupt (Empty):

(1) **Paul’s relationship to the nation** – Paul was born into a pure Hebrew family and entered into a covenantal relationship when he was circumcised. He was not a proselyte, nor was he descended from Ismael (Abraham’s other son) or Esau (Isaac’s other son). The Judaizers would understand Paul’s reference to the tribe of Benjamin, because Benjamin and Joseph were Jacob’s favorite sons. They were born to Rachel, Jacob’s favorite wife. Israel’s first king came from Benjamin, and this little tribe was faithful to David during the rebellion under Absalom. Paul’s human heritage was something to be proud of. When measured by this standard, he passed with flying colors.

Listen, you heritage, who your parents are, who your family is, what country you come from... none of that will get you into heaven. You are not a Christian because you are an American, as some suppose. And you can’t get into heaven based on your parents’ salvation, how much they took you church when you were young, how many Bible stories they read to you, how many you dedicated, or if your family is a long line of “Christians.” What about you?

(2) **Paul’s relationship to the law** – Paul writes in the last part of verse 4, “...concerning the law, a Pharisee.” And the last part of verse 6, “...concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” To the Jews of Paul’s day, a Pharisee had reached the pinnacle of religious success and experience, the highest ideal a Jew could ever hope to attain. If anybody was going to heaven, it was the Pharisee. He had to orthodox doctrine (see Acts 23:6-9) and tried to fulfill the religious duties faithfully (Luke 18:10-14). While we today are accustomed to use of the word “Pharisee” as the equivalent of “hypocrite,” this usage was not how that was looked upon in Paul’s day. It meant the pinnacle of spirituality and religious rightness... the height of religious expression, and represented those most respected and deemed going to heaven “for sure.” Measured by the righteousness of the law, Paul was blameless. He kept the law and the traditions perfectly. Wow!

Okay, if any one ever could have gotten into heaven that was going to get into heaven based on religion and religious adherence, good works, moral code following, Paul could have. Paul was good, and not just good, he was really, really, really good by all the standards of his day, but it wasn’t enough. What won’t work for Paul surely won’t work for you either. You can’t be so good morally, religiously, spiritually, or any other way. Your good is not enough to get you to heaven and never will be. It wasn’t for Paul and it isn’t for you either. No one gets into heaven by being “good enough.”

(3) **Paul’s relationship to Israel’s enemies** – And if that wasn’t enough... it wasn’t enough to just believe the truth; a man must also oppose lies. Paul defended his orthodox faith by persecuting the follower of “that deceiver” Jesus (Matthew 27:62-66). He assisted in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60), and after that he led the attack against the church in general (Acts 8:1-3). Even in later years, Paul admitted his role in persecuting the church (Acts 22:1-5, Acts 26:1-11). Every Jew could boast of his own blood heritage. Some Jews could boast of their faithfulness to the Jewish religion. But Paul could boast of those things plus his zeal in persecuting the church.

So at this point we might ask, “How could a sincere man like Saul of Tarsus be so wrong? “ The answer is, he was using the wrong measuring stick... the wrong counting rod.

(READ: Mark 10:17-22) *“¹⁷ Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ” ²⁰ And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.” ²¹ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” ²² But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”*

Saul of Tarsus, like the rich young ruler, was looking at the outside and not the inside. He was comparing himself with standards set by men, not by God. AS far as obeying outwardly the demands of the law was concerned, Paul was a great success, but he did not stop to consider the inward sins he was committing. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made it clear that there are sinful attitudes and appetites as well as sinful actions (Matthew 5:21-48).

When he looked at himself or looked at other, Saul of Tarsus considered himself to be righteous. But one day he say himself as compared with Jesus Christ. It was then that he changed his evaluations and values, and abandoned “works righteousness” for the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

THE COUNT OF FAITH RIGHEOUSNESS (Philippians 3:7-11)

2 Parts to Paul’s Finding Faith Righteousness:

- (1) Paul’s losses –
- (2) Paul’s gains -