

## The Joy of Our Salvation

*Philippians 3:1-8*

*Philippians #5*

*Come now, let us settle the matter, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*

I was 17 years old when my life radically changed. I was in the auditorium of Furman University talking a thousand miles a minute trying to impress the girl sitting right beside me. It didn't work. But it did manage to bother the youth chaperone sitting directly behind me. She kicked the back of my chair, tapped me on the shoulder, and said: "Would you please be quiet, young man? Someone needs to hear this message!" When I stopped talking and started listening, I heard these words from the preacher on the stage: "*Come now, let us settle the matter, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*" On that day, December 27 of 1990, I trusted that Jesus died on the cross in my place for my sins, repented of them, and, by faith, believed that He rose from the dead. At that moment, I understood more about the joy of the Lord than any book or sermon could ever teach me.

Friends, hear me today, if Jesus never answers another prayer request from you for the rest of your life; if He never removes the thorn in your flesh; if He strips away all you possess; and if He speeds up your already borrowed time to the point that your last breath is just around the corner, then you, sir or ma'am, still have too many blessings to count. The hymn may implore us to name the one by one. But we can't. For His blessings in are infinite and too many to count. At the top of that list of many blessings, is your salvation. Number two is the joy that comes from it.

Philippians is a great book because the theme of it is joy. Chapter one is a great chapter because the theme of it is joy in suffering. Chapter two is a great chapter because the theme of it is joy in submission and service. Chapter four is a great chapter because the theme of it is joy in togetherness. But chapter three is my favorite chapter not just the Book of Philippians, but all of the NT, because the theme of it is joy in our salvation. And if the devil wants to rob you of your joy in suffering, submission, service, and togetherness, I will assure you that wishes to rob you of the joy of your great salvation. First, he will try to rob you with apathy. If apathy doesn't work, then naivete. If naivete doesn't work, then vanity. If vanity doesn't work, then carnality. For these four tools of the devil are the greatest threats to the joy of our salvation. And they will always be. Turn with me to Philippians 3:1-8 and we will see them.

*Further, my brothers and sisters, 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. <sup>2</sup> Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> 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; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. <sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.*

### The Greatest Threats to the Joy of Your Salvation

#### 1. **Apathy (v 1)**

- **The Apathy Club:** (1) In high schools and colleges, there are a lot of clubs on campus. There are chess clubs; sports clubs; Christian clubs; and glee clubs. But I've yet to hear of an Apathy Club. (2) For the Apathy Club would face a foundational problem before it ever got off the ground: no one would show up for club meetings.
- **Apathy:** Showing indifference and a lack of concern, attention, or care. The greatest way to lose the joy that comes from our salvation is showing indifference to how important your salvation is, not only for the eternal future, but the reality of now.
- **As a Result, Paul Shows Us How to Protect the Joy of our Salvation from Apathy (v1).** (1) He tells us what to do: Rejoice in the Lord. It means to show great delight in God. It's a present active imperative, which means: Do it today. Do it tomorrow. Do it in bad circumstances. Do it in good ones. Do it on the mountaintop. And do it in the valley. Do it always. It's not the first time he implored the Philippians to rejoice. We saw last week, he did it subtly when he told them to "do everything without grumbling and complaining" (2:14). Paul will repeat this command again twice in chapter 4 in the same sentence: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice" (4:4). (2) He tells us why: It is a safeguard for you. It's a protective measure put in place to remind us that we are prone to make our rejoicing in Jesus contingent upon circumstances. And if we forget to rejoice in difficult ones – like Paul did in prison – apathy sets in.
- **App:** The best way to read the letters in the NT is to read them in a mirror. A mirror casts the opposite reflection. The reason Paul commands the Philippians to rejoice is because they were not rejoicing. Apathy had set in. And if apathy and indifference has crept into your spiritual life, that opposite reflection in the mirror is the safeguard to restore the joy of your salvation: rejoice.

## 2. Naivete (v2-3)

- **Oh, What A Tangled Web:** (1) You've heard it said, "oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive." (2) My spin on it is a little different: "oh what a tangled web we weave when we think our children are naïve." (3) My wife likes to tell me "Derrick, your kids are not as naive as you think they are. But you sure might me."
- **Naivete:** Trust without experience, wisdom, and/or sound judgment. Naivete in spiritual matters will rob you of the joy of your salvation. Unlike apathy though, it's subtle. Spiritual naivete invites us to trust and leaves us worse for the wear.
- **Paul's Recipe for Guarding Against Naivete (2-3):** (1) He gives us another command: "watch out for the dogs." This phrase is an interesting one. I watch out for dogs all the time. They very rarely catch me by surprise because they bark. Here, though, the imperative "watch out" involves being on your guard from a surprise attack. Put together, it is a command to guard against being surprised by spiritual proclamations and ideas which will inevitably lead to tearing you apart and stealing your joy. (2) Paul has a specific group in mind: the Judaizers, the same group that gave the Galatians trouble. We know that from the reference to circumcision in verse 3. The Judaizers had a problem with the Gentiles coming to Jesus by faith. So, they said in order to be a Christian, Gentiles must first convert to Judaism and then be circumcised. (3) Paul also has a specific correction: No, he says. "We" are the circumcision who believe by faith and walk and live by the Spirit of the Lord.
- **Spiritual Naivete and Dogs in Our Day:** (1) Spiritual "dogs" tend to appeal to your desire to please the Lord and follow his commands. That's the way they get in. (2) Dog #1: You better follow and do all that God commands. It's appeals to our desire to obey. The problem comes in our ability to do so. If we could, there would have been no need for Jesus. For we fall short of the glory of God. We obey because we love God for saving us. And when we fail, we have the privilege to repent and ask God to help us obey better. (3) Dog #2: It's all about love, truthfulness doesn't matter. That was the Corinthian problem. And it's one of the greatest issues churches faces. When this type of mentality gets thrown around endorsed in Christian settings, any element related to what God has spoken is immaterial. (4) Watch out for both of those "mutilations."
- **App:** "Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:16)

## 3. Vanity (v4-6)

- **I'm Paul Harvey and That's the Rest of the Story:** (1) I miss the days of Paul Harvey and the rest of the story on the radio. (2) He always had something clever to say, much like this: "Human vanity can best be served by a reminder that, whatever his accomplishments and sophistication, man owes his very existence to a six-inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains. I'm Paul Harvey. And that's the rest of the story."
- **Vanity:** There is a simple way to define the Bible's view of vanity and the pride that comes from it. It is this: having confidence in the flesh.
- **If Any Person on Earth Had the Right To Put His Confidence in the Vanity of His Flesh It Was Paul (v4-6):** (1) His heritage was pristine: (a) "circumcised on the eighth day" – A genuine Jew from birth, not a proselyte; (b) "of the stock of Israel" – direct descendant of Jacob (Arabs boast of their descent from Abraham; but only Jews could boast of Jacob). (c) "of the tribe of Benjamin" – son of my right hand/the only son of Jacob born in the Promised Land; (d) "a Hebrew of Hebrews" – Both of his parents were Jews. (2) His devotion was pristine: (a) "Concerning the law, a Pharisee" – The sect of religious Jews known for their loyalty, patriotism, and conservatism of the Law of Moses. (b) "concerning zeal, persecuting the church" – he was sincere and true to his conscience even though his conscience was wrong in this case. (c) "concerning the righteousness, which is in the law, blameless" – Not an acknowledgement of perfection. It was Paul's way of saying he was diligent in fulfilling the requirements of the Law through sacrifices.
- **But Do a Search of Paul's Life in the Book of Acts Before Jesus Saved Him and You Won't Notice Joy Anywhere:** (1) He had Stephen stoned to death and watched with approval. (2) He was on the way to Damascus to repeat the process before Jesus saved him. (2) But the cross and Jesus changed everything.
- **App:** "At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day."

## 4. Carnality (v7-8)

- **In Church Every Sunday:** In most evangelical churches, there are three types of Christians in church on a given Sunday. (1) Natural Egypt Christians – in bondage to sin. Christ lives on the outside. (2) Carnal Wilderness Christians – a believer who has Jesus as resident, but not president. (3) Spiritual Canaanite Christians – the victorious believer who lives in the joy that Christ gives us at salvation because they are living in obedience to the Word and the Spirit of God.
- **Carnality:** Is a way of saying "of the flesh" and "of the world." And one sure way to be robbed of the joy of your salvation is to forget we are not permanent residents. We are passing through, bound for Canaanite. We are called to be Canaanites, not Wilderness Wanderers.
- **Paul Lived from Prison at Already as Having Arrived in Canaan (v7-8):** (1) What He Did Not Value: He tells us three times in these verses: Whatever gains, I consider loss (v7); What is more, I consider everything a loss (v8); I consider them garbage (literally: dung) (v8). (2) What He Did: "Because of the surpassing worth (greater than all things) of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord (v8)
- **App:** I am bound for the Promised Land. I am bound for the Promised Land. Oh, who will come and go with me? I am bound for the Promised Land. Restore unto me the joy of my salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. For though your sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow. Though they are red as crimson, they will be as wool. Amen. Glory to His name.