

Beware! – Philippians 3:1-11

## I. INTRODUCTION

A. Read vs. 8-11

B. Insecticide

1. Ants are incredibly hardy creatures. Some species are difficult to get rid of.
2. Most insecticides only kill the ones they contact while the colony remains unfazed.
3. So exterminators use a **different** tactic. They leave poisoned food around the nest.
- a. Worker ants pick it up & take it back to the queen.
- b. Over a few days she's slowly poisoned & lays no more eggs.
- c. Soon there aren't enough workers to transport food to the colony & it dies.
4. The food the ants were eating has starved them to death.
5. That same process occurs **spiritually** when false teaching infects the Church.
6. Specially with a particular type of false teaching Paul warns about in our passage today.

## II. TEXT

A. V. 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.

1. Paul proves himself a true preacher when he says, "Finally." This is only the middle of the letter!
2. I've heard many preachers say "In conclusion" then go on for another 15 mins.
3. That's why when I say it, it **really is** the closing of the message.
- a. I figure once I say "*Finally*" you give me no more than a few minutes to end it.
- b. If I go longer than that, I've lost you.
4. 2 women who'd known each other in high school met in the store one day after not seeing each other for a few years. They took a few minutes to catch up.
- a. They found out both had come to faith & were going to different churches.
- b. One woman said, "I just love my pastor; he's so smart. He could talk for an **hour** on **anything**."
- c. The other woman said, "That's nothing. My pastor often talks for **two** hours on **nothing**."
5. Paul says "Finally" because he's finished the **main** things he wanted to tell them.
6. He has a few minor things he wants to pass along before signing off.
7. The first is - "**Rejoice in the Lord**."
- a. **Delight** in Him. // **Celebration** ought to be a part of the normal Christian life.
- b. A **depressed** Christian ought to be an oxymoron.
- c. We can rejoice because we are loved by a good God & have the sure hope of heaven.
8. Then he says - "**to write the same things to you is not tedious, rather it's safe**"
- a. Another thing Paul wanted to tell them before signing off was to **watch out for false teachers**.
- b. He'd warned them **before**. But he knows he needs to **remind** them because it's easy to forget.
9. This [brain] is a amazing **forgetery**.
- a. I regularly forget where I put my keys.
- b. I forget important dates. I've even forgotten my age.
- c. There are times when I'll walk into the garage to do something, but when I get there forget what it was.
- d. I have to go back to the kitchen to remember what it was I went into the garage for.
10. God repeats Himself often in the Bible; not to make it a big book, but because **repetition is crucial to learning**.
11. The average length of time a pastor in the USA stays in the same church is only 2 years.
- a. Many pastors have an inventory of enough sermons to cover 2 years.
- b. Then they move to **another church** where they preach them over again.
12. The pastor who stays in the same church for a long time faces a challenge to keep his messages fresh & engaging.
- a. Our culture just **loves the new thing**.
- b. The marketing industry knows this. That's why they're forever making **new** models & products with the label = "**New & Improved**."
- c. This longing for novelty has infected the Church.
- d. Many Christians are always on the lookout for the new thing God is doing.

- e. They get fidgety when they hear something they've heard before.
- 13. I've been pastoring here for close to 30 years & know the pressure to be novel.
- a. The holidays are specially difficult because how many different ways can you preach about Christmas or Easter?
- b. As great as the desire is to teach something new, I know how important it is to **constantly return to** the core truths of the Faith & **remind you of them**.
- c. Let's not forget that what's **repetition for some** is **new to others**.
- d. And even if we've heard it before, we need to be **reminded** of it because we **DO** forget.
- 14. I'd rather repeat the things that make us strong & safe & be called tedious,  
Than lay out new things that tickle ears but don't deepen us in the Faith.
- 15. I want to encourage you to **embrace the value of repetition**.
- a. If you find yourself saying, "Oh yeah, I remember hearing this,"
- b. Follow it up with this, "Am I living it?" Or have you forgotten it?
- 16. If someone says to you, "Let's get a burrito after church." You don't say, "On no - I had a burrito years ago. I don't need another."
- 17. Now! - One of the things we need to be reminded of is **to be on the lookout for false teachers**.
- B. Vs. 2-3

<sup>2</sup> Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! <sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, & have no confidence in the flesh,

- 1. Paul has a specific group of false teachers in mind.
- a. He refers to some **spiritual parasites** known as **Judaizers**. They were **legalists** who said spiritual growth came by keeping the Jewish Law
  - 1) Things like circumcision, keeping the Sabbath & eating a strict kosher diet.
  - 2) Legalists are all about rules & rituals.
  - 3) They've figured God out & know exactly **what** to do & **how** to do it so they can secure the best spots in heaven.
- b. These Judaizers followed Paul around, creeping into churches he'd planted.
- c. They waited till he moved on, then snuck in to sway new believers to their brand of religion.
- d. They couldn't spread their silliness while Paul was there because he would have unmasked their error.
- e. So they waited till he was gone then snuck in to stage their campaign of deception.
- f. They told new Gentile Christians if they wanted to **really please God**, if they wanted to go **DEEP** in spiritual things, they needed to study & obey the Jewish law.
- g. They claimed Paul's Gospel was a good **start**, but only that - **a start**.
- h. True godliness, they claimed, was based on good works; & the harder they were, the more merit they earned.
- 2. Their message had no **traction** with unbelievers because it sounded like every other man-made religion which says what you **do** saves you.
- 3. The Gospel of Christ Paul preached said it's **not** what we do but what Jesus **DID** that saves us.
- a. Salvation is **all of grace**. It's a gift we can't earn - **only** receive by faith.
- b. Any attempt to **earn** salvation, **cancels** grace.
- c. But the Judaizers tried to **mix** work & grace.
- 4. So Paul calls them **dogs** = **mutts**.
- a. They weren't pure-bred; they're theological mutts;
- b. Trying to mix things that **can't** be mixed Truth w/ error; works w/ grace.
- 5. When Paul says, "**Beware of dogs**" don't picture your pet Fifi. Dogs weren't pets.
- a. They were vicious, diseased curs that traveled in packs, scavenging the streets & garbage dumps.
- b. When people saw them coming they got out of the way.
- c. Being bitten by a dog was dreaded because it often meant a painful death.
- 6. When Paul called the Judaizers 'dogs' the Philippians knew precisely how they were to deal with them:
- a. Stay **away** from them.
- b. Be on guard lest they be **infected** by their dangerous & diseased lies.
- 7. Paul says "**Beware of evil workers**" because far from the works the false teachers advocated being good, they were **evil** because they moved people from God's grace to self-effort.
- 8. Paul makes it crystal he was referring to Judaizers when he calls them the **mutilation**.

- a. It's a reference to **circumcision**, which had **no merit** for Gentiles in earning them brownie points with God.
- b. On the contrary, Paul disparages it as nothing more than disfigurement.
- c. **Jesus** saves - **not** circumcision. // Or keeping the Sabbath. // Or eating kosher.
- d. But let's not stop there because the principle extends beyond the works the Judaizers taught.
- e. There are legalists in the Church **today** who say the way of salvation is marked by strict rules & regulations.
  - 1) You have to go to church. // You have to pray so many hours a day.
  - 2) You must give so much. // You have to pray the rosary.
  - 3) You have to wear an officially approved wardrobe.
  - 4) You must jump thru all these religious hoops.
- 9. The Judaizers thought **physical** circumcision was an requirement to enter heaven. Paul says the only cutting that pleases God isn't done on the body; it's a far deeper work done in the heart.
  - a. It isn't made by a **blade in a man's hand**.
  - b. It's done by the **sword of the Spirit** when we put our trust in Christ alone & die to self.
- 10. The worship we give God isn't comprised of religious rules regarding foods, festivals, & special places.
  - a. We worship God anywhere, anytime.
  - b. We worship Him in every way because He has our hearts & minds.
- 11. We boast, not in the good we've done, but in what Jesus has done & continues to do by His Spirit.
- 12. Paul turns the tables on the legalists in v. 4 & takes them on, on their own ground.
- 13. Reading this we see **why** the Judaizers didn't want to face Paul. He **annihilates** their position.

C. Vs. 4-6

<sup>4</sup> though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: <sup>5</sup> circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

- 1. Paul says to the Judaizers, "I'm no Johnny-come-lately to this thing of trying to earn my way to heaven. - If you want to compare, see how you stack up against **my** list of accomplishments."
- 2. Then he gives his credentials . . .
  - a. He came from a godly home that raised him according to the strictest rules.
  - b. He was a Jew thru & thru, by birth, blood, & training.
  - c. Regarding the law, prior to his conversion to Christ, Paul was a member of the ultra-strict Pharisees. These guys were super-legalists!
    - 1) They were the hard-core religious fundamentalists.
    - 2) If religious rule-keeping were an Olympic sport, the Pharisees would take Gold, Silver & Bronze.
- d. Regarding Paul's personal passion for his religion, he'd seen the followers of Christ as a dangerous sect that had to be uprooted & wiped out.
- e. Then, as a last twist of the knife, Paul says that as far as thinking right standing with God came by keeping the law, **he was without blame**.

4. Now, that would be mere bragging were it not for the fact that Paul made these claims knowing his reputation before coming to faith in Christ was well-known both within & without the church.

- a. None of this could be disputed.
  - b. Regarding the outward expression of the Jewish Law – Paul had lived **faultlessly**.
- D. Vs. 7-9

<sup>7</sup> But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup> 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, & count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> & be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

- 1. One day on the outskirts of Damascus, as Paul was making his way there to continue the persecution of believers, Jesus appeared to him & showed him his error.
- 2. In that instant, Paul realized the **righteousness that saves** isn't something we obtain by our good deeds.
  - a. His entire life of trying to be **good enough** to pass God's inspection could **NEVER**, lift him over the bar

into salvation.

- b. So he laid it down, set it aside. As he says here, he **counted it as loss**.
  - c. Because he discovered **God's way of salvation** was so much better!
  - d. Paul realized what you & I must realize - **Salvation isn't a prize we earn or win**.
  - e. It's a **gift** God gives those who believe in Jesus.
3. Look at it here in v. 9 -

<sup>9</sup> & be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

- a. Either we stand before God in **our** righteousness based on how well we've kept the law.
- b. Or we stand before Him in the perfect righteousness of Christ by faith.

4. **Whose righteousness are you counting on today?**

- 1) If you're trusting in your own - careful! How you doing with that?
- 2) You see, there's a **set of rules** you have to live by, if you want to go that route.
- 3) You can't make up your own rules; They're God's rules you have to play by.
- 4) They're in here - 10 Commandments.
  - a) No god but God.
  - b) Never used the name of God in vain.
  - c) Keep the Sabbath
  - d) Don't steal, lie, covet.
  - e) Most people think judgment works like this – [balance]
  - f) Judgment is more like this – [tablets]
- 5) So, if you break even one of the Commandments - & you have, you have to bring a sacrifice to the temple in Jerusalem & give it to a priest to offer up on the altar to cover your sin.
- 6) You haven't done that because there is no temple; it was destroyed 2000 years ago.
- 7) The temple with all its service was meant to be a **temporary measure** until Jesus came & **completed** what the law required.

5. That's what Paul realized that day outside Damascus when Jesus appeared to him.

6. Have **you** realized it? The righteousness you need to be saved doesn't come **from** your works. It comes from HIS!

- a. Trust in Christ, that when He died on that cross, He paid the penalty for your sins.
- b. And that when He rose from the dead, it was with the power to give you new life.
- 7. Don't miss what Paul is saying in vs. 7-8. There's no **mixing** works & grace. There's no **merging** our own efforts at being righteous with the gift-righteousness of Christ.
- 8. Paul see his religious self-effort before coming to Christ as nothing more than rubbish - refuse; something pathetic & embarrassing to be left & forgotten.
- 9. In Isa. 64:6, the prophet says all our righteousness is like filthy rags.
  - a. If you visit someone in the hospital, you'll see covered disposal bins in the hallways.
  - b. They're where infected towels & bandages are thrown for removal to a secure site where they are treated & burned.
  - c. The waste inside those bins is nasty-gross. No one would think of reusing those bandages.
  - d. That's what Isaiah says our **righteousness, our best** is like to God - toxic waste.
  - e. Imagine how bad our **sin** must be in God's sight.

10. The point is - we can't save ourselves. Only Jesus can save us. We receive that salvation by faith in Him.

E. Vs. 10-11

<sup>10</sup> that I may know Him & the power of His resurrection, & the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, <sup>11</sup> if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- 1. Whereas Paul had thrown himself into being a devoted Pharisee, now that he's come to the truth, he **abandons** himself to one all-consuming passion to know, love, & serve Jesus.
- 2. The Gospel not only held forth the Good News of forgiveness of sins; it meant a **new life** - with the power to live the kind of life he'd worked so hard for as a Pharisee.
- 3. The good works he now performed flowed from **love** rather than **law**,  
from **appreciation** rather than **ambition**.
- 4. He didn't do them to **gain** acceptance; he did them because he was **already** accepted.

5. When Paul was a religious zealot **without** Christ, he didn't face much opposition from the world.
- a. The devil doesn't hassle those already in his camp.
  - b. He doesn't care how he gets people, whether thru gross immorality or religious morality,
    - 1) As long as they stay clear of Jesus, that's fine with him.
    - 2) There will be a lot of religious people in hell because they never trusted in Christ.
    - 3) They thought their good deeds would outweigh the bad.
  - c. Paul didn't suffer the world's opposition before he was born again.
  - d. But as soon as he came to faith in Christ, he knew opposition for the cause of Christ.
  - e. As we saw last time, Paul wasn't bummed by suffering.
  - f. He counted it as **evidence** of His new life in Christ.
6. He knew that when he suffered, it was an invitation by the Holy Spirit to die to self & let the resurrected life of Christ live **through** him.

### III. CONCLUSION

- A. Next Week –
- B. Altar Call