

Introduction: I was talking to a friend recently who made an important observation. He said: It seems to me that we much too often forget The Holy Spirit. *** The Holy Spirit convinces us we are sinners who need The Righteousness of Christ Jesus. (*John 16:7-15*) The Holy Spirit brings our dead spirits to life and delivers us from following powerful spirit working disobedience, namely Satan – the devil. (*Ephesians 2:1-10*) The Holy Spirit empowers us to live lives that please God, and enables us to do the obedience of faith. (*Romans 1:1-6; 2 Timothy 1:7-10*) *** The Holy Spirit drives the big idea of today's passage: Those who are under God's Covenant of Grace IN Jesus are serving by His Spirit and boasting IN Christ, having moved beyond trusting in their own efforts (in the 'flesh'). *** So, let's dig into the beginning of the rest of the exhortations Paul wrote to the brothers he loved in the church he planted in Philippi.

I. Further, rejoice in the Lord and look out for those trusting circumcision; because we, by God's Spirit, are serving and boasting in Christ Jesus. (*Verses 1-3*)

A. Further brothers, rejoice in the Lord; writing the same things to you all is for your safety. (*Verse 1*)

1. My brothers [this is] the rest: Rejoice IN the Lord! (*Verse 1a*)

The rest: The word used here can mean finally. But in the majority of the over fifty times it is used it means: the rest, the other, further or moreover. (E.g., *Romans 1:13; 11:7; 1 Corinthians 4:2; 7:12; 11:34; Galatians 2:13; Ephesians 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; 5:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:1*)

Affection: By calling them brothers, Paul is again showing his affection for the people in the church in Philippi.

Even as he begins a section heavy in exhortations, he addresses them as brothers (and sisters – Lydia, *Acts 16*).

IN the Lord: All true joy is experienced only IN the Lord. Only those who are IN The Lord Jesus by the birth given by The Holy Spirit have BOTH abundant life AND joy.

2. To write the same to you all (is) to me indeed not tiresome; but to you all (is) safe. (*Verse 1b*)

Safe: At the founding of the church (*Acts 16*), and in later visits, like any good teacher, Paul made sure they both knew what the Lord required of them and that they were doing it. This ongoing strengthening of disciples was Paul's pattern (*Acts 14:21-23*)

B. Carefully look at the evil dogs of the 'mutilation', because we are the circumcision, who by the Spirit of God are serving and boasting, not having trusted the 'flesh'. (*Verses 2-3*)

1. Look out for the dogs! Look out for the evil workers! Look out for the concision! (*Verse 2*)

Three times: Paul uses the powerful rhetorical device of emphatic repetition. And he uses strong words: dogs (unclean to Israelites), evil workers and (literally) mutilators.

Word play: The King James Version preserves the word play in the original contrasting 'concision' here with 'circumcision' (*verse 3*). Again, concision is a synonym for mutilation. These Judaizing Christians want to subject non-Jews to circumcision in addition to faith IN The Lord Jesus Christ!

2. Because we, we are the circumcision. (*Verse 3a*)

Emphatic 'we': By strongly joining himself (a Torah keeping Jew) with his non-Jewish believer brothers in Philippi, Paul makes an important point about the church uniting Jews and non-Jews, consistent with the outcome of the Jerusalem Council (*Acts 15*). And, this verse is the heart of his exhortation for how they are to work out their salvation (following up on *2:12-16*).

3. We, by The Spirit of God, are serving and boasting (*Jeremiah 9:24; 1 Corinthians 1:26-34*) IN Christ Jesus. (*Verse 3b*)

Serve: Paul uses the noun from this verb when he urged the brothers in Rome to offer their bodies to God as their spiritual service to Him (*Romans 12:1*). Under the Mosaic Covenant it was used of the Passover service and the service of the priests in offering sacrificial burnt offerings and peace offerings. (*Exodus 12:1-28; Joshua 22:27, LXX*).

Holy Spirit: In addition to what has already been said about the work of The Holy Spirit, Jesus said He will be with His people by The Holy Spirit, who also will teach His people all things, remind them of all He said (as written in The Gospels), give them peace in a troubled world, and testify to Jesus through them (*John 14:15-27; 15:26-27*). All of this is how disciples of Jesus are to be serving God.

True service of God is IN The Spirit

4. And having no confidence in 'flesh'. (*Verse 3c*)

No confidence: With this phrase, Paul is transitioning to telling his story of how by his own efforts he was unable to attain to the righteousness of Christ he gained through the faith of Christ (*3:9*).

Following the 'flesh' does not bring righteousness

II. I have more reason to trust in the 'flesh': I am a Hebrew of Hebrews, according to zeal persecuting the church after becoming blameless according to the 'law' (Torah). (*Verses 4-6*)

A. I am also having cause to trust in the 'flesh' – more than any other. (*Verse 4*)

1. Although I am having confidence in the flesh. (*Verse 4a*)

Reverse testimony: Paul now reminds everyone how he was advancing in Judaism beyond his peers, being more exceedingly zealous to the traditions of his fathers; but, God called him to preach The Gospel revealed to him by Jesus Christ – The Gospel that opposes the 'flesh'! (*Galatians 1:11-16*)

Following the 'flesh' does not bring righteousness

2. If any other is thinking to trust in 'flesh' – I (am) more. (*Verse 4b*)

Foolishness: When confronting the church in Corinth about the 'super-apostles' Paul foolishly boasted about his past accomplishments (in the 'flesh') as an Israelite of Abraham AFTER saying he is now fighting with divine weapons as he preaches The Gospel, and only boasts IN The Lord. (*2 Corinthians 11:16-22*)

Following the 'flesh' does not bring righteousness

- B. I am a blameless seven-fold Israelite, beginning with being circumcised on the eighth day. (*Verses 5-6*)

Present tense: Although he is talking about his past way of life, his past influences who he IS now, in the present.

1. On the eighth day: circumcised. (*Verse 5a*)

Abrahamic Covenant: The condition of the Covenant God made with Abraham was that every male had to be circumcised on the eighth day (*Genesis 17:9-14*). But, Paul now knows Yahweh also spoke of heart circumcision, now fulfilled in the Covenant of Christ: first the truth of heart circumcision (*Deuteronomy 10:15-18*); then the promise of heart circumcision (*Deuteronomy 30:5-6*); and finally the prophetic command to allow heart circumcision (*Jeremiah 4:3-4*).

2. Of the race of Israel. (*Verse 5b*)

Birthright: This means that by his birth (genetically) Paul was also under the Mosaic Covenant.

3. Of the tribe of Benjamin. (*Verse 5c*)

Moses: When Moses blessed the tribes, Benjamin was called the beloved of Yahweh who would rest shielded in Him (*Deuteronomy 33:12*). Saul of Tarsus claimed this blessing.

First king: The first king of Israel was Saul of Gibeah from the tribe of Benjamin. (*1 Samuel 9:13-17; 10:1, 17-26; 11:12-15*) Paul was given the name of Saul at birth in recognition of Israel's first king.

4. A Hebrew of Hebrews. (*Verse 5d*)

Pivot: Up to this point, Paul has talked about his heritage. After this he will talk about how he lived prior to his conversion, especially in light of the law (Torah).

5. According to law (Torah) a Pharisee. (*Verse 5e*)

Testimony: In his testimonies before the seventy elders of the Sanhedrin and King Agrippa Paul called himself a Pharisee with a hope in the resurrection of the dead and said he lived according to the strictness of that sect (*Acts 23:6-8; 26:4-5; Galatians 1:14*).

Jewish Christians: But now, Paul saw a great number of Jews believe in the Gospel he preached with Barnabas at Iconium (*Acts 14:1*), and some of these Jewish Christians demanded that non Jews must be circumcised (*Acts 15:5*). Even though they were judged to be wrong by the first Church Council in Jerusalem, many were traveling hundreds of miles to push their 'fleshly' requirement of circumcision in addition to faithful obedience to Christ by the grace of The Holy Spirit. Paul says he knows where this false doctrine is coming from because he was there. And this is why he is using such strong rhetoric to keep the believers in Philippi safe (*verse 1*).

6. According to zeal: I was persecuting the church. (*Verse 6a*)

Former zeal: He was at, and approving of, the stoning of Stephen (*Acts 8:1*). And, while Philip made disciples in Samaria and baptized a eunuch from Ethiopia (*Acts 9:4-39*), Saul was still breathing threats and murder against The Lord's disciples and received permission to bind any who followed The Way in Damascus to bring them to Jerusalem (*Acts 9:1-2*).

Curse of The Cross: As a good Jewish Pharisee, he knew the Torah said anyone who was hung on a tree was cursed (*Deuteronomy 21:22-23*). He knew Jesus was crucified on the tree of The Cross and was therefore cursed. But now he knows Christ became a curse for our sake to redeem us from the curse we are under because we cannot always do all that is written in the Torah (*Galatians 3:14*).

7. And blameless according to the in the law (Torah of) righteousness. (*Verse 6b*)

Blameless: Five times in *Psalms 18* David says he is blameless before Yahweh (*verses 23, 25 [twice], 30, 32*).

It would seem Paul used this standard of being blameless before he was IN Christ. But now he has said as his brothers in Philippi live out what God is working in them, they may prove themselves blameless (*2:12-15*).

Theme verse: All these strong statements support the reason Paul wrote this letter: for their 'progress and joy in the faith' (*1:25*). He wrote to believers in Corinth, righteousness is not in the law (Torah); but, believers 'become the righteousness of God IN Him [Christ]' (*2 Corinthians 5:20-21*).

Pride: But when Paul was in the 'flesh' he proudly thought he could be righteous by his own efforts.

Application: Therefore, we too must never put any trust in our birthright, or in our religious practices, or even in our zealous deeds done for God according to His Word.

Following the 'flesh' does not bring righteousness

Bottom line: May we all live by The Truth that joy comes from the leading of The Holy Spirit, SO we may serve God and continually boast in the Messiah-Savior (Christ Jesus).

True service of God is IN The Spirit

Conclusion: Rejoicing in the Lord is the fruit of those who are serving by The Spirit of God and boasting IN Christ Jesus; who are having NO trust in the 'flesh' – human effort and practice.

Following the 'flesh' does not bring righteousness