

The Book of Philippians

Notes: Doug Hamilton

- Even though he was supposed to stay with Paul for the duration of the imprisonment, he was sent back to bring the letter and great joy of his presence. Nothing seems to encourage like a homecoming. The smile on Paul's face while meditating on Epaphroditus' arrival should bring joy to not only the Philippians, but to the present day readers as well.
- Like any good soldier returning victoriously from the front lines of war, the Philippians should celebrate their hero that came to the aid of Paul. That is the language which is being used here, the celebration of a hero in his victory.

Summary on the example of Epaphroditus:

- Epaphroditus was a true hero in every sense of the word. He was willing to brave the hundreds of miles, face deadly illness and even scorn from the guards to come to the aid of another godly hero name Paul. He thought nothing about putting his life in danger for another. Once again, we must be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren whenever the calling comes. *1 John 3:16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* Follow this man's example and be a hero to your fellow saints.

We would do well to surround ourselves with as many of godly examples as possible. Remember Jesus; remember Paul and the other apostles; remember Timothy and Epaphroditus; remember your elders; remember your fellow saints in the kingdom. They are all the for our example to continue in the faith.

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(Philippians 3:1-11) Protecting the Morale of the Troops.

In the last lesson we covered the need of every good soldier to be willing to lay their lives down for our fellow servants, just like Jesus laid down his life for us. In this lesson we must talk about dying to ourselves. In a war, there will be sacrifice and in a spiritual war there are always casualties as well. We must never forget that we must keep the morale high if we expect to press on through the battles. That is the aim of this lesson titled "How do we keep the morale of the soldier high?"

There is a command to Rejoice

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

- Paul is once again touching on one of the primary themes of the letter, joy. He had just completed a section of the letters discussing the need to be a good soldier of Jesus, just like he was and the others who were willing to lay their lives on the line. If one thought about that too long it would be easy to forget that great goal of the Christian life, which is joy.
 1. It was with JOY that Paul offered his prayers for the Philippians in 1:4.
 2. It was with JOY that Paul proclaimed the gospel to the world in 1:18.
 3. It was with JOY that Paul had confidence of his return to the Philippians in 1:25.
 4. It was with JOY that Paul reflected on the unity they were to have as a church in 2:2.
 5. It was with JOY that Paul was willing to pour himself as a drink offering for the Christians in 2:17.
 6. It was with JOY that Paul urged the Philippians to do the same in 2:18.
 7. It was with JOY that Paul urged the Philippians to receive Epaphroditus in 2:29.
 8. It was with JOY that Paul described his emotion toward the Christians in 4:1.
 9. It was with JOY that Paul doubly asked the Philippians to excel for in 4:4.
 10. It was with JOY that Paul would receive the gifts of love from the Philippians in 4:10.
- One could not doubt that a primary theme in the Letter of Philippians and in the life of Paul was joy. It is the gladness or happiness that is not subject to the happenings of the world. It is the attitude of gratitude that you are a child of God with a message of hope in your heart, knowing that nothing can really take it away from you.
- When Paul tells them to "Rejoice in the Lord", he implicates it is the decision of the Christian to look at life through the eyes of God and not the eyes of the world. It might seem awkward to say this in between self-

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sacrifice and willing-attacks from the enemies of God, but on the other hand it does not. This is because unless we consciously will to have the joy of the Lord in us, we will not have it. It should be the Christian's goal in life to permeate every cell of his being with the joy of the Lord. It is the job of the soldier of Christ to keep the morale high with joy! But the world has a way of robbing us of joy. Here are three things to look out for.

1) Guard Against False Teachers.

Philippians 3:2-3 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³ for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

- Apparently Paul had written at least one other letter to the Philippians prior to this concerning evil influences creeping into the church family. He refers to the false teacher in three terms.
 1. Dogs: These creatures might be lovable parts of the family in this hemisphere, but in that day in the Middle-east they were viewed as the lowest of all scavengers. They would often roam the streets in packs, attacking passersby and digging through rubbish. In fact to the Jew, the dog was the lowest of all creatures on the planet. The Jews actually referred to the gentiles of the day as "dogs" just to be cruel. Paul is now throwing the same term back on those false teachers who are trying to upset the church. They are like dogs, scavenging around church members and seeking to devour souls.
 2. Evil Workers: The Jews commonly taught they were workers of the righteousness of the earth, but in this case they are only leading people further from the truth. They are trying to impose their Jewish traditions on a gentile Christian.
 3. False Circumcision: Paul uses a phrase here that combines circumcision and castration. One was commanded under the Law and the other was forbidden by the same (Lev 21:5). By doing such, it says they teach circumcision, but miss and cause castration. In trying to impose their Jewish traditions, they do the opposite and bring insult to God.
- Paul reminds them that the faithful Philippians are the ones whom have it right, for they died to their worldly ways in search of the spiritual. They worship in the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus and are not bound to fleshly rules of the Judaizers. They were to BEWARE of the and be on guard for false teachers.

2) Guard Against False Worth.

Philippians 3:4-7 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as

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to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. ⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

- It would be natural for any of the Judaizers sitting in the presence of the reading of the letter to say, "Paul is a Christian and he does not know what these things mean to us." Before they could make that argument in defense of their wicked behavior, Paul throws his pedigree out for all to see. He wants them all to see that he was far more Jewish than they.
 1. Paul was circumcised on the eighth day because he was born into Judaism, not a convert later in life like the Judaizers.
 2. He was of the nation of Israel, not of some other nation like the Jewish converts they sought to make.
 3. Concerning which Tribe it was that of Benjamin, the one being absorbed into the more faith Judah.
 4. He was a Hebrew among Hebrews, meaning he stood out among his countrymen.
 5. Concerning the Law, he was a Pharisee. They spent years and even decades preparing to inherit their role. They had to memorize the first five books of the Law before they were finished. He studied under the feet of Gamaliel, the great teacher of the Law of that day.
 6. As to zeal against the church, he persecuted it. He sought to wipe them out. Not even they could boast of Jewish patriotism such as that.
 7. Concerning righteousness he was a standout. He lived his life with a clear conscious.
- There was not one single Judaizer in the first century who could boast a strong Jewish history. Paul put them in the position that he knew how they felt and why they felt it, but they were missing the rest of the story. Paul was not going to trust in his pedigree, but in a personal relationship with Christ.
- He guarded against false teachers.

3) Guard Against False Losses

Philippians 3:8-11 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- Paul was an individual that came from wealth, education, a career, prestige and connections. As he would say in the closing chapter, he had prosperity and abundance. He had it all going for him. When he converted on that Road to Damascus those many years prior, that all changed.

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Within days his fellow countrymen were waiting outside the gates to kill him. Many of those in his circle would reject him. He lost it all, including the Law that he so adorned. It would have been so easy to be caught up in loss, but this was not so.

- All those things that he had he was willing to slide over into the loss category for a wonderful connection with Christ. He counted all those things as worthy of the manure pile, and that is the word he used, to have a faith-based personal relationship with Jesus. Even the very thought of dying for Christ in the mission field brings joy to his heart because he sees it through the perspective of heaven. Just the thought of being resurrected from the dead and with Jesus makes all those things lost seem like a gain.
- He guarded himself from false losses.

In Closing:

When we are out on the battlefields of the Christian life, we must keep the joyful morale high in order to carry out the spiritual warfare. If you do not, then we might die behind enemy lines.

1) Don't let the false teachers destroy that joy with their hopeless teachings. They will say things, bind things upon you that will rob you of joy.

2) Don't let the false worth deceive you into trusting yourself rather than trusting Christ. You will let you down, but Jesus will never let you down.

3) Don't let the false losses that you have had as a Christian get you down and rob the joy from you. Don't believe the world that you are missing a lot, but rather that you have gained far more in the end.

If we will focus on these three areas in our warrior status in Christ, we will always be able to have the joy that Christ commands us to hold in our hearts.