Two lessons from Philippians 3

*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.* ***2*** *Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.* ***3*** *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—* ***4*** *though I myself have reasons for such confidence.*

*If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:* ***5*** *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;* ***6*** *as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.*

***7*** *But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.* ***8*** *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* ***9*** *and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.* ***10*** *I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,* ***11*** *and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

***12*** *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.* ***13*** *Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,* ***14*** *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

***15*** *All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.* ***16*** *Only let us live up to what we have already attained.*

***17*** *Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.* ***18*** *For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.* ***19*** *Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.* ***20*** *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,* ***21*** *who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

The first instruction Paul gives is - Rejoice in the Lord - Philippians 3:1

This verse completely sums up the Christian life - Rejoice in the Lord! Rejoicing in the Lord is the distinctive sign of a victorious Christian.

A Christian that is not rejoicing has not fully grasped the importance of rejoicing regardless of the trials or circumstances, and is not living victoriously.

Rejoicing is the one attitude that brings peace and contentment to the heart. It is a sign of true belief in who God is and that He will do what He says He will do.

A strong Christian is one who is completely fearless, continually cheerful, and constantly in trouble. It’s the continual rejoicing in the midst of trouble that marks the Christian life.

In contrast, the sign of unbelief in the Christian life is always grumbling and complaining. Sadly, this is what the world sees from many Christians. This shows how little we truly believe in the God we love.

There is a story about a little girl who went to visit a farm, and on her first encounter with a mule, after studying it for some time, she exclaimed: “I don’t know what you are, but you must be a Christian. You look just like my grandpa.”

That is the impression of the world concerning Christians. We are a sad, somber, solemn lot, casting gloom on every occasion. But that is not true Christianity!

The mark of a true Christian is a smile of confidence, in spite of the circumstances. It may be a smile showing through tears, but it is a smile nonetheless. It comes because of the understanding and acceptance that all events are ordered by the Lord. He is sovereign! He is in control! That’s the secret of rejoicing in the Lord! It comes from a quiet trust in His ability to handle whatever comes. When we learn this secret we find that bridges mysteriously appear over every chasm we encounter. We receive an invisible strength to help us handle every stress life throws at us.

No matter how long you have been a Christian, if you are still grumbling and complaining, griping and grouching about what life gives you, let me be the one to remind you again, just as Paul reminded the readers of Philippians, Rejoice in the Lord!

King David gave us many examples of how to praise the Lord within the Psalms. One that I really like is Psalm 103. When you are down or struggling, remember this Psalm, read it aloud, and allow it to soothe your soul.

*Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.* ***2*** *Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—****3*** *who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,* ***4*** *who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,* ***5*** *who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.* ***6*** *The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.* ***7*** *He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel:* ***8*** *The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.* ***9*** *He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;* ***10*** *he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.* ***11*** *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;* ***12*** *as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.* ***13*** *As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;* ***14*** *for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.* ***15*** *The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field;* ***16*** *the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.* ***17*** *But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children—****18*** *with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.* ***19*** *The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.* ***20*** *Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.* ***21*** *Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.* ***22*** *Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, my soul.*

So the first instruction was “Rejoice in the Lord!”

The second instruction Paul gives is - Put no confidence in the flesh - Philippians 3:3

Here Paul contrasts the measure of true spirituality with those who put their confidence in some type of self-effort.

The world today continually strives to get us to put confidence in the flesh. From childhood, this is how we are told that we can accomplish things in life. But this is what destroys human life. Our strength is not to come from self-confidence, but rather through our confidence in God, and His faithfulness.

It is imperative that we face life recognizing we are weak, ineffectual, and unable, so that it might drive us back to the one who is totally adequate, and can be our total strength. That is the way God intended for us to live.

The spirit of self-confidence is one of the deadliest lies ever perpetrated upon the human race. Don’t buy into the lie! Instead heed the words of Solomon as written in Proverbs 3:5-8.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.*

There is so much more that can be taken from this chapter but today I just wanted to share these two instructions because I believe that if we will do our best to Rejoice in the Lord and Put no Confidence in the Flesh but rather in the strength and faithfulness of the Lord, the rest will naturally flow out of our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Father God, may your Holy Spirit enable us to rejoice in the Lord even when life gets hard, and may He remind us to have confidence in You alone. Amen!