

# Dear Church

## 8 – Proof is in the Heart

### Philippians 3 (NIV)

*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 <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

*<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.*

*<sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> 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.*

## Dear Church

### Religion can get in the way of belief –

- We tend to give more credit or respect to the outward practice of being religious, than we do to the change that is in us – through faith in Jesus Christ.
- And we use religious protocol and standards to bring judgment on those who have stepped out of bounds, or away from the “practice”.
- Paul pointed this out about those who couldn’t let go of their outward marking (circumcision) and “branded” their faith by the religious practice of the law instead of making their relationship with Jesus the center point of their faith lives.
  - *<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>18b</sup> many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.*

Being truly marked by the Life of Christ is realized only in those who worship God with genuine, spiritual worship and who gain their identity in honoring Christ (“glory” or “boast” in Christ) as their Savior **rather than finding identity in their own religious accomplishments** (i.e. Jewish circumcision).

“I mean that you have been saved by grace because you believed. You did not save yourselves; it was a gift from God. You are not saved by the things you have done, so there is nothing to boast about. God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us new people so that we would spend our lives doing the good things he had already planned for us to do.”

Ephesians 2:8-10 ERV

## Dear Church

### What do we do with our “religious” accomplishments?

Use Paul as an example:

#### 1. He was covered by religious requirements.

*“<sup>4</sup> 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 [eagerness and intense interest in the Jewish faith], persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.*

#### 2. His conversion, though, is based on total surrender to Jesus – “I want to know Christ - ONLY!”

Compare and contrast Paul’s use of phrases in the following

*<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 <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead...*

*<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.*

*“Live up to what we have already attained” - “Live up to” calls for Christians to maintain a consistent life in harmony with the understanding of God's truth they already have.*

## Dear Church

What is our goal as true believers?

1. Be everything Christ created us to be – “to win the prize for which God called him in Christ Jesus”.

*<sup>12</sup> 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.** <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> **I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.***

2. See citizenship as nothing in this world – but in the kingdom of heaven.

*<sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> 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.*

3. Join Paul’s example in this rightful attitude:

*<sup>17</sup> 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.*