



Transcendent Joy: Learning How to Rejoice No Matter What

Message #14: **Safeguarding Your Faith** (Philippians 3:1-3) | March 5, 2023

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- We all understand the need for protecting our life, goods and property in a fallen world. We also recognize the importance of safeguarding our faith in a world full of spiritual enemies. We are regularly warned to “*beware*” or “*take heed*” or to “*be on the alert*”.
- Paul uses the word “*safeguard*” to help us see some of the ways we need to keep our guard up in order to protect our faith.
- We can find five spiritual safeguards to apply in our faith and keep it protected.

1. **Rejoice in the Lord** (3:1)

- For the twelfth time, Paul highlights the virtue of joy which becomes an unexpected safeguard for our faith.
- As stated before, rejoicing is commanded and a present tense verb which calls for a continual demonstration. This joy is enabled by God’s supernatural gift (Ps. 4:7) which provides a settled confidence in who He is (Ps. 16:11) and what He’s done for us (Ps. 92:4). God always enables what He expects even in the face of trying circumstances and people.
- The focus of rejoicing is “*in the Lord*”. As the source and object of our joy, we can expect God to give us strength during times of sorrow and suffering that want to rob us of that joy (Ps. 51:12; Neh. 8:10).
 - God’s strength keeps us grounded in His joy-fueling attributes (i.e., grace, mercy, compassion, love, providence, faithfulness, etc.).
 - This joy also helps us maintain an eternal perspective that understands the trials of life are perfecting tools God uses for our good (Jms 1:2-4; Rom. 5:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:6-8)

2. **Recognize your enemies** (3:2)

- This second safeguard is designed to keep us in the know about Satan’s subtle and subversive perversions of the truth. Half of the battle is knowing your enemy, so Paul uses the word “*beware*” (be on the lookout, be on alert) three times to warn us about a group of false teachers known as Judaizers who promote a self-driven counterfeit Christianity.
 - Paul sarcastically calls the Judaizers “*dogs*” (a term of derision and one Jews used of Gentiles who viewed them as unclean in not following the Mosaic law) because they took pride in being born a Jew and believed that status made them right with God. However, God is no respecter of persons and saves all the same way (Rom. 10:12-13)
 - Paul describes the Judaizers as “*evil workers*” because their good works were viewed as meriting God’s favor and a righteous standing before Him.
 - Paul calls the Judaizers “*false circumcision*” or “*mutilators of the flesh*” because they took pride in religious rituals they thought would save them. Instead of using the word for circumcision, Paul uses the word for mutilation to describe what this physical act of cutting away a foreskin meant if it was practiced in order to produce a right standing with God.
- Leaders have a duty to warn the Lord’s church of dangerous teaching (Titus 1:9-10)

3. **Render Spirit-led worship** (3:3a: “*who worship in the Spirit of God*”)

- Another unexpected safeguard is how we worship. The “*true circumcision*” is not about being ritualistic mutilators of the flesh but being true worshippers who are circumcised in the heart (Rom. 2:25-29).
- We were born false worshippers who bow to false idols (Rom. 1:25). But as followers of Christ, we now worship the true and living God and give Him all that we are, say, believe and do to all that He is and does. We worship Him “*in spirit and truth*” (John 4:24).
- We are now Spirit-led worshippers who honor God’s truth written by the “*Spirit of truth*” and exalt Jesus Christ which is one of the primary ministries of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26).

4. **Revel in Christ Jesus** (3:3b: “*and glory in Christ Jesus*”)

- This safeguard is all about boasting in the Person and work of Christ who by His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, high priestly work, reign as King, and coming judgment is pleased with us (Jer. 9:23-24) and guarantees our eternal protection.

5. Reject confidence in the flesh (3:3c: “*and put no confidence in the flesh*”)

- This final safeguard keeps us from living in the spiritual quicksand of a futile self-absorbed life. Paul uses the word “*flesh*” which has a range of meanings in Scripture. Here, it is used as a self-reliance in one’s ability to attain the righteousness that God requires and to earn a favorable verdict from God.
- Without Christ, everyone is powerless to effect an eternal change in their life and to achieve the righteousness of God in Christ. The flesh has no reason for confidence because it cannot please God , is unable to do so and attains the fruit of death (Rom. 8:6-8).
- Only those who reject self-reliance and humbly receive God’s gift of righteousness in Christ are truly right before God.