

Place: Lurgan Baptist 1:3:2015

## THE JOURNEY TO JOY

Reading: Philippians 3:1-9

### 11. GUARD THE GOSPEL

David Jeremiah tells that in 1858, a small, frail lad was born to a rich family in New York. Along with feeble eyesight, he suffered from asthma so severe that he sometimes couldn't blow out the bedside candle, nevertheless, he became one of the most powerful men on earth. At eleven years of age, his father told him that a good mind alone would not ensure success, that he must build himself a powerful new body to match it. So the lad spent thousands of hours chinning himself, lifting weights, and rattling a punching bag. It is little wonder that he rose like a rocket in the world of politics. He was elected to the New York Legislature at twenty-three, was a candidate for mayor at twenty-eight, U.S. Civil Service Commissioner under two Presidents, president of the Police Commission of New York, national hero as leader of the Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War at forty.

Then, in just three busy years, governor of New York, Vice-President and finally Teddy Roosevelt became President of the United States of America. War. *At five feet nine inches, Roosevelt was a small man who was made large through his commitment.* In many ways, the early life of Teddy Roosevelt parallels that of

the apostle Paul. They both inherited advantages and they both worked hard to give themselves additional advantages. *There is one huge difference, however, Roosevelt climbed to success in the system of the world. Paul became a success in the plan of God.* All the things that Roosevelt accomplished were *stepping-stones* for his ultimate achievement. All the things that Paul accomplished ( 3:5-6 ) were *stumbling blocks* to his acceptance with God. In Paul's case the " *things,*" he was living for before he knew Christ seemed to be very commendable. A religious life, obedience to the law, the defence of the religion of his fathers, but my .... none of those things satisfied him or gave him acceptance with God. One day, however Saul of Tarsus, met the Risen Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road, and on that day, Saul's values changed. *In this very passage Paul speaks about those things which he valued before conversion and then he speaks about the person he values since conversion.*

You see, sinister teachers of legalism had crept into the body attempting to seduce the Philippians into adding circumcision to the plan of salvation. They posed a very real threat to the church and Paul knew if he gave them an inch they would take a mile. And so Paul issues a serious warning. In effect he says, " *Guard the gospel,*" " *Rejoice in the Lord,*" the Philippians were not to rejoice in who they were and what they had done. They were to rejoice in Jesus Christ and all that He had done. Now there's a word in the passage that I want to use to unlock the rest of these verses this .... ! The word is found in ( 3:2 ) and its the word " *Beware,*" it means " *watch out,*" " *be careful,*"

“ *beware,*” “ *be on your guard.*” Beware of what ? Well, let me suggest a number of things.

**(1) BEWARE OF A THEOLOGY THAT DISTORTS THE GOSPEL:**

Do you get that ? (1) Or if you like beware of any doctrine that misrepresents the gospel. Do you see what Paul says in ( 3:2 ) ? Now who is Paul talking about ? Well, the answer takes us back to the early history of the church. Do you recall that from the very beginning the Gospel came “ *to the Jew first,*” ( Acts 3:26 Rom 1:16 ) So that the first seven chapters of the book of Acts deal only with Jewish believers or with Gentiles who were Jewish proselytes ( Acts 2:10 ) In ( Acts Ch 8 ) the message went to the Samaritans, but this did not cause to much of an upheaval since the Samaritans were at least partly Jewish. But when Peter went to the Gentiles in ( Acts Ch 10 ) this created an uproar. Peter was called on the carpet to explain his activities, after all these Gentiles in ( Acts Ch 10 ) had become Christians without first becoming Jews, and this was a whole new thing for the church.

It was touch and go for a while, but after Peter had explained God’s hand in Cornelius’ conversion, his Jewish-Christian brothers accepted his testimony and glorified God, that is until ( Acts Ch 15 ) when some legalistic teachers came to Antioch, and taught that the Gentiles in order to be saved, had to be circumcised and obey the law of Moses. Thus the bomb exploded.

*Good-bye, free grace ! Good-bye joy !* These men

called Judaizers did not deny salvation by grace outright. They simply said, salvation came by “ *grace plus ....,*” specifically “ *grace plus circumcision.*” They were saying, “ *A Gentile must first become a Jew before he can become a Christian. It’s not sufficient for them simply to trust Jesus Christ. They must also obey Moses.*” My .... this was a direct attack upon the principle of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That’s why Paul says (1) You see, one thing never failed to arouse Paul’s wrath and fire for controversy, and that was when the gospel was at stake. So he writes of these Judaizers, “ *Beware of dogs ....,*” ( 3:2 ) You see, Paul,

**(a) DESCRIBES THEM:**

“ *Dogs,*” speak of their DEPRAVITY: when you visit the land of Israel you’ll see of orthodox Jews. Do you know what the orthodox Jew called the Gentile ? A dog ! But here Paul calls orthodox Jews “ *dogs.*” He is not using names, rather he is comparing these false teachers to the dirty dogs who prowled about the cities feeding on the refuse and filth of the street. Like those dogs, these Judaizers snapped at Paul’s heels and followed him from place to place “ *barking,*” their false doctrines. They were troublemakers and carriers of dangerous infection.

“ *Evil workers,*” speak of their DEEDS: because these men taught that the sinner was saved by faith **plus** good works, especially the works of the law. Instead of bring folk nearer to the Lord they were taking them further from the Lord.

“ *The concision,*” or “ *mutilation,*” speak of their DOCTRINE: for these Judaizers taught that circumcision was essential to salvation. ( Acts 15:1 Gal 6:12-18 ) But Paul states that circumcision of itself is only a mutilation. The true Christian has experienced a spiritual circumcision in Christ and does not need any fleshly operations. ( Col 2:11 ) Oh, lets (1) Lets be on our guard against those who say “ *man can save himself.*” Let’s beware of those who teach that by confirmation, sprinkling, baptism, or the Lords table, a man can be made right before God. Let’s beware of those who add to the simplicity of the gospel, of those who seek to add a damnable plus to the gospel, and undermine the work of the cross. Do you ever hear folk saying “ *Unless you belong to our group, you cannot be saved,*” or “ *unless you participate in our ceremonies and keep our rules you cannot be saved,*” or “ *unless you were saved in our building, well you’re not really saved.*”

Do you ever that sort of talk ? Do you what they are doing ? They are adding to the gospel and denying the finished work of Christ. My .... Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians to make it clear that salvation is wholly by God's grace, through faith in Christ, “ *plus nothing.*” So Paul (a) But notice again, for Paul,

**(b) DISMISSES THEM:**

For he says, “ *we are the true circumcision,*” ( Rom 2:25-29 ) which “ *worship God in the spirit,*” Our spiritual worship has God as its supreme Object, the Spirit as its supreme Force, and Christ Jesus as its

supreme Joy. Moreover, our boast is only in Christ, and we have no confidence in the flesh. John Calvin says “ *To place one's trust in anything outside of Christ is to have confidence in the flesh.*” This distorts the gospel and endangers the soul. A lady was arguing with her pastor about faith and works. “ *I think that getting to heaven is like rowing a boat,*” she said. “ *One oar is faith and the other is works. If you use both, you get there. If you use only one, you go around in circles.*” “ *There is only one thing wrong with your illustration,*” replied the pastor. “ *Nobody is going to heaven in a rowing boat.*” My .... there is only “ *good work,*” that takes us to heaven and that is the finished work of Christ on the cross. Are you depending on that ? Are you trusting in Christ and Christ alone ? (1)

**(2) BEWARE OF A PHILOSOPHY THAT DELUDES THE GODLESS**

Paul was deluded. How ? Well, he had a theory, a concept that he could stand in the right before God by means of his good works. You see, when Paul was writing about these Judaizers he was not speaking from some ivory tower. He personally knew the futility of trying to attain salvation by means of good works. He says in effect, “ *I know what I'm speaking about, I'm not looking at this from the outside, indeed I'm going to prove to you that I had more reason to have confidence in the flesh, than they had.*” So in this intensely personal section Paul shows us his pedigree. He talks about,

**(a) HIS PROUD RELIGION:**

Paul was a Jew by religion. Do you see his Ceremonial Claim ? “ *Circumcised the eighth day,*” this was in strict accordance with the Law ( Gen 17:12 ) Do you see his National Claim ? “ *of the stock of Israel*”

Paul was born into a nation chosen and set apart by God. ( Rom 9:4-5 ) It was a great privilege for Saul of Tarsus to be born into a Jewish home, as it is today for a person to be born into a Christian home. Do you see his Tribal Claim ? “ *of the tribe of Benjamin,*” the tribe which remained true to David at the time of the division of the Hebrew kingdom. Do you see his Parental Claim ? “ *An Hebrew of the Hebrews,*” or “ *a Hebrew of Hebrews,*” in other words both Paul's parents were Hebrews. What a pedigree. Paul was certainly proud of his religion, but then he met Christ, and one glimpse of the Lord from Heaven was all it took to strip mere religion away from his soul forever.

My .... is Paul a picture of you ? Is your pedigree similar to Paul's ? Have you passed through the ceremonies of the church ? Sprinkling, confirmation, baptism and communion. Have you had the privilege of a Christian background ? Home ? Have you had a Protestant heritage ? Can you trace your ancestors back for generations ? Orangemen, in the Black, perhaps they were the founder members of some church. Proud religion that will dam your soul in hell.

### **(b) HIS PERSONAL RECORD:**

You know, when you go to Israel you'll see all sorts of Jews, orthodox, and non-orthodox. What kind of Jew was Paul ? He was a Fundamentalist Jew: “ *as*

touching the law, a Pharisee.” He belonged to the strictest sect of his religion. ( Acts 26:5 ) He was a Fanatical Jew: “ *concerning zeal persecuting the church,*” Do you recall that Saul “ *made havoc of the church,*” ? ( Acts 8:3 ) When the Jews stoned Stephen it was Saul of Tarsus who held their clothes. He was a Fastidious Jew: someone who paid great attention to detail for he says “ *touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless,*” not sinless but blameless, so strict had Saul been in his outward observance of the Old Testament law as interpreted by the Jewish Rabbi's. My .... no-one could point the finger of criticism at Saul of Tarsus. His outward conduct was irreproachable. Is this you ? Do you not like to be among God's people ? Does your life not put some Christians to shame ? Are you not a person of integrity, morality, and respectability ? My .... will you listen on, for Paul goes on to speak here of,

### **(c) HIS PRECISE RECKONING:**

For he says in ( 3:7 ) “ *But what things .... for Christ.*” Paul was looking at his religious balance sheet and counting up his gains. He spread out his bags of gold seven of them in ( 3:5-6 ) the Judaizers would have been delighted with every one of them. He picked them up and put them on the scales and then he looked at Christ. He could have one or the other, his accumulated gains as a religious man or Christ. He could not have both. He did not hesitate a moment. He picked up his once treasured gains and threw them away as trash. You see. like some of you Saul of Tarsus **was using the wrong measuring stick.** He was looking at *the*

*outside not the inside, he was comparing himself with standards set by men not by God. My .... when he looked at himself or others Saul considered himself to be righteous, but one day on the Damascus Road, he saw himself as compared with Jesus Christ and “ what things were gain to him he counted loss for Christ.”* What is the philosophy that deludes the godless ? Its the idea that because you are sprinkled you’re ready for heaven. The Roman Catholic Catechism says, “ *Infants unless baptised cannot enter into heaven.*” The Catechism of the Anglican church states, “ *In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.*” In a book entitled Presbyterianism Dr. Barkley says, “ *Baptism is more than a formal admission into the church it is a sacrament of regeneration through the Holy Spirit.*” ( The Truth about Baptism Robert Clarke p, 74-75 )

If that is not clear teaching on baptismal regeneration I don’t know what is ? And do you know something ? Its deluding the masses. What is the philosophy that deludes the godless ? It’s the concept that says, “ *My parents are believers, I’m a Protestant, in the Orange, surely this will swing open the gates of glory.*” My .... it will take you to the lowest hell. Is there no hope ? There is, for Paul speaks here about,

#### **(d) HIS PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS:**

This is not the works righteousness that we read of in ( 3:6 ) but the faith righteousness that we read of in ( 3:9 ) The former depends on the sinner, the latter

depends on the Saviour. My .... when Saul of Tarsus trusted Christ, he lost his own self-righteousness and gained the righteousness of Christ. The technical word for this is “ **Imputation,**” ( Rom 4:1-8 ) it means “ *to put to one’s account.*” What happened was this. *Sin was transferred from Paul’s account, and righteousness was transferred to Paul’s account.* Do you know what that did ? That made him right in the sight of God. What about you ? Have you exchanged your assets for Christ ? Have you by faith received the Saviour ? Has His righteousness been put to your account ? George Whitefield was one of the most effective preachers of the Gospel the church has ever known. His preaching trips to America were largely responsible for the Great Awakening that took place in the middle of the eighteenth century. As a teenager, Whitefield had desired to live a religious and serious life.

When he enrolled in college, he began to pray and sing psalms three times every day, in addition to his regular morning and evening devotional time. He religiously fasted every Friday and always on that day received the sacrament at a parish church near his college. He habitually attended public worship, and abstained from worldly pleasures. But during all this time, just like Paul, George Whitefield was lost. One day he was introduced to Charles Wesley who gave Whitefield a copy of a book by Henry Scougal, “ ***The Life of God in the Soul of Man.***” When George Whitefield read that book he realized he was not saved. He discovered that a man can go to church, say his prayers, receive the sacrament and yet not be a

Christian. His heart shuddered and he cried to God in prayer. “ *Lord if I am not a Christian, for Jesus Christ’s sake show me what Christianity is, that I may not be damned at last.*” George Whitefield read on and discovered that salvation “ *is a vital union with the Son of God, Christ formed in the heart.*” He says, “ *Oh what a ray of divine life did then break in upon my soul.*” My .... have you this vital union with the Son of God ? Have you come to recognise ?

*Not the labour of my hands  
Could fulfil Thy law's demands  
Nothing in my hand I bring  
Simply to Thy cross I cling  
Naked, come to Thee for dress  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace  
Foul, I to the fountain fly  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die*

### **(3) BEWARE OF A MENTALITY THAT DESTROYS THE GROWTH**

What is the mentality that stifles the growth of a professing Christian ? It’s the mentality that has blighted our province for years. Its the mentality that says, “ *I was saved at such and such a place, at such and such a time and that’s it ....,*” there’s been no growth, no progress, and no development. ( Matt 7:20 2 Tim 2:19 ) Now be honest, is this you ? How different this man was for I am struck by the fact that the years between the “ *counted,*” of ( 3:7 ) and the “ *count,*” of ( 3:8 ) had been for Paul years of spiritual progress. Isn’t it refreshing to hear an up to date

testimony ? Not one that needs the dust shaken off it, not one that’s dry because there’s been no progress. Let me suggest to you that Paul made progress in,

#### **(a) HIS KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST:**

Referring to his conversion he simply speaks about Christ. ( 3:7 ) But now he speaks about “ *the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*” ( 3:8 ) How is it with you ? How long have you been on the Christian pathway ? Do you know the Lord any better now, than when you were saved ? When George Truett was pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas a sceptic came up to him after a Sunday service, and this is what he said, “ *Dr. Truett, I want you to tell me the truth. Is Jesus Christ real to you ?*” The preacher looked at him and said, “ *Sir, Jesus Christ is more real to me than the air that I breathe and the skin on my flesh.*” My .... is the Lord Jesus real to you ? (a)

#### **(b) HIS DEDICATION TO CHRIST:**

In ( 3:7 ) he says, “ *I counted,*” that’s a Past Surrender: in ( 3:8 ) he says, “ *I count,*” that’s a Present Surrender, and then in ( 3:8 ) he says, “ *I do count,*” that’s a Progressive Surrender. Nothing represses the passion of his soul as he goes all out for Christ. You see, consecration is not a once for all experience. We must make good the vow we made by daily living for Christ. To Paul “ *my Lord,*” is not an empty expression of a spiritual sentiment, it reveals the allegiance that dominates his life. Nothing else counts but knowing and serving His Lord who has become so

real to him. My .... are you progressing in your dedication to Christ ?

**(c) IN HIS SUFFERING FOR CHRIST:**

For he says, “ *For whom I have suffered the loss of all things,*” ( 3:8 ) Did you ever think about the things Paul had given up for Christ ? His Jewish parents: for they are never mentioned, his financial stability: for at one time he had lived an affluent life ( 3:5 ) his physical comfort: for now he is reduced to a life of hardship. ( 2 Cor 11:23 ) his great reputation: for they saw great potential in Saul. Now he had just given up Epaphroditus and one day he would even give up his life on the altar of Nero’s hate. ***Does it not make us feel a little ashamed when we think of the little we have given up for Christ ?*** When C.T. Studd the Cambridge and England cricketer, gave away his considerable private fortune and went off to labour in the mission - fields of inland China and unevangelised Africa they said “ *to what purpose is this waste ?*” ( Matt 26:8 )

When someone confronted Hudson Taylor one day and said to him, “ *Mr. Taylor, you must have sacrificed much.*” The missionary veteran replied, “ *Man I have never made a sacrifice in my life.*” When Florence Nightingale was asked the secret of her life she said, “ *I have never refused God anything.*” My .... if we were able to ask Paul if he ever felt the loss of the things he gave up, he would at us in astonishment and say, “ ***Loss ? Of trash ? What loss ? I have seen***

***Christ face to face. I have looked into His eyes and that is all I have ever see. I have heard His voice and that is all I have ever hear. I love Him with all my heart. I live only for Him, anticipating the day when I shall see that face and hear that voice again. All I want is to win Christ, to hear Him say, ' Well, done Paul.'”***

Christ is the sum total of all his desires. He aims to be all for Christ while he lives and to find Christ all for Him when He dies. My .... what are you living for ? What is your goal in life ? Can you say with the poet,

***Jesus is all the world to me  
My life, my joy, my all***

