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Read Philippians 3.1–11. I will print the Net–2 translation.

### CHAPTER 3 TRUE AND FALSE RIGHTEOUSNESS

3:1 Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! To write this again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! 3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, exult in Christ Jesus, and do not rely on human credentials 4 —though mine too are significant. If someone thinks he has good reasons to put confidence in human credentials, I have more: 5 I was circumcised on the eighth day, from the people of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. I lived according to the law as a Pharisee. 6 In my zeal for God I persecuted the church. According to the righteousness stipulated in the law I was blameless. 7 But these assets I have come to regard as liabilities because of Christ. 8 More than that, I now regard all things as liabilities compared to the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things —indeed, I regard them as dung!—that I may gain Christ, 9 and be found in him, not because I have my own righteousness derived from the law, but because I have the righteousness that comes by way of Christ’s faithfulness—a righteousness from God that is in fact based on Christ’s faithfulness. 10 My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

#### COMMENTS:

Notice again the emphasis that Paul places on joy. Five times he uses the word “joy” and nine times he uses “rejoice” in this short letter. Before we get to the end of this letter Paul is going to explain to you the secret of joyful living.

We will discuss this some more then. It is a necessary message to those depressed by the circumstances of life today. This is not about those who are clinically depressed and need therapy, medication, or sometimes both to cope with their life.

The words of Paul here are not as troubling to people as the words of Jesus when he seemingly calls the Canaanite mother (Matt. 15:21–28) a dog. When she asks Jesus to heal her daughter, he says I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. Then she repeated her call for help. Then Jesus says it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.

Then she says, “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Now Jesus commends her faith and grants her request. How could kind, loving Jesus be so harsh toward a mother who is only concerned about her child? Dogs were not a common household pet at the time of Jesus. It was a very derogatory name to call someone or refer to them that way.

The modern equivalent is when someone is called a “son of a bitch.” You are speaking evil of both the mother and son because a “bitch” is a female dog. I remember seeing a classmate learn the meaning of that phrase when he called the class bully that.

He was grabbed, thrown against a wall and asked, “Do you know what that means?” When he said, “No,” he got an instant education and was told if he ever called his mother that again he would need someone to take him to the hospital.

When Paul attacked the Judaizers who insisted that the gentiles who became followers of Jesus must be circumcised, he calls them “dogs.” Since they were attacking a key principal of the gospel, people didn’t object to it. We should not be attacking Jesus for using the term also.

First of all, the Jews looked down on all the gentiles. Many thought God had chosen them because they were better than the gentiles. Jesus' praise of the woman and his help for her was a witness to his disciples that they were not better, but they were privileged to be chosen for service by God.

In v. 3 we are reminded that the circumcision of the heart is what God is looking for, not of the flesh. He gives three qualities they possess: 1) Worship by the Spirit of God; 2) Exult in Christ, and 4) Do not rely on any human credentials.

He expands on this thought in v. 4 when he says, if human credentials were what counted, you could not match mine. Then in vs. 5–6 he lists his Jewish qualifications. In v. 7 he says these human things are really liabilities, not assets. What is of greater value is knowing Christ Jesus as Lord. My human honor roll is simply garbage. Worth nothing.

Everything Paul gains is Christ and his righteousness. Human righteousness comes from the law and the law does not and cannot save us. His righteousness comes from the faithfulness of Christ. This is how we get fully righteous. We accept the work of Christ (faithfulness) as a gift from God and thus have full forgiveness and complete righteousness from God.

His aim is most of all to know Christ and experience the power of his resurrection. That all sounds good. Why does he want to share in his sufferings and to be like Jesus in his death? I think the vs. 9–11 offer a good summary of the Christian life.

Verse 9 speaks of justification (the imputed righteousness), v. 10 of sanctification (living a life for Christ), and v. 11 of glorification (our change at the end of time). The sequence of privilege-death-exaltation suggests a connection with 2:6-11.

**REFLECTION QUESTION:** What is the priority of your life? Is it like Paul who said the only thing of value was knowing Christ? Christ is the only lasting value. Nothing else has lasting value. Eternity is at stake, not just your planned retirement or vacation. The pandemic we are experiencing now shows us how quickly things can change. In God kingdom, the blessings and the promises do not change. God has said clearly, "For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6).