

Intro:

1. Rejoice!

The admonition to rejoice is punctuated thru-out the letter & functions like a hinge at the beginning or end of the section it appears. It always appears in the surrounding context of adverse circumstances (here the ↑). Regardless, they are to rejoice for God is mightily at work in these circumstances to bring about His good purposes, 1:6

⇒ This is no 'put on your smiley face' kind of admonition. As believers remember God's sovereign grace, they can rejoice even in trials.

- A) Who? → *avdelfoi, mou* (admonition *only* to believers!)
- B) In Whom? → *evn kuri, w* | (contra unbelievers who rejoice in self)
- C) Why? → b/c of their union w/ Christ (no matter what, they have everything)
- D) When? → Always! (*cai, rete*). No matter when, they are "in Christ"

⇒ Note also P's heart. Service for the good of others is "no trouble" to him.

→ Is this how we serve others? (I.e. "I've already done that once")

→ Some things (*ta. auvta.*) are important enough to repeat again.

⇒ Importance of 'safeguarding' the church (Heb. 6:19 – God's promise = 'anchor')

→ How: Doctrine!

2. Beware!

The triple use of "beware" shows P's deep concern & the seriousness of the matter. He is describing the same set of people from 3 slightly different angles (Judaizers).

⇒ The 3 terms, which are biting irony, are all inversions of Jewish boasts – boasts that set them apart from all others, but from P's perspective were false claims before God.

A) Of Dogs (*tou. j ku, naj*)

⇒ Evoked the idea of uncleanness in the Jewish mind, for dogs were well known for feeding on carrion, filth, and garbage. (E.g. of Mexican dogs).

⇒ In Mishna, "dogs" were those who were outside the covenant community.
→ Cf. Matt. 7:6; 15:26-27.

⇒ Here, the Judaizers are to be reckoned as not belonging to God's people.

B) Of Evildoers (*tou. j kakou. j evrga, taj*)

⇒ Though they thought they were doing good, the outcome was deadly
→ E.g. of many sincere Mormons, Muslims, etc.

⇒ The Jews prided themselves on their obedience to the Law

⇒ Such believe that their works are pleasing to God (tho' really offensive!)

⇒ It was not their works that were offensive to God, but their dependence & reliance upon them for God's favor, which is harmful also to their hearers

C) Of Mutilators (*th. n katatomh, n*)

⇒ Circumcision was the outward sign of the covenant b/w Yahweh & His people (cf. Gen. 17). There is nothing special for those w/o faith in X!

⇒ However, circ. w/o saving faith is nothing more than mutilation. Even the OT called for Israel to circumcise their hearts (cf. Gal. 6:15; Rom. 2:25).

⇒ The Jews derided the pagans for their cutting of the flesh that was forbidden in their law. Here, P says these circumcised have no part at all in God's ppl.

⇒ Salvation is an *inward* operation done by the Spirit not man (2 Cor. 3:3, 6b).

3. Understand! (Salvation is *only* by sovereign grace).

If all these outward observances didn't constitute God's people, what did? In P's eye those who are "the" circumcision (*h` peritomh,)* 'do' 3 things:

A) Worship by the Spirit of God (*oi` pneu, mati qeou/ latreu, ontej*)

⇒ Despite what every other false religion advocates, they *cannot* worship God (cf. John 3:6). They are worshipping, but *not* in Spirit & truth (John 3:23).

No Spirit = no true worship!

⇒ Why? B/c it's *always* been about the heart, not outward observances (Jer. 31:33 – in the NC, God writes the law upon our hearts, cf. Rom. 8:1-4).

→ Is God's law in your heart? Do you delight to serve Him?

⇒ OR "serve" [the 2 are linked]. Often in LXX = the service/worship rendered to Yahweh by His chosen people Israel (cf. Rom. 9:4).

⇒ No service = no worship (gives a new meaning to a 'worship service')

⇒ "By" shows that the H.S. is the divine initiator ('impulse') that works in our heart (cf. 2:13) to produce the only acceptable worship/service unto God.

⇒ Did God accept your worship this morning?

→ Challenge those who merely show up, sing, listen & leave!

→ How does one 'receive' the Spirit? Gal. 3:2

B) Boast in Christ Jesus (*[oi`] kaucw, menoi evn Cristw/ | vihsou/*)

⇒ Cf. 1:26 – not all boasting is bad! (cf. Gal. 6:14; 1 Cor. 1:31)

⇒ We boast about what matters most to us! What do *you* boast about?

→ How sad it is that more Christians boast in their children!

⇒ Cf. the major answer given by why people think they deserve 'Heaven.'

⇒ Why do Christians boast in Christ? GOSPEL! (cf. Rom. 8:3-4)

C) Put no confidence in the flesh (*[oi`] ouvkh [not mh,] evn sarki. pepoiqo, tej*)

⇒ The opposite of above: mutually exclusive like water & oil (cf. Rom. 10:3).

⇒ "Flesh" a reference to circumcision, but also (in P) is an expression to denote all that in which one places trust (e.g. 3:4-7). "It is one's self-reliance that negates every kind of striving to please God." (cf. Luke 16:15).

⇒ What separates biblical Christianity from every false religion (works)

⇒ In what or in whom are YOU placing your confidence? Creator or creation?

B/c Israel lost sight of the spiritual significance of circumcision, focused on the external ritual, and failed to boast in the Lord alone (cf. Jer. 9:23-25), it forfeited its right to the title "the Circumcision."

Conclusion: Rejoice, Beware, Understand.