

# True Christianity

## Philippians 3:1-3

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.

<sup>2</sup> Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! <sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

## Introduction

### Matt 13:37 Explanation of Parable of Tares

<sup>37</sup> He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked *one*. <sup>39</sup> The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. <sup>40</sup> Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, <sup>42</sup> and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Illustration of my friend who died with aids

## I. Paul's Commitment

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.

## Rejoice in the Lord

Rejoice

**4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!**

[Matthew 5:12](#) Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: ...

[Luke 1:47](#) And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

[Romans 5:2,3,11](#) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, ...

[1 Thessalonians 5:16](#) Rejoice ever more.

[James 1:2](#) My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations;

[1 Peter 1:6-8](#) Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ...

1 Peter 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; ...

Paul is not talking about happiness when he talks about joy and rejoicing. Happiness is from hap...hap is a circumstance, happenstance, happenings, happiness, all the same word group. That is to say happiness is an emotion or an exhilaration associated with certain events. It is not an emotion or an exhilaration associated with a relationship. It has to do with an event, a thing, a happening. So the kind of joy that Paul is talking about and calling for, and this by the way is a command, and the command implies the capability of obedience on the part of a believer which in itself is no doubt a test of true salvation. But he says...rejoice in the Lord...commanding us to joy. But it is not the kind of emotional outburst, good feeling, exhilaration that is associated with an event. It is the kind that is associated with a relationship. It doesn't even say, "Rejoice because of what the Lord has given you...rejoice because of what the Lord will give you...rejoice because of what the Lord is giving you." It doesn't say, "Rejoice because of what the Lord has done for the people that you care about." It says, "Rejoice in the Lord."

It is the exhilaration in the relationship, perhaps the simplest human analogy to it would be the joy of a parent in a newborn baby. The baby gives nothing, in effect, the baby provides no stimulating events. In fact, most of the events connected with the baby are anything but stimulating. The baby provides no exciting gifts, makes no charitable contribution, does no particularly beneficial service but there is something about the relationship that literally exhilarates the soul. It is the same kind of emotion only in much greater and deeper proportion as that of falling in love. And it isn't so much that your emotion and your exhilaration and your exuberance and that overwhelming sense of silly peace that you enjoy is related to what the one you love does for you as it is just the thought of the one you love. And extrapolating out of those irrepressible human joys that come out of relationship, we can magnify that concept in to what we ought to feel and ever rejoice in that we enjoy with the Lord Himself.

Now let me take it a step further. This kind of joy is not an emotion from a human level, it is produced by the Holy Spirit therefore it is a supernatural emotion. It is a supernatural emotion. You say, "Well what does it do? What does it feel like, this joy that we're to have?" Well it produces a deep

confidence in the future, built on trust. The relationship says my life is in God's hands, my life is in Christ's control, all is well. The hymn writer said, "It is well with my soul," and it is so well with my soul that no matter what is going on around me, I have joy. It is the kind of joy that brings a silent sleep, a deep sleep, a quietness of life because it trusts, because it knows the sovereign God and the faithful Christ will accomplish all their good promise. It is a supernatural emotion that also could be described as the absence of any ultimate fear because what is there to fear when all is bound up in the relationship and the relationship is eternal. It is the kind of emotion that puts a melody in the heart that no matter how bad it is in the world, it's almost as if we ride across the top of the bumps. It's the kind of emotion that puts a song on the lips, a lightness to the step. It's the kind of emotion that produces easy thanks for little things...small pleasures.

It's very different from happiness. It's different from the happiness, for example, of good health because true joy persists in weakness, pain, illness and death. It is different from the fun of a party with its laughing friends and music because it persists in the dark when someone is all alone. It is different from the delight of a new house or a new car or a new dress or a new anything because it persists through the loss of everything. Why? Because it is the joy in the relationship and the relationship with Jesus Christ that we enjoy never changes...never changes. He is always present. He is ever close. He is ever loving. He is ever securing. He is ever strengthening. He is ever providing. And we trust Him. Rejoice in the Lord. Very different than happiness.

But, you see, most people's happiness and joy is based on what is given to them, is based on what good things happen to them. Most people's happiness is based on what they succeed at doing at a given point in time, or what they acquire. Few people understand the exhilarating sheer joy of relationship, but we do in the Spirit. And so I submit to you that before we look at the explicit qualities of a true Christian, one of the implicit ones is that there is a surpassing joy in the relationship that is unrelated to the circumstances of life. F.B. Meyer(?) wrote, "The joy of the Lord arises from leaving all our burdens at His feet, from believing that He has forgiven the past as absolutely as the tide obliterates children's writing in the sand, that nothing can come which He does not appoint or permit, that He is doing all things as wisely and kindly as possible, that in Him we have been lifted out of the realm of sin, sorrow and death in to a realm of divine light and love, that we have already commenced the eternal life and that before us forever

there is a fellowship with Him so rapturous and exalting that human language can only describe it as unspeakable."

### Spurgeon comments...

Let this be the end of everything; before you get to the end of it, and when you do get to the end of it, "rejoice in the Lord." It is incumbent upon us, as Christians, to rise out of our despondencies. Joy should be the normal state of the Christian. What a happy religion is ours in which it is a duty to be happy! "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."

### in the Lord

Philippians 1:14 (note) and that most of the brethren, trusting **in the Lord** because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

Philippians 2:19 (note) But I hope **in the Lord** Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

Philippians 2:24 (note) and I trust **in the Lord** that I myself also shall be coming shortly.

Philippians 2:29 (note) Therefore receive him **in the Lord** with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard;

Philippians 3:1 (note) Finally, my brethren, rejoice **in the**

**Lord.** To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

Philippians 4:1 (note) Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm **in the Lord**, my beloved.

Philippians 4:2 (note) I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony **in the Lord**.

Philippians 4:4 (note) Rejoice **in the Lord** always; again I will say, rejoice!

Philippians 4:10 (note) But I rejoiced **in the Lord** greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.

Spurgeon

It is your privilege, it is your duty, to rejoice in God; — not in your health, your wealth, your children, your prosperity, but in the Lord.”

**For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious**

**tedious**

**Trouble** (3636) (**okneros** is from **okneo** = to shrink, to hesitate, to delay) means that which causes reluctance or is tedious or bothersome (upsets a person's composure or which annoys and suggests interference with one's comfort or peace of mind). It describes being afraid to act, hesitating, shrinking or lazy.

Paul is saying it is not bothersome for him to repeat truth so that they might be kept from being tripped up by false teaching. As Eadie phrases it "To repeat the same truth is to me no task of irksome monotony." Biblical truth is always the best safeguard from error!

**Okneros** is found 3 times in the **NAS** (Matthew; Romans; Philippians) and is translated .lagging behind, 1; lazy, 1; trouble, 1. The KJV renders it grievous, 1; slothful,

**TDNT** writes that...

Like **oknos**, which means "hesitation" through weariness, sloth, fear, bashfulness, or reserve, **okneros** is used a. of persons in the sense of "*showing oknos*," "hesitating," "anxious," "negligent," "slothful."

**but for you it is safe.**

**Safeguard** (804) (**asphales** from **a** = w/o + **sphallo** = throw down, trip up, totter, bring to the ground, make someone fall) literally means that which cannot be thrown down, tripped up, tottered or overthrown. It describes that which is secure and safe from stumbling or falling.

**Asphales** thus means firm, sure, secure, safety, unshakeable, certain, steady, immovable (as of the anchor in [He 6:19-note](#) - see below - or in Septuagint referring to the sky above in [Pr 8:28](#)) and then figuratively referring to a state of safety, stability and security which can be relied on and hence free from danger and secure from peril. **Asphales** describes something that cannot be made to totter when put to the test. In [Acts 2:36](#) the related adverb **asphalos** means certainly, surely, speaking of that which is known beyond a doubt.

**NIDNTT** has the following note on the uses of this word group in classic literature...

**Asphaleia** occurs in classic Greek. with the following meanings: security against stumbling (Thuc., History, 3, 22), assurance from danger

Pauls commitment was to warning the church because of False Doctrine

The possible infiltration, and destruction it can cause was of primary importance to Paul

Some passages we can see his heart about this

Acts 20: 27

<sup>27</sup> For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup> Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. <sup>29</sup> For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup> Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. <sup>31</sup> Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.



## II Paul's Condemnation

**<sup>2</sup> Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!**

### **1. Beware of dogs**

#### **Beware**

**Beware** (991) (**blepo**) means perceive with your eyes. Have your eye on so as to beware of. Paul says to pay especially close attention to these men. Paul uses **blepo** three times in this verse, each time in the **present tense** (continual action called for = make this the habit of your life) **active voice** (choice of your will = he can't force them) and **imperative mood** (command not a suggestion). Wuest conveys the sense of the verb tense and mood rendering it "*Keep a watchful eye ever upon*". The idea is constantly observing with a view to avoiding, constantly be looking at in the sense of continuing to be wary.

#### **Dogs**

\_\_\_\_\_ Dogs are not thought of highly in mid eastern culture, You find this also reflected in scripture

**Proverbs 26:11**

As a dog returns to his own vomit,  
So a fool repeats his folly.

**Isa 56:10-11**

His watchmen *are* blind,  
They are all ignorant;  
They *are* all dumb dogs,  
They cannot bark;  
Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

<sup>11</sup> Yes, *they are* greedy dogs  
*Which* never have enough.  
And they *are* shepherds  
Who cannot understand;  
They all look to their own way,  
Every one for his own gain,  
From his *own* territory.

**Matt 7:6**

<sup>6</sup> “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine,

**Matt 7:15**

<sup>15</sup> “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

**Rev.22:15**

<sup>15</sup> But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

**Dogs** (2965) (**kuon**) (**See dictionary articles**) in the ancient word **dogs** here were mangy, flea-bitten, vicious, starved scavengers, that tended to run in packs, dig through garbage and occasionally even attack humans.

**Barclay** has a helpful note on **dogs**

With us the dog is a well-loved animal, but it was not so in the East in the time of Jesus. The dogs were the pariah dogs, roaming the streets, sometimes in packs, hunting amidst the garbage dumps and snapping and snarling at all whom they met. J. B. Lightfoot speaks of “the dogs which prowl about eastern cities, without a home and without an owner, feeding on the refuse and filth of the streets, quarrelling among themselves, and attacking the passer-by.” In the Bible the dog always stands for that than which nothing can be lower.

## 2. **Beware of the evil workers**

**Evil** (2556) (**kakos**) morally descriptive of those characterized by godlessness with the implication of harmful and damaging bad. **Kakos** describes their character as base and malicious.

**Workers** (2040) (**ergates** from **ergázomai** = engage in an activity involving considerable expenditure of effort) describes one who labors or toils. They did not just do evil in the general sense, but in this context they actually worked against the gospel of grace.

Paul appears to describe Judaizers who taught circumcision was necessary for salvation and thus were evil workers for the kingdom of God. In his second letter to the Corinthians **Paul** addresses another group of "**workers**"...

For such men (those were attacking the credibility of Paul) are false apostles, **deceitful** (dolios - describes Satan's servants who deliberately attempt to mislead other people by telling lies & desire to gain advantage by deceiving using deceitful cunning or duplicity) **workers** (ergates), disguising (transfiguring, changing their outward appearance - Satan's worker's most destructive efforts are accomplished when they transform themselves, changing their outward appearance) themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ([2Cor 11:13,14](#))

### 3. **Beware of the Mutilation**

**False circumcision** (2699) (**katatome** from **kata** = intensifies + **temno** = to cut) literally means a cutting down or (ironically) a mutilation. In the Septuagint or LXX the related verb katatemno is used to describe the mutilation that pagans performed as part of their religious ceremonies.

**Peritome** had been ordained in the Law of Moses and did convey a spiritual significance, distinguishing God's people Israel in the OT from the pagans. When this spiritual meaning is forgotten, then **peritome**, circumcision, becomes **katatome**, a mutilation, a butchering up, a mere cutting away flesh conveys no merit or value in itself. Paul says keep watching out for these "butchers". The almost certainly taught that outward circumcision of the flesh was necessary to salvation.

### **I. III Paul's Contrast**

<sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,