

That I Might Know Him - Part 1

by Peter Brandon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of rejoicing in the Lord, which means rejoicing in one's salvation, service, and sanctification, and having a deep understanding of the truth of Christ's death and resurrection.

Duration: 50:57

Scripture: Philippians 3:1

Topics: "Knowing Christ", "Rejoicing in the Lord"

Description

Peter Brandon emphasizes the importance of knowing Christ intimately, as expressed in Philippians 3. He discusses the contrast between rejoicing in the Lord and having confidence in the flesh, highlighting Paul's personal journey from legalistic righteousness to a deep, personal relationship with Jesus. Brandon encourages believers to rejoice in their salvation, service, and sanctification, reminding them that true joy comes from understanding their identity in Christ. He warns against the dangers of externalism and urges the congregation to focus on the heart of Christianity, which is a vibrant relationship with Jesus. The sermon concludes with a call to pursue a deeper knowledge of Christ, encouraging all believers, regardless of age, to seek this intimate connection.

Transcript

We trust that the Lord will bless us as we look at Philippians 3. Now I think we ought to read it immediately and I shall read the first six verses and then make exposition of them. Then I shall go on to 7 to 15 and then read that and make exposition of those verses and then 15 to the end and we trust that the word may get right into our hearts this morning. Philippians 3 reading from verse 1. Finally my brethren rejoice in the Lord to write the same things to you to me indeed is not grievous but for you it is safe beware of dogs beware of evil workers beware of the concision for we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh though I might also have confidence in the flesh if any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh I more circumcise the eighth day of the stock of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin and Hebrew of the Hebrews as touching the law of Pharisee concerning zeal persecuting the church touching the righteousness which is of the Lord blameless but what things were gained to me those I counted lost for Christ.

Now God will bless to us the reading of his word. The Philippian epistle was given to us mainly because it was an acknowledgement of a gift that was sent to the apostle whilst he was in prison. But I think we must look just at the background a little so that we can see some of the terms which are used here.

First of all historically Philippi came from the word Philip and Philip was the man who was the father of Alexander the Great and therefore even in those early days it was the gateway to Europe. Eventually it was conquered by the Romans and they made it a Roman city. In fact if you lived in Philippi you could actually call yourself a Roman and again I repeat it was the gateway to the whole of Europe.

Secondly the epistle was written because of the acknowledgement of a lovely gift when the apostle was in prison and quite frankly he uses this gift almost as an offering and this shows to us how the apostle received gifts and how that he acknowledged them before the Lord. They were not really received as some kind of monetary token they were received as an offering from the Lord and that to me is very beautiful indeed. When you read the epistle you can see into it the background.

First of all there was no doubt some preaching the gospel of contention chapter one not sincerely. Then when you come to the second chapter there was a sense of pride in the assembly so he's dealing with that and he gives them a lovely objective view of the Lord Jesus. When you come to the third chapter there were Judaizing teachers trying to pervert the people of Philippi who were Christians and when you come to the fourth chapter obviously there were two outstanding sisters but they had a contention and one was Euodius the other was Syntyche.

I like the way in which an old Deuteronomy put it he called one Odius and the other soon touch it and quite frankly if you look at that carefully you will see the reason for this. When there is contention there is a nauseating sense of smell among the people of God and secondly it's generally because someone is too sensitive and soon touch it so obviously he wasn't far wrong in his understanding. Again if you want to analyze the epistle a sophisticated title would be in his captivity for Christ in chapter one in chapter two his condescension with Christ in chapter three conformity to Christ and in chapter four we see his contentment through Christ.

But I would like to simplify that because there are young people here and so chapter one I'm going to address as the life of Christ for me to live is Christ to die is gain. In the second chapter it's the mind of Christ for he says had mind of Christ. In the third chapter it's the knowledge of Christ because that's what he's speaking about in detail and in the fourth chapter it's the peace of Christ only addressed here as the peace of God.

Now what about this particular chapter if you look at it carefully without any sophisticated headings you will see from one to seven we have the dignified person or if you like the majestic person in whom we are to rejoice in. Then when you come down to seven right to 14 we have something a little different and that is the great prize that every Christian should have before them. And I've used the word prize because the key word there is prize and the prize obviously is taken from the olympic games when they receive the garland.

But our prize is the crown of righteousness which is a million times greater than the olympic garland. And then right at the end from 15 to 21 you will see the prospect and the prospect even in those days was the coming of the Lord Jesus. So that's how we're going to work first of all the person the prize and the prospect.

Now would you with me look at the first verse. Finally my brethren now this doesn't mean to say the end of the chapter but it does mean the end of a subject. And what he is basically saying is this look I'm coming to a point that's absolutely vital.

What I have said is important don't misunderstand it. But now I want to share with you something that's vital and notice it's Paul's own experience and if you will go down here you will see almost a dozen personal pronouns. Now Paul does this on two occasions.

He does it in Romans 7 when he looks within and he gives you his personal experience regarding his struggle for holiness. But when you come to the third chapter he's not looking within he's looking up and he's got a vision of the glorious Lord and he's going to explain to you his earnest desire to know him intimately and fully. So it's not looking within it's looking up and it's finally brethren and then he comes to the point rejoice in the Lord.

Now he doesn't say know the Lord he says rejoice in the Lord. Now I want to make this quite clear it's vital to know the Lord and to know all the facts of the law of the Lord. We are living in a day when people are beginning to jettison doctrine you must not do it.

Now forgive me being emphatic the doctrine is the very bone structure of Christianity and if you destroy the doctrine that means your head knowledge and the facts and figures about Christ then you have destroyed the whole bone structure of Christianity. But it's possible as we shall see in a few moments to know the Lord and not rejoice in the Lord. And this word rejoice as we shall see is very safe and very important.

For instance if we had time to go back to act 16 we would find there that the apostle recorded by Luke put three conversions together. One was Lydia that was the first one that was to be saved usually God starts with a woman. Secondly was the young lady that was a fortune teller and she was exercised and I believe she was saved.

And the next was the Philippian jailer. Now why do I mention the Philippian jailer? When Paul was placed in prison and it was a dirty hole it was a prison in which people invariably died. It was the inner prison where they put murderers.

He would be sitting with Silas in two inches of mud infested by rats and fleas. His feet would be made fast in the stocks and many prisoners before they got out of this prison for execution died. Paul's back was bleeding and probably his face disfigured with Silas and it was midnight man's weakest point that Paul must have turned around and said to Silas, Silas this is wonderful.

We're having fellowship with the Lord in his sufferings. Wonderful. Let's sing and pray.

And what a prayer meeting. Now the word of God says this, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that ye shall ask it shall be done. And those two agreed.

Those two men had clean hands and when they lifted them up God saw them and they started to pray. And when two godly men pray be sure of this there's going to be an earthquake even if it's a spiritual one. And then after their prayer Paul must have said let's sing and they didn't sing a dirge.

Some of us would have been singing here we suffer grief and pain in the other prisons they're just the same. Oh no. They were singing praises to God and I love this they were probably singing the hundred and third psalm.

Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name. Wonderful. And then we read the prisoners heard them now don't miss that.

The word heard there means not to hear something that's boring but something that's exciting but more than that. The word heard there means to listen until the tears flow down the cheeks. It means to listen with deep emotion.

And here were two men in an inner prison and there they were rejoicing. Now that's the key word to this epistle. 18 times I'm using all the Greek inflections by the way I'm not a Greek scholar I rely on the lexicon.

But there are 18 inflections on the word joy. And I believe there are 13 direct expressions of joy in the epistle. So can you see it started in a prison in Philippi.

Now having said that finally brethren he comes to his point. Rejoice in the Lord. Now what does that mean? First of all if you look carefully at chapter one and the key word there is gospel he was rejoicing in salvation.

Now can I say something a little sharp but in love. Never get over your salvation. The moment the day of your salvation becomes stale then you will be a stale Christian.

Paul never got over his conversion. In fact every time he told people about his conversion the light the sun got brighter. And if you read the accounts you will see that is so.

Now why should we rejoice in our salvation? Because all our sins have been forgiven once and for all. Shouldn't that make you happy? That means there's nothing between you and God. When God forgives a man of his sins he doesn't forgive on the grounds of the size of your repentance.

He doesn't forgive on the size of your faith. When God forgives he forgives on the grounds of the precious blood of Christ. The analysis of all his sufferings and he puts your sins away once and forever.

Now that should cause us to rejoice but more than that. When your sins were all forgiven you were so clean in the presence of God that he could actually put a divine person within you. So that the moment you were cleansed from sin in came the Holy Spirit and you weren't born again you were born from above.

And that meant in the sight of God you were a new creature and God looked upon you and said I declare you righteous. Shouldn't that make us rejoice? Shouldn't that cause us to say hallelujah what a saviour? Don't sing it sometimes say it. Hallelujah what a saviour.

But more because you have received the Holy Spirit and your body is now the temple of the Holy Spirit you have the right to come into his presence and say to the Almighty God two wonderful words Abba Father. Let me say them again Abba Father. Abba is the first word that a Jewish baby speaks.

Abba Father is what a son says. When they went through their bar mitzvah they never called their dad Abba. If they did after that he would say grow up.

They would call him father. But the moment you are born of God oh it thrills me to say this you can actually say Abba Father. And what does that mean? It means that God has now made you a joint heir with Christ.

And what does that mean? That means he has brought you right into the presence of the Lord and you are his adopted child and he's going to share all the glories of heaven with you. And do you know what that means? Every single Christian is a multi multi multi multi multi millionaire. You couldn't be richer than what you are.

And thank God the riches are not in our bank where there's all this inflation and deflation. The riches are in heaven. And one day oh how can I say it? When he builds the new heaven and the new earth.

I'm not talking about the millennium something better than that. When he builds the new heaven and the new earth you're going to reign with him forever. Shouldn't you rejoice in your salvation? Oh may God bring that spirit of joy into us.

But it's more than that. Secondly as you look at Philippians 1 he rejoices in service. He talks about the gospel.

He talks about fellowship in the gospel. He talks about striving together in the gospel. He talks about the furtherance in the gospel.

Now what does that mean? Paul was a man who was absolutely on fire for souls. I wish we were. Do you know brethren if I can say this for the glory of God this visit the Lord's been saving many.

Only on Thursday night an assistant headmaster got wonderfully saved and then there was a young lady about 16 that came right into blessing and that happened often. God has been saving souls. Oh how can I say this? Never allow your gospel meeting to get stale.

You see one of the greatest joys in life is to preach the gospel and to see men and women born again. No joy like it. You see the trouble with us is this.

We have so many gospel meetings where we're preaching to the initiated and therefore we can't expect souls to be saved. I mean what would you do if you went fishing in a fried fish shop where they were all caught and kept. You see we must make our gospel meetings effective but there is nothing more precious than to work with a group of people in gospel preaching and to see souls saved.

Now don't throw away gospel preaching because if you do it will make you a miserable old Christian and here it is rejoice in the Lord and when God's people are zealous for souls then there's blessing. But there's something even more than that rejoicing in the Lord that means rejoicing in your salvation rejoicing in service but rejoicing in sanctification. Now this is one thing I find it hard to understand.

Everyone in this room is a Christian is sure that they believe that Christ died for their sins. Is that right? But only a few of us understand that we have died in him. Now I know this will surprise you but if you read the scriptures there's as much in scripture about Christ as we dying in Christ as Christ dying for our sin.

Now until we understand that truth we shall never really rejoice in the Lord. You see beloved when the scripture says that we have been crucified with him when the scripture says we have been made conformable unto his death it simply means this that when the Lord Jesus died all his people died in him and that meant all the judgment that has come upon your sins and all the condemnation that's come upon that evil nature called flesh has all been dealt with in the person of Christ so that when Christ died you died in him. Now that's a wonderful thing to bring release.

You know brethren for about 10 years I suffered Roman 7 coming from a platform like this sometimes preaching the gospel and going home and saying Lord I've done it again and I got to a point where I began to wonder is there any reality in this gospel preaching I got really down but when God opened my eyes to see that I have been crucified with Christ that this flesh nature that made me a wicked horrible person has all been put to death that was the first time I shouted out hallelujah and I don't want to stop.

Oh what a wonderful thing it is and may I say it personally that wicked evil corrupt the person that said of him behold he stinketh Peter Brandon has been put on the cross and then what else well it simply means is that Christ lives in me and what does that mean the Holy Spirit has brought the seed nature of the Lord Jesus within me so that Christ is being formed in me and it's not me it's the Lord Jesus.

My dear friends when that grips you you rejoice you'll say praise the Lord you'll be a happy person when you see that but I mustn't go on but I must get to the point now rejoice in the Lord what does that mean well just rejoice in him rejoice in his pre-existence so that in the beginning when he said let there be light he was with the Father and the Spirit when that was said who was it that stood on Mount Sinai Jehovah who did Isaiah say in the year that King Isaiah died Jehovah who was that the Lord Jesus we can rejoice in that can't we and then rejoice in that wonderful birth rejoice in the conception rejoice in the birth for the first time a perfect baby was born can't we rejoice in that then we can rejoice in that perfect man the way in which he lived before God and in every single

detail he brought glory to God so that when God saw him coming from the waters of baptism if I may paraphrase God the Father and the Son must have said we can't keep quiet we must say it and God said it this is my beloved son in whom I find all my delight rejoice too in his divinity I think that's wonderful you know the more I think of him co-equal with God the mighty son of God and we don't learn that by education we've learned that by divine revelation and the more we see in him his essential deity we shall rejoice and how do I see it I see it in the uniqueness of his speech I see it in the marvelous predictions that he made I see it too in the way in which his mind was set to the cross I see it too in the miracles that he performed some of you who have read Greek backgrounds especially

on idolatry will notice that they made a terrible mess of deity they had their gods nearly on every street corner in Athens and what a mess they made of it but when you see the biblical description of the divinity of Christ let me say this it is absolutely full proof then we rejoice in his death what a day think of the rulers that we see today and the leaders that we see in the oriental faiths no not one of them compares with the Lord Jesus and when you think that he died upon a cross and not only bore our sins not only tasted our death but destroyed him who had the power of death shouldn't we rejoice and then when you go to that sepulchre and when you see him being raised from the dead now can I say this I have been lecturing on the resurrection for 20 years now in most of our

universities giving to them first of all textual evidence then historical evidence then legal evidence then critical evidence and experimental evidence now in my experience I've never heard a good argument against it not once and you see this is not a Christian fairy story this is a wonderful fact and we should rejoice and then when you see him going back to heaven brethren what a sight when you see him going through principalities and powers you see they try those principalities to stop the resurrection they try to stop the ascension but he went straight through them in victory and when you see his glorification at the father's right hand shouldn't we all rejoice can you see the point rejoice end of all something sad happened two years ago in one of our assemblies in Scotland where there

was a large fellowship they used to have the table in the front and all the elements were made of pure silver and it was all covered with a great white cloth look very beautiful externally a man came in and sat at the back and halfway through the service he went up and an elder followed him he said are you all right he said yes I'm awfully sorry he said I didn't know it was a funeral now we laugh but wasn't that serious he thought that was a corpse and we were so miserable so drab so dead he thought it was a funeral perhaps it was you know my brothers and sisters there are times when we see the death of the Lord Jesus when

we should weep there are times when we go to the grave and see him risen we should rejoice and one of the reasons why our meetings are becoming so boring is because of

the lack of rejoicing wouldn't it be lovely if our boys and girls could see us all rejoicing they could see mum sitting there around the Lord's table and sometimes there's tears and sometimes there's joy could see dad there rejoicing in the Lord and then in their homes as they read the scripture a sense of joy you see this is what brings joyous characteristics to Christianity in Acts chapter 2 we read they were praising having favour with the people now let me go back to a bit of history when I first started to preach round about 1948 or just before that 1944 I used to go in the back room and there would be 25 brethren on their knees and they would be calling upon God to save souls and many of them were beating the bench before them reality then I would go to a breaking of bread meeting

and the brother would stand up and worship and you would hear all over the building Amen praise the Lord you see they were rejoicing in the Lord and then when you stood up to preach there would be a number of unsaved and all over the building you would hear Amen praise the Lord now they weren't swinging on fans and things like that and losing control of themselves and having these spiritual bumps of aces they weren't doing that but dear friends they were really rejoicing in the Lord now can you see how vital it is that we should get back to that otherwise what will happen is this people will say that open meetings don't work and we shall go back to one man minister but if we get back to this rejoicing in the Lord there's nothing that can touch an open meeting nothing it's wonderful to be

in a meeting that's really controlled by the Spirit of God now would you believe it he takes us right up to the Father's house and then in verse 2 he brings us right down to the dog house look at verse 2 beware of dogs beware of evil workers beware of the concision now immediately God's people rejoice what time have I got to finish that's my time up is it oh dear all right we'll have that later sorry brethren oh thirteen oh I see I thought I was on the ropes all right we'll look at that again beware of dogs beware of evil workers beware of concision now who were these dogs so the scholars tell me there are two kinds of dogs in scripture there's the little puppies that eat the crumbs from under the table the Sarano-Phoenician woman and they were pets lovely little things and then there

were the scavenger dogs the wild dogs and they would eat anything now you will know in the old testament on two occasions the gentiles are addressed as dogs but when you come to the new testament it's not the gentiles that are addressed as dogs but the Jewish people now one moment the apostle lifts us right into the glory and he says see the contrast rejoice in the lord the next moment he puts us right into that dirty dog house and says beware of dogs now why immediately a group of people start rejoicing intelligently in the lord they will be attacked by the devil immediately and the attack can come from the outside but invariably it comes from the inside now it's the inside person that does all the damage I wish I had time to go through the acts to prove this now these dogs were the

Judaizing teachers now what were they doing they were saying yes Christianity is right it's all right but we must add to it the law in other words we must add to it the sacrifices we must add to it the ceremonies and therefore it was a mixture between Judaism and Christianity and brethren and sisters that is apostasy when we go on in this chapter we shall see another error and that's not Judaism it's Gnosticism now what was Gnosticism Gnosticism was a mixture of Christianity and Greek philosophy and that was error and as you go through the scripture you will see that mainly John is dealing with the Gnostics whilst Paul mainly is dealing with the Judaizers now what were they trying to do they were trying to take away the liberty of God's people and they wanted to bring them back into

bondage now brethren we must be very careful of that now I want to say something that is very very serious I want to say it to you in love and as gently as I can beware of brethren that just dwell on externals and just externals and miss Christ half the trouble with our assemblies has been that fact we have majored on externals and we've missed the hub now can I say something that's careful that's very very dangerous in a meeting like this it's right that a sister should be covered in the presence of God because of the angels but don't make that the one object of your Christianity not the one object it's right that people should be baptized in water but it's more important that they should live out a baptized life it's right that we should break bread but listen you can pick a piece of

bread and you can put the wine in your mouth and you can be thinking of your job or you could be thinking of the joint of home you've missed it you see you're majoring on the external but you're missing the substance now the substance of everything is Christ and that is why he says beware of dogs beware of evil workers that's an awful word I'm not going to give you the original meaning of the word but it's far worse than evil workers and then he says beware of the concision now what does that mean the cutters who are only concerned with the flesh being cut and just that now brethren and sisters if we just major on externals and externals only we shall miss the great heart of Christianity so that's the demonic problem now let's look at the cure of the problem that's right for we are the

circumcision which worship God in the spirit now I'm not going to do with the surgery but I am going to do with the spiritualization of that circumcision doesn't mean cutting off in fact there was a very little cutting off in circumcision it means the cutting wrap it's not so much that you isolate yourself it's a matter that you make yourself spiritual and that's the meaning of the word and therefore circumcision in the new testament is this the mutilation of the flesh I wish we had time to go into this because this is vital it's a matter of what Paul calls mortification and sometimes what he calls crucifixion now what does that mean when Saul was told to slaughter the Amalekites he partially completed the command but left some of the best animals for sacrifice now may I say this quickly

you can't use the flesh in the service of God or in worship and then Agag came and he came very delicately cunningly cunningly you know quite frankly dear friends I can't really describe words to give you what that basically meant I could give a description but I'm not going to do that now but he came in a very crafty subtle way and then he said surely the pains of death are all over now I don't like to say this it hurts me as I say it he took Agag and hewed him to pieces now why am I saying that he mortified he crucified the man now that's what we've got to do with the flesh there are five meanings of the flesh I'm going to sort them out into two in scripture one is good and the other is bad the Lord was manifest in the flesh that was good flesh but the flesh here is the very source of

evil and therefore we have to mortify it and that is circumcision and if I had time to take you through Galatians we should see that that is the secret of circumcision they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts then he goes on and worship God in the spirit now can you see the development first of all you deal with the flesh then the spirits released and you're filled with the spirit and so now you're worshipping God in the spirit that means pure spontaneous pray you know at Bexley it moves me as I say this a man that was saved three years ago stood up in the meeting and worshipped it was only for two minutes it was spontaneous and his heart was pouring out in love that's it can you see it the flesh dealt with the spirit prominent and then the saints

worshipping in the power of the spirit now may I say this quickly in passing when you worship brethren don't give God a lecture he knows all about the burnt offering he knows all about the meal offering he

knows all about the thanksgiving offering that we call the peace offering he knows all about the sin offering and he knows all about the trespass offering he knows all about the red heifer he knows all about the two sparrows he knows all about the goat and the gazelle on the day of atonement and you know sometimes we give God ministry dare I say it as though he were taking notes that's not worship.

Brethren if you're going to give a word of ministry give a word of ministry don't give it to God but worship is when you're seeing the Lord Jesus the Spirit's filling you and your heart is flowing out to praise to him what a lovely thing worship God in the Spirit and then you will notice rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh now the flesh there has to do with social flesh no confidence in the fact that you are an aristocratic Jew there should be no confidence at all in the flesh and then he goes on though I might also have confidence in the flesh if any man thinketh that he have whereof he might trust in the flesh I more now notice these seven features circumcised on the eighth day a very few Jews were circumcised on the eighth day even at that particular time he was and by the way the eighth day would be a Sunday and the profundity of that truth in connection with circumcision is almost unsurpassed if we could really see it then I want you to note of the stock of Israel he was a true Jew absolutely pure and then of the tribe of Benjamin even in the time of the Apostle there were a very few Jews due to the captivity that knew their tribe he knew the tribe and the only time when those tribes will be revived will be during the tribulation when the hundred and forty four thousand will know them and God will supernaturally show them. A Hebrew of the Hebrews well it would mean a pure Hebrew but I think it's deeper than that it means that he knew the Hebrew language fluently it meant that he was a brilliant Hebrew scholar because an Orthodox Jew would never read the Septuagint that meant the Greek Old Testament he would always read it in pure Hebrew. Touching the law of Pharisee that meant as far as the Old Testament was concerned he was a Pharisee and that meant he was a fundamentalist he believed in all the Old Testament scriptures he believed in angels he believed in life after death and he believed in all the supernatural stories of the Old Testament.

Alright we go on concerning zeal persecuting the church well the church knew all about that touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless that meant as far as the externals of the Ten Commandments were concerned he thought that he had kept them all but when he became a Christian he saw the finer points of the law and cried out oh wretched man that I am who shall deliver me. Now brethren the second half we are turning to the Lord Jesus and we're going to take up a study that I only know a very little but I want to know more and we're all going to be learners it's the intimate personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus and may I say this to these young people it's not about you you can know it just as much as the old people this lovely intimate knowledge of Christ.

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