

Not about us - All about Jesus (Jeremiah 9:23-26 & Philippians 3:1-21)

06-May-2018

There are Bibles in front of you and the usual outline in the bulletin for you to take down notes if that helps you concentrate

Let me pray first - for God's help and understanding. Let's pray...

Intro

[Intro Family Service - my job in JBA Ireland - English owner visiting and he is sharp as a razor!]

[Intro 2 - Sydney Tourist Coach - Sightseeing Harbour Bridge (8yrs), Opera House (14 years) -American Tourist-Compares Golden Gate Bridge (4 years) and Empire State (14 months) -Tour guide doesn't mention Sydney Tower-wasn't here last week!]

Boasting often backfires and is never received well!

And according to the Bible we have nothing to boast about!

[PowerPoint 1a-John 15:5]

In John 15:5 - Jesus says: **apart from me [Jesus] you can do nothing.**

And according to Galatians 2:20 as Christians

[PowerPoint 1b-Gal 2:20]

[We] have been crucified with Christ and I [we] no longer live, but Christ lives in me [us]. The life I [we] now live in the body, I [we] live **by faith in the Son of God, who loved me [us] and gave himself for me [us].**

[PowerPoint 2-All about Jesus]

So it's not about - not about you - not about us - but all about Jesus

Rejoice (v1)

That's why Paul says in Philippians 3 - verse 1 - that we should **rejoice in the Lord** - repeating what he said in Phil 2:18 and something he repeats again in Phil 4:4 - and he doesn't have a problem repeating that we should rejoice in the Lord because as Paul says at

The end of v1 - it is a safeguard for us - literally it is a sure and certain statement that we can rejoice **IN** the Lord

Because...

Jesus lives in us - so it's no longer us that lives but Jesus in us

Therefore **Rejoice** (literally - Be glad! Be happy! Be joyful!)

Whatever is going on in our lives - we have God living in us

And Jesus says in John 16:22 - no one can take our joy away!

There is something indestructible in Christian joy - that's because Christian joy is **in** the Lord - Its basis is that a Christian lives forever in the presence and the company of Jesus Christ. A Christian can lose all things and lose all people but a Christian cannot lose Jesus. Therefore even in circumstances where joy seems impossible - and even in situations where there seems to be nothing but pain and discomfort - we can have joy - because nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39) - and because in all things God works for the good of those who love Him (Rom 8:28) - that's why Paul can still rejoice in jail!

Challenge for us - Can we join Paul and rejoice in the Lord - because we have Jesus living in us - and because our lives - are Not about us - but all about Jesus!

(pause)

No place for us glorifying ourselves (3:2-7)

In verses 2 to 7 - Paul has some people who are contradicting his teaching about Jesus

[PowerPoint 3-Verses 2-3]

So in v2 - Paul issues a warning - Watch out - Beware of those dogs, those evildoers - those mutilators of the flesh.

Who's he talking about?

Before we answer that

Let's remind ourselves of Paul's teaching - that we are saved from the punishment that our sins deserve by God's grace alone - a free gift from God - in sending Jesus to die for our sins on a cruel cross - we didn't deserve to be saved - we didn't earn our salvation - we simply and humbly and adoringly accept what God has offered us

Furthermore Paul taught that this gift from God - was for all people - male or female, rich or poor, slave or free - and for all nations - not just the Jews - even the non- Jews - the Gentiles

So back to who Paul is calling dogs, evil doers and mutilators of the flesh

He's talking to some Jews who taught that salvation only belonged to Jews - so if any male wanted to be saved - they first had to be circumcised like every

other Jewish male. In other words they had to become a Jew before they could become a Christian.

And Paul calls these Jews - **dogs!** - Ironic since Jews referred to Gentiles - as Gentile dogs -

He's also saying it's evil to add any sort of work based activity to the free gift of God's grace in sending Jesus - it's an insult to Jesus' death to add our own efforts to make us right with God - Jesus has already done it. These Jews might think they're serving God by insisting on circumcision but they're disregarding God's grace in the process

And really all these Jews are doing is mutilating the man who wants to be a Christian

So Paul outrageously claims in v3 - it's the Christians who are the circumcised - the ones who serve God in Spirit - and don't boast in what they themselves do - but in what Jesus Christ has already done

You see circumcision was given as a sign of the agreement between God and His people. Just like a wedding ring is a sign of marriage - it's not the actual marriage but a sign that a person is married.

In the same way circumcision was a sign of the agreement of God and His people - but it required more than this physical sign - the Jews wore it as a physical badge - but there was a spiritual element

As Deut 10:16 says:

God says - circumcise your hearts therefore and do not be stiff-necked - [stubborn]

So what Paul is saying is "if you have nothing to show but circumcision of the flesh, if all you have is a **physical** mark - then you're not really circumcised - you are only mutilated. Real circumcision is devotion of heart and mind and thought and life to God"

Paul sets out 3 signs of real circumcision

A Worship of God in and through His Spirit living in us -

Christian worship is not about ritual or observations of details and regulations - it's about worshiping of God from our heart - it's about our inside attitude to God - not our outward appearances

B Only boast in Jesus - there should be no ego and pride in ourselves - but pride in Jesus - the one who did all for us - the only pride we can have is that we are someone that Jesus died for -

C Therefore a Christian have no confidence in their own flesh - their own self. Jews placed great importance and confidence in circumcision and human performance in following all the ordinances and duties of the Law. They'd rather keep the Sabbath free from work than help someone in need. They followed the letter of the law - and not the spirit of the law. In essence the Jews trusted themselves - whereas Christians must trust Jesus

Challenge for us - The Jews were trying to add to the completed work of Jesus and insist on circumcision. Is the work we do for the Lord - done with motivation that it is for the Lord - or is about our own pride and status and ego - it's worth examining our motive for the work we do for the Lord? Because we are saved for good works not by good works. It's not about us - it's all about Jesus (pause)

Now Paul's opponents could try and argue - well Paul - you're a Christian - you don't know what it's like for us Jews - But remember Paul was formerly a Jew - (called Saul). He knows everything about being a Jew
He lists his credentials in verses 4 to 7

[PowerPoint 4-verses 4-7]

- a. Circumcised as a baby boy on 8th day after his birth (Gen 17:12 & Lev 12:3)
- b. He was part of the race of Israel - God's chosen people - a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - the patriarchs
- c. He was from the tribe of Benjamin - a special tribe - Benjamin was child of Rachel - well-loved wife of Jacob - Benjamin alone had been born in promised land - (Gen 35:17, 18) - the first king came from tribe of Benjamin - Paul most likely got his name Saul from King Saul - Benjamin was a faithful tribe along with Judah when Israel divided into 2 kingdoms
- d. He's a Hebrew of Hebrews - born of Hebrew parents
- e. He trained in the Law as a Pharisee - the Separated ones - whose whole aim was to devote their lives to every minute detail of the law
- f. He had the utmost zeal - he persecuted Christians - the Church
- g. He was blameless in keeping the law

If anyone could claim to please God by law-keeping and works of the flesh, it was Paul - he was far more qualified than his opponents

[PowerPoint 5-v7]

But look what he says in v7 - all of those credentials he sees as a nothing but a complete loss compared to Jesus!

You see for Paul - it's not about him - and his achievements - but all about Jesus

Challenge for us - we may have a lot of credentials - qualifications - status - money and possessions - but they are nothing compared to what Jesus brings us as he lives in us

Are we boasting in our credentials? My grandfather or father was a Presbyterian - my mother was a missionary - I have 3 degrees - I'm expert in bla-bla-bla - so what? Great!

That's nothing - Jesus created everything, He holds everything together, Jesus loves us - He died for us to fix our sins - He forgives us - He lives in us - He gives us eternal life - how do we compare to all of that?

(pause)

Instead a desire to know Jesus (3:8-16)

You see Paul has been trying all his life to get into a right relationship with God. He's tried to do it by strict adherence to the Jewish Law. He tried keeping every smallest detail of the Law. He tried to please and satisfy God - even to the extent of getting rid of Christians whom he thought were against God

[PowerPoint 6-v8]

But as he says in v8 - He found the law and all its ways no more use than the garbage (literally animal pool!)

All his efforts are garbage compared with the worth of knowing Jesus

[PowerPoint 7-v9-11]

Paul had discovered that a right relationship with God is not based on the Jewish Law but on FAITH in Jesus see v9-10 - not achieved by human beings - it is given as a gift from God - it's not won by doing stuff - but is received and accepted by faith in Jesus

So the bottom line for Paul is that the Jewish way is wrong and futile

The right way is to know Jesus - that's Paul's heart desire in v10

To know Christ Jesus

"Know" here is not head knowledge but a personal heart knowledge of Jesus

The Greek word means a personal experience of another person

It means the closest and most intimate personal knowledge of another

For Paul to have that personal knowledge of Jesus

- a. Knowing the **power of his resurrection** - to Paul the resurrection of Jesus was not just a past event in History - Paul wants to experience that same power that raised Jesus in his life - it is a living dynamic power which operates on the lives of Christians - it means our lives are important to Jesus - and are sanctified by His Spirit as we live - it means the guarantee of immortality and Heavenly glory - and it means living with the risen Jesus forever
- b. Paul also wants to know the **privilege of suffering** - participation/fellowship in Jesus suffering. To suffer for our faith in Jesus is not a penalty/punishment - it is a privilege - as we are sharing the work and task of Jesus - not to gain salvation (Jesus has done that) - but to show we are connected to Jesus' life in every aspect of our life

- c. Paul wants to know what it is to be united to Jesus day by day - to become so **ONE with Him** as to share His every experience - we walk in life as He did, we bear our cross as He did, we share his suffering - in Paul's case that will be martyrdom - and we share his life forever more. All the time having Him with us - living in us

Paul sees this knowing of Jesus personally as a life-long experience - until we are one day perfected - when God completes the work He has already begun in a Christian (Phil 1:6)

[PowerPoint 8-v12-14]

So Paul says in v12 - He presses on to the goal of being perfected - He can't wait to be perfected - when he becomes the complete Christian - and takes hold of the prize which is Heavenly glory with Jesus - knowing all the time that Jesus has already taken hold of Him (which he did on the road to Damascus) - So as Paul presses on - his advice to his brothers and sisters in Christ in v13 - is to forget what is behind - Christians must forget all our past achievements and credentials - don't glory ourselves in them - don't rest on our laurels - saying look at what I've done - don't yearn for the good old days - [Luke 9:62] - but keep our eyes on Jesus - our prize v14

[PowerPoint 9-v15-16]

Paul's convinced in v15 - that **all mature Christians will understand** - that having a heartfelt desire to know Jesus personally and fully - is the way every

Christian should think - and if not - God will make it clear to people - Paul is certain of that

He sees that Christians - in v16 already have everything they need - forgiveness, a way to live, the truth - and the life of Jesus - leading into eternal life - so they should live up to the promised heavenly glory by living in unity with Jesus

Challenge for us - do we have a heartfelt desire to **know Jesus more personally** and intimately - experience this new life - this new creation we are - in Jesus - because of His resurrection - to have the desire to enjoy and rejoice in the privilege of suffering for Him - with Him in us strengthening and encouraging us - united to Christ - with the knowledge that this united life with him goes into eternity - knowing we have him forever

That's worth rejoicing about it? Isn't it?

(pause)

Instead - Imitate Paul, imitating Christ (3:17-21)

Living a Christian life is to be - Paul says in v17 - by following his example - literally by imitating Paul -

[PowerPoint 10-v17-19]

Now if I was to say to everyone [this morning/evening] - follow my example
You'd think me arrogant and having tickets on myself

It's best to see what Paul is saying in v17

As imitate me [Paul] as I imitate Christ [1 Cor 4:16; 1 Cor 11:1]

You see some in the Church [in Paul's day and our day] had a wrong view that because of God's grace in sending Jesus - there was no need to obey God's law - especially the 10 commandments. They thought they had a freedom to do as they please - because Jesus has done it all.

But of course we still need the 10 commandments - it's through God's Law we become aware of what our sin is [Rom 3:20 & 7:7] - like a looking glass mirror - shows every spot on our face - the commandments show where we've gone wrong - and **why** we need Jesus to fix our sin

And remember Jesus - fulfilled the law - He did not get rid of it (Matt 5:17) - and He summarized the law - as loving God and loving others (Mark 12:30-31)

So Jesus demanded a higher obedience of **love** - rather than a lesser obedience

So imitating Paul - imitating Jesus - is the call to love God and love others

Paul says anyone not following the example of Jesus - and living a love life - is an enemy of the cross - something that brings tears to Paul's eyes in v18

You see there were many in Paul's day (v19) who had made a **god** of their stomach

We shouldn't see that as people who were over-indulging in their food - and satisfying their stomachs - although remember the Jews were obsessed on what could and could not be eaten or drunk - and that led them not to mix with others

But stomach here should be seen as any self-indulgence - indulging in the pleasures of the body, mind and soul - and caring so much about those indulgences that there is no room for Jesus in their lives

As 2/3 of our population are not Christian - there are many things that keep them away from a relationship with Jesus - partying, sex, drinking, drugs, entertainment, material possessions, TV, technology, money, sport, It's basically any obsession with what this earth can give which prevents people knowing Jesus

[PowerPoint 11-v20-21]

And Paul warns his Christian brothers and sisters not to get caught up in earthly things v19b but remember where their citizenship is - in Heaven

In Paul's days - the Roman Empire was huge

Places like Philippi and Corinth were Roman colonies - even though many km's from Rome - the magistrates were Roman, Latin was spoken, Roman justice administered - Roman culture and morals followed - everywhere in the Empire - Romans never forgot their citizenship

Likewise - Christians should NEVER forget their citizenship is Heaven and their conduct should match

Paul wants them to remember in v20-21 that the hope of every Christians is that the day will come when Jesus - who has supreme power of God - and has everything under His control - and will transform a Christian's body {our old, failing, arthritic, disabled bodies) transformed to be like Jesus' divine and glorious body - a body which will never die and live forever!

How good is that!

(pause)

Challenge for us - are we reduced to tears - like Paul - knowing that there are 2/3 of our population who don't have that personal relationship with Jesus - and are enemies of the cross of Jesus - rejecting his saving love on the cross? What will we do about that?

(pause)

Challenge for us - are there earthly attractions which are taking our attention away from Jesus. Are there things we need to repent of?

(pause)

Challenge for us - as people see us as Christians - do they see us modelling the example that Jesus left us to live our lives? Do they see the joy in us - of being united to Jesus? If we're not joyful about being united to Jesus - we should be - as Paul said back in v1 - it's a certain safe truth that we can rejoice in Jesus

(pause)

Conclusion

So to sum up

- We have Jesus in us
- Apart from Him we can do nothing
- All our credentials are nothing compared to Jesus
- We should boast in nothing but Jesus
- We can't work our way to Heaven - Jesus has secured our eternity
- Our response is simply - having our hearts belonging to Jesus -
circumcised hearts - hearts that want to know Jesus more fully, more personally, more intimately -

SO friends, let us imitate Jesus because

[PowerPoint 12-Not about us!]

The bottom line, middle line and top line is - is that our lives - are not about us -
but All about Jesus!

Let's pray