

But...

Բայց...

Phil. 3:1-11

Pride can be dangerous. Unfortunately, the world rewards us only when we achieve things. And when you look back and see your achievements you get a feeling of pride and say, “I did it.” There is another way we get pumped with pride if we have a certain family heritage. “I belong to this or that family. My father did this or that. My grandparents did this or that, and I am their grandchild. I am somebody.”

Pride in wealth. “I came from the old country with \$100 in my pocket. Look at my properties today. I made it. I am a self-made man...”

According to the world (the flesh) two things shape who we are, our heritage and achievements. When we meet a new person, first thing we ask is their name. Name indicates our background or heritage, Armenian, Asian, Hispanic, ... Next question, what do you do? Achievements...right?

Paul had everything. He had a rich heritage, and he had many achievements. Somehow those lost their value. There is a “But” in verse 7 that changed everything for Paul.

So let us dig in.

1. Continue Rejoicing in the Lord Շարունակեցէք ուրախ ըլլալ Տէրոջմով

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. (Phil 3:1 ESV)

“Finally” does not mean we arrived to the end. It means “as for the rest”. In Armenian it translates: Ասկէ ետք After this...

How many times Paul said **rejoice**? Nine times in this short letter. Rejoice in the Lord three times; I am suffering but I rejoice; I rejoice because Christ is proclaimed; rejoice, with you; rejoice, church of Philippi, by seeing Epaphroditus return. Also, he uses the word **joy** four times.¹

If Paul is saying, “I am not troubled by telling you to rejoice in the Lord over and over again.” As your badveli, I will not stop reminding you this very important principle to rejoice in the Lord. I am going to tell you over and over.

-Paul is repeating himself. Why? Because they needed to hear that. Don't we all need joy? We have so many reasons to lose our joy. The pandemic and all the chaos interrupted our lives; interrupted our graduations, interrupted our wedding plans, interrupted seeing a grandchild's birth; interrupted our daily school...name it. In all this craziness we come to the Lord and say: I will rejoice in you, Oh LORD.

Illustration: A few weeks ago, a person from our church cooked some food and delivered to different people to express care and love. While the person was finishing the delivery, that person had an accident. The car was damaged and towed. The person came alive and well from the accident. I called the person to sympathize. The person was in some pain from the accident but rejoicing in the Lord. "Badveli, God saved me." Last week this person started to cook again and deliver again...

For me to rejoice in the Lord mean, I know who my Jesus is. I trust Him though I do face tough times.

2. Sign of the Covenant Ուխտի նշանը

² Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— (Phil 3:2,3 ESV)

On my car's dashboard there are little lights of all sorts that tell me if something is wrong. When you see your engine light is on, perhaps it is time to change the oil, and so on.

Paul is warning this church. He gives three descriptions:

Look out: "dogs", "the evildoers", "those who mutilate the flesh."

Dogs were regarded by the Jews as 'the most despised, insolent and miserable' of creatures and as unclean (Matt. 15:26; Rev. 22:15). It was a derogatory title used by orthodox Jews for the Gentile nations who were treated as Israel's enemies and therefore God's. ²

Paul is warning against the false teachers. Here is the context. We have Jewish Christians (Judaizers) who preached the false gospel and they insisted gentile Christians to observe Jewish laws and regulations. For example, we read in Acts 15:1, "**Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of**

Moses, you cannot be saved.” They preached Jesus, but also added some other laws and regulations for someone to be saved. (False teaching)

Those false teachers believed they were the people of the covenant, “those who mutilate the flesh” (circumcision). They were above everyone else. Let me explain how God made a covenant with Israel. The sign of the covenant was circumcision. Unfortunately, they forgot God and worshiped laws and regulations. However, God was interested in their “circumcised” hearts.

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. (Deuteronomy 30:6 ESV)

In Romans Paul explains further about this:

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. (Romans 2:28,29 ESV)

After telling about the false teachers, Paul describes **the true followers and people of God:**

For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—
(3:3)

We are the circumcision, which means God made a covenant with Abraham, but that covenant arrived to all humanity, Jews and Gentiles, through Christ Jesus. With Jesus, we have the Spirit of God; with Jesus, we can worship God in Spirit not relying on our rituals or heritage.

True worshipers do not put confidence in the flesh. What do we mean by the flesh?

3. Paul's Heritage and Achievements

Պօղոսի ժառանգութիւնը եւ կատարելագործումները

⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a

Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. (Phil 3:4-6 ESV)

In my introduction I explained how **identity makers** and **ethnic heritage** shapes our character. I am who I am, because I belong... And I did...

Paul is saying:

“if I am going to boast in the flesh, I have the best resume to show”: (7 things of heritage and achievements)

-circumcised on the eighth day, (covenant sign)

-of the people of Israel, (pure Israelite, of the chosen people)

-of the tribe of Benjamin, (my tribe originated with one of the true sons of Israel)

-a Hebrew of Hebrews;

-as to the law, a Pharisee;

-as to zeal, a persecutor of the church;

-as to righteousness under the law, blameless

What a resume.... Man!

Yet, yet next word changes everything....But....BUT..... BUT

4. But... But...

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (7-11)

Paul is saying, hello friends, I have tons of ethnic status; I have wonderful identity markers; I have ethnic heritage that surpasses any nation or tribe, and anyone who is not like me is a dog. I made it... I arrived to the top...

Yet, I count everything a loss

The “luggage” that I carry is rubbish... nothing... zero...

I am who I am because of Jesus Christ.

I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ...

Paul wants us to follow his example in shaping who we are. As an Armenian, I do fall in the trap of pride. I love and will love my heritage and people. But woe to me they become my source of significance, security, identity and worth. Woe to me if I replace them with the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

My righteousness does not come from the law (**identity makers** and **ethnic heritage**.) It cannot come from a list of achievements; it cannot come by merit. Our right relationship with God comes by the Grace of Jesus Christy. Through Him I am at peace with God and with each other.

There is nothing wrong in achievements or having rich heritage; there is nothing wrong in feeling good about them. Here is the danger sign: look out when those replace God. Look out for “those” who steal from you the JOY of KNOWING CHRIST.

MY Prayer:

Oh Lord, “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.” (Jer. 9:23-24 ESV)

1. The focus of the book of Philippians is the proper Christian attitude during times of suffering. Specifically, this is an attitude of rejoicing. Paul encourages believers to rejoice despite suffering (Philippians 1), rejoice through humble service (Philippians 2), focus on Christ during hard times (Philippians 3), and depend on Christ’s strength when struggling (Philippians 4) <https://www.bibleref.com/Philippians/survey-of-Philippians.html>

2 Tyndale Commentary, Ralph Martin

¹ Ասկէ ետքը, եղբայրներս, ուրախ եղէք Տէրոջմով: Նոյն բաները ձեզի գրել ինծի ձանձրութիւն չէ, բայց ձեզի ապահովութիւն է: ² Զգուշացէ՛ք շուներէն, զգուշացէ՛ք չար մշակներէն, զգուշացէ՛ք թլփատութենէն, ³ Վասն զի թլփատութիւնը մենք ենք, որ հոգիով Աստուած կը պաշտենք ու կը պարծենանք Քրիստոս Յիսուսով եւ մարմնի վրայ չէ վստահութիւննիս: ⁴ Թէպէտ ես ալ նոյն վստահութիւնը ունիմ մարմնի վրայ: Եթէ ուրիշ մէկը կը կարծէ թէ վստահութիւն ունի մարմնի վրայ, ա՛լ աւելի ես. ⁵ Ութը օրուան թլփատուած, Իսրայէլի ազգէն, Բենիամինի ցեղէն, Եբրայեցի՝ Եբրայեցիներէն, օրէնքին նայելով փարիսեցի. ⁶ Նախանձախնդիր ըլլալու կողմանէ՝ եկեղեցին կը հալածէի. օրէնքին արդարութեանը կողմանէ՝ անարատ էի: ⁷ Բայց ինչ որ ինծի շահ էր, զանիկա Քրիստոսին համար վնաս սեպեցի: ⁸ Եւ իրաւ բոլոր բաներն ալ վնաս կը սեպեմ իմ Տէրոջս Քրիստոս Յիսուսին գերազանց գիտութեանը համար. որուն համար ամէն բանէ զրկուեցայ եւ աղտեղութիւն կը սեպեմ, որպէս զի Քրիստոսը շահիմ ⁹ Ու իր մէջ գտնուիմ, ո՛չ թէ իմ արդարութիւնս ունենամ որ օրէնքէն է, հապա Քրիստոսին հաւատքովը եղած արդարութիւնը՝ որ Աստուծմէն է հաւատքով: ¹⁰ Որպէս զի ճանչնամ զանիկա եւ անոր յարութեանը զօրութիւնը ու անոր շարշարանքներուն հաղորդ ըլլամ, անոր մահուան կերպարանքը առնելով. ¹¹ Որպէս զի մեռելներուն յարութեանը հասնիմ:

Փիլիպպեցիս 3.1-11