**Lesson 9: Righteousness That Counts!**

Text: Philippians 3:1-10

**Introduction**

We have seen thus far that Paul had joy despite his difficult circumstances and difficult people because he found joy in Christ. The Philippians faced another situation that was detrimental to their joy. There were those in their day who taught that keeping the law was necessary for salvation. They were self-righteous. Paul provides a powerful rebuttal in this chapter. Warren Wiersbe calls his study of this chapter “Learning to Count.” Paul had to learn how to count his own righteousness. He seriously overestimated his heritage and religious deeds. He learned that they were useless. He needed righteousness from an outside source. When he found righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ, he found righteousness that counted. The absence of righteousness leaves you in fear and doubt as you face eternity. Finding your source of righteousness in Christ produces joy. Do you have righteousness that counts with God?

1. Paul warned the Philippian church about those who taught a works-based righteousness. (v. 1-3)
   1. The Jews had a hard time believing that the Gentiles could be right with God apart from the law.
      1. It was hard for them to accept that they could become a Christian without becoming a Jew!
      2. Thus, they stressed keeping the law as part of their salvation.
   2. Paul used three descriptive terms to describe these false teachers. (v. 2)
      1. He referred to them as “dogs” because they were like scavengers. They worked in packs and followed Paul everywhere he went. They were always biting at his heels and disturbing the faith of those who trusted Christ.
      2. He referred to them as “evil workers” because they were harmful to the church.
      3. He referred to them as “the concision” because of their emphasis on circumcision as a means of being right with God.
   3. Paul said that righteousness was given to believers apart from works of the flesh. (v. 3)
      1. Since it was a spiritual problem, he emphasized a spiritual remedy. (v. 3a)
      2. They should “rejoice in Christ Jesus” because His work on the cross made salvation possible. (v. 3b)
      3. “There is only one good work that takes the sinner to heaven: the finished work of Christ on the cross” (Wiersbe).
      4. Since righteousness comes by faith in Christ, there is no reason to have confidence in the flesh. (v. 3c) Paul knew this by firsthand experience.
2. When Paul assessed his righteousness before his salvation, he overestimated his standing with God. (v. 4-6)
   1. Paul was confident that his religious credentials could be compared to any of the Jews. (v. 4-6) If anyone had grounds to boast in the flesh, Paul had an impressive resume.
      1. He was the ideal Jew. (v. 5)
         1. He had a Jewish heritage. (v. 5a)
         2. He was ultraconservative in the way he kept the law. (v. 5b)
      2. He targeted those who threatened their Jewish beliefs and way of life. (v. 6a)
      3. He added these things up in his mind and considered himself righteous. (v. 6b)
      4. He was a “good person” in everyone’s eyes…except God’s!
   2. He had to learn how to count God’s way. (v. 7-8)
      1. “Like most religious people today, Paul had enough morality to keep him out of trouble, but not enough righteousness to get him into heaven….He had to lose his religion to find salvation.” (Wiersbe)
      2. Paul had to look at God’s ledger.
      3. When Paul counted everything from God’s perspective, he found that he was spiritually bankrupt!
3. When Paul learned to count God’s way, he found Christ’s righteousness alone to be satisfactory. (v. 9-11)
   1. Righteousness that counts is received by faith. (v. 9)
   2. Since righteous came by faith in Christ, it became the joyful pursuit of his life to know Christ. (v. 10)
      1. He wanted to know Him, not just know about Him. (v. 10a)
      2. He wanted to know the power of His resurrection. (v. 10b)
      3. He was willing to suffer with Him. (v. 10c)
   3. Paul’s assessment demonstrates that there are only two possible kinds of righteousness.
      1. Self-righteousness (what you are *doing* for salvation).
      2. Jesus’ righteousness (what Christ has *done* for your salvation).
4. Central Idea: Finding his source of righteousness in Christ produced joy in Paul’s life.
5. Application: Finding your source of righteousness in Christ produces joy.
   1. On whose righteousness are you counting for your salvation? Yours or Christ’s?
   2. Many refuse to count God’s way. They want to hold onto their religious heritage. They continue to add up their good works. (Rom. 10:3)
   3. Read Carey Schmidt’s book, Done, for a clear and concise presentation of the truth that righteousness is received by faith. (Rom. 10:9-10)
   4. Counting on Jesus’ righteousness is not the end. It is just the beginning of the joyful Christian life! Is it your life pursuit to know Him? What are you doing to know Him more?

**Conclusion**

The pursuit of righteousness apart from Christ is an endless and empty pursuit. How sad that so many are living without the joy of counting on Jesus’ righteousness! If you have never received Jesus’ righteousness by faith, I urge you to do so today. Living without assurance of a right standing before the holy God is a fearful experience. Trust Jesus as your Savior and know the joy that comes with His righteousness. Receive the righteousness that counts!