

## ***“Sharing Joy and Hope in Jesus!” #5***

### **Chapter 3: 1 – 4a**

*Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.<sup>2</sup> Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.<sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh --<sup>4</sup> though I myself have reasons for such confidence.*

- As the third chapter opens, Paul invites his fellow believers to “rejoice in the Lord.” We’re going to hear that encouragement again in this letter. The reason for joy is rooted in the gospel. Paul’s aim was to “safeguard” the gospel from those who would undermine and destroy its message.
- Note how passionate Paul is as he defends the gospel of Christ Jesus. He doesn’t pull any punches in his language.

**Who are the “mutilators of the flesh” Paul warns against? (See Galatians 5:1 -6)**

**Explain how insistence on circumcision undermines the gospel message.**

**What does Paul mean when he says, “For it is we who are the circumcision.”**

### **Chapter 3:4b - 9**

*If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:<sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;<sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.<sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.<sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ<sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.*

- Paul is talking hypothetically here. If you could be justified by keeping the law, Paul would be far ahead of all others in God’s sight. But whatever he used to think were advantages were now nothing but trash ... because they took his attention off of Christ and the righteousness that comes from God.

**What takes your attention off of Christ and the righteousness he won for you?**

**What increases your appreciation of what Christ has done for you?**

### **Chapter 3:10 - 14**

*<sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

- Paul wanted to “know” Christ completely, to be intimately connected with his suffering, death, and resurrection. Through his connection with Christ, Paul knew that he would attain the resurrection from the dead.
- Even though eternal life in Christ is a certainty, Paul lived as though he was constantly pressing on toward the goal of heaven.

**How do we “know” Christ and the power of his resurrection?**

**What does participation in the sufferings of Christ mean in the life of a believer?**

**What does Paul mean when he says that he has not “already obtained all this”?**

**What does a life of “straining toward what is ahead” look like?**

**Does Paul’s encouragement to “press on toward the goal” diminish the importance of the Spirit’s work? Explain.**

### **Chapter 3:15 - 16**

*All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.*

- Mature Christians will understand Paul’s words. Paul also know there will be different ways to approach life in this world. Believers often differ on the details of how they live their lives.
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**How does God make his will and ways clear to us?**

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, help me press on toward the goal of heaven, trusting only in the merits of Jesus my Savior. Amen.