

CFT BRISTOL CHURCH

“BOOK BY BOOK” BIBLE STUDY NOTES

*By Pastor Benson*



CFT BRISTOL CHURCH

**A STUDY OF  
PHILIPPIANS 3:1-6**

**HAVING NO  
CONFIDENCE IN THE  
FLESH**

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Friday, 8pm -9pm, 2nd June 2023  
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## Having No Confidence In The Flesh (Philippians 3:1-6)

### Philippians 3:1-6

*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.*

*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.*

#### Notes:

[1] Apostle starts by asking the Philippian church to rejoice in the Lord and not to be tired of his constant admonitions particularly with respect to what he was about to say. He cared dearly about their faith in our Lord Jesus (Hebrews 13:17)

- Hebrews 13:17

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

[2] He warns them about a group of people who were attempting to subvert the faith of the Philippian believers. He uses very strong terms to describe these group of people:

- I. Dogs
- II. Evil Workers
- III. Mutilators of the flesh (The False circumcision)

First, the Philippian Christians were warned about those Paul labels as "dogs." Unlike today's domesticated pets, dogs in first century Philippi were generally wild pack animals. They were aggressive scavengers and thieves, devouring whatever food they could find (Matthew 7:6; 15:26, 27; Mark 7:27, 28; Luke 16:21; 2 Peter 2:22; Revelation 22:15). False teachers, like those Paul will describe, are looking for their own interests. They are not truly part of the family of faith, but are seeking to take whatever they can get from others.

Second, the Philippians were warned against **those who were actually doing evil:** false teachers. This was a theme Paul also warned other groups of Christians about (2 Corinthians

11:13). One particular group Paul cautions against are the "Judaizers" (Titus 1:10). These were teachers who claimed that faith in Christ was not enough for salvation. These people added the requirements of the Old Testament law on top of the gospel. This focus on legalism turned the practice of circumcision from an act of obedience into a "mutilation" of the flesh.

- 2 Corinthians 11:13

For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.

- Titus 1:10 (Judaizers)

For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group.

[3] He contrasts these group of people with True believers using the following phrases:

#### I. The circumcision (Colossians 2:11)

- Colossians 2:11

In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh<sup>a)</sup> was put off when you were circumcised by<sup>b)</sup> Christ,

#### II. Who worship in Spirit (or serve God by His Spirit) (John 4:24)

- John 4:24

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.

#### III. We who rejoice (or boast) in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17)

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17

<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually

#### IV. We have no confidence in the Flesh (2 Corinthians 3:5)

- 2 Corinthians 3:5

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

One can describe “The Flesh” in the context as that part of us as humans (and believers) that is independent of God, to put it simply (Rom 8:5-6, Rom 8:7-8, Gal 5:13, Gal 5:16-17, Gal 5:19-21)

[4] The Apostle Paul went further to state that, if anyone could boast in “The Flesh”, he would have the credentials to do so, but he didn’t because he was now “in Christ”. He outlined credentials that could be boast worthy:

- I. He was of the tock of Israel.
- II. He was from the tribe of Benjamin.
- III. He was “Hebrew of Hebrews”
- IV. He has excellent knowledge of the Laws of Moses
- V. He had zeal (so much that he persecuted the church)
- VI. He was blameless from a righteous perspective.

The “Flesh” looks down on everyone stemming from a place of self-righteousness (Luke 18:11)

- Luke 18:10-14

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’<sup>13</sup> “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’<sup>14</sup> “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

[5] The Apostle Paul basically is re-iterating the basis of the gospel of Christ:

- I. Faith in Christ was enough for salvation. Adding the requirements of the Old Testament law on top of the gospel for salvation was erroneous and defeats the essence of the gospel. (Galatians 3:1-2)

- Galatians 3:1-2

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. <sup>2</sup> I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?

- II. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ not by works, including works of the law (Ephesians 2:8–9)

- Ephesians 2:8–9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.