

Put No Confidence in the Flesh

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you [is] not tedious, but for you [it is] safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:1-8 NKJV)

Paul finds no harm in covering a subject more than once. It was not tedious to him because it protected his readers. It is quite apparent that this particular warning could be repeated many times because we are so easily ensnared by misdirected affections.

The flesh is naturally prideful, and always seeks to deceive us. If we can find something to do, some task to check off to satisfy God, we will gladly do that instead of humble submission. Therefore, Paul reminds the Philippians not to be deceived by the Judaizers (Pharisees and Sadducees). They put their confidence in their works.

They believed by keeping the law they would save their souls. However, they failed to realize that the law had to be kept perfectly for salvation. Really, even beyond this, they believed they would be saved just because they were Israelites.

The truth is that no one will be saved by the law because there is none righteous, no not one (Rom 3:10). If anyone could have confidence in the flesh, it would have been Paul.

Paul was a model Pharisee with a perfect bloodline to back it. However, he realized, by the grace of God, that all his righteousness was as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). Therefore, he threw that all away to follow Christ and seek His righteousness.

Have you been subdued by the Pharisees of today? Many so-called servants of God use legalism to control people. Oh, they don't come out and say that is what they are doing. However, if you analyze it carefully you will see they use the law to manipulate people with guilt. They lay heavy burdens on the peoples back all the while excusing themselves. When church attendance or giving is emphasized more than personal holiness, the reader should beware.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier [matters] of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” (Matthew 23:23 NKJV)

Therefore, friends, don't put any confidence in the flesh. Make sure you are doing the weightier things of the law like justice, mercy, and faith. Do the other things too, but do them as an act of worship. Then you will have peace. Legalism may bring you to a false assurance, but it will never give you true peace.

Gracious Father, we are too easily led into this error. Keep us on the narrow path by protecting us from legalism. God I know those in leadership may cry foul at the reading of these words. Lord, have mercy and open their eyes that they may see what their congregation is really like. Many surely have fallen victim of the god of attendance and offerings. Return them to the God they love. Revive them to a pure worship. These men have given their lives to serve you. Many have made tremendous sacrifices to enter and stay in the ministry. Restore them to that pure motive, to that divine calling you laid upon their heart. Lord, we need you in this dark hour. Do not allow the devil to have victory over your church. Take your leaders by the hand and set them on the right path. Then you will have the worship you deserve. Do this Father because we ask it, and because you are a God that hears the cry of His children, amen.