**one thing – wk5 – One Faith**

**Have you met a grumpy – unhappy – uptight Christian? I have…**

**Some Christians seem more miserable than joyful. In some churches... no running, shouting, talking, drinks, no laughing, no smiling, no fun.**

**Paul wanted to go to Rome as a preacher ended up there as a prisoner. He had been through a lot! Has reasons to be negative.**

**Time to think and write… missed his friends and the ministry.**

**But, Paul knew God was using it to pave the way for others.**

**Last week the challenge to live authentic lives as Christ works in us. Today – the deceptive danger of religion in our life.**

**Picking up where we left off - Paul mentions two people –**

**Timothy – he was a full-time minister/ pastor with a specific call of God**

**Phil 2:19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. (Paul mentored Tim - he became a pastor - is like a son to Paul) 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. (this little verse – is big. Look around – the world looks out for themselves – but not the people of Jesus…) 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son (spiritual son) with his father (Paul) he has served with me in the work of the gospel. (They traveled the world together – planted churches together – preached together)**

* **The Paul’s and the Timothy’s of life – thankful**

**23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. (He will be coming to you soon w/ an update – I hope to follow. But for now here’s …)**

**Epaphroditus – a regular guy who’s willing to serve wherever needed**

**Phil 2:25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, (in Christ) co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. (sent by Philippi to Paul with offerings and letters) 26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. (missing home & deathly sick) But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. (we don’t know what happened – but he nearly died getting to Paul) 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me. (you couldn’t go so you sent him – missions)**

**Paul - the spiritual father - pouring his life into others**

**Some are here – these men and women are few.**

**Someone is looking for a spiritual father and mother!**

**Timothy - the pastor / teacher – bolding leading**

 **Not everyone is called to ministry leadership – do it faithfully.**

 **He not only received from Paul – he ministered to Paul too.**

**Epaphroditus - the regular guy who loved God? Ready to serve.**

**Where do you need me? I’ll go where Jesus needs me.**

 **This is where most Christians are…**

**Picked to bring the offering & serve Paul – he gets ill, nearly dies on the way. He could have turned around when it got tough… but,**

**He finished his mission and because of him, we are reading this letter. He delivered this to them. He stepped up and he followed thru! Imagine what we could accomplish if we all lived like this!**

**Big Thought - When you belong to Jesus, everything you do is important – everything we do is ministry! Be faithful.**

**What seemed like a simple FedEx job for them, turned into the word of God for us – We’re not all a Paul, or a Timothy, but many of you are Epaphroditus - thank you!!!**

**Phil 3:1 Finally, my brothers, 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. (I sound like a broken record on this joy thing, but I repeat myself to make sure you get it!)**

**Up to this point Paul is kind and loving… the tone changes - Philippians 3:2 - Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. (does not beat around the bush – his wife would have kicked him under the table – and given him the look.) 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh - 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. (He gets very passionate about something that can steal our joy and he is angry about it – it’s legalism – aka. religion.)**

**The issue is those trying to undermine Jesus: The religious**

**Those that went from church to church - undermining Paul**

**Those from within the church – elders, leaders, people**

**His passionate words remind us of a few things about church:**

* **Not all church leaders can be trusted**
* **We must not be afraid to confront deception**
* **There are right and wrong beliefs - Not all faiths are the same**

**Paul is often reminding us there but one true faith- Faith in Jesus alone**

**How to safe Guard Your Faith**

1. **Look out for the Dogs!**

**Phil 3:2 Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. (What is he talking about? – The dogs call themselves Christians, but twist scripture to create harsh rules, guilt, and manipulation)**

**There is a diff. between Christians and religious people**

**\* A Christians life in a nut shell = humility, joy, compassionate**

**\* But, the dogs are self-serving, legalistic, and divisive.**

**Look out for the religious folks - Paul used a strong word – Dogs: we think how cute (pic of a cute dog) He was speaking of wild dogs (Dogs in S. America = wild, dirty, ravenous, prone to attack, reproducing…) This is how religious people are…**

**3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh (our efforts)**

**The issue: The religious say you needed Jesus + circumcision.**

**But true followers – worship in the Spirit and not in the flesh.**

 **\* Who here knows what circumcision is?**

**\* Would you like to come up here and explain it? LOL**

# ****A Short History Lesson:****

**Before “Worship Wars” - There were** diet wars **&** circumcision **wars**

* **What were the diet wars?**
* **What is circumcision… what was it for… when did it start?**

**Genesis - Given by God to Abraham as a covenant on the 8th day – represented the heart, an act of obedience - it set them apart.**

**The Big Debate: Did Jesus** fulfill **OT laws or do they** still apply today**?**

**The Key Question to answer this: What was their ultimate** purpose**?**

**Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. - Hebrews is a discourse about this… / Galatians 3:24 - So the (OT) law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. / Romans 3:19-23 – The law was given to show us how much we need God – it does not make us right with God – And thru Jesus, not rules or tradition, we are righteous before God.**

**The OT law was not a** stairway **to heaven, but a** signpost **to Jesus?**

**The religious say you need Jesus, plus… – That Jesus is not enough – this enraged Paul! Jesus + anything = Religion**

**Today we see it still it: Jesus plus rules – food – worship styles - baptism - tongues - clothes – voting - Sunday night church – early prayer – performance and rituals. The tools had become the rules**

**Phil 3:4 …though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! (Paul was like I have been there, I know – I have tried to live that way)**

**Here’s my religion resume - 5 I was circumcised when I was eight days old. (check) I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel, (right race) and a member of the tribe of Benjamin (right family) - a real Hebrew if there ever was one! (pure Jewish) I was a member of the Pharisees, (most devoted group of his day) who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. 6 I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. (I attacked those who opposed) And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. (Followed all 600 commandments – I’ve Been there - done that – bought the T-Shirt… but then – I met Jesus)**

**7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. (maybe you are there – you look back all those things you were chasing – that just left you empty) 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. (Hallelujah) For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, (rubbish) so that I could gain Christ 9 and become one with him.**

**Bible uses harsh words to talk about harsh things – Rubbish is strong Word- gk. skubala (skoo'-bal-a) garbage, refuse, dung. Paul is saying – the religion they are feeding you is a load of…**

**Look out for the dogs and - 2. Don’t step in rubbish**

**When I stand before the throne – when God asks me – why I should let you into heaven? My answer will not be - I gave to the feed the kids fund, went to church regularly, was a good person… No, it will be…**

**I am covered by the blood of the lamb - Jesus! By faith I look to the cross as payment for my sin - I am forgiven!**

**Isaiah 64:6 - …we are all unclean, and all our righteous acts are as filthy rags… “filthy” is the word menstruation rags. Religion is a dirty tampon**

**Paul in other letters remind us that this is not a license to live reckless lives, we are to represent Jesus and from one follower to another we are to correct - keep accountable.**

**Paul gave his religion resume, now he gives his righteousness resume 9 b I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God’s way of making us right with himself depends on faith. 10 I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. (the HS) I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, (I embrace wherever this faith takes me – even if it’s death) 11 so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! (for even if I die – I will live again!)**

**Paul defines righteousness. You ready? It’s – faith in Jesus – that’s it**

**Paul says this is my new resume - Jesus took this self-righteous, arrogant, unloving person, legalistic person and made new me new!**

**God is Holy and just we are not – But in Christ we are made holy - made right thru Jesus Christ alone! Not rules but grace.**

**Don’t buy the lie, Jesus + anything is rubbish – Don’t step in it!**

**Religion will try to tell you what righteousness is – our efforts to climb**

* **Buddhism: cease all desires**
* **Confucianism: meditation, education and live a moral life**
* **Hinduism: Detach from want and be in unity with nothingness**
* **Islam: Live a good life, and if Allah will’s it you will be righteous**
* **Judaism: Obey God’s law’s perfectly**
* **New Age thought: Live in concert with creation – and do good**
* **Taoism: Live in rhythm with the force, obey it and flow in it**

**Christianity is lumped with world religions – but it is very different**

**It alone declares God saves us – we cannot save our self!**

**Philippians 3:8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ 9 and become one with him.**

**3. Pursue the true prize - Jesus**

**You want to safe guard your faith – keep your eyes in the right prize.**

**Paul lost it all –his power, position, wealth, prestige – lost it all. For what? What did he gain. Jesus – to be one with his savior.**

**Francis Chan, Crazy Love – Imagine heaven being everything you ever wanted – free of guilt, pain, suffering, sickness, anger, violence – with luxury, beauty, joy, peace, family who have passed on – all of it. Then take Jesus out of it – would you be content to live there? Most would say Yes - Now – take it all away, and all that’s left is Jesus - would you still want to go. Many probably no, because we want what God gives far more then we want God himself.**

**I love those things / things here / family / beauty… but do I love His gifts more than the gift giver… sometimes – I wonder**

**Do we really want the one who blesses or just his blessings?**

**If we lose track of the real prize – we chase the blessing.**

**Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. (Can we really say that?) 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**

**Yes, we get heaven / we will have perfect healing / the future hope of seeing Christian family & friends who passed/ Yes, streets of gold/ Yes, a place to call home - but the prize is Jesus. He is what this is all about.**

**Thank you God – that you love us and give us so much! But - Help me God to seek your face not your hands.**

**Phil 3:13b …I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.**

**This one faith – not religion – Is worth it – following Jesus / knowing Jesus – is worth it all. Paul traded his filthy rags of sin, for clean garments of righteousness.**

**This salvation is free – but not cheap – it cost Jesus everything – offered to you freely… but it will cost you – everything.**

**We pick up next week – at verse 12 – Paul says, I am still trying to understand this and live this out… Next week - one of my favorite sections of Philippians.**