

How To Avoid Identity Theft

Philippians 3:1-3



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FOCAL Read Responsively **Philippians 3:1-3** Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe. [2] Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. [3] **For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.**

Susan and her family came home from a wonderful vacation at the beach to find she no longer owned her home. Somehow an *identity thief* had gotten hold of her Social Security number and other pertinent information. Identity thieves had sold the contents of her house - and the house itself - while she and her children were relaxing on the coast. Though Susan would be able to get her house back it would cost her literally thousands of dollars in attorney fees to make things right.

Identity theft has become such a prevalent problem in the United States that the Federal Government has established a website to tell you how to avoid it. Thieves are very smart about stealing *who you are* and then using that information to enrich themselves while destroying your life. Some thieves have developed small electronic boxes that they magnetically attach to Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs). These boxes scan and record your card's magnetic strip when you put it in the machine. The thieves come back later, remove the boxes, and then go online to rob your bank account. Other thieves with less technological savvy will call your house pretending to be a representative of your bank. They then tell you that their bank is doing a periodic review of all their customer accounts. In order to aid in the review you are

asked to give your full name, your Social Security number, and your bank account number and routing code. When you give the information they politely tell you that your account has been verified, hang up, and then proceed to take all of your assets. Other web smart thieves send emails to unsuspecting people with "backdoor trojan" programs that record your keystrokes, spy on you, and ferret your passwords from your computer. If you think you're safe because you never use the Internet you're wrong. If you're throwing out old billing and banking information thieves may be going through your garbage - even at the landfill. If you're not shredding your sensitive information you may be a victim.

Identity theft can happen to anyone if they're not careful.

What happens in the physical world is also duplicated in the spiritual world. There are *external* as well as *internal forces* at work that are conspiring to steal your *spiritual identity*. These forces all seem quite reasonable on the surface but, like Satan in the Garden of Eden, their intent is to rob you. It is Satan's desire to use any means necessary to rob you of salvation, or if you're saved, to rob you of the **joy of your salvation**. It can happen to anybody if you're not diligent. The Church of Philippi was a wonderful Body of Believers. This was one of the few local Churches where the Apostle was able to say:

CONTEXT Philippians 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you ...

They were a loving and caring local Church - and *they were under attack*. The devil never attacks the local

Church that compromises with the world. He doesn't care if you come to Church and sit apathetically listening while the pastor preaches. The demons of hell are not disturbed by the shallow "I believe" profession of the undoing Christian. The world is not disturbed by the local Church that ignores the Word of God and makes excuses for sin. But be like Philippi and love Jesus. Preach the Gospel clearly calling for repentance unto salvation. Speak the truth in Christian love and say that **there is but one way to salvation, and that Way is faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6)**. Do this and you will be opposed, you will be an offense, you will be attacked. Paul told the obedient Philippians"

CONTEXT Philippians 1:27-28 stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel [28] without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved and that by God. New International Version of the Sacred Scriptures

The Church of Jesus Christ will have its enemies, but God will stand with His Bride. The Church cannot be defeated as long as it **stands unified in one loving and Christ honoring spirit. Worldly men and ungodly philosophers have come and gone, but God, God's Word, and God's Church has outlived all who would be their pall bearers.**

Conduct yourselves in a manner of the Gospel. **Rejoice in the Lord** and do not let anyone steal your identity in Christ. Keep on telling the world that "**whosoever**

believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life".

1. If I Am A Believer I Am To Rejoice In The Lord

FOCAL **Philippians 3:1** Finally, my brethren, **rejoice** in the Lord. ...

Word Study Rejoice in the Lord. The word "rejoice" is the *Present Active Imperative* of CHAIRO (χαίρω **Pronounced** *kah'-ee-ro*), which means **to be joyful, filled with peaceful contentment**. The word is an *Imperative Mood* which means that *it is a command*. The Apostle says "God is commanding you to be joyful".

What is the difference between "happiness" and "joy"?

What is the difference between **happiness** and **joy**? "**Happiness**" is an English word that comes from the word **happenstance**. When you have a **good happenstance** then you have **happiness**. Happiness is based on things *going your way*. When you have a lot of money you're happy, but when the government takes a bunch of your wealth in taxes you're unhappy. When you health is good you're happy, but when your health declines you're unhappy. When the beautiful woman you wanted to date says *yes* then you're happy. When you go out on the date and discover she incessantly talks about herself you're *unhappy*. Happiness is based on good circumstances. Happiness cannot be commanded because it depends on our environment.

Joy, on the other hand, is **internal to the believer**.

FOCAL **Philippians 3:1** Finally, my brethren, **rejoice** in the Lord.

Finally (λοιπον **Pronounced** *loy-pon'*) - **moreover - be filled with joy IN THE LORD**. Here is where the believer's joy is. It is not in circumstances, not in those things that go on around you. It is **in Christ, in the Lord Jesus Christ**. Dear friends, here is your identity. Here is what sets the Christian apart from the non-Christian. It is that you are **in the Lord Jesus Christ**. The Bible says that **Abraham**

Genesis 15:6 ... **believed in the LORD; and {the LORD} counted {Abraham's faith} to him for righteousness.**

When you believed in the Lord you were saved. This is the fountainhead of your joy.

1 Samuel 2:1 **My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.**

If you are born again and destined for God's Heaven then your faith is **in the Lord**. Not in your circumstances, not in any person or priest, but **in the Lord**. Whether the times are good or the times are bad the wise believer will

Psalms 4:5 **Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and**

put your trust in the LORD.

God is faithful, and cares for those who are His. Our **trust is in the Lord**, not in our circumstances. Our focus must be on the Lord Who saved us. Our focus - no matter what might come - should be in **rejoicing in the Lord**. The Apostle tells the Philippians:

CONTEXT Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord
always: *and* again I say, **Rejoice**.

Here we see *two Present Active Imperatives*. This is a *double command with habitual action*. We are told **"keep on rejoicing in the Lord at all times - and I will keep on saying this - keep on rejoicing"**. The identity of the believer is **in Christ**. It is the Lord Who calls us, Who saves us, Who preserves us, and Who guarantees us eternity. We **rejoice in the Lord** because we know that - no matter how deep and dark the valley - we have His Word that:

2 Timothy 2:19 The Lord knoweth them that are his.

We are to rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice as the **Magi did who, after a long journey, they came to the house of the young Jesus**:

Matthew 2:10 When they saw the star, they **rejoiced** (**χαίρω** Pronounced *kah'-ee-ro*) with exceeding great **joy**. (**χαρά** Pronounced *khar-ah'*)

In this sentence we see both the *noun* as well as the *verb*

forms of the Greek for JOY. **"They rejoiced (CHAIRO) with very great joy (CHARA)"**. What was in their hearts spilled outward. They were literally *overflowing with joy*. Here was Jesus! Their long journey was done, and they had found the Messiah.

The disciples had seen Jesus crucified, nailed to a Cross naked and shamed. They themselves had not "played the man", but had run and hidden as cowards. Even their leader Peter cursed before a milk maid so as to blend into the crowd. The stone was rolled over the mouth of the borrowed tomb that Jesus' body laid in. Now they were all hiding behind locked doors.

Then came the resurrected Jesus! The Bible says that **Jesus ...**

John 20:20 showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

That word "glad" is actually **CHAIRO**. They **REJOICED!** Be content and filled with joy! It is God's desire that every Child He has purchased by the Blood of Christ be joyful. We should be a happy people. We should be a peaceful people. We should be a content people.

Nehemiah 8:10 ... the joy of the LORD is your strength.

REJOICING (**חָדַדְוּ** Pronounced *khed-vaw'*) **in the LORD** (**יְהוָה** Pronounced *yeh-ho-vaw'*)

You will find absolutely no strength as a believer in Christ in *negative emotions* like *worry, anger, spite, bitterness*, and so on. The Bible tells us that

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, [23] Meekness, temperance ...

ILLUSTRATE On any package or can of food you will find a list of ingredients that tell you what's inside that package. For instance, I was eating a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup and looked at the label of ingredients. They are "Milk Chocolate, Peanuts, Sugar, Dextrose, Salt, & TBHQ". I don't have a clue what some of those things are but I'm eating it anyway. The ingredients are listed *by volume*, that is, what is first is the prime ingredient. The Lord used the same method with His Christians. Your ingredient list is "**love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, and moderation**". All these ingredients are found **in the fruit of the Spirit** - and JOY comes right after LOVE in the Christian's life. **The joy of the Lord is your strength.** The great preacher C.H. Spurgeon said:

"It is always weakness to be fretting and worrying, questioning and mis-trusting. What can we do if we wear ourselves to skin and bone? Can we gain anything by fearing and fuming? Do we not unfit ourselves for action and unhinge our minds for wise decision? We are sinking by our struggles when we might float by faith.

Oh, for grace to be quiet! Why run from house to

house to repeat the weary story which makes us more and more heart-sick as we tell it? Why even stay at home to cry out in agony because of wretched forebodings which may never be fulfilled? It would be well to keep a quiet tongue, but it would be far better if we had a quiet heart. Oh, to be still and know that Jehovah is God! Oh, for grace to be confident in God!"

FOCAL **Philippians 3:1** Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

2. I Must Identify And Avoid The Three Stooges Of Faith

ILLUSTRATE I haven't seen them in a while, but I used to watch the *Three Stooges* when I was a boy. These three men - **Larry, Moe, and Curly** - would come into a peaceful situation or a thriving business and literally destroy it in just a matter of minutes. The Three Stooges always meant well but always destroyed what they touched. The Apostle Paul warns the believer's at Philippi of three stooges that may or may not know what they're doing. He says:

FOCAL **Philippians 3:1** ... To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*

What Paul is telling the Philippian believers is "**I have written these words before the other local Churches, and it's no trouble for me to write these same words to you**". These Three Stooges of Faith can come to hinder any local Church and any Christian no matter who

they are or how prepared they are. The Apostle wrote:

FOCAL Philippians 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Word Study Let's look at the word "beware" first. Remember when we were talking about CHAIRO, rejoice? CHAIRO was a *Present Active Imperative* denoting a *command*. We are commanded to **rejoice in the Lord**. The word **beware** (βλεπω **Pronounced** *blep'-o*), BLEPO, is also a *Present Active Imperative*, a command - and it is repeated **three times**. The Apostle says "**You are commanded to watch out for dogs. You are commanded to watch out for evil workers. You are commanded to watch out for the concision**". These are the Three Stooges of Faith. Let's talk about them one at a time.

Watch out for DOGS. What does that mean? `

The Bible often uses the word DOG. Sometimes dog just means the animal dog, but there are times when the word "**dog**" is used to describe people. For instance the Bible tells us that **there are no dogs in Heaven**:

Revelation 22:15 For **without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.**

So what is a "dog"? It is a human who emulates a dog. Think about a dog for a minute. I have a beautiful Eskimo Spitz called "Scooter" and I love him dearly.

When Scooter sees someone he goes to them wagging his tail. He's very friendly, and will lick you if you let him. It takes a long time to give Scooter a bath because of his long white fur. Right after I bathe him I'll take Scooter outside, and he will *roll in the first stinking thing he sees*. Not only that, but he'll eat things that I wouldn't touch. Scooter doesn't have a very high standard of hygiene nor or behavior. He's a dog.

Humans that the Bible defines as "dogs" are people that - just like a dog - will roll in anything. They have no standards when it comes to faith. A dog will believe any god, follow any way, define truth outside the context of God. They are people with *loose morals* and *loose ties* to that which is right. They'll believe anything. They'll "Amen" Oprah in one breath and the preacher in another breath. They mouth godliness but eat anything they find in the world. Jesus said:

Matthew 7:6 **Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.**

Dogs will take from a Church, but never give to it. Dogs will compromise God's truth with the world in order to *make peace*. Dogs are generally "good people" but not godly people. Paul spoke of

2 Timothy 4:10 For **Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, ...**

Demas was a believer who helped Paul at one time, but became dog-like by **loving this present world more**

than he loved the Lord.

Dogs are New Age in their faith, Emerging in their activities, and Pantheistic in their approach.

Watch out for dogs for they will be among the members when the "fun things" are there - the festivals, the floats, the dinners, the singings - but are no where to be found when the work of the Church in evangelism is to be done. Dogs take resources but give little or nothing in return. And their apathetic, welfare mentality will in time wear off on the rest of the congregation.

Watch out for evil workers. Who are these? **These are people who are more focused on doing wrong than they are doing right.** Someone once said "Any time you hear someone say 'rise up and build' you will have someone else say 'let's all stand up and destroy'".

Evil workers are always against any movement forward of the Church. They are filled with self and selfishness. They care nothing for the unity of the Body, but **their god is their own bellies:**

CONTEXT **Philippians 3:18-19** (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: [19] Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* their belly, and whose glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

The evil worker does not walk in love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, or moderation.

They are *bitter, divisive, fault finding, sensual,* **working with all their hearts at cross purposes with the purposes of the Cross.**

They are mean mouthed and spiteful. Their lives do not honor the Lord nor help the Pastor or Deacons. Paul wrote of such people when he spoke of:

2 Timothy 4:14-15 Alexander the copper-smith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: [15] Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

ILLUSTRATE The evil workers may see themselves as helping the cause of Christ, but they are actually great hindrances. **Judas Iscariot was an evil worker among the disciples of Christ.** One day when Jesus was at Mary and Martha's house eating supper **Mary Magdalene** decided to anoint the Lord's feet with oil. The Bible says

John 12:4-6 Then saith ... **Judas Iscariot** ... which should betray him, [5] Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? [6] This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Judas wanted the money, and had been robbing the treasury of the disciples for some time. He didn't care about the poor nor even the ointment. This evil worker *just cared about the money*. But I want you to notice that when Judas voiced his evil worker opinion the other disciples chimed right in:

Mark 14:4-5 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? [5] For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

Beware of evil workers in your midst. When they start their evil murmuring they can pollute the righteous and destroy the work of the Church.

Word Study Finally, watch out for the concision. That word "**concision**" (κατατομή **Pronounced** *kat-at-om-ay*) means "**those who cut down or mutilate themselves**".

It is evident that the Apostle was talking about the *Judaizers* who were trying to force religious circumcision on the Christians at Philippi, for he wrote:

FOCAL Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit,

Christians are not made Christians by circumcision or by any other ritual. Water Baptism does not make a

Christian. What makes a Christian *is God*. God the Holy Spirit comes on the person who **calls upon the Name of the Lord Jesus and is saved**.

Romans 10:13 For **whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved**.

We do not save ourselves. God saves us in response to our cry. Just as He saved Israel from Egypt, He saves the believer in Christ from the world. We are saved to serve the Lord Jesus!

The **concision or mutilators of the flesh** teach that - unless you follow this or that religious ritual - you will be lost forever. They are the self righteous who get focused on *form* rather than *faith*.

2 Timothy 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

As **Ravi Zacharius** once said,

"God didn't come into this world to make bad people good, but to make dead people live".

When a person calls upon the Name of Jesus the Lord acts and causes him to be born again. The dead is made live.

Do not let the Three Stooges of faith - **Dog, Evil Worker, or Mutilator** - rob you of your identity. If you are

in Christ, you are REDEEMED (Romans 3:24)
in Christ, you are UNCONDEMNED (Romans 8:1)
in Christ, you are FREE from sin or death (Romans 8:2)
in Christ, you are FOREVER LOVED (Romans 8:39)
in Christ, you are part of ONE BODY (Romans 12:5)
in Christ, you are SET APART (1 Corinthians 1:2)
in Christ, you are have LIFE (1 Corinthians 15:22)
in Christ, you are ESTABLISHED (2 Corinthians 1:21)
in Christ, you are WILL WIN (2 Corinthians 2:14)
in Christ, you are a NEW CREATURE (2 Corinthians 5:17)
in Christ, you are RECONCILED TO GOD (2 Corinthians 5:19)
in Christ, you are GOD'S KIDS (Galatians 3:26)
in Christ, you are ALL EQUAL (Galatians 3:28)
in Christ, you are capable of GOOD WORK (Ephesians 2:10)
in Christ, you are NEAR TO GOD (Ephesians 2:13)
in Christ, you are GIVEN DAILY GRACE (2 Timothy 2:1)

Rejoice in the Lord. Find out all you can of Jesus and what He has done for you. Dwell on Him, serve Him, love Him.

3. Am I Mutilator, Evil Worker, Dog - or Circumcision ?

FOCAL Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

The Apostle says "**we are the circumcision**". The mark of the truly saved is that we **worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus**. Our faith is not in us, but in the Lord Who saved us. We love Him, we praise Him, we magnify His Name. **Our confidence is not in the flesh.**

If your confidence - your belief that you are going to Heaven when you leave this life - is based on how good

a person you are, then **you are like the mutilators**. They believed that circumcision would save them.

Circumcision - nor any ritual - saves no one. If your faith is based on the belief that *God is just too good to send anyone to hell* then you are like the **dogs**. You think you can do anything and believe anything and God will automatically save you because of Who He is. But God is not bound by His Nature to save anyone. He chose to save **whosoever believeth on the Name of Jesus**. You may, like the **evil worker**, believe that your sins do not matter. They do matter. Jesus paid for sin on the Cross of Calvary. If you reject His payment and refuse to believe in Him you will stand before Almighty God one day and have to answer for your sins.

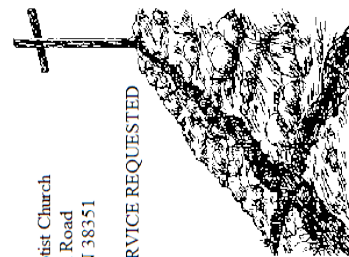
Every believer in Christ is saved by **faith in Christ and through the operation of the Spirit of God.**

The believer is no longer what he was, but is now different - a new creature - because of who Christ is. Christians change their world by living for Jesus and through Jesus. **We worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus**. We have no confidence in ourselves, but in Christ our Savior.

ILLUSTRATE I've probably told this story before, but it bears repeating. In the early Church there was a believer by the name of Telemachus. He lived his life far from the cities of that day. One day the Lord laid upon his heart that he needed to go to Rome. As Telemachus enters Rome he sees the huge coliseum and people lined up to get into that place. Having never seen such a thing

Telemachus entered the coliseum. There, to his horror, he sees the gladiators killing one another, the spraying blood, and the stench of death. Telemachus runs out into the arena and, standing there, cries out "In the Name of Christ stop this thing. In the name of Christ forbear!" One gladiator throws him to the side, and these burly men begin to slap him about. Someone cries out "run him through". A man bearing a spear stabs him fatally and, as Telemachus kneels down - his life blood pouring out - he cries once more "In the name of Christ, stop this thing". Suddenly one man got up and walked out, and then another and yet another. Within a short while the arena was empty. A historian writes, "No other factors were brought to bear. The death of Telemachus crystallized the opposition so that never again was there a gladiatorial fight in the coliseum."

If you are God's then you are world changers, not to be changed by the world. Stand for Him, and tell others of the Christ Who is your joy and your strength.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Philippians 1:3; John 14:6; Philippians 1:27-28

1. If I Am A Believer I Am To Rejoice In The Lord

Philippians 3:1; Philippians 3:1; Genesis 15:6; 1 Samuel 2:1; Psalms 4:5; Philippians 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:19; Matthew 2:10; John 20:20; Nehemiah 8:10; Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 3:1

- What is the difference between "happiness" and "joy"?

2. I Must Identify And Avoid The Three Stooges Of Faith

Philippians 3:1; Philippians 3:2; Revelation 22:15; Matthew 7:6; 2 Timothy 4:10; Philippians 3:18-19; 2 Timothy 4:14-15; John 12:4-6; Mark 14:4-5; Philippians 3:3; Romans 10:13; 2 Timothy 3:5

- Watch out for **DOGS**. What does that mean? _____

- **Watch out for evil workers.** Who are these? _____

Evil workers are *bitter, divisive, fault finding, sensual, working with all their hearts at cross purposes with the purposes of the Cross.*

- "watch out for the concision". That word "concision" (**κατατομή** **Pronounced** *kat-at-om-ay'*) means

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Philippians 3:3 _____
