

## An Undeterred Attitude

Philippians 3

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An undeterred attitude can be a good thing. In 1946, golfer Ben Hogan returned from duty in World War II and promptly won thirteen golf tournaments. He would go on to win 37 in the three years as he rose to become golf's premier player. One foggy February morning in 1949, driving on a highway just outside Van Horn, Texas, Hogan and his wife collided head on with a Greyhound bus. Hogan threw himself across his wife to protect her. Doctors were flown in to save his life. It was doubtful if he would ever walk again. But Hogan returned to golf only eleven months after the crash. In the summer of 1950, despite severe pain, having to play 36 holes on the final day with his legs wrapped in bandages, Hogan won the U.S. Open, "the miracle at Merion". He would go on to win thirteen more tournaments, six of his nine major championships, playing a limited schedule due to his health.

An undeterred attitude can also be a very bad thing. Al-Qaeda terrorist activity around the world persists, despite the efforts of United States and other countries to combat it. Even with the killing or capturing of many of their top leaders, Al-Qaeda continues, seemingly undeterred.

An attitude of steadfast, undeterred persistence doesn't happen overnight. It develops as life happens to us. Some of us have a difficult time being persistent and steadfast in those things that really matter. This chapter gives us a bit of Paul's own story of how he came to "press on" towards God's purposes. We might not be able to match Paul's indomitable spirit and drive, but we can learn from Paul what ... or who ... we can rely on to make our lives not just meaningful, but eternal.

### Rejoice in the Lord

*Read Philippians 3:1*

In other translations, Paul starts this chapter with "Finally ..." and then, as Paul does, he goes on for two more chapters! In all translations Paul next tells us to "Rejoice in the Lord!" Paul often encourages us to rejoice. But what does he mean to rejoice in the Lord?

The first four passages express joy in obeying and worshipping God, foretelling his promises, and being blessed with children. These are times when it is pretty easy to rejoice in the Lord.

- *Think of a time when you rejoiced. How did you include God in your joy? If you didn't include Him, how can you the next time?*

Paul says "whatever happens", rejoice in the Lord. The last two passages describe times when it was difficult to be joyful but even in these situations, Nehemiah said "for the joy in the Lord is your strength" and Habakkuk said "yet I will rejoice in the Lord".

- *What do you think about rejoicing in God during tough times? How do we do that? How might rejoicing in God during good times help us through the tough times? How would it "safeguard our faith"?*

#### Rejoice in the Lord

1 Chronicles 16:7-36

Isaiah 61:10

1 Samuel 2:1-2

Luke 1:46-47

Nehemiah 8:1-12

Habakkuk 3:17-19

## **Cut to the Heart**

*Read Philippians 3:2-3*

The dogs Paul refers to are probably folks who professed to be Christians but insisted that Jewish law required that Christian non-Jews should still be circumcised. Where did this circumcision thing come from?

The first Old Testament passage tells of the covenant God created with Israel and the role of circumcision. The other OT passages tell us what God desired from His people and His disappointment in their response.

### **Cut to the Heart**

Genesis 17:1-14  
Deuteronomy 10:12-16  
Isaiah 29:13  
Jeremiah 9:1-26  
Acts 15:1-21  
Galatians 2:11-16  
Galatians 6:12-16  
Romans 2:25-29  
Romans 4:1-13

- *What did God ask his people to do in Gen 17:9?  
In Gen 17-10?*
- *What were God's desires and warnings in the other OT passages? What is an uncircumcised heart? (Jeremiah 9:26)?*

We see above that circumcision like many things in the Jewish law became more about obeying the law than having a relationship with God. Circumcision also divided the young church as our New Testament readings show. Even Peter struggled with it.

- *In the first two NT passages how did the early church leaders solve the circumcision issue? How was God included in their decisions?*
- *What do the other NT passages say about circumcision, obedience, our hearts, and our relationship with God? How does "who we are" change what we do and why we do it?*

## **A Glowing Resume ...**

*Read Philippians 3:4-6*

In the previous section we heard Paul warn of the evil dogs and their obsession with relying on "human effort". In this section Paul lists his impeccable Jewish credentials when he was just such a person. The readings for this section describe Paul when he was Saul, a fanatic Jewish Pharisee who had an undeterred attitude for evil. In fact, Saul would have made a great leader of Al Qaeda. It is likely Saul recited these same credentials to the people of Jerusalem as he was beating them or throwing them in prison.

- *To be undeterred, there must be deterrents. List the deterrents that Saul faced in his evil quests. What was the most formidable?*

### **A Glowing Resume ...**

Acts 7:54-60  
Acts 8:1-3

## **... is Garbage**

*Read Philippians 3:7-11*

The reading for this section is the story of Paul's transformation from Saul, with an undeterred attitude for evil, to Paul, with an undeterred attitude for good. Once we know the whole story, we see more than a small amount of sarcasm in Paul's "resume" from the previous section. His words above show how his passion was turned 180 degrees from evil to great good... great God.

- *Are you as passionate as Paul about something you do? Can we keep our best from being garbage? As you do your best, how can God use you?*

### **... is Garbage**

Acts 9:1-22  
John 17:1-3

- *In his new life, with an undeterred attitude for good, what deterrents did Paul face? What was the most formidable? How did he deal with those deterrents? As we strive to serve God, what deterrents do we face?*
- *Paul sees even his good works as garbage compared to knowing Jesus Christ? In John 17:1-3 Jesus tells us why knowing Him really matters. How do we get to know Jesus? What can you do right now to get to know Him a little better?*

**Press On!**

*Read Philippians 3:12-21*

So we might never be as undeterred as Paul. But we can let the joy in the Lord be our strength. We can allow God to circumcise our hearts. And as we recognize that some (or all!) of our glowing resume might need to be thrown away, we can also take comfort in what Paul tells us...

- that we are a work in progress
  - that we can't do this without each other
  - that we will disagree
  - that there will be good examples
  - and bad examples
- ... and that it's all worth it, not because of what we do, but Who we do it for.