

- e) Putting no confidence in the flesh. The idea of flesh is the old nature.
- This is linked with the previous characteristic. It's the flip side.
 - There is nothing in us that can save us or give us confidence of acceptance before God.
 - Paul will go on in his testimony to show what he learnt about this.
 - In verses 4-6 Paul shows that he knows what he's talking about.
 - He could have been in that group in verse 2. Indeed, he once had been.

QUESTION 6

- a) Some people think that going to church, taking communion, being baptised, joining a church etc, will get them to heaven.
- b) But as Jesus told the religious Nicodemus, "*...unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (**John 3:3**).
- c) Our joy is in the Lord who has saved us and given us that place in the kingdom
- d) We are to work for Him; but not with a view to gaining salvation (**Ephesians 2:8-10**).
- e) We are to be worshippers; boasting in Christ alone and putting no confidence in our own means to be accepted by God.
- f) We must be careful not to add anything, but to keep the pure gospel at the centre of the church (c.f. **2 Corinthians 4:1-6**). It is easy to be side-tracked.

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES – STUDY 11

QUESTION 1

- a) Paul has mentioned the theme of rejoicing some eleven times already in the first two chapters.
- b) The Christian life is to be one of joy. But that joy is found only in Christ and what He has done for us. True joy is not based on circumstances but on faith.
- c) But alongside this must go carefulness.
- d) Circumstances and people can rob us of our joy.
- e) The believers are to be aware of the dangers and threats around them.
- f) Paul could see danger threatening the church in Philippi.
- g) The 'same things' he is writing to them, refer to what he had taught them in person while with them in Philippi. He sees the need to warn them again.

QUESTION 2

- a) Verses 2 and 3 go together, in that they describe two groups of people.
- b) In verse 2, the reference is a group of Jews and their interpretation of the Jewish religion.
- c) The second group in verse 3; to which these Philippians belong, are the Christians (containing both Jews and Gentiles).
- d) The gospel had first come to the Jew. Circumcision was a seal given to Abraham in Genesis 17. It was the seal of God's covenant promise. A sign that they belonged to God and were His special people.
- e) When the gospel started going out to the Gentiles, this caused an uproar (see **Acts 11:1-3** where Peter is called to explain his actions).

- f) It was believed that these Gentiles should become Jews first. At very least they should adhere to Jewish rules. And that included circumcision.
- g) If not, they could not belong to God.

QUESTION 3

- a) Note that three times in verse 2, Paul writes *“Look out for...”*
- b) This demonstrates how concerned the apostle was to keep the Philippians on their guard.
- c) Paul reinforces this by using three different descriptions of these *“enemies of the cross of Christ” (verse 18)*.
- d) Dogs were viewed by Jews as detestable animals. They were wild scavengers.
 - They were considered to carry impurity.
 - If you called someone a dog, it was a gross insult; a term of disgust.
 - It was a term used by Jews to describe those from Gentile nations. They were not pure. They were unacceptable to God.
 - Here, Paul turns the term back on them, to show that it is they who do not have the approval of God.
- e) Here were those who thought they were saved by good works; but actually, were doing evil. They thought they were pleasing God and obeying His law. Instead they were turning people aside from the truth.
- f) Circumcision was a sign of God’s covenant with His people. It was the seal that they belonged to Him. It pointed to the coming of Jesus; the fulfilment of that covenant promise.
 - These Judaizers were teaching that circumcision was essential for salvation (**Acts 15:1**).
 - Paul is saying that circumcision for its own sake was nothing more than mutilation of the body.

QUESTION 4

- a) *“For we”* is an important phrase.
- b) Paul is saying: ‘we are the real circumcision’. Jew and Gentile believers alike. Bear in mind that the church would have been made up of circumcised Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles (non-Jews).
- c) It wasn’t those who thought they were the circumcision who were right with God.
- d) This became what was known as circumcision of the heart (**Jeremiah 4:4**). A heart change, rather than a flesh change.
- e) Just because someone had been circumcised in the body didn’t mean that they were circumcised in the heart.
- f) These Philippian believers possessed what circumcision really represented.
- g) The true believer has experienced a spiritual circumcision in Jesus (**Colossians 2:11**).

QUESTION 5

- a) These activities contrast with the merely physical sign.
- b) Christians ‘worship by the Spirit of God’.
- c) This is not simply the act of worship. We have the Spirit within us. That worship is living and active.
- d) Christians Glory in Christ Jesus – The Jews boasted of their acceptance before God rather than living in humility and gratitude.
 - It was about what they were; and what they did.
 - The Christian has nothing to ‘boast’ about (**Ephesians 2:8-10**). Their boast is in Jesus because our salvation is all from Him. What matters is that work of grace (see **Galatians 6:14-15**).