

PHILIPPIANS

Rejoice In
The Lord!

Impeccable Credentials

Lesson Thirty-One

Philippians

Rejoice In The Lord!

Lesson Goal: To assist students in understanding Paul's repeated message.

Scriptures: Philippians 3:4-7

For Memory: "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ." Philippians 3:7

Impeccable Credentials

Have you ever heard the expression "Impeccable Credentials?" It is sometimes used to describe the background of someone looking for a job. It means having the best job record, the best education and the best references from people who know you and have worked with you. It means that you are qualified for the job in every way.

Paul said in our text for today that if you counted just human qualifications, he was as well qualified as any for guiding the church at Philippi.* Last time, we were reminded that there are people who will mislead us. The Judaizers were misleading Paul's friends at Philippi. They thought that they knew better than Paul. They were saying that with their background in the Jewish religion they were better qualified to teach the Philippians how to be Christians. They might have said, "But Paul is a Christian, we, being of the chosen people (Jews) know better than he what God expects of Christians.

So, Paul decided to show his credentials. He was not doing this to brag. He was simply listing the things that demonstrated that he was a true Jew. He knew all about what it was to be a Jew and to be at the top of the Jewish religious organization. He said that first, according to Jewish law, he had been circumcised when he was eight days old. (See Genesis 17:12). Second, he was of the people of Israel. Paul emphasized his pure family background by referring to the fact that he was a direct descendant of Jacob, who was renamed by God who called him Israel. Third, he was of the tribe of Benjamin. That tribe was one of the most loyal and was the tribe that produced King David, and Jesus, on His human side. When Paul spoke of his being of the tribe of Benjamin, he was making it clear that not only was he a Jew, but he was from the elite...the special...people of God. He was of those who descended from the marriage of Jacob and Rachel...one of the very special couples of the Old Testament.

Those first three qualifications were Paul's by birth. The second set of qualifications tell us about Paul's choices. He said that he was, first, a Hebrew of Hebrews. He was born of Hebrew parents. But, that is not the end of the story. Paul was born outside the Hebrew nation. And, even though the Hebrews usually kept their religion and social customs when they were in foreign lands, they often forgot their Hebrew language. Paul said that he not only kept his Jewish religion and obeyed the Old Testament law, but that he continued to speak the Hebrew language. In the book of

Philippians

Rejoice In The Lord!

Acts, chapter 21, we are told that Paul spoke to a crowd of people in Hebrew.

Second, he said that he was trained as a Pharisee. There were never more than 6,000 Pharisees, so it was an exclusive group. He was one of the very special Hebrews. The third thing he said was that he took his responsibility as a defender of Judaism so seriously that he persecuted the Christians who were seen as the enemies of Judaism. He arrested them and brought them to Jerusalem to be tried and even put to death for their belief. Fourth, he said that he had kept all the law. He was blameless when judged according to the Old Testament law.

So, Paul put his reputation as a good Jew up against anyone else and declared that he was the best of the best. Then, he said something truly amazing. In verse seven, he said that all these things that were so important to other people were not important to him at all, because he had met Jesus and they were no longer valuable. They were useless. If he was going to accept the grace of God...that blessing which no one can deserve...he had to give up all his earthly attempts to earn it.

Paul had all these assets. Assets are things we own; that are ours personally. He gave them all up because he had found the amazing truth that they weren't worth anything in God's sight. He now could have God's assets by simply asking in faith. You can, too!

*Underlined statements in this Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.



Teaching Tips:

1. You might think of a profession that requires significant credentials...like a physician or a teacher. Discuss that with your class and then compare Paul's credentials.
2. You might want to call attention to what is probably the most important word in this text. That is the word "But" at the beginning of verse 7. Paul has listed his credentials, which are very impressive. Then, he says "But." You might want to say that this word calls our attention back to Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, where he met Jesus and all the old stuff in his life became unimportant.
3. James M. Boice: Paul had not just exchanged one religion for another, He had been won to a new faith by a divine person, Jesus, forever...Christ and Christ alone.
4. Songs that emphasize God's grace, salvation, new life in Christ, and giving all we have to Jesus are appropriate.
5. Pray with your students: Ask God to show you, and them, the real values in life.
6. An interesting fact: The tribe of Benjamin was most often at the head of the army in battles. The battle cry was "Lead on, O Benjamin" Hosea 5:8

Philippians

Rejoice In The Lord!

Student Worksheet

For Memory: “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.” Philippians 3:7

Impeccable Credentials

=Paul said in our text for today that if you counted just human qualifications, he was as well _____ as any for _____ the church at Philippi.

=First, according to _____ law, he had been circumcised when he was eight days old.

=Second, he was of the people of _____.

=Third, he was of the tribe of _____.

=Qualifications that tell us about Paul’s _____: First, a Hebrew of _____.

=Second, he said that he was trained as a _____.

=Third, he took his responsibility as a defender of _____

so seriously that he persecuted the Christians who were seen as the enemies of Judaism.

=Fourth, he said that he had kept all the _____.

=In verse seven, he said that all these things that were so important to other _____

were not important to him at all, because he had met _____ and they were no

longer _____.

=Paul now could have God’s assets by simply asking in _____. _____ can, too!

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that there is a God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God’s Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.

Fifth, believe that He has answered your prayer, and be determined to live for him all the rest of your life.