

Philippians 3:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Analysis

As touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless (κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος, κατὰ ζῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος, kata nomon Pharisaios, kata zēlos diōkōn tēn ekklēsian, kata dikaiosynēn tēn en nomō genomenos amemptos)—Three religious achievements: (5) Kata nomon Pharisaios ("according to law, a Pharisee")—strictest sect (Acts 26:5), meticulous law-observers. (6) Kata zēlos diōkōn tēn ekklēsian ("according to zeal, persecuting the church")—zēlos ("zeal") meant violent devotion (Num 25:11-13; 1 Macc 2:26-27). Paul's persecution proved zealous orthodoxy (Acts 8:3; 9:1; Gal 1:13). (7) Kata dikaiosynēn...amemptos ("according to law-righteousness, blameless")—outwardly faultless law-keeping. Amemptos ("blameless") doesn't claim sinlessness but irreproachable external observance.

Paul's seven credentials (vv. 5-6) are structured: four by birth (ethnic/ritual), three by choice (sect/zeal/righteousness). He climaxed religious achievement. Yet vv. 7-8 declare it all worthless—shocking claim proving gospel's supremacy over works-righteousness.

Historical Context

Pharisees numbered ~6,000 in Jesus's day, obsessively devoted to oral law traditions (Josephus). Paul studied under Gamaliel, leading rabbi (Acts 22:3). His persecution of Christians demonstrated theological conviction: he viewed

Christianity as heresy threatening Judaism. 'Blameless' doesn't mean perfect but scrupulous external observance—Pharisees parsed Mosaic minutiae (Matt 23:23). Paul achieved the Judaizers' ideal—and pronounced it worthless.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How could Paul claim 'blameless' righteousness if all have sinned (Rom 3:23)?
2. Why does zealous religious activity (even persecution) fail to commend us to God?
3. What religious achievements might you secretly trust rather than Christ's righteousness alone?

Interlinear Text

κατὰ	ζῆλον	διώκων	τὴν	ἐκκλησίαν	κατὰ
Concerning	zeal	persecuting	which	the church	Concerning
G2596	G2205	G1377	G3588	G1577	G2596
δικαιοσύνην	τὴν	ἐν	νόμῳ	γενόμενος	ἄμεμπτος
the righteousness	which	is in	the law	G1096	blameless
G1343	G3588	G1722	G3551		G273

Additional Cross-References

Acts 8:3 (Parallel theme): As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Matthew 5:20 (Righteousness): For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Acts 21:20 (Word): And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

Acts 26:5 (Parallel theme): Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

Romans 7:9 (Word): For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

1 Corinthians 15:9 (Parallel theme): For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Matthew 23:25 (Parallel theme): Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

1 Timothy 1:13 (Parallel theme): Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Luke 1:6 (Righteousness): And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

2 Kings 10:16 (Parallel theme): And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So they made him ride in his chariot.