

Worthless Assets

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[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 3. Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord!

Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. As to the law, a Pharisee. As to zeal, a persecutor of the church.

As to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.

[1 : 23] In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.

The righteousness from God that depends on faith. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

And that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead. This is the word of the Lord. Heavenly Father, wherever we're at, whether we're searching for you or we've known you for a long time, each of us need to know Christ more.

And I pray that your word would reach down into each of our hearts and transform us. So I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, have your Bibles open.

Philippians 3. Here's what God wants us to do today. Here's what he wants for us this week. Here's what he wants for us for our lives.

[2 : 43] This command is so important, so urgent, he repeats it emphatically. Rejoice.

Rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord. It's not optional in the Christian life. This isn't because rejoicing empowers living a life that pleases God.

We need to rejoice in the Lord if we're going to live a life that pleases God. Now, Paul, when he commands us to rejoice, he's not like someone talking to a depressed person.

Just be happy. He's not unhelpful like that. He's not saying, just fake it. Fake it until you make it.

He's not saying just, Christians, you need to put a smile on your face and be cheerful. Just forced like a clown's makeup.

[3 : 44] This command, this is repeated in chapter 4, verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. He's picking up what we've already heard in chapter 2, verse 18.

You could say that this whole letter is just soaking in this theme of rejoice. We need to rejoice. What we're going to be spending the rest of our time in Philippians in, chapters 3 and 4, is teaching us how.

How to think so that we can rejoice in the Lord. Today we're going to look at how to think about our righteousness. Next week we're going to look at how to think about our future.

We're not who we want to be yet. How do we cope with that fact and still rejoice? And then in the final week, how do we have peace amidst trouble and anxiety?

And how do we rejoice in sacrificially serving God? So the rest of our time, Philippians, is I hope you're looking forward to this because we need to learn how to rejoice.

[4 : 53] I don't know about you, but I need a fight to rejoice. If we learn to think like Paul, we're going to learn to rejoice in the Lord always, not just individually but together as a church.

Don't we have a great God whose urgent command to us, be happy in me? Well, what gets in the way of that?

Well, let's dive into our passage today. We'll start where Paul does. There's a huge threat. This threat can prevent someone from becoming a Christian in the first place.

It's probably the main thing that prevents people from believing. It can make a life lived for God absolutely a waste, total waste.

It can produce pride. Look out, look out, look out. He repeats it three times.

[6 : 07] He's probably speaking about the Judaizers. They come along and say, great, you believe in Jesus. That's fantastic. You need to get your life in order.

You need to obey God's moral standards if you want to be saved. Believe in Jesus, sure. You need to obey. And so Paul, the language here, he hasn't blown a fuse.

He's using sharp irony. He's taking what they boast in and turning it against them. You call the Gentiles dogs?

You think you're the pure ones morally and ritually? No, that confidence in yourself makes you the dogs.

You are these missionary workers going around saying, you better live up to God's standards to be saved.

[7 : 07] You think you're serving God. No, you're a worker of evil. You're boasting in circumcision and forcing others to be circumcised. You're mutilating.

You're mutilating the body. That's incredible language to speak of circumcision. He's trying to convince the Philippians church and convince us today, don't listen to this way of thinking for a second.

Verse 3, we are the circumcision. The emphasis in this verse, we. We are the circumcision. We are the people of God. We don't put our confidence in ourselves for salvation or even our ability to obey.

We don't put confidence in our flesh, in our body, in our efforts. We boast in what Christ has done. We rely on the spirit of God at work in us, which we've already heard in chapter 2, verse 13.

It is God who works in you to will and to act for his good pleasure. We are the people of God. Don't listen to this thinking.

[8 : 24] Now, I suspect we don't, if you're anything like me, we don't take this threat seriously enough. And maybe we don't quite understand how pervasive it is.

This is going to be a bit of a change of gears, okay? But think back to Genesis chapter 3, Adam and Eve.

What was the very first thing Adam and Eve did after they sinned? What was the very first thing? And this isn't rhetorical. I'd love someone to answer it.

They hid and they covered up. They clothed themselves. They realised they were naked and they clothed themselves with pathetic clothing.

It didn't work. Because they'd lost their righteousness. They had lost their ability to stand before God and be fully naked and seen and know they have confidence.

[9 : 32] They've lost it. And so they had to clothe themselves with the purpose of the goal of it. We all try and clothe ourselves.

I remember in high school wearing the same outfit as a best mate down to the shopping centre. And there was this tight shirt that was just tighty, whitey, I think.

I don't know if that's the best one. Like a Calvin Klein model. The only problem was I wasn't a Calvin Klein model. But it's embarrassing. And even though I'm sharing it, I feel special.

Then I have to reach further. She's trying to clothe herself. There's no righteousness. Australian Open is on.

Tennis player, Hall of Fame, Chris Evatt. Winning made me feel pretty. She had to win. Chariots of Fire, Olympic sprinter Harold Abrams.

[10 : 39] His girlfriend, it's just a race. It's just a hundred metre race. He's saying, no, I have ten lonely seconds to justify my whole existence. We try and clothe ourselves.

Why do mothers often fall apart when their children aren't doing well? Of course there's compassion, but there can be more to it. I need to be seen as a good mum.

I need to look at myself in the mirror as a good mum. Why do men fall apart often if their work isn't doing well? Ability.

Now, am I more godly? I don't think so. I think I've just got a different place I'm trying to clothe myself with righteousness. And we've all just got different places. We're looking for it. The deadly prideful human condition is we try and clothe ourselves rather than coming to God in his grace for him to clothe us.

The usual testimonies of coming to Jesus that we hear usually, they go along these lines.

[12 : 02] I was spiralling down in destructive things, whether that's addiction or anger, relational dysfunction. But then I found the forgiveness of Jesus.

Now, praise God for that testimony. I'm not having any go at that. But listen to Paul's testimony. It's very different. I had so much gain.

So much gain as a religious man. My religious resume was second to none. I challenge anyone to be a better man than me.

I am the model of religious devotion and knowledge and privilege. I had it all. I was no convert to Judaism.

I was born. I was born into the Covenant people. Of all the tribes of Israel, I'm in Benjamin. I'm one of the two who stayed loyal to King David.

[13 : 02] I've got pure blood. I've got pure blood, is his claim. My upbringing. My upbringing. Some Hebrew families, yeah, they're Hebrew, but really they're Greek in terms of how they lived and how they operated as a family, even their speaking.

But I'm a Hebrew of Hebrews. We grew up on the law. And then he turns to his achievements. I was a Pharisee. I was passionately following the traditions and the law, 613 laws.

I was an activist. I was on fire for the temple. And I was blameless. He's not being ironic here. He's saying no one could fault me. No.

I used to repent of my sins. I always knew my sins were wrong. But now I've met Jesus. I repent of my goodness. I repent of my righteousness.

It led me away from God. Away from a Savior. That's a Christian.

[14 : 20] A Christian is someone who repents of their goodness. Not just their sin. There was a man called Nathan Coles.

And he heard George Whitefield preach in America in the Great Awakening. And he called himself a Christian for many years. But he said this. My hearing him preach gave me a heart wound.

By God's grace, my old foundation was broken up. And I saw that my righteousness could not save me. What good thing?

What gifts from God even do you need to repent of? That's a weird question, isn't it? Not because they're bad in themselves, but you're using them to clothe yourself.

You're using them as your confidence. When you confess your sins, do you not only confess the obvious sins like lying and anger and whatever else.

[15 : 38] Do you confess the good things that you're relying on? In my experience, it's often the good things I'm relying on that makes me so angry because something's getting in the road.

Or it makes me deceived because it's under threat or something. We need to repent of our righteousness. Let's learn to think like Paul, verse 7 and 8.

Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

A Christian is someone whose whole value system has been turned upside down. A Christian isn't just someone who's used to do bad things and now you do good things and try and believe good doctrine.

Your value system, our value system has just been upended. Three times, I consider, I count. He's using accounting terminology.

[16 : 50] And I'm going to show up how little I know the accountants in the room. But assets and liabilities. The things that had long been in my assets column.

They're worthless. It's like this nest egg house. You've been pouring your funds and your maintenance in all your life, ready for your retirement.

And the economy collapses. It's worthless. Utterly worthless. It's counting what we think as an asset as loss.

It's useless. It's useless. It's not just his past legal righteousness. Verse 8, he goes further.

Indeed, I count everything as loss. Totally the worst thing for you. It could be the worst thing for you if you rely on it as your sense of being somebody.

[17 : 57] If you take up a ministry position this year because you want to bolster your sense of worth, that's going to be destructive for you and probably harmful to the church.

We've got to count these things. We've got to count these things as loss. They get in the way of true joy in Jesus.

He goes further. The word rubbish is really excrement. I count them as I'm still deciding how bold to be in this moment.

How many emails do I really want to receive? The word of God is less worried about this word than I am.

All my assets, like being a great pastor, being, I don't know, a competent man, it's like the dog poo you've stepped in and you want to get it off with a stick.

[19 : 04] It stinks. It stinks. I remember when I was flat sharing, we came home and the freezer had stopped and it was full of meat.

Have you ever had that? It is disgusting. Even now it's like I need a control, not vomiting. It is a stench. I consider it like that.

Anything I once boasted in, it's worthless, more than worthless, it's putrid, it's unclean. Not that they're bad in themselves. It's because we try and clothe ourselves with them. We've got to count them as harmful, revolting.

We can't just do that by looking at them and thinking that way. We've got to compare it. Compared to the matchless worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. Verse 9, and be found in him.

[20 : 16] To be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ. The righteousness from God that depends on faith.

Do you know the illustration of the two coats? There's a white coat and a black coat. And when Jesus died on the cross, he takes the black coat of all our sin upon himself.

That's what happened on the cross. He took all that sin. And that is, we praise him for that. That's incredible. But then his white coat of righteousness comes onto us.

We mustn't forget that side of what happened. There was an old brother who was dying and he wrote to a friend, I thank God for the obedience of Jesus Christ.

That's his dying thought. Because he's clothed in the obedience of Jesus Christ. It's a gift.

[21 : 30] It's from God. Now, I love that illustration. I probably should have actually done it, but found in him.

It's not just this monetary exchange or something. We're in him. I want to be found in him. It's relational language.

I want to know him deeper than a husband and wife with a healthy marriage. I want to know him that intimately. God sees Paul.

He sees, if you're trusting Christ for your righteousness, brothers and sisters, he sees us bound up. We're located in him.

My Samuel. My Aurora. God is calling us to share Paul's intimate language, knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

[22 : 35] My. He goes on. We'll see it more next week. Christ Jesus has made me his own. Nothing compares to that.

He's all yours by faith. Just lay your confidence in yourself down and he's yours. There's a hymn.

Lay your deadly doing down. Down at Jesus' feet. Stand in him and him alone, gloriously complete.

That's the Christian. The surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. Well, that changes everything and it changes Paul's goal now.

So verse 9 is really, to use theological terms, he's talking justification. This is my standing before God and before the world and myself.

[23 : 44] Verse 10 is really describing sanctification. I want to know him. I want to know him more. I know him now.

I'm in him. But I want to know him more. And then verse 11 is glorification. I can't wait. I can't wait till I'm with him in presence and in body.

So before someone's converted, often they're content with their spiritual condition.

They shouldn't be content, but they are content. They're not bothered by it. And they're discontent with their worldly circumstances. I need more money. I need whatever. When you become a Christian, you get more content.

I don't need all that. And you get discontent spiritually, even though you've got peace with God. I want to be more like him. I'm not there yet.

[24 : 43] I want to know him more. There's a proper discontent in the Christian life. I can't wait till I don't sin anymore and I'm glorified with him.

I want to know him more and more, says Paul. And I think this knowing is deeper than intellectual. He's using experiential terms. I want to know the power. I want to know the power, that same power that rose him from the dead.

That, yes, we know Christ through his word. We live off every word of God. But I want to experience him.

Interpreting that experience by the word of God, I want to experience him more. And the focus is on two words, his power and the fellowship in his sufferings.

If our value system has been turned upside down and our goal now is, he's the best thing. I just want to know him.

[25 : 52] Be ready for conflict because we enter the same conflict that Jesus entered when he came into the world. We're going to be against the hostile world, constantly pressuring us to, he's not worth anything.

We're going to be against our sinful flesh. There's a part of me that really loves just indulging my sinful nature.

Get ready for a fight there. And we're going to be against the devil. He doesn't want you to boast in Jesus. There's a dying.

To know him better, par for the course, the norm, I think it's God's, it's at least God's main pattern of how we get to know him.

I'm hesitating. I think it's his only pattern of how we know him more is through dying, is sharing in the cross. Sharing in the struggle against sin and the world and the devil.

[27 : 06] But obviously that's not the ultimate goal. I want to share that with Jesus, that struggle, so that I know his power. I want to experience the power of God at work in me to change me and God using me in a world for fruitfulness.

I think this is kind of like the teenager who is open that you're a Christian and you come to church at school and you taste the loneliness and rejection that Jesus tasted.

But you also experience the power of God. Knowing God is fantastic. Being, belonging to his people is fantastic.

There is a dying and yet there's a knowing the power of God. I think it's like the man who's lost his reputation at work or with friends.

Even in church circles, you've lost your reputation. People are thinking, you fear people are thinking the worst about you. You're sharing Christ's humiliation.

[28 : 26] But that is the very pathway of communion with God that is so much sweeter than you knew when you were fit and healthy. Now, it's probably loads of other ways, but this is the way we experience the power of knowing Christ more.

I want to know him more. His power. Now, as much as Paul's goal is to experience Christ more and more, verse 11, his eyes are set there.

I can't wait. I can't wait till I'm raised bodily with him. Now, it says by any means possible. He's not expressing doubt of his salvation. That does not make sense because he's saying I'm righteous in Christ.

So he's not expressing doubt. He doesn't know how he's going to reach that goal. Am I going to die? I'm in prison. Is the order for my execution going to be tomorrow?

Maybe. Am I going to keep on and going to be alive when Jesus comes back? Maybe. What does tomorrow bring? I'm not sure. Aren't we given such wonderful ways of thinking to fight for joy?

[29 : 53] It's not just be happy. Think like this. The guilt for what you did on Friday.

Now, if I'm triggering, I don't know what you did. But if the guilt for what you did on Friday, you can go, God, that was really bad. The next time you're disappointed and devastated by what's happening, don't pray, I changed my circumstances, God.

Now, you can pray for change, but make our deeper prayer, okay, I'm losing this, but it's not my righteousness. I know I've got something much, much better.

When someone in the church isn't meeting your standards or they're not meeting God's standards, we can be thinking, I want them to know they're found in Christ.

We have such resources to fight for joy. My brothers and sisters, whom I long and long for, my joy and my crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

[31 : 22] Deadly doing, the deadly assets we're clinging to, that we might let go of them. And, Lord, dare I pray that if we won't let go of them, take them from us.

So that you might help us to know the joy of being found in Jesus and the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, our Lord.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.