

# How Precious Is Your Joy In The Lord?

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[ 0 : 00 ] As I read our sermon text, remember this is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, sufficient word for his people. Philippians 3, 1 through 11.

Finally, brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs.

Beware of evil workers. Beware of the mutilation. For we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Though I might have confidence in the flesh if anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so. Circumcised on the eighth day of the stock of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, concerning the law of Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, concerning the righteousness which is in the law blameless.

But what things were gain to me? These I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

[ 1 : 30 ] Not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death.

If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Oh, Lord, I ask that you please fill your people with true joy that can only come from Jesus Christ again today.

And may our rejoicing in the Lord together be our strength as you promise. Amen. Amen. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

And as Luke 13 says, no word from God shall be void of power. May it be so through the ministry of his word. Well, like it or not, we live in the United States of America.

Whose declaration of independence includes the phrase, the pursuit of happiness. Maybe this American ideal has never been.

[ 3 : 07 ] So bluntly put forward as Henry Ford himself did. There is no happiness except in the realization that we have accomplished something.

According to Henry Ford, the pursuit of happiness is to go after whatever your heart desires.

Well, the problem is our hearts are twisted and fallen and dark. And happiness in this understanding is found in grabbing something in this realm of creation for myself.

Therefore, happiness is dependent upon circumstances. And Henry Ford pointed out what I think most Americans, maybe maybe all Westerners think.

That if I work hard, I can control my happiness. It becomes this vicious cycle, doesn't it? Well, if I'm not happy, maybe I just need to work harder and accomplish something that will then make me finally happy.

[ 4 : 13 ] The Bible reveals something very different about joy. Biblical joy is so much deeper and it cannot be shaken.

True joy can't be manufactured, manipulated or controlled by fallen man. It's not a commodity to be bought or sold.

I was curious, what would Noah Webster's old dictionary say about joy and rejoicing? 1828 defines joy this way.

Joy is when your soul feels deep, contented delight because you possess and appreciate something desirable, pleasant and good.

Let me put that the same words in reverse order. If you possess, truly have something that is good, pleasant and desirable and you appreciate it, then you experience in your soul an emotion of deep,

contented delight.

[ 5 : 20 ] That's joy. And rejoicing is to experience that. And this is different than worldly happiness because this is an inward treasure.

It's a treasure. It's a treasure that I possess in my soul that can't be taken away from me when my circumstances change. Joy is the big message of the Bible.

True joy. The most clear part of Jesus' teachings as they build up in all of the Gospels. We get these insights in John chapters 14, 15, 16 and 17.

And he pulls his disciples close and he reveals the joy of heaven to them. And Jesus said in John 15, 11, See, it's the joy of Christ himself that he wants to fill the soul of a Christian.

And that's our theme for today's sermon. Verse one, Paul says it. Brethren, rejoice in the Lord. I say this again and again to you. Rejoice.

[ 6 : 34 ] So, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, I invite you to reflect, take stock. How precious is your joy in the Lord?

How precious is your joy in the Lord? In our sermon text, I've divided it into six encouragements for us of this precious joy we have in the Lord.

And the first is this, that you must be reminded to rejoice in the Lord and to protect this precious joy. You and I need to be reminded to rejoice in the Lord and also to protect it.

Your joy in the Lord needs to be protected. And that's a big reason why we gather in his name week after week. It's to encourage and exhort and admonish and remind one another, rejoice in the Lord. No matter what else is hard in life, rejoice in the Lord. This is his day. Look at verse one. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

[ 7 : 39 ] Experience the joy of Jesus himself. For me to write the same things to you, Paul says, is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

In other words, Paul's saying, I don't mind repeating this over and over to you. You need the reminder. Plus, this joy of Christ is what I'm bearing witness to. It's real.

It just bubbles up from my own soul. When I think of the church in Philippi and I think of Christ and his work in his kingdom, I want to tell you about this deep joy. And I want you to experience it.

That's what rejoice means. Experience this joy. And he says, for you, it's safe. Or other translations, for you, it's a safeguard. In other words, it needs to be protected.

His very next words are, beware. And he repeats it three times. Your joy will be under attack. It will be threatened. So you need to be reminded to rejoice in the Lord and to protect this precious joy.

[ 8 : 40 ] Now, let me clarify it. In verse one, when he says, finally. One thing you can appreciate about your translation is that it's doing its best to be word for word, but it's still understandable in English.

Now, that word finally might be a bit wooden of a translation, though it's accurate. But that same word in the original is used just as frequently to emphasize how the writer is now setting up a transition or drawing a conclusion to the arguments this far.

To refresh your memory, it's been a few weeks. He said to them, rejoice, because the gift that you sent to me through Epaphroditus was received. And his service to me was a blessing.

And I took his service as a gift from all of you serving me. Rejoice as I rejoice in you. He says, rejoice, church. Soon you will have my fellow soldier back in your ranks serving alongside with you. Rejoice, he's coming back. And rejoice, because soon you'll be reading this very letter that I'm writing to you. Paul says, I know I'm repeating myself.

[ 9 : 47 ] In fact, he uses this command, rejoice, 14 times in the four chapters of this little letter. I think Paul understood what we often forget.

Rejoicing is an important part of our Christian armory in the defense against the attacks of the enemy. This life will put Christians at war with sin, Satan, worldliness and wolves.

And a big part of how we are equipped and strengthened in the battle is the joy of the Lord. The joy of the Lord is our strength. And your joy in the Lord is worth fighting for.

So you see how in verse one, it's a command to rejoice, but don't relax. The two go together. It's a militant joy. Right now, we're the church militant. One day we'll be the church triumphant.

But right now we're militant. In these past weeks, we sing that beautiful Advent hymn, Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel. Remember that one?

[ 10 : 53 ] Repeats rejoice twice. The first time in a major key. Rejoice. The second time in a minor key. Rejoice. So it's joyful, but it's militant.

There's war. But Emmanuel, God is with us, his church. So we must be reminded to rejoice in the Lord and to protect this precious joy.

The second encouragement is this. As with anything precious. Raiders will try to rob your joy in the Lord.

Your joy in the Lord is precious. It's the treasure inside of you. Well, you know, the tomb raiders that would try to break into the pyramids to steal the ancient gold, silver and jewelry. Because it's precious.

Because it's precious. They're going to try to get in and take it away. So his very next words are that your precious joy needs to be protected. It will be attacked. In verse one, he says, you're rejoicing needs to be safeguarded.

[11:55] In verse two, he says, beware three times. And he uses three very strong words. These are threats to your joy in the Lord.

Beware of dogs. Beware of evil workers. Beware of the mutilation. What did this mean? Why these words?

What do they have to do with the joy of the church in Philippi? We really have to read verses three and four to see how Paul continues building his argument to refute these threats.

The basis of the threat to a Christian's precious joy can be summarized this. You will lose your joy if you start to put confidence in your own flesh.

That's what he says in verses three and four. Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he might have confidence in the flesh, I mourn. So do you see all three of these words tell us something about the threat to this church in Philippi, tempting these Christians to put confidence in their own flesh or to feel insecure because their flesh isn't enough.

[13:04] Dogs, workers of evil, the mutilation. I love Dennis Johnson's comment that Paul paints the self-righteous Jewish legalists with the dark, unsavory hues of paganism.

He turns the table on him. And these three words actually have a alliteration in the original language in the Greek. The first is dogs.

The Greek word is kunas. It's where we get the word canine. Kunas. Kakaos ergatas. That's evildoers.

And katatome. They all start with the letter K. The mutilation. Scholars have boiled these down into three categories. And it's almost like it's almost like Paul has just seen this pattern.

God brings the gospel to a church. Gentiles and all kinds of people are believing. They're gathered together. The spirit's ministering. But then here comes Satan dressed as an angel of light, twisting them, trying to bind them now to put confidence back in the flesh again.

[14:10] And it's almost like he's got a shorthand for that pattern. And it's these three Greek words. He just rattles them off under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What is the meaning here? The dogs are those who rob a Christian's joy by putting confidence in pedigree.

So the three Ps that we can use to help us understand are pedigree, performance, and purity. So the dogs, it's pedigree. He says these legalists are the true dogs.

And this is a reference to Gentiles who would be considered dirty animals and scavengers in the land. This would be a disgusting animal that lives in the alleys and eats trash.

Even in Matthew 15, 24, Jesus used this common phrase of outsiders to the covenant people of God as Gentile dogs.

When that demon possessed, a girl's mom came to ask him and she wasn't a Jew. And then, of course, Jesus in compassion saves her daughter.

[15:13] And they believe in him by grace to turn the tables. And Paul is following Christ's own pattern here. In the ancient world, most dogs were not pets, but were street mongrels scavenging scraps from stinking garbage heaps.

Disgusting and defiling carcasses were what they would eat for their snacks. In Exodus 22, 31, listen to this. It's most likely where this became their phrase. Exodus 22, 31, God says, you shall be consecrated to me, O Israelite people.

Therefore, you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by the beasts of the field. These decaying carcasses don't eat roadkill. Don't do that. Instead, throw it to the dogs.

See, you people of Israel are clean and consecrated. Throw the trash to the dogs. The legalists, following the ministry of the gospel, they wanted to bind Christians to a certain diet, condemning anyone who would not eat kosher food.

And Paul portrayed them as being the ones that are feasting on poisonous food like disease infected tramps. See how I turned the table on them?

[16:26] You're trying to say you have to be kosher, have this Jewish diet to be in the people of God. No, to bind God's true people that way is to be a dog yourself.

Their pedigree is not based on a Jewish ceremonial law. It's not that at all. And he's going to explain what the true identity is. So Christians, beware of dogs.

Who would try to say, based on what you put into your mouth, you're the mutt. Beware of that.

Number two is the evil workers. Those are the false teachers who would try to rob the Christian's joy in Jesus by putting confidence in your own performance.

Those who place their confidence of acceptance by God in detailed, obedient keeping of the ritual, ceremonial and ethical demands of the old covenant and the Jewish tradition.

See, they're saying you have to do all these works according to the old covenant laws for the people of God in the land. And Paul says by telling people that you are the ones, instead of doing good and performing your way to God's pleasure, you are the evil workers.

[17:41] He turns the table on them in just the same way. And the third one is the mutilation.

These are the ones who rob a Christian's joy in Jesus by putting confidence in external consecration or external purity.

These Judaizers that followed around the ministry of the gospel by trying to bind the conscience of Christians beyond what Christ intended. They taught that if you lack this external sign of circumcision, then you are not welcome in God's presence.

And Paul turns the table on them by calling these outward Jews only pagan idol worshipers by calling them the mutilation. That's exactly what he's alluding to.

Paul selected the very same word that the Greek Old Testament uses of those self-mutilating prophets of Baal. Do you remember that story in 1 Kings 18?

How the prophets of Baal come before this altar that's set up as a big, great contest and they cry aloud and they cut themselves. They self-mutilate after their custom with swords and lances until the blood gashed out upon them.

[18:58] What's more is that if a priest in the Old Testament had suffered some kind of mutilation, you know, maybe a rope got tangled around the pinky and it snapped the pinky off. Now that priest was no longer allowed in the presence of the Holy God.

They'd had a mutilation and they were not consecrated, no longer able to be servants in the temple. So by calling these these legalists that were putting all the confidence in this external sign of circumcision, he calls them now the ones who are not welcome in God's presence.

Because God is not looking for an outward external circumcision. As with anything precious, raiders will try to rob you in me, just like the church in Philippi of our joy in the Lord.

Number three. So what do we do? We must refute the threats to our joy in the Lord. You and I must refute. We must fight against, push back these threats to our joy in the Lord.

Johnson again commented how the religious recipe in which Paul had been raised. It was a formula that blended God's initial grace with a person's own best efforts in order to yield divine approval at the final judgment.

[20:18] So Paul was raised in that Jewish Hebrew tradition. God initiates you in this walk of faith and then your own best efforts at all this law keeping are what will finally give you a standing before God.

And he'll say you're approved because you did your best at the final judgment. That's what Paul was brought up on. I'm afraid many of us were brought up on something similar, a version of that. And so we must refute threats like that because there will be no joy in Christ if you're living in that kind of false religious formula.

And how does Paul refute it? Well, first of all, he's establishing his own credibility as one who can say, been there, tried that. It doesn't work.

And he's going to bring the gospel instead. So here's Paul establishing his credibility. Remember those three P's, the pedigree, performance and purity. Watch how Paul shows how he can speak to any one of those better than any of these other Judaizers.

Regarding the confidence in pedigree, Paul says in verse five, I was circumcised the eighth day. I got that external sign and I'm of the stock of Israel.

[ 21 : 28 ] Not only do I have the external sign, I got the internal genes. I'm of the tribe of Benjamin. Well, Benjamin was the favorite of Israel's sons and the only one born in the promised land, according to Genesis 35, 16 through 18.

You remember who else was from Benjamin? It was the first king of Israel. Do you remember what his name was? Saul. See God's wonderful providence?

Saul in the New Testament, who God renames Paul, was named after Saul, the great king from the tribe of Benjamin, who was pleasing to men, but not to God. Remember who Saul persecuted? David, the type of Christ, the king after God's own heart, just as Saul persecuted the church. And Jesus said, you're persecuting me. Isn't God's providence amazing?

He says in verse five, I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. In other words, I wasn't a mixed breed mutt. My parents, they raised me going to Hebrew school.

[ 22 : 31 ] And Paul says that the Jews who follow Jesus, if you say you follow Jesus, you have no right to treat another follower of Jesus as second class.

That's not the gospel. You're the real dog if that's what you do. Brief point of application. No one should look down on a fellow Christian based on what denomination they go to, for example. Don't we so quickly get proud and puffed up? If someone loves Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and they're growing as a disciple where God has put them, we should praise the Lord, and we should encourage them in the faith.

There's no room for pride. There's no room for denominationalism in that proud sense. We don't compromise on our convictions of the Bible, but man, we better do it with a gospel tone, right? Number two, here's Paul's credibility for having confidence in his own performance. Verse five, he said, Concerning the law, I was a Pharisee.

[ 23 : 35 ] I'm the best of the law keepers. I wasn't like those liberal Sadducees. I actually believe in the resurrection of the dead. I believe what the Bible taught. If you remember, Saul was disciplined by Gamaliel, and we read in Acts 5, 34 through 39, that Paul's mentor was able to persuade the entire Sanhedrin.

This would be like standing up in the middle of Congress, where you've got House of Representatives and Senators all together, and you're able to persuade the whole nation. That was Paul's mentor.

So you want to talk about performance? Paul's got that. In verse six, he says, Concerning zeal, I was persecuting the church. I was trying to wipe out the Jesus sect.

Well, if you and I rely on works, or our own performance, or things that we think we have done for God, Paul does not mince words.

He says, All those things you thought you were doing as a good work, you were a worker of evil. One example recently would be like, Oh, you know, your church didn't do this toy drive, or, well, I mean, our church not only did a toy drive, we also brought Santa into the church so that people could take their pictures with him.

[ 24 : 57 ] Jesus says, You're a worker of evil. Did I tell you to do that? You're trying to pile on all these burdens on God's people. That's not what you're called to. And what about confidence and purity?

Paul says in verse 6, Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. The Torah, the five books of the law, and the first five that Moses wrote, they include, according to the rabbis who have studied them, 613 laws in the Torah itself.

But Paul says, Not only did I keep all of those, I also kept all of the traditions of the rabbis. That's called the Mishnah. And if you read reports of those who were grown up, even today, in that type of legalistic faith, they will say things like this.

You're not allowed to walk more than six feet once you wake up in the morning, until you wash your hands with water that you had prepared and left by your bedside the night before. You must wait six hours after eating chicken before you can eat any dairy product.

You're not allowed to light a lamp. You're not even allowed to ask your non-Jewish friend that's in the same room to light the lamp or turn on the light for you. But instead you have to hint at it.

[ 26 : 15 ] Isn't it a little dark in here? And see if they'll pick up on your hint and turn it on for you if it's the Sabbath so that you're not breaking the Sabbath commandment. You can't even rip toilet paper on Shabbat or the Sabbath.

And you have to go to sleep on your left side and then wake up on your right side. And if you hear the references, where is this from? It's not from God's inspired word. It's from, they'll refer to rabbis who are then scholars of rabbis.

They'll say things like it's from Shabbat based on the Rambam. And so you really have to understand all the teachings of the law keepers in order to be able to say like Paul concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

You can almost hear his tone. I hate the law. I did it all. I tried it. You don't want to know the true God of the Bible.

You want to keep loving an idol that you call Jesus, which is piling on wickedness because now you're blasphemy. You're calling this idol in your own mind, Jesus. But you don't really want to know the true God of the Bible.

[ 27 : 19 ] And yet you condemn someone who loves the Lord Jesus. It says, have mercy on me. And who's a chain smoker for smoking? You know, they're not pure. Well, do they love the Lord Jesus?

Paul says everything else is evil works. They're the mutilation. If you think it's your lifestyle that gives you access to the Holy God, you're a mutilator.

You are unfit to be in the presence of the Holy God. Well, you and I, like Paul, even though our context is different, we need to refute those subtle ways that the gospel will be undermined and our joy in the Lord will be robbed.

The way we do that is number four. It's we rehearse our grounds for rejoicing in the Lord. That's what Paul does really with the rest of this passage.

He rehearses with the Philippian church, third person plural, we together, Paul and the church. Here's our grounds for rejoicing in the Lord.

[ 28 : 28 ] Who is it that truly belongs to God's kingdom? Who is his covenant people? And Paul says in verse three, we are the circumcision.

The Jew of Jews saying, I am one with you, Philippians. You know, it only took 10 men to form a synagogue, a place where you could read the word of God.

And historians have found no evidence that there was ever a synagogue in the city of Philippi. It was a very Gentile city in a very Gentile church. And here's the Jew of Jews after laying out all of his credentials, his resume, so the Judaizers can't get a foothold.

He says, I'm with the Gentile church. I'm with these believers who love the Lord Jesus, nothing else. He identifies with them just as Christ identified with his people while they were still his enemies.

And he tells them, church, rejoice. We are the circumcision. We are the covenant people of God. Rejoice because to the church believers from all nations, to us belong the fullest flowering of all of God's promises.

[ 29 : 38 ] You know these. Let me remind you of a couple. Isaiah 53, 5. You're condemned people of God. You're banished away because you're sin.

You lost the land. But the punishment, the chastisement that you deserve that will bring you peace and restore you to God, it will be laid not on you but on the coming Messiah.

Jeremiah 31, verses 31 through 34, there will be a new covenant cut between God and man in which God will remember the sins of his people no more.

Now the revelation we get through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit breathing out the New Testament is that this has happened. Colossians 2, 11.

In him, Jesus Christ, you also were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

[ 30 : 39 ] Christ's death on the cross was his circumcision. He was cut off so that you could be grafted in. He was punished so that you could be blessed.

Paul says in Romans 2, 29, a Jew is one inwardly. Circumcision is a matter of the heart by the Spirit, not in the law.

Because Jesus was cut off, he was crucified. Now the Holy Spirit applies his circumcision, his death on the cross for sin, he applies that now to your heart and mind through regeneration.

He melts your heart of stone. He gives you the circumcision of the heart that's inward wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. So you can rejoice because now you can approach God in Jesus Christ.

In verse 3, Paul says, you now worship God in the Spirit. Church, we too can rejoice. We are in the unprecedented era that Ezekiel prophesied in chapter 37, verses 26 through 28.

[ 31 : 50 ] We are now God's nation that is marked by a central blessing that God dwells eternally in the midst of his people in an everlasting covenant.

This is what we get to be part of by belonging to him in his church. So the question was, if you're not to put your confidence in your own flesh, what do you put your confidence in?

And he answers that very clearly in verse 3. He says three things. Here's where true confidence that you belong to God is found. Number one, you worship God in the Spirit.

Number two, you rejoice in Christ Jesus. Number three, you put no confidence in your flesh. When we get to approach the Holy God through the work of Jesus Christ, we are experiencing, we are rejoicing, we are taking what he has purchased for us with his own blood.

Worship is a privilege and a right we have by belonging to him that he purchased at such a high cost. There's no way that sinners like us could be with the Holy God except for Jesus Christ who came to satisfy all righteousness and to make a way for sinners like us freely to be in the presence of God.

[ 33 : 15 ] When we're in his presence, you stirred up to rejoice. that's the Holy Spirit applying to us the joy of Christ. Zephaniah 3:17 says that the Lord God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save you and he will rejoice over you with gladness.

It's Jesus rejoicing over us with gladness and that stirs up and pulls out of us a rejoicing in response to him. So the true identifying mark of the covenant people of God, those who truly belong to him, is that you worship the triune God.

Ephesians 2:18, it's through Jesus Christ that we have access by one spirit to the Father. We must rehearse our grounds for rejoicing in the Lord.

The reality is that as much as we rehearse this and we keep coming together and reminding one another, we're always under attack. We are in a battle. So my fifth encouragement for us is that when we do have those waves of doubt, those spiritual doubts, we need to follow Paul's example, look back on our own lives, take stock, and we calculate what is most precious.

Because if we're honest, we'll be reminding ourselves that there is only one precious treasure and it's deep inside my soul where no one can steal it. So we battle our spiritual doubts by calculating what is most precious in your life.

[ 34 : 53 ] Paul says, Church, don't let these false teachers lead you in the wrong way. Take my own example. I've laid out my credentials for you. Don't fall into that poisonous religious recipe.

Don't do it. Because if you do, it'll push you in two directions. you will either live with nervous uncertainty that you're not pure enough, you have not performed enough, you have not done enough, and you'll never have an assurance of faith.

Or, you will be proud and puffed up and overconfident in your own flesh, in your own self. That ambitious overconfidence in what you'll be doing is burdening other believers.

So don't follow that path. Either way, you will come up disappointed and hurting the very one who saved you. In verse 7, Paul says, what things were gain to me.

So Paul looks back at his resume and he said, I used to think that was a star and this was a star and all these things made me shine. But now I look back and what I thought was gain, I had rested my confidence of those things.

[ 36 : 10 ] Now I have counted them loss for Christ. In the light of the gospel, he now finds all those personal achievements repellent and defiling before the face of God.

In verse 8, he says, indeed, I also count all things loss. loss. The word loss that he's using really means damage. What I thought was helping was doing damage.

He's using banking terms. See, in verse 7, he says, what I thought was gain to me, I thought that was a profit. He says, it was actually counted loss.

You know, this is true. You get a credit card. You'll never grow in your wealth if you keep plunging yourself further and further into debt. You can never enjoy a rich spiritual life if you keep digging yourself deeper and deeper into a self-righteous hole.

Paul tells his testimony in verse 8, for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. Everything else pales in comparison.

[ 37 : 26 ] This is the only time in the New Testament when Paul refers to Jesus as my Lord, my God. His testimony, we get in the letter to 1 Timothy 1, verses 13 through 16.

Paul wrote, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent, but the grace of the Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

In Christ, Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost. Why? That in me, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to you who now believe in him for eternal life.

In verse 8, he says, yes, I've suffered the loss of all things for Christ. Paul had forfeited his reputation, his self-respect, his standing in the community, his personal safety, and more, but he says, I gained Christ.

I'm found in Christ and I know him. He bears witness to the same thing that James does in James 1, 2, and 3. He says, consider it pure joy, my brethren, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

[ 38 : 51 ] When you suffer for Christ's name, consider it joy. James says, no, consider it pure joy to suffer for Christ. Paul says, all of those things that I thought were adding my value, this is like revenue, profit on my account.

That was a massive debt and I had to declare bankruptcy before the Holy God. those things were damaging my standing before God. In verse 8, he says, I count them as rubbish, refuse, which is rotting food, or dung.

Children, dung is what we flush. That's why he says, compared to Christ, it's garbage. It's worse than worthless.

If you're like me, this is searching because my flesh so often wants to go there again. Am I doing enough? Am I going to be, you know, show up before the Lord and he's going to look at my life? Will he be pleased with my performance? And then I'm exposed to his law and I'm just laid low once again. And if the Holy Spirit is breaking up the hard soil in your heart and in mine, we will want to weep.

[ 40 : 14 ] I'm so encouraged by the passage we read earlier. Justin read for us Nehemiah 8 in verses 9 and 10. After they had read the law of God and the people weep and mourn over their sin, the Leap Knights taught the people and the people all wept as they heard the words of the law.

But then God said to them, and God says this to us now after you've repented, do not mourn or weep. This is the holy day of the Lord your God.

Do not be grieved for the joy of the Lord is your strength. You see how quick God is, how ready he is to forgive us and to restore us. And we rest in Jesus Christ and we say, this is my only gain, my only treasure.

This is the precious possession. I have Christ. I know him. I'm right before God because it's his righteousness covering me. There's an infinitely more valuable treasure than anything this world can offer and it's to have communion with God through Jesus Christ, to have the spirit of the holy God dwelling in your soul, the place where no robber can break in and steal, where moths and rust can't destroy.

He is your treasure. So Paul says, I count it all. An easy loss. No brainer because I got Christ.

There was a missionary who moved to Ecuador and into the jungles of Ecuador to take the gospel to an unreached people group there.

[ 41 : 49 ] And he died. He was speared to death. His name was Jim Elliot along with others on his team. But his wife kept his story and Jim Elliot's testimony even dying at a very young age was this.

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. So we need to battle our spiritual doubts, calculate what is most precious in this life truly.

And the sixth point is this, that when you meet your maker, make sure you'll be able to rejoice. grace. We will all meet our maker. Your soul will meet him the moment you die.

And in the fullness of time when Christ returns, there will be a great resurrection. Saved and unsaved will be resurrected and stand before the creator of all.

My encouragement to you who God has brought here today once again is make sure you will be able to rejoice that day. How?

[ 42 : 56 ] That's what Paul tells us in verses 9 through 11. See heaven where our souls go and the new heavens and the earth where the glory of God fills the earth as the waters cover the sea.

It's a place where the angels are rejoicing in his presence, delighting in him, where the souls of those he saved are singing before him. That's why C.S. Lewis I think rightly said joy is the serious business of heaven.

Make sure you'll be able to rejoice as well. On what basis can you know this? When you have to give an account to your God, what will he accept? According to verse 9, your only hope of rejoicing

in heaven when you meet your maker is to be found in him.

to be found in Christ's righteousness not your own merits, but in him. The holy life of Jesus Christ roping, covering you completely so that that's all the holy God can see is Christ clothing you.

Paul writes in verse 9, not having my own righteousness which is from the law, from things I must do. Whatever brings you glory in this life, it's really like a big bag of sand tied to your ankle pulling you deeper and deeper into the ocean.

[ 44 : 22 ] If it brings you glory, it's pulling you toward hell. You don't want anything of your righteousness. You want the righteousness of Christ, that which he freely put onto you, the only way he gives it.

He says also in verse 9, you get this righteousness that is Christ through faith in him. Not by works, but by receiving freely. As Calvin said, faith is the poor beggar's hand.

It's the instrument that God puts the blessings of Christ and makes him your savior. You bring nothing to the equation. The uncompromised only criteria that the holy God will accept is the righteousness which is from God by faith.

It's faith alone, not faith plus anything else. And when you behold God in Jesus Christ by faith, God promises verse 10 that you will know him.

You will have such close union that he is already sharing with you now in this life the power of the resurrection. It says, Holy Spirit making you a new creation already, killing sin in you, growing your love for God, causing you to rejoice.

[ 45 : 42 ] You see how suffering prepares you to rejoice in heaven. The more closely you and I identify with Christ right now in his suffering, in his death on the cross to save us, the more he strips our souls away of our own flesh and our remaining sin.

It's suffering that he uses to sanctify and prepare us to rejoice in his presence. In verse 10, Paul calls this the fellowship of Christ's suffering.

We are fellowshiping, we are partners, we are communing with Jesus Christ when we suffer in Christ, which God uses to make you more and more conformed to his death.

Not alive to yourself and your flesh, but conformed to the death of Christ. He died for you, now he lives in you. You share in his death on the cross, you belong to him, and you will share in his resurrection.

Fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ, especially in suffering, is the way that God purifies you and it's the way that he grows your assurance.

[ 46 : 51 ] God proves himself over and over and over because in that suffering you are not alone, the Lord Jesus was with you through it. And that's the confidence we need to know that when I meet my maker, I will be able to rejoice.

That's what it means to attain the resurrection from the dead with rejoicing. Well, Henry Ford had said from the perspective of proud fallen man under the curse of a covenant of works, this lie, there is no happiness except in the realization that we have accomplished something.

You see how Paul just totally destroyed that statement. the truth of the gospel is this, that there is no joy except in communion with the triune God because Jesus Christ has accomplished everything for those who love him.

Make sure you love the Lord Jesus Christ and you commune with him again today. Remember Jesus' words in John 16 22, you have sorrow now, but I will see you again.

Your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you. When you meet your maker, make sure you'll be able to rejoice.

[ 48 : 14 ] Let's pray. Amen.