

Philippians 3:1-14 (PM)

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[0 : 01] Well, it'd be helpful to open the Bible in front of you. It's the Black Big Book to page 981. That's the text we're going to be looking at today, and I'll tell you when it's time. But it's just good to stick a finger into it now.

Christians believe, above all else, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news. The gospel is good news of great joy for all people.

Do you believe that? Do you believe the gospel is good news of great joy for gay people, for straight people, for young people?

Is the gospel good news of great joy for indigenous people? For residential school victims? Survivors? For poor people?

Rich people? Is the gospel good news of great joy for women? What about women with unplanned or unwanted pregnancies? What about women trapped in abusive relationships?

[1 : 15] How is the gospel good news of great joy for them? Is it good news for men? Is it good news for trans people? The gospel, scripture declares, is good news of great joy for all people.

And I don't think many of us believe that, if we're honest. Our world certainly doesn't. Our faith is painted as deeply problematic and antagonistic towards our culture's values of autonomy and self-determination.

Of personal freedom and progress. The gospel tells us who God is. It tells us who we are. It tells us that there's a problem with ourselves and our world.

And it declares to what lengths a good God is willing to go to save us and to renew our world. But the world doesn't want to hear it. We want to be our own gods.

We want to define our own identities. We refuse to accept the message that we are sinners in need of a savior. We refuse to let God direct how we should live.

[2 : 29] We want to live our lives our way. And that's why we're told the gospel is not good news. It's bad advice. It will not bring great joy, we're told.

But great repression. Limitation. And loneliness. And unnecessary suffering. It's not for all people, we're told.

But only for a simple-minded few. Who historically, generally, look like me. So what about for you? If you consider yourself a Christian, why do you cling to the gospel when the world around us tells us to let go of religion and to break free of its shackles?

Well, that's what our passage is about tonight. It's about what we gain by grasping and being gripped by the gospel of God's grace.

To see what one gains by being gripped by the gospel, we must first contemplate the life of Paul. The imprisoned apostle. The pastor who was previously a Jewish Pharisee.

[3 : 43] A Hebrew of Hebrews. Hell-bent on destroying the church. Because he saw the gospel as the worst possible message. That like a cancer was threatening his world and leading people away from God.

Paul gave up everything he had. All of his status, rank, power, prestige, safety, comfort, friends, maybe even his family to gain Christ.

And he tells us here why he did it. Sharing three things you gain when you gain Christ. So that's where we're going tonight.

We're going to focus on Paul the person. The apostate Pharisee turned apostle. The pastor. And we're going to look at the three things Paul says you gain when you receive the gospel.

Three reasons. Concrete, real reasons why the gospel is good news of great joy for all people. If you were a Pharisee, as Paul was, what mattered more than anything was your personal holiness.

[4 : 52] Meaning your own ability to live a life pleasing to the Lord through your own effort and piety. And in that regard, Paul was pretty much perfect.

Look at verse 4 of Philippians 3 on page 981 if you've got it. Paul writes, If someone else thinks they have reason to put confidence in the flesh, that means confidence in yourself, in your own accomplishments, or in your own life.

Paul says, I have more reasons. I was circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law of Pharisee.

As for zeal, persecuting the church. As for righteousness based on the law, faultless. Paul in his past life as a Pharisaic Jew says that no one measured up more than he did in that world.

He was the poster boy. The perfect Pharisee. The perfect Jew. The perfect person within the people of God. Paul the Pharisee assumed that he was perfectly pleasing to the Lord by living a perfect life.

[6 : 02] He had ascended to the top of all of his personal ambitions. He'd achieved the life he wanted. He was a success story. A person to praise and to look up to as a worthy model for living.

But then something happened. It was in the grade six video. I don't know if you caught it. And what happened is that Paul encountered Jesus. The risen Jesus broke into Paul's life very unexpectedly. And he showed Paul that the rigid religious life he was living was all wrong. Paul miraculously met Jesus and immediately his whole life was turned upside down.

Or rather right side up. Paul saw that he'd been heading the wrong direction. The life that he thought was ascending to God he realized was leading him away from God.

His lifestyle of what he had determined to be the good life he saw was actually leading him down the wrong path to death and to darkness.

[7 : 09] When Paul met the risen Jesus his life changed forever. His priorities changed instantly. He describes it this way in verse 7 of our text.

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 Paul the gospel is not a religion. It is not a set of beliefs or morals or a lifestyle or a philosophy. For Paul the gospel is a person.

The good news is Jesus. The announcement that Jesus is our Savior our Lord and our King. The gospel is not a message it's a man.

It's not advice it's Christ. The gospel is the announcement that God has become a man for us to be known by us to save us to invite us to know God even to experience and enter into the very life of God.

[8 : 27] This man is God and his name is Jesus. That's the gospel according to Paul. It's Christ. And knowing Jesus gaining Jesus grasping Jesus is worth more than anything any other life pursuit can offer.

Jesus is life itself. He's life to the full eternal life flourishing joyful never ending life and once you know him nothing else matters.

I met someone a few years ago who grew up in a fundamentalist Christian setting and realized in that rigid religious space that they were gay. They were same sex attractive.

They initially resisted their attractions but ultimately they embraced them and they rejected the rigid rules of their church and their family to be true to themselves.

But then something unexpected happened. This person encountered Jesus. They had an experience similar to Paul's that left them knowing Jesus is Lord that he loves them and accepts them and that he was inviting them to follow and obey him unto eternal life.

[9 : 46] This person that I met for coffee saw their homosexual lifestyle was at odds with their faith in Christ. And so they started following Jesus and resisting their homosexual attractions and desires.

Embracing celibacy and Christian community and seeking sexual purity. And I remember Chris the pastor saying to that person that I struggled to see how the gospel is good news of great joy for them.

How is the gospel good news of great joy for a gay person? It seems like a life sentence to submit to solitude and celibacy, to singleness and loneliness for the rest of their lives.

And I'll never forget what that person said to me. They said, oh Chris, laughing, having Jesus in my life, knowing Jesus is so much better than anything a gay lifestyle could give me.

See, the gospel is good news because it's the good news of Jesus Christ. The good news is a person. And once you know that person, you see how being found in Christ, knowing Christ, is infinitely better than anything any other lifestyle can offer you.

[11:10] Paul puts it this way when he looks back at his old life as the perfect Pharisee in verse 7. He says, 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 Jesus Christ, my Lord. For his sake, Paul continues, I have suffered the loss of all things.

Think about that. Paul has given up everything to gain the gospel. I have suffered the loss of all things, and more than that, I count them as rubbish, garbage.

Mark can tell us what rubbish means. Literally, Paul here uses a four-letter word for poop that I'm not allowed to say in church. Paul swears.

Isn't that amazing? For Jesus sake, I've suffered the loss of everything, and I count everything else as total crap in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

[12:17] The gospel is good news because it offers us something that nothing else can give. It offers us Jesus. You can know God. That is the good news that brings great joy for all people.

That is Paul's overview of why the gospel is good news. But let's get practical. What actual things do you gain when you are found in Christ?

My best friend growing up was a secular Jew, smartest guy I've ever met, just incredibly bright. His dad was also a genius, was an inventor, and his dad told him the Christian faith is the most brilliant lie in the history of humanity because everything it promises you, you don't get until you die.

Isn't that good? What do we gain by grasping the gospel? Paul tells us three things in verses 9, 10, and 11.

The first thing is in verse 9. Paul writes that I may gain Christ and be found in him, verse 9, not having a righteousness of my own that depends on the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

[13:46] The first thing you gain when you gain Christ, when you're found in him, is God's righteousness. None of us are righteous. No, not one.

none of us behave rightly in our relationships with God or with others. We're all sinners. We are all selfish and we live for ourselves as if we are gods.

And all of us are like this. There's nothing we can do about it on our own. For Paul, he threw himself into religious piety, becoming blameless by the religious rules he obeyed.

And yet, even Paul could not become righteous. All the self-righteous effort amounted to a big, hot, heaping pile of you-know-what, according to Paul.

There is no lifestyle, no laws, no self-help guides, no TED Talk, nor mindfulness app that can make you righteous. We're all stained by sin.

[14:47] We are all contaminated by it. And now the good news. Hearing the gospel and gaining Christ. Hearing the news that he has given himself for you.

That God so loves the world that he gave up his only son for it. Verse 9 tells us that we are not offered a righteousness that comes through our own effort, but rather we are offered a righteousness that comes through his.

A righteousness from God that is Christ's, that is given to us through faith in him. The technical word for this is justification.

We are justified in Christ by faith. Our sin is taken by him and in exchange through faith we receive his righteousness.

So that when God looks upon us, he sees his blameless son. And when he saw his son on the cross, what he saw was our sin. Therefore, our sin has been dealt with, it's been atoned for, it's been paid, the debt has been forgiven by Christ and in return we now receive his righteousness through faith.

[15:58] So the first thing we gain from Christ is justification. We receive his righteousness as he takes away our sin. And this is the first reason why the gospel is good news because it's the message of Jesus that he comes to give us his righteousness in exchange for our sin.

The second reason why the gospel is good news is in verse 10. Paul says, I count everything as garbage that I may gain Christ, being found in him and then verse 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

The goal of the gospel is to know Christ, to know God, not just to know of him. To have a relationship with the Lord of the universe, to experience intimacy with the Almighty. And from knowing him through the gospel, verse 10 tells us, we will come to know his power. The gospel brings power. The gospel is not mere words. It contains the power of God for the salvation of everyone. Knowing Christ enables you to know his power.

[17:14] not just in the future, but now. Today is Pentecost, 50 days after Easter.

And we remember the gift of God, the Holy Spirit, being poured out upon Jesus' followers after the risen Jesus has ascended to heaven. Today should be as big a deal for us as Christmas. Shouldn't be funny. It should be a big deal. At Christmas, we remember and celebrate the coming of God the Son to save the world and bring the kingdom of heaven to earth.

At Pentecost, now, we remember the coming of God the Holy Spirit to fill us with God's power to work through us to spread Jesus' gospel and his kingdom.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the result of the gospel. We are justified by Christ and we are now empowered by God the Holy Spirit to become like him in how we live.

[18:19] Our old sinful self, what Paul would call the flesh, is put to death and we are resurrected as a new creation, being remade into the image of Christ, indwelt and empowered by his spirit.

The gospel brings power, power to die to our flesh and resurrect to the spirit that you might now become like Christ. This power can be known today through participating in the spirit, living life aware of the spirit's presence and power in your own life as you believe in his son.

I wish when I was younger I was taught more about the gift of the Holy Spirit because he is how we can know the presence and power of God in our lives today and this is a message young people especially need to hear.

I was undereducated on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life. Paul at the beginning of our passage writes about how we worship or how we serve by the spirit of God.

Every act of service we commit is enabled by God's Holy Spirit empowering us from within. Through the gospel we're invited to know God and know his power in our lives today.

[19:40] Paul calls it the power of his resurrection. Think about that. The very power of God that raised Jesus from death the seemingly unbeatable foe that same power is now made available to us today through the gospel through the indwelling Holy Spirit transforming us recreating us into the image of Christ.

For Paul this is worth losing everything else to gain because there's no other narrative or lifestyle that can provide this power the power of God himself dwelling within you.

There is no other name by which we can be saved. There is no other power by which death can be defeated. And we can know this power of his resurrection through knowing Christ and through being found in him.

So the gospel is good news because it introduces us to Jesus. It brings us to our Lord and Savior and enables us to gain him and to be found in him forever.

The gospel grants us justification by faith. It gifts us God's righteousness through faith in Jesus. And the gospel gives us sanctification the power of his resurrection the power to serve God by the spirit of God and how we live being transformed into the image of Christ alive in us.

[21:07] And then there's a third reason a final reason Paul gives for why the gospel is good news in verse 11. Paul counts everything as garbage that he may know Jesus and the power of his resurrection sharing in his sufferings and then verse 11 becoming like him in his death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

The gospel gives us the hope of glory the hope of life after death the hope of heaven of being with God forever.

So three things we gain when we are found in Christ justification by Christ sanctification by his spirit and glorification by God himself.

Three reasons why the gospel is good news of great joy for all people. First from verse 9 it grants us the righteousness of God in exchange for the wretchedness of our sin through faith in God's son. Second it enables us to know him to know Christ and the power of his resurrection to experience the life in the spirit worshipping by the spirit experiencing the power of God at work in us and lastly it provides us the resurrection from the dead glorification life in him with him by him enjoying him forever.

[22 : 41] The gospel is painted as bad advice by a fallen world that lives in deepening darkness. but it isn't. It's God's good news of great joy for all people.

It's the promise of justification sanctification and glorification. It's the invitation to know God to know his power and his resurrection by knowing his son our Lord Jesus and his Holy Spirit alive in us. It's better than anything the world can give you and it's worth losing everything else to gain. and it's granted to you by grace. It's God's gift for you.

All you need to do is receive it in faith. And once you've received God's gift of grace offered in the person of Jesus you must press on.

Press on toward Christ. Press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ. forget what lies behind and strive toward what lies ahead.

[23 : 50] Set your hope and your eyes on what is to come on the kingdom of heaven which is coming to earth of the king of the kingdom of heaven who's ascended to the father and right now rules over all as king over all kings and lord over all lords.

Now to finish we must note this isn't all we gain when we gain Christ. Paul writes this is the small print Paul writes in verse 10 that we may know him and the power of his resurrection and also may share in his sufferings.

What we also gain by gaining Christ is a participation a fellowship a sharing in his sufferings. You will suffer for following Jesus.

Jesus suffered. Paul suffered. The Philippians are suffering. We will suffer. Your suffering may be physical may be mental may be relational or spiritual.

It may be persecution from the world. It may be false teaching from within the church. All of us will suffer. We will share in Christ's sufferings if we are gripped by the gospel of grace.

[25 : 12] But through our suffering the power of Christ's resurrection is made manifest to us. Our suffering achieves for us an eternal weight of glory that far surpasses all of our difficulty.

So in spite of suffering set your eyes upon Jesus the author and perfecter of your faith. Give up everything and count it as garbage that you may gain Christ and be found in him.

And the things of the world will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and his grace. Amen. Let me pray for us.

Lord Jesus on this day of Pentecost the pouring out of the Holy Spirit would all of us receive this gospel would all of us receive you and experience this good news of great joy in our own lives. And for the people we know who do not know you we pray for them as well Lord. Would you pour out your spirit on all flesh that all may come to know Jesus that all may gain Christ and know the power of his resurrection.

[26 : 45] We pray this in his name and for his glory. Amen.