

The Surpassing Worth Of Knowing Christ

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[0 : 00] Good morning. It's my privilege this morning to continue our sermon series in the book of Philippians. And this morning we will be reading out of Philippians chapter 3, starting in verse 1, reading down through verse 11.

Just to set the stage a little bit before we read together, just a reminder, this is a letter that Paul, the Apostle Paul, is sending to the church at Philippi.

He's in prison, and yet he loves him in such a way that he would desire to send a letter to them and instruct them and remind them and thank them and direct them and pastor them through this letter. As we read this morning, we'll see early, he says, my brothers, just this affectionate term of those who are in the kingdom with him. So with that, I would ask, if you will, in honor of God's word, if you would stand.

And hopefully you've got your Bible with you and you can open to this passage. If not, there's Bibles in front of you you could use to look at this beautiful passage from the Apostle Paul to the Philippian church.

[1 : 14] Starting in verse 1, chapter 3. Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

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.

For we are circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the 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.

[2 : 32] For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish 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 may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death.

That by any means possible, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Let's pray one more time. Father, I ask this morning that your word would speak to us powerfully this morning.

And Father, if there's anything that comes from me, I pray that it would wash away. But I pray that your truth, your word would sink deep into our hearts. And Father, we would embrace the truth that's written here and live in such a way.

And I pray in your name. Amen. You may have a seat. As we walk through this passage, again, I want to make the point here as I look at it.

[3 : 40] It says, finally, my brothers, this affectionate term that Paul uses for those that are in the faith with him. God used him to plant the church at Philippi as one who took the gospel message to this town and to these people in Philippi.

And he says, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. You know, we could read right past that and miss the power of what Paul is saying here.

He's asking them to rejoice. If we look up the definition of rejoice, the definition would be to be full of joy, to be delighted.

It says rejoice in the Lord, delighted in the Lord, full of joy because of our relationship with the Lord. And it's interesting, Paul is sharing that to these Christians who are persecuted for their faith. You know, Paul is not asking them to do something that he personally is not doing. Paul is writing this letter from prison. And we see that in chapter 1.

[4 : 55] He said, even in my imprisonment. He said, brothers, I count it joy that I'm in prison. I rejoice that I'm in prison because God is using my imprisonment that those that are around me are hearing the gospel.

Even the whole praetorian guard, the guards that are guarding me in prison are hearing the gospel as I continue to share it, even in this place. And though I'm locked away and though I don't know what the future holds, I still rejoice because I see that the gospel is being proclaimed.

I see God changing lives and touching hearts. And that is his rejoicing. It's not the physical difficulty of being in prison. It's not the unknown that he rejoices about.

He rejoices in what God is doing in the hearts of people. Even in chapter 2 earlier, Paul said this in verse 17. Even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice.

Do you get what he's saying? Paul is saying, even if I die taking the gospel to you, sharing the gospel with you, it is worth it for me.

[6 : 14] Because I see what's happening in your lives. I see what's happening in your hearts. It's that you're embracing the gospel and I'm so glad. I'm thankful. I rejoice.

I'm full of joy because I see what God is doing in your life. And now he tells these Philippians to walk in similar manner.

He said, I know in a sense, I know that you're going through a lot. I know that you're suffering. I know that life is difficult in many ways. And yet I say, my brothers, rejoice.

Live in such a way that you have a mindset that always is full of joy because we see the sovereign hand of God. Though God would put, Paul would say, though God would put me in prison, I praise him.

Though God would put me in prison, he can still use me. And I surrender my life to him to be used in any way he chooses in his sovereign plan. And Paul is encouraging the Philippian church to have this mindset of joy.

[7 : 20] A rejoicing that they can be used likewise to share the gospel with people, to praise together with the church what God might be doing in their lives as well.

So we read on. It says this, my brothers rejoice. Have this mindset of joy. To write the same things to me, or the same things to you is no trouble to me.

And it's safe for you. And in Paul, in verse 2, he says, look out for. He gives a warning. I really believe that Paul is very affectionate for the Philippian church.

He has a deep love for them. And a shepherding heart for them. He desires for them to know God in great depth. He desires for them to be faithful in their walk.

He desires for that church to be healthy. And he gives them this warning. He says, brothers, look out for dogs. The dogs. Look out for the evildoers.

[8 : 25] Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. It's as if he's sharing a warning to them about three different types or groups of people.

Those, and this is just the way I read it. He would say there's those who are dogs. There's those who are so self-absorbed, who want whatever they want for selfish reasons.

They'll do anything to get it. Watch out for those people. And he says, watch out for the evildoers. Those who scheme and plan with evil intentions.

They have motives that aren't pure, that don't honor God. Watch out for those people. And he talks about these who mutilate the flesh. Those who would say, the flesh, there's nothing good in it.

We just need to show God how serious we are about our faith. Mutilate our body as a way of saying to God, we want to do this to honor you.

[9 : 23] This false idea that mutilating the body is going to in some way honor God or some way help them to be more favored in the eyes of God.

A subtle lie. He says, watch out for these people. You know, this is not the first time Paul is giving a warning to a church. You remember in the book of Acts.

Paul's missionary journey as he traveled to Macedonia and shared the gospel in Macedonia. And he was traveling back heading toward Jerusalem on his missionary journey.

He had already been for years in Ephesus and he had shared with them the gospel. And he longed for them to be faithful in serving God.

And so on his trip back, he stopped at Miletus. He didn't want to spend more time at Ephesus because he's heading to Jerusalem. And in the book of Acts, it says this. Now, from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

[10:29] So the picture is this. Instead of going to Ephesus and spending more time in Ephesus, which would have kept him from being in Jerusalem at Pentecost, he sends a message to the elders. Come.

Come to Miletus. I want to tell you some things. I want to share with you some things. Things that have been on my heart. Things that I'm praying about. And here's one of the things he shared with them.

Very similar to the warning we just heard to the church at Philippi. He said this to the elders.

Therefore, be alert. You hear his warning? It's a warning to the elders of Ephesus. Those who are shepherds of the church.

Beware elders. There are those who will come in to destroy the church. There are those who will come in for their own selfish reasons that will destroy the unity and destroy the gospel message, destroy the effectiveness of the church.

[11:58] And he shares something similar to these brothers at Philippi. Beware. There's those who would not protect the church.

Instead, they would come in as dogs, as evildoers, with false messages. Be aware of them. Be alert.

Do you think that's true for us as well? In our day and time, do you think that there are messages that are in the church that are not according to Scripture? Do you think there's those who have their own selfish ambitions and reasons for being involved in leadership in churches?

I think we likewise need to be aware of the enemy's plan. I really believe, church, that Satan has a plan to destroy every healthy church. He wants to bring disunity.

He wants to bring dissension. He wants the message to be unbiblical. He does not want the church to be strong. He does not want us to serve one another, to care for one another.

[13:03] He does not want the church to go and take the gospel to the lost and dying world. Satan will do whatever he can to destroy the church. So Paul says to them, watch out.

He has all kind of methods. He uses all types of people to destroy the church. Beware. And Paul goes on in verse 3 and he says this, For we are their circumcision.

I find that interesting. He's speaking to Gentile believers. He says, we, Gentile believers, church at Philippi, we are the circumcision.

Paul, what do you mean? I thought circumcision was a sign of the covenant for the Jewish nation. Paul would say, yes, that's true.

It was a sign of the covenant. It was an ordinance given by God to Abraham when he gave Abraham a covenant. And he said, on the eighth day, your children should be circumcised.

[13:58] But Paul is saying to these Gentile believers, we are the circumcision. Paul, what do you mean by that? You know, it's interesting that Romans chapter 2 will give us a little insight into what Paul was saying.

Paul is speaking to Romans 2 and he says this, For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law. But if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

So if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code in circumcision but break the law.

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. Let me say that again. Paul is indicating that circumcision is something that is not just a physical issue, it's a heart issue.

He goes on to say, but a Jew is one inwardly and circumcision is a matter of the heart by the spirit. The physical act of circumcision pointed to something that was intended, that is a spiritual circumcision of the heart.

[15:24] That our heart would be circumcised, that our heart would no longer desire the ways of the world, but our heart would desire the ways of God. In that respect, he says to these believers in Philippi, we are the circumcision.

We are those who have been spiritually changed. Paul, what do you mean? We are those who have been spiritually changed.

We are those who have been born again. We are those who have been now indwelt by the spirit.

We now have spiritual life. Y'all remember the passage with Nicodemus.

He talks about being born again. And Christ says, you must be born again. He says, how in the world am I going to be born again? He says, you must be born of spirit. You know, that's true for the believers in Philippi and it's true for you and I, that if we're truly believers, we've been born of the spirit.

That we're part of the circumcision in this sense, is that our heart has been circumcised. Where we used to have a heart of stone, we now have a heart of flesh. We now have a heart that desires God's honor.

[16:37] We've been changed. We can walk now in newness of life. Even in the book of Psalms, David writes this. As he writes, he says this.

He says, for you will not delight in sacrifice or I would give it. You will not be pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

Oh God, you will not destroy. I mean, sorry. I said the wrong word. Not despise. Sorry. Do you hear what I'm sharing?

Is that by virtue of being born again, by virtue of spiritual life, by virtue of spiritual birth, these people are part of this body of believers that have been circumcised, not just in the flesh, but in the heart.

There's been a change. And that change is marked in three ways in this verse. Do you see it?

There's three things that Paul shares here about those who have been born again, about those who are truly Christians.

[17:49] And here's the first one. The three, well, all three are the, it says here. For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit. We worship by the Spirit.

Number two, we glory in Christ Jesus. And number three, we put no confidence in the flesh. These three marks of the church, these three marks of true believers, we worship by the Spirit, we glory in Christ Jesus alone, and we put no confidence in the flesh.

First, this concept of worshiping by the Spirit. You remember the encounter, the woman at the well where Christ went to Samaria?

And they were thirsty, and so they went to the well. And there was, he sent his disciples on, and there was a woman who came late in the day to fill her container with water to draw from the well.

And there was an interaction with this woman at the well. And she's trying to get away because he's digging a little bit. He's exposed, he's exposing the sin in her life.

[18:57] And finally, she, in an attempt to get away and change the conversation, she says, well, y'all Jews, y'all say you ought to worship in Jerusalem, but we say you ought to worship, Samaritans ought to worship here.

And Jesus says what to her? Do you remember? He says, woman, you don't know what you worship. You have this idea of what worship is, but you don't even know what you worship. You remember what he said to her in that encounter?

He said, the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. The true worshipers will worship in spirit or truth. God is a spirit, and those who worship must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Do you know if you're not a Christian, you can't truly worship God? If you're not born of the Spirit, there's no way to worship, but don't you know people try? People come up with all kind of ideas about what it looks like to worship God.

But truly, unless we're born again, we cannot truly worship God. The only way to genuinely worship Him, as Christ told this woman at the well, is in spirit and in truth. That is, until we're born again, until we have spiritual life, we don't really understand what it is to worship.

[20:28] And in truth, and proper worship is based on truth. Let me just share a little more here. Those who are truly born again will worship in the Spirit, but they will glory in Christ Jesus.

What does it mean to glory in Christ Jesus? To make much of Christ. Christ. To understand what Christ has done. To understand that His death on the cross is the only means by which we would ever be saved.

It's not by what we do, it's by what Christ did. And so we rejoice in the sacrifice and the life of Christ. Paul says this, here's the one thing I boast of, I boast in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Galatians 6, he says, that's what I boast in. I boast in Christ and Christ alone. We're about to see, in just a second, a false gospel that Paul talks about.

This boasting in something other than Christ. This boasting in our efforts and what we do. But he says, the true Christians, the true spiritually circumcised ones, the church worships by the Spirit, we glory only in Christ Jesus and we put no confidence in the flesh.

[21 : 37] You know how difficult that is? At least from my perspective, to put no confidence in the flesh. Our whole culture operates in that way.

It's performance, right? Think about basketball. I don't know if any of y'all watched the Clemson Carolina game or the Texas-Texas A&M; game or football in general, but we're in a season right now, if you like football, this is a great time to be watching TV.

It's not great if you're a Clemson fan, although you did get bailed out. Carolina fans are smiling and not saying much. They're hoping, fingers crossed, they're going to make it to the playoffs. You know, how do you make it to the playoffs?

You've got to play good. You've got to beat all these teams. You've got to have a great record.

You've got to perform it on the field. There's this sense that the only way I make it to the playoffs is I just have to play really well.

I have to be better than all these other teams and have to play extremely well. How are you going to win the national championship? Same thing. We're going to compete on the field. Whoever plays the best is going to win. Whoever's the best team and the best capability is going to win based on how you perform.

[22 : 51] You know, isn't that the way the world operates? My daughter swam in high school. And the only way to make it to the state meet is to make a time threshold. If you're going to swim butterfly or you want to swim freestyle, if you don't get to this time, you don't get to go to state.

How do you get to go? By performing. By doing really well. Isn't that the way our culture is? How do you rise the corporate ladder?

You just do well. You show that you're competent and you are elevated into other positions. How do you become the national sales leader? Well, you are great salesman with great performance and great accomplishment.

And so as a result, you get opportunities to climb this ladder. It's all based on performance, right?

You know, God's kingdom is just the opposite.

You know, there's a false gospel that says this, and we're going to see here this false gospel. The false gospel says this, that as long as you work really, really hard, as long as you're really, really good, then you can earn your way into heaven.

[24 : 02] You can impress God. You know, God's kingdom is not that way. Paul says of Christians that we put no confidence in the flesh.

In other words, he's saying that there's no amount of good deeds that we can do that's going to earn our way into heaven. There's no amount of goodness or good deeds that we can do that is going to earn the favor of God.

So he shares a story of his life. Really, he summarizes a perspective he used to have. He used to have and he was running hard after God but not according to knowledge.

He was running hard after God but it wasn't according to truth. Let me share what I'm talking about here. It says, we put no confidence in the flesh though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh.

Let me tell you why. If anybody's going to get into heaven, I'm the guy. Paul would say this. He says, listen, as far as pedigree, as far as being in the right family and the right town and the right nation and the, man, I had it.

[25 : 20] I was from the Jewish nation. So he's speaking to a Gentile church and he says, listen, you know, there's those that believe as long as you're children of Abraham then you're good.

That you're going to end up in heaven. Abraham's the one that God gave this promise to and since I'm a child of Abraham, I'm good to go. Listen, Paul says this, I was circumcised the eighth day of the tribe of Benjamin.

I was a true Hebrew. I was a true child of Abraham. I did everything that I was supposed to do.

I was circumcised on the eighth day like the Old Testament says. Man, I am set. I'm good. And matter of fact, not only was I born into the right nation, but listen to my accomplishments.

Listen to how I was outpacing all my peers on my performance. Listen, as to the law, that is the Old Testament law, I was a Pharisee.

[26 : 20] You know that Pharisee is the most strict sect of the Jewish nation? Much more so than the Sadducees and some of these others. I was a part of the strictest sect in our religion, our Jewish faith.

I was a Pharisee. Check the box. As to zeal, let me just tell you, I was so passionate for God that I was chasing after Him.

I was, all these other fates, these people that call themselves Christians, that dishonor God in the mind of Paul, I was chasing them to arrest them and put them in jail or put them to death.

I was zealous for God. I was serving God in that way as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Paul is saying, listen, according to the flesh, if this is the way things work, I was in good shape.

But you know what he says? This is not the thing, the way things work in God's kingdom. It's not based on accomplishment. It's not based on pedigree or performance. Matter of fact, if we look down to verse 9, he talked about a righteousness of my own that comes from the law.

[27 : 40] You know, the false gospel is this. It's a gospel based on performance. A gospel based on performance. And you know the result of good performance is self-righteousness.

Do you think that Paul gained genuine righteousness in the eyes of God because of his great zeal and his great passion because of his pedigree being born?

Not at all. Matter of fact, Paul says here, he says, listen, I was dead wrong. And if we look at chapter 9 of Acts and the whole encounter where Christ encountered him on the road to Damascus, he says this of Paul, Paul who's passionately chasing hard after God in his own self-righteous way, he meets Christ on the road to Damascus and Christ says this, Paul, Paul, why are you persecuting me?

Paul's like, who are you? What do you mean I'm persecuting you? I'm doing everything I can possibly do to honor you and to serve you and to love you and be faithful to you.

I'm working hard for you. What do you mean you're saying I'm persecuting you? The kingdom of God is an upside-down kingdom.

[29 : 02] The kingdom is not based on performance. It's based on grace. Here's the difference in these two gospels Paul is talking about. It's the gospel of works based on performance and it's the gospel of grace based on faith.

Paul says, listen, I put no confidence in the flesh, Christian. If I couldn't earn it, earn my salvation based on the flesh, I can't earn God's favor based on the flesh.

I put no confidence in the flesh. The false gospel says work harder, work harder, work harder, work harder, and God will receive you. That's dead wrong. It's not biblical. Paul says it this way.

If we look down in verse 9 again, it says, no, that's the beginning of the sentence. Let's go back up to 7. Whatever was gain, whatever gain I had, whatever I'd accomplished, 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've suffered the loss of all things and I count them as rubbish.

[30 : 11] Paul, what are you talking about? Paul would say, every credential that I just gave you that I thought was going to earn me favor in the eyes of God, that I thought was for the kingdom of God, I now see as nothing.

It's self-made righteousness. It's me patting myself on the back and saying, look what I've done for you, God. And Paul says, God, open my eyes to see the lie that I was believing.

That I could earn God's favor by what I do. That I could become righteous because of all my good works. Paul says, I now see it for what it really is.

It's absolute garbage. There's nothing good in it. There's no value to it. It deserves to be on the dung pile.

It is absolutely less than trash. It has no place in the kingdom of God. It does not earn salvation. It does not earn the favor of God. Instead, there is this righteousness that comes from God.

[31 : 18] Do you see it? Verse 9. He said, I count all that as garbage, as rubbish, in order that I may be found in him.

I'll speak of that in a second. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from my own effort from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.

The righteousness from God that depends on faith. The righteousness that comes from God that depends on faith.

Paul, what are you talking about? Do you know that on your own you'll never be righteous in the eyes of God? Do you know that all of our works, all of our effort, all of our performance in the eyes of God is like filthy rags?

Based on what we do and our effort, we'll never come to Christ. The only way that we will be in him, the only way that we will be united with him, the only way we will be in relationship to God is through Christ.

[32 : 28] It's through the sacrifice of Christ and his willingness to die in our place on a cross. You know what the result of that is?

When we understand the reason Christ died on the cross, when we understand that he died in our place that we might be born again, that we might have spiritual life, not only that, but the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us.

It's as if God takes the righteousness of Christ, his pure life, and he takes it and he gives it to me and he causes me to be righteous, not because of what I've done, but because of what Christ has done.

It's this great exchange where he would cause me to be righteous in his eyes based on what Christ has done. He takes the righteousness of Christ and puts it on my account and now Paul says this, he says, yes, we are made righteous, but this righteousness is not from us and our effort.

This righteousness is from God and the means by which we are granted this righteousness, this relationship is through faith. notice a beautiful result of faith.

[33 : 47] Verse 10, that I may know him, that I may know him. Let me ask this church for any of you who are here this morning that maybe don't know Christ. Maybe there's someone here that would say, I'm investigating the claims, I'm listening to the scripture, to the preaching, I'm reading, I don't know that I really understand yet what this whole thing is about.

You know, Paul says here, and he says that righteousness from God depends on faith. What faith? faith that Christ lived a life in our place and that he died on the cross, we deserve to die because of our sin, in our place and that God is willing to forgive us of our sins and give us the righteousness of God and give us a relationship that we would be found in Christ.

Children through faith in Christ. I wonder how much confidence we put in the flesh.

I wonder if we've come to really know him in that way to recognize that on my own I can never do enough on my own I am not truly righteous that the only righteousness is found through Christ by faith.

Let's pray. Father, Father, thank you that you would provide a way that we can be forgiven not based on what we do but based on what Christ did.

[35 : 41] Father, thank you for the life of Christ that Father, he was willing to live a perfect, spotless life and die in our place that we might know you, that we might be in relationship with you.

So God, I give you thanks and I thank you for this truth in the scripture that the true gospel is based on faith. It's not based on performance. God, I thank you for your provision.

I thank you for your love. I thank you for your relationship. God, I just pray that the Father, if there's those here who do not know you in that way, Father, not yet born again, that Father, you would draw them to yourself.

I pray in your name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.