

## Philippians 3:1-11

### Verse 1:

--**Finally** is better translated *for the rest*. Paul is not ending the letter, he is moving on to a new theme.

--**my brethren, rejoice in the Lord**. . . Paul knows that they have much to be thankful for and that correctly rejoicing in the Lord will also keep them centered and safe. Rejoicing in the Lord is preventative medicine.

--If we are not rejoicing in the Lord, what are we rejoicing in? Too many Christians lack true joy because they are trying to find it in places Christ will never provide it.

--**For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe**. Paul is going to repeat warnings and truths that he has given before. He knows that doing so shouldn't be a burden.

--We all need reminders—we don't always need to hear something "new." An unchecked desire for novelty leads men and women into false teaching through ungodly speculation and fables.

--Like little children, God knows we need to hear things more than once and praise God that He is willing to repeat Himself!

**\*Jonah 3:1: Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time. . .\***

### Verse 2:

--The particular warning here—which is clear from the context—relates to the Judaizers who constantly followed Paul around adding the Jewish law to the gospel.

--He uses three direct descriptions to emphasize their twisted doctrines:

1) **Dogs**: Were considered unclean (**Mt. 7:6**) and was a negative term the Pharisees used for Gentiles.

2) **Evil workers**: Contrasts their message of works-based righteousness (**Gal. 2:21**) with the righteousness that is from God alone.

3) **The mutilation**: Paul is referring to circumcision but doesn't use the typical Greek word. He uses another word that refers to cutting something to pieces. He is directly attacking their overemphasis on circumcision (**Acts 15:1; Gal. 5:2**).

--It doesn't seem as if this false teaching had crept into the Philippian church yet, but Paul was constantly battling this message, and he knew it had a fleshly, cultural, and societal draw. It was more physically tangible, culturally uplifting, and societally safe.

**\*Galatians 6:12: As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.\***

--We may not be drawn into Jewish or Hebrew roots movements, but we do need to be warned about the other gospels out there today that look and sound better culturally and societally.

--In our day it is the “Gay” Christian gospel that focuses on outward acts of acceptance, live-and-let-live attitudes, and doesn’t require anyone to break family or societal bonds. God loving gay or lesbian or trans people just as they are—meaning with no need of repentance, new identity, or new life over sin—has a nice sound of spirituality that keeps one protected from the persecution of the cross of Christ.

### Verse 3:

--**For we are the circumcision.** . . . Paul is contrasting those who worship God from the life of the Spirit (**we**) Vs. the life of the flesh. He completes this contrast of worshipers with three distinctions of himself and the Philippians.

--Paul calls them **the circumcision** in the true and spiritual sense—they are circumcised in heart. Even in the OT it was clear that the physical act of circumcision needed the spiritual reality behind it to be what God wanted it to be. See: **Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 9:24-25; Ez. 44:9; Acts 7:51.**

**\*Romans 2:28-29: For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.\***

--NT worship requires spiritual inward reality before physical outward expression. Not the physical outward expression without spiritual inward reality.

--What does that look like?

1) **Who worship God in the Spirit:** We do not ask: *Is he a Jew? Is their flesh circumcised? Are they worshipping in Jerusalem at the Temple? Etc.*

**\*John 4:23-24: But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.\***

--Jesus took worship out of the hands of fleshly men and placed it into the realm of the Holy Spirit. God, as Spirit, must be worshiped in spirit and truth. This means two things:

-First, God demands we **must** worship Him in the Holy Spirit. **\*No worship is acceptable otherwise!\***

-Second, we **must not** demand any type of fleshly necessity to worship. Music and buildings and musicians are nice but never necessary.

2) **Rejoice in Christ Jesus:** The Greek for **rejoice** (*kauchaomai*) is a different word from what Paul uses in **1** and is most often translated in the NT *glory* or *boast*.

--Our boast and rejoicing ought to be in Christ and His work in us to will and to do. Our joy and rejoicing is in His work for us and not our works for Him.

**\*1 Corinthians 1:30-31: But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”\***

--It was Paul's joy to boast in Jesus Christ and not his own Jewish heritage or even his present Christian works. Why would I boast in my own righteousness when I have accepted the perfect righteousness of Christ? Same for wisdom, sanctification, power, truth, etc.

3) ***And have no confidence in the flesh:*** We are not trusting in ourselves, our own talents, works, or "potential." Nothing fleshly can create or nourish spiritual life.

***\*Galatians 6:14-15: But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.\****

#### **Verses 4-6:**

--Paul was not making this point out of jealousy, in fact, he was more Jewish than just about anyone! If it was about outward qualifications, Paul had every reason to glory.

-***circumcised the eight day:*** He was not a proselyte later in life but a part of the covenant right from birth (**Gen. 17:12; 21:4; Lev. 12:3; Lk. 2:21**).

-***of the stock of Israel:*** He was a national member of God's chosen people.

-***of the tribe of Benjamin:*** He could trace family origins to a notable tribe.

-***a Hebrew of the Hebrews:*** Both his parents had Jewish heritage. Basically, a summation of the previous points put together.

-***concerning the law, a Pharisee:*** He was a part of their most respected religious Jewish society (**Acts 23:6; 26:5**).

-***concerning zeal, persecuting the church:*** He was no nominal Jew. He lived out his beliefs to the fullest extent (**Acts 9:1-2; 22:1-5; 26:9-15**).

-***concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless:*** At least outwardly.

#### **Verse 7:**

--***But*** . . . changes the whole course of his boasting. All his former assets were now considered liabilities. The Greek tenses imply that in that judgment he persisted.

--The Greek word for ***gain*** is the same that Paul uses in **1:21: *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.***

--Instead, Paul now counts all of those things as ***loss***. The Greek for ***loss*** (*zemia*) is an interesting word used only here in **7-8** and in **Acts 27:10+21** in the account of Paul's warning about ***disaster and loss*** when sailing at the wrong time.

--Why? ***For Christ!*** All former gains are no longer of any value when it comes to knowing Jesus Christ. Everything in his life—his very life itself—is now displaced by Jesus Christ.

#### **Verse 8:**

--Here Paul doubles down on and expands on what he just declared.

--***Yet indeed I also count all things loss.*** . . . No longer just the privileges of his Jewish heritage. Nothing mattered but Jesus Christ. Jesus was his exceeding great reward, so counting ***all things*** as nothing was not difficult. He had all things in One.

--***for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.*** . . . You will notice Paul's speech has shifted from the past tense in **7** to the present in **8**. This is now some thirty years after his conversion and the ledger has not changed. If anything, his losses seem smaller and his gains larger!

--The Greek word for ***excellence*** (*hyperecho*) is the same word he uses in **4:7** for ***the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding.***

--Paul found something of surpassing excellence in—***the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord!*** This is relationship and not religion. Paul had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. \*Not cerebral or nominal or cultural Christianity!\*

--Walking with God. Not knowing about God. He described his Christian life saying: ***the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.***

--Can you imagine not knowing Jesus Christ or His love for you? Can you imagine not knowing that you can walk with God day by day? Can you imagine living without this surpassing excellence?! It would not be living at all.

--That is why Paul adds: ***for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish.*** . . . This is no pity party! Paul is not speaking as someone taking bigtime losses or reluctantly accepting a tax write-off because he made a bad investment.

--The Greek word for ***rubbish*** (*skybalon*) is used only here in the NT. It described anything trashy enough to be thrown to unclean street dogs or the refuse from them (Why some translate it *dung*).

--Why all of this? ***That I may gain Christ.***

--The choice was Paul's old gains without Christ, or the loss of them for Christ. In his estimation, it was not a hard decision! Paul was winning big! Thirty years later, he still felt exactly the same. He still had an unquenched hunger and thirst to know Him more.

--What would we surrender to gain the knowledge of Christ? What would we give up to have walked with Him in the days of His flesh? We all sacrifice willingly for whatever we esteem of surpassing worth—especially relationships we desire.

**Verse 9:**

--***And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ.*** . . . When it came to righteous judgment from God's perspective, Paul wanted to be found in Jesus Christ through faith.

--To be **found** has the idea of being weighed or judged. The prophetic word to Belshazzar was: ***You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting (Dan. 5:27)***, but Pilate's declaration of Christ was: ***I find no fault in this Man (Lk. 23:4)***.

--Paul is taking off his fig leaves and accepting the righteous skins of another. ***\*Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.\****

--If we are accepting the righteousness of another it must be received as a gift. The only righteousness of any value is Jesus Christ's!

***\*Romans 3:21-23: But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.\****

--You cannot hold both! Paul had to let go of his own righteousness to accept the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith. ***\*Confusion of works-based gospels like the Catholic gospel.\****

--The only righteousness that matters is ***the righteousness which is from God by faith.***

--Paul makes it clear the righteousness offered to sinful humanity in Jesus Christ is ***from God***. It has divine origins and comes from heaven to earth. It is the only righteousness provided by God that will be acceptable to Him!

***\*Romans 1:16-17: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."\****

***\*Govett (On Philippians): "The source of this righteousness is, not law, but God. The righteousness is not of my working, but of Christ's; but as I wear it, and it clothes me, it is mine. Its effect is God's glory, who devised it; fulfilled it, and applies it; and not my glory."\****

#### **Verse 10:**

--***that I may know Him***. . . there is no possible path for sinful men to walk in communion with a sinless God without this righteousness. In Jesus Christ, there is a way for man to be in just fellowship with God (***1 Jn. 1:7***).

--Is it your desire to know your Savior? To walk with God? There is a great beauty in getting to know someone. We often discover people are much different than we first imagined. Yet in Christ, we get to know the greatest Person, the Person who originated all personalities! The very source of personhood itself.

--You cannot get to know someone by one encounter. Nor can you know someone without spending time with them. ***\*Jesus called the disciples to be with Him\****

--Sometimes, we want God to tell us everything and decide beforehand if we want to get to know Him, but it doesn't work like that in any human relationship! There is an introduction, some draw, and then a decision to continue in that friendship or relationship.

--Knowing God is the very thing we were made for. Eternity is an eternal relationship.

**\*John 17:3: And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.\***

--Is our Christianity a technique to get things, a lifestyle, or our own way? Or is the goal of our Christianity to know and walk with God? What does the way we live say about the surpassing value of knowing God?

--Now Paul lists some areas of life he desires to know God more:

1) **the power of His resurrection:** Paul met a risen Christ on the road to Damascus! He also personally knew the power that raised Christ from the dead worked in him to give him a totally new life! \*If God's power can make a dead body rise it can make our live bodies do what pleases Him!\*

--This was often his prayer for other believers: **Eph. 1:19-20; 3:19-20; Col. 1:11.**

2) **the fellowship of His sufferings:** Paul wanted to know Jesus Christ more through the sufferings he faced in the path of love and obedience to God.

**\*1 Peter 2:21 + 4:13-14: For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps. . . But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceedingly joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.\***

--Paul experienced Jesus Christ most directly in some of his most trying times. This reality was a part of his teaching to early believers and his personal experience (**Acts 14:22; 2 Cor. 12:9-10; Phil. 1:29; Col. 1:24; etc.**).

3) **being conformed to His death:** To the Spirit of Christ's selfless death—**2:5-11**—so that he could walk in harmony and agreement with Jesus Christ.

**Verse 11:**

--**if by any means. . .** refers to something desirable but also difficult or hazardous as it is used in **Acts 27:12.**

--Jesus Christ is the firstfruits (**1 Cor. 15:20**), the beginning of the new creation and the coming harvest of those who will also rise out from among the dead (**1 Cor. 15:21-23**).

**\*Acts 26:23: That the Christ would suffer, that He would be first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.\***

--Paul will elaborate on this more at the end of this chapter.

*\*Hendrickson (Philippians): "Union with Christ implies that all of Christ's redemptive experiences are duplicated unredemptively in the believer. The Christian, accordingly, suffered with Christ (Rom. 8:17), was crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6), died with Him (Rom. 6:8; 2 Tim. 2:11), was buried with Him (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), made alive with Him (Col. 2:13), raised with Him (Col. 2:12; 3:1), made joint-heirs with him (Rom. 8:17), is glorified with him (Rom. 8:17), enthroned with Him (Col. 3:1; Rev. 20:4), and reigns with Him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4)."*\*