

LSB Philippians 3:1 - 11

1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

2 Beware of the dogs! Beware of the evil workers! Beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, 4 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God upon faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

We are studying Paul, who has given us a very intimate glimpse into his own heart and mind and reasonings. He is giving an apologetic argument of why judaism and more close to home, why the heresy that requires those who would want to become christians be required to become jews first before they can have Jesus and become christians is false and dangerous.

Any system that requires you to achieve or accomplish some merit in order to achieve any part of your salvation is from the pit of hell. Only two

religions, remember. The religion of human achievement and the religion of divine accomplishment.

And Paul has approached it from his own personal experience. There was no one ever more jewish than Paul, and after Jesus rescued Paul out of that works righteousness religion, Paul looks back and compares the two systems.

He adds up all the self achieved merits working to somehow please God, and he says, it's dung. It's zero value. Worth exactly nothing in the equation that ends up in a relationship with God.

Then he speaks of the value of a relationship with God of very God, purchased outside of anything he did or ever can do, and rejoices in the overwhelming value of gaining Christ. Knowing Christ.

The judaizers are selling jewishness. Paul says, I left jewishness, on a level that no one else can ever achieve, on the trash heap when I gained Jesus. As far as knowing God intimately and relationally the self righteousness of jewish phariseeism was of no value. At all. Dung. Waste.

The problem is sin. Self righteousness can work to perhaps reduce the frequency and problem of sin, but it ultimately can't remove it. Past sin remains on the books. And future sin is inevitable with Adams fallen seed. We are sinners. Period. Born condemned.

Jesus states the problem for us in the sermon on the mount. Matt. 5:48
Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

God's requirement is sinless perfection in order to be in His presence. We are born sinners. We are hopelessly bankrupt. Even if I could somehow achieve sinless perfection from this day forward somehow, one single sin in my past would still send me into the darkness of hell, separated from God for eternity.

In Exodus, God states two diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive truths that only He could ever negotiate.

32:33 “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

33:19 . . and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.”

34:6 Then Yahweh passed by in front of him and called out, “Yahweh, Yahweh God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

God says, I'll be gracious on who I'll be gracious. I'll be merciful on whom I'll be merciful. But I will by no means let the guilty go unpunished.

How are both of those truths possible! I'll show mercy and forgive, but every sin must be atoned for in punishment. How? How do those mutually exclusive truths come together.

Well, Paul discovered the answer. My sin must be atoned for in real actual punishment of death by a sinless substitute who atones for my sins in my place. And that sinless substitute must give me His righteousness.

This is the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Jesus takes my sin to the cross and dies in my place, and He in turn gives to my account, His righteousness.

Why would I believe that actually happened? Because of the resurrection from the dead. Jesus rose on the third day and gives that victory over death to all those who He has atoned for and forgiven their sins.

That is what Paul is arguing here. Jewishness (or any other brand of human achieved self righteousness) never purchases eternal life and forgiveness of sins for anyone.

Paul says, I had the Jewishness. More than anyone else perhaps in the world. But it didn't accomplish a relationship with God through forgiveness of sin and a perfect righteousness. Jesus did that. So I walked away from all of the human achievements. All of the merits of works righteousness. I traded all of that and never looked back, in order to have Jesus.

We ended last week, on purpose I might add, in verse 8 where Paul says, of his transaction, *that I might gain Christ*. I walked away from the religion of human achievement so that I might gain Christ. Human effort could never do that. Faith in His completed work in my place on the cross did.

He left Judaism and human achievement and human self righteousness behind in order that he might have Christ and His righteousness instead. We talked about that last week also. Human achievement and divine accomplishment are mutually exclusive. You choose one. You can't have both.

Why? Because human achievement falls short of the goal. It doesn't remove sins. It has no way to atone for previous or future sins. It doesn't solve the problem. Instead it supplies pride to those who engage in it. They achieve their own self righteousness which causes pride, which is added to all of their other sins.

We could argue that there may be nothing more offensive to God than to think you are acceptable to Him through your own self efforts. Jesus illustrates this truth for us in one of the parables.

In Matthew 22 we have the rather complex parable of the wedding feast. Lots of stuff going on in that multi leveled parable, but one component is that some who finally end up at the feast are not dressed in the wedding attire necessary. And the Father says, how did you get in here? Without wedding attire? And those folks have no answer. And they are cast, bound hand and foot, into outer darkness.

You say, well, what is the proper wedding attire. It shows up for us again in Revelation 19:7 *Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him the glory. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. 8 She was **given** clothing of fine linen, bright and pure.*” For the fine linen she wears is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then the angel told me to write, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

clothing of fine linen, bright and pure are given to the bride.

That's what we're going to see Paul define for us in our passage this morning. He says, I left Jewish self righteousness on the garbage heap in order to have . . . Christ. That I may gain Christ.

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ

Then listen to what Paul says next, because without what he describes here, you'll be at the wedding and the Father will say, How did you get in here with filthy soiled rags on. Out. Get him out of here.

*that I may gain Christ 9 and be **found in Him**, not having a righteousness of my own which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God upon faith,*

Paul loves the term "in Him". He uses it over and over, many times. We are in Christ. And it's the same idea as clothing. Covering. My wedding garments are that I am clothed with Christ. I am in Him. My life is hidden with Christ, in God. I am clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

Someone has well said, you can sum up all of Paul's theology in two words.

In Christ. He repeats that in some form or another 164 times. It is the key to understanding Paul, and understanding the mechanics of your own salvation.

So Paul says, I want to be "found" in Him. It's almost as if Paul is picturing himself at the wedding feast, and the Father walks up, and Paul is clothed in Jesus righteousness. Fine linen, bright and clean.

Paul says I want to be found, clothed in a righteousness, not my own. It's the righteousness of someone who is hidden in Christ. Perfect and spotless. Jesus sinless righteousness, accounted to me. Those are the wedding garments I want to be found in.

There is a most interesting word used in verse 9. Paul says he wants to be found in Him. That word to be found is interesting. It is a courtroom word.

In a courtroom you have discovery and evidence and examination in order to what? Ultimately you have a finding. A jury of your peers finds you . . . guilty, or innocent or not liable, or whatever it might be. That's the exact idea that Paul is presenting.

Hebrews 9:27 is in Paul's idea here. *27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:*

A judgement day is coming. A day of reckoning with our maker, creator, owner, Lord. A day in which the Creator's question will be, did you glorify me perfectly with perfect holiness and righteousness. It will be a courtroom with a judge who will make a finding.

The requirement of an image bearer is perfect holiness and righteousness that glorifies the Creator, at all times, and forever. How will you be found?

That gives a whole new conceptual meaning to what Paul says in verse 9. Paul's talking about judgement day and the verdict based upon God's finding. And Paul says;

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God upon faith,

This is so profoundly simple that people get lost trying to find something more complicated. This isn't hard enough, God, that I can feel some accomplishment and pride in any of it. A child could do this. A fool could accomplish this. I need it to be harder. This can't possibly be all there is to it! Simple faith in what someone else accomplished??

Jesus, born of a virgin, no human father, not from Adam's fallen seed, lived a sinless life, was holy and acceptable and pleasing in every way to His heavenly Father, went to the cross, a sinless substitute, took my sins upon Him, died in my place, paid my debt in full.

Why would I believe any of that? Because He rose from the dead and ascended back into heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, as God the Son. The resurrection is the proof that He accomplished my forgiveness.

On my day in court, with God, I want to be hidden so far inside Christ that all the Judge of the earth will be able to see or find is the sinless perfection of Jesus given to me. I want God to look upon me and say what He said from heaven about Jesus. This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. That's what He will say about any one who is clothed with Christ. Or as Paul puts it; In Christ. I just can't say it any better than Paul did;

*9 and be found **in Him**, not having a righteousness of my own which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God upon faith*

You know, if Paul had stopped right there it would be enough to ponder and sing glory to God forever, but he doesn't.

Because once the sin problem is removed, as far as the east is from the west, according to the Psalmist, the moment I understood and believed, a transformation happened that changed everything. Now. From that moment on, sins removed, I became a new creature.

My spirit was quickened from death to life. And my living spirit began a very real very personal very intimate friendship love relationship with Christ, with God, through the indwelling Holy Spirit. I walk daily with the trinitarian God. And that's exactly where Paul goes next.

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul made the transaction. He sold everything in order to have Christ. Just like the treasure in the field guy or the pearl of great price guy. Paul cashed in everything he had, in order to have Jesus.

And he reports back, it was worth it. Not only worth it, but in comparison, the worldly life I gave up in order to have Him, the stuff I walked away from was worthless in comparison to having Jesus.

So what happens after you make that transaction. What's next? Do you just float along on a christian cloud with a harp until Jesus calls you home? Is being a christian boring?

Paul just walked away from everything he ever possessed in this world in order to have Jesus. But what's next? That's a leap of faith. You just left everything you ever knew, ever achieved, all that ever had value to your previous life behind. What's next? Where do you go now that everything you built your life on is gone?

In verse 10, Paul gives us a glimpse into a life that expanded further and further into Jesus. Being "in Christ" for Paul just kept expanding and expanding deeper and deeper.

Sort of like the history of the invention of the telescope. Galileo put some glasses together and men looked out into the stars and said, Oh my, there's a lot more out there than we ever knew from what the naked eye could see.

Then that expanded to mountain top observatories 100+ years ago and those scientists said wow, there's so much more out there than Galileo ever saw. And now we have the Hubble telescope out in space sending back images and we're like, wow, our little galaxy that those guys saw is just one in uncountable billions more that go on forever.

And the book that we had all along says, all of it is just a barrier between where we are and where God's heaven is, and one day, He will roll it up like a scroll. Science didn't make God smaller, it made God more infinite than my little pea brain could ever comprehend.

Those advances into more and more depth illustrate what Paul unfolds for us in a few brief words in verse 10, about the depths of a relationship with the God who spoke all of the galaxies into being.

If we were to outline verse 10, and that's about all we can probably do, we could break it down this way into 3 phases of depth of knowing Christ. Depth of a life of walking with Him.

- Knowing Him
- Knowing His Power
- Knowing His Sufferings

Those are all expansions further into Him. And if we looked at the apostle John's epistles he speaks of the same phases or expansiveness. But John calls the phases little children, young men, and fathers. It's worth a quick

reminder. First John chapter 2;

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you have known Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you have known the Father. 14 I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Different levels of being IN Christ. Babies. Youth with it's strength. Aged. The exact same idea of what Paul unfolds for us in verse 10.

We begin in this deal just knowing Him.

I can't help comparing what Paul's describing here with the similarities of a long successful marriage.

You begin with the excitement of being with someone you're in love with. That's the only thing you can think about. It's all consuming. You just want to be with that person.

Next phase. You're married and the former things are all still true, but you're crazy working together in this thing every day trying to keep up with everything there is to do building a life together. Raising kids. Making payments. Work work work. But the love drives you. It's what you do.

Then finally, after 50 years you catch each other looking at each other and saying, you better not die first and leave me alone. In Pam's case, leave me alone with your mess.

The love never left, it just is there in different phases.

I hope that sort of helps you understand what Paul unfolds here in verse 10.

Being IN Christ is like a long marriage, to Him, that enjoys different phases of the love relationship.

First is the excitement. I KNOW God. My sins are forgiven and God has adopted me and made me His friend! That's astonishing just by itself! Amazing! How is that possible. But it is! And it's happened!

Next is the power of His resurrection phase. This, in a way, corresponds to the long years of hard work in a marriage, building something together. And I have to say, I wish more christians were actually in this phase.

It turns out that the combination of you and Jesus has absolutely astonishing capabilities. In Paul's case, if we look at the history of what we know about Paul, he tells us he spent 3 years in the honeymoon phase in Arabia. He tells us that in Galatians 1.

Then he went for a walk with Jesus from Antioch to Rome and the power of Jesus together with Paul turned the whole world upside down. We're at the tail end of so called western civilization that was caused by the combined power of Jesus resurrection and this fellow Paul. Changed the whole known world so significantly that we're still enjoying the blessings.

Most of us never begin to even flex those muscles. When we combine our efforts with Jesus power in something He has designed to accomplish, miracles happen. That's what Paul refers to when he says, he not only wants to know Jesus, but he wants to know Him with power.

I'm no Paul, that's painfully obvious to everyone, but I can still tell you, that when I feel God at work accomplishing something that pleases Him, and I get to be a part of it, that's a rush. Getting to be any tiny part in what the power of God is accomplishing, in this world, is always a rush.

And then, finally, there's a third telescoping phase which I can only speak about in theory. The fellowship of His suffering.

If you and Jesus are out in the world actually making waves, it gets noticed.

Don't forget who the ruler of this world is. Satan is the current landlord. And if you and Jesus show up like enemy combatants gaining territory in his world, taking captives for Jesus, causing people that belonged to him to be called out of his world and into the kingdom of God, there's going to be some pushback.

Here's what I think Paul would tell you. When you get beat up and left for dead at the edge of town, I think Paul experienced the pleasures of having Jesus, in those trying situations, at a level most of us haven't experienced.

It's a rush when you're in the fight and the devil's losing ground because the power of Jesus is taking it away from him. But the sympathies and presence of the saviour when you get beat up, for Him, is a level of fellowship beyond even the rush of seeing His powers in the battle.

Because really, the world isn't mad at Paul. They could care less about Paul. The world is furious at Jesus, and they can't get at Him, so they beat up Paul instead.

Jesus speaks of this phenomenon right at the beginning in His manifesto on the mountain. Matthew 5;

10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

There is a depth of sympathy and fellowship with the Saviour that is greater, when you're getting beat up, because they can't get at Him. That's a real thing. We read about it. Few of us are in at this level. Now. We don't know what the future will hold.

We all felt like we might find out sooner than later as secularism was gaining ground at a rate that was frightening for some of us. Like him or hate him, it seems like our current president is holding some of the secularism that would like to scratch our eyes out at bay. Temporarily?

The disciples first experienced the fellowship of His sufferings in Acts chapter 5. Early on. Look carefully at the immediate result of that little first fruits of suffering for Jesus name;

*40 So they followed his advice. And after calling the apostles in and beating them, they commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. 41 **So they went on their way from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for the Name.** 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*

This is right after pentecost as Jesus is adding the first thousands of believers to His church. It's all brand new. And the chief priests order the apostles not to speak in this name! But the apostles tell them we must obey God and not men. And it was Gamaliel, the great teacher who tempered the chief priests from doing worse to these men. He basically said, let them go and if it's nothing it will fizzle out on it's own.

Pinch yourselves. Here we are. It didn't fizzle. These apostles of the church were the first to experience the fellowship of Jesus in His sufferings as they receive these beatings and defy the orders of men to not preach.

In Paul's case, there is a final element to this greatest depth of fellowship with the Saviour, the fellowship in suffering for His name, and that was in Paul's case it was already apparent that Paul would eventually lose his life in martyrdom for that same Saviour.

And Paul sort of says, I can't wait.

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Most of us can't imagine what or how we might respond to a challenge with this world that would result in serious persecution. I talk real big in the safety of these 4 walls.

We bloviate, like Peter, Lord, Lord, I'm ready to die for you . . . and then some little slave girl exposes that your backbone is made out of gummy bears.

Paul was at the point, in the fellowship of his sufferings, that he was looking forward to that final leap into eternal fellowship, face to face. Paul's like, what are you boys waiting for. Bring it. Because in that moment that you do, I'll be experiencing the resurrection from the dead, where I see Him who I followed since the first time I met Him on the road to Damascus.

Well, if the christian walk is a natural progression. A honeymoon of blissful companionship and growing love and friendship, and then a long successful happy working together in a life together, and finally the old age of succussfully weathering all of the storms together and then perhaps, you can see your exit, which is actually an entrance you're longing for;

Where are you in that? Paul didn't lay that out as if it was only normative for him. Paul was living an example life for the Philippians and by extension, us in 2025 to emulate and copy.

So, where are you in this deal with Jesus. Do you know Him? Have you recognized that having Him is worth more than anything this world can begin to offer? Would you gladly pay any cost required in order to have HIM?

Has that knowing progressed to seeing His power accomplishing fruit through your life and witness? Are you in the long slugging it out but you wouldn't have it any other way part?

Is anyone here in the phase John referred to as fathers. Elders. Men who have been proven faithful in successful battle that can come along side others and help them see and understand this whole deal?

Friendship with Jesus is a relationship that lasts through many expanding phases and just gets better and better until the day He calls us home and we see His face for the first time.