



Series: Philippians: Growing in Christ

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Passage: Philippians 3:1-11

Title: I'm Free From Me

Juneteenth & Father's Day

- Echoes of eternity

Intro

Philippians 3. Make your way there. We've got some real work to do today. Let's remember the situation because it's super important today. The apostle Paul is in a Roman prison. A Roman first century prison. Because he was preaching the gospel. And what we saw a couple of weeks ago - some of his old friends who he THOUGHT were brothers in Christ are trying to keep him in this prison so they can build their own platform. AND YET...our guy Paul is brimming with joy as he writes to the Philippians.

And what we are going to get into today - is WHY is Paul joyful when his life isn't great? Because this is not what many of us would consider a great situation. He got the "go to jail" card in the Monopoly of life a few times now. And today we are going to hear the deep reason why Paul is joyful when his circumstances and future outlook on life is so much worse than his resume deserves. Hear that. He has an AWESOME resume yet a pretty rough life. And there is something that keeps him joyful.

And I'm telling you, we need this. We need to embrace a Christianity that can carry us through suffering, AND can defeat that thing in our heart that plagues our faith called entitlement. I've seen this to be a huge hole in our theology. When suffering comes our way what often happens is we get mad at God. And I'm not talking about that initial emotional reaction. The psalms make room for that. It's ok to cry out. I'm talking about that attitude where we settle into the perspective of our suffering that "God it's not fair that you would do this to me. Why would you let this happen to me? After all, look at what I've done for you." Christians will experience suffering. There is nothing in our faith that exempts us from suffering. We are still human. And some experience, some significant life discomfort that is either really intense OR really prolonged will come. And we can start to wonder whether "God is real." Because...a just God would know: don't I **deserve** better?



But the apostle Paul...he doesn't just say "oh it's gonna be ok." NO, he gives us an entirely new perspective. See, Paul is going to show us his resume here in chapter 3. The things that used to make him secure and happy. But then he's going to turn around and show us how he found something way better. Something that cannot be taken away. Something no amount of persecution or bad circumstance can shake.

So today we are going to tackle, head on, self-righteousness. What it is, why it is so toxic to your soul, and why Christ-righteousness is so much better. I'm so excited. This stuff Paul is talking about right here is the breakthrough so many need. Freedom from our own kingdom.

What is Self-righteousness?

1 In addition, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write to you again about this is no trouble for me and is a safeguard for you.

Whatever it is that Paul is about to say, he's glad to say it AGAIN. There's an old adage that when you are sick of saying it, your hearer is just starting to hear it. Well, whatever this is, and I'm contending it's the danger of self-righteousness, is so important Paul seems to indicate it is a good safety measure to

hear it AGAIN. Almost as if - when talking about our own pride - we may not hear everything we need to hear the first time. So maybe if you are sitting there thinking you've been in church before and you've heard sermons on a familiar topic...maybe YOU are exactly who God is speaking to today. Like the rest of us are aware of our pride and are locked in. But if you are like "yeah pride bad Jesus good yadayada" then YOU are the one who needs the safeguard. So congrats, God has a word for you today!

2 Watch out for the dogs, watch out for the evil workers, watch out for those who mutilate the flesh.

Dogs, Evil Workers, mutilate the flesh - we can assume these are all the same and he is repeating for emphasis. And he is saying 3 times to watch out for these. These who mutilate the flesh are evil and they are among you. What is he talking about? Verse 3 gives the clue.

3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh—

We are the circumcision. Strange thing to say UNLESS it is a contrast. See those who mutilate the flesh - Paul's talking about circumcision. And what he's getting at is this new church has some people from some different backgrounds in it. Some of them are Jews and some gentiles. The Jews would have been



circumcised as children, according to God's law, because God had commanded the Jews to be circumcised as a sign they were his people. Well, now they've become Christians. But then there are gentiles who were NOT circumcised. And the Jewish Christians seem to be telling the Gentile Christians that unless they get circumcised they aren't true Christians. Kind of like Christians today who say unless you dress or act or vote a certain way you can't be Christian.

But Paul says no no WE are the circumcision. And the "we" is the ones who worship by the Spirit of God and who boast in Jesus, not in a circumcision. In fact, we put NO confidence in that sign because that's a sign we have control of. And therefore we could take pride in accomplishing it.

At its core this is what self righteousness is: Confidence in what we can do. And when I say confidence I mean security and status. **Self righteousness is whatever it is about us that we think makes us acceptable and valuable.** It's our resume. In fact the very next thing Paul does is show us his resume. What his self-righteousness has earned him.

4 although I have reasons for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding

the law, a Pharisee; 6 regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.

See this is great for the church. This is Paul saying those of you who are bragging about your circumcision - which is super weird anyway - I got you beat. I have more bragging rights than ANY of you.... if this did make us acceptable and valuable... I'm at the top of this mountain. You are circumcised... well I was circumcised on the 8th day. And we all know that is THE DAY. See, being a Pharisee was a GOOD thing in their day and Paul is saying I'm the best at being Jewish.

- College suitemate John Bowman - Super Jew. SuperJew T-shirt.

Paul was the best Jew. And that's exactly what these Jewish believers needed to hear. Because they are trying to PROVE themselves...trying to find their righteousness through their resume. And we all do this. We claw and claw to be accepted and counted as valuable. Whatever it is that enables you to look in the mirror and feel good about yourself - THAT is your self-righteousness.

Moms - trying to feel like I'm successful. Compare yourself to other moms. Gotta be better. Gotta get my kid speaking 3 languages, eating vegan, doing advanced calculus with their little puff snack things. All while looking so put together.



Security in your performance, status as a successful mom. And DON'T tell me you don't care what other people think. You care DEEPLY what SOMEBODY thinks.

I could talk about everyone. Talk about Pastors for a second. We try to find security and status in how much people NOTICE our success. We don't want to say it because we also crave praise for our humility. Because we are the WORST. We are looking for security and status. I want my job to be secure and everyone to praise me for being so good and humble. I know. We are awful. And so are you. Ha!

To find where you are putting your righteousness - just think about the things you get criticized for that cut the deepest. Maybe even cause you to panic. When you're younger it's often your career dreams or marriage dreams. Like being scared of not finding the right person or right job. So people affirming you is super important in these areas - and doors closing in this area are really scary. Older you get you start thinking about financial security and family stability. A stable family makes you feel acceptable and valuable, but it's the same thing underneath. The way my old pastor used to say it is the "most

fundamental human need is for righteousness, and all of us find it somewhere."¹

7 But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ

Paul says all of that...all of that resume stuff. All of the things that give me righteousness. He says these things are two things to him now that he has found Christ. They are loss and they are dung. Let's start with dung.

Now the Greek word for dung is scubala. Which is just an awesome word isn't it? Scubala. The proper translation for scubala is...dung! So if you have a translation that tried to clean it up...well, you can't clean up scubala. It is what it is. Paul wanted it that way to emphasize a point.

He considers his resume a big pile of horse scubala - completely worthless - compared to the surpassing value of

¹ Greear, JD. "The Resume." 7 December 2008, The Summit Church, Durham, NC. Sunday Sermon.
<https://summitchurch.com/message/the-resume>



knowing Jesus. The resume of righteousness now just a stinky pile of scubala. What a word to us who put degrees on our wall and trophies on shelves and constantly self promote what we've done and this and that. Are we willing to count all the things we've found our righteousness in as scubala? And you say, "But Spence, aren't my kids, my job, etc.. God's blessings?" That's right. They are to be enjoyed and stewarded as gifts, not repurposed into sources of value and security for you.

But Paul's OTHER thing he says about that resume stuff goes deeper. I told you there were 2 things. He calls them scubala. But he also says:

7 But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ.

I have considered to be a loss. And here I think is the deep water of the gospel to dive further down into. Paul didn't just say the things he used to find righteousness in he counts as worthless. He did. But then he went further. He said he had to count these things as a loss. In other words they weren't just of worthless value, they were actually something he had to reclassify. They used to be a positive value for building his self-righteousness. But now he's realized that these accomplishments on his resume were somehow harming him and he'd be better off without them.

Here's why: They were fueling his pride... his sense of self worth... and therefore he didn't really NEED Jesus. *"See it is our sense of superiority that works righteousness causes you to feel that keeps us from knowing our need for Christ and running to him. It is our poverty that enables us to receive the riches of Christ."*²

Parable of Pharisee and Tax Collector: Luke 18.9-14

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else: **10** "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11** The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself: 'God, I thank you that I'm not like other people — greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.'

13 "But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner!' **14** I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." -- Luke 18:9-14 (CSB)

² Greear, JD. "The Resume." 7 December 2008, The Summit Church, Durham, NC. Sunday Sermon. <https://summitchurch.com/message/the-resume>



See here's the thing - The reason self-righteousness is so toxic to your soul, so dangerous to really knowing God - **The very things making you feel secure and happy are likely the very things that keep you from true security and happiness in Christ.**

- Ex: the security your wealth brings - keeps you from feeling like you need to depend on Jesus. Is wealth bad? No. But can it become your sense of security instead of Jesus? ABSOLUTELY. That's why Jesus is so big on generosity. Because otherwise you'll buy the lie that wealth = security.
- Morality - Your do Goodery will make you think you aren't "that bad of a person." Which will make you think - why do I really need Jesus anyway? Yet scripture says the wages of sin, even one sin, is death.

See what Paul is getting at is the very things that used to bring him the GAIN of self-righteousness are now not just scubala... they are his enemies! He's got to count them as loss because these are the things that keep him from knowing Christ.

This is why **self**-righteousness IS our greatest enemy to keep us from knowing the more satisfying righteousness of Jesus. IF right now you feel like you don't really need Jesus...Cause you are "good," then humbly I want to encourage you to really look at the foundation of the house you are building. I think you'll

find it's on sand. You desperately need the better righteousness of Christ. Which leads to the best part of this. He counts his righteousness as Dung and as Loss and then shows us the VALUE of Christ-Righteousness. This is what God is inviting us all into today. What we get when we gain Christ:

9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ[a]—the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, 11 assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.

When I embrace Christ's righteousness

Verse 9 says "to be FOUND IN HIM" - I want you to hear some freedom in this. Because some of you are on a journey trying to find yourself. This is a common thing, there is no shame in it. People get involved in all kinds of hobbies and pursuits because life brings them to a point where they are looking in a mirror asking the question they didn't used to ask: "Who am I?" It's like you used to know but for whatever reason you aren't there anymore. And what Self-Righteousness says is... you gotta keep trying to justify yourself. Make yourself feel whole or complete or worthy or at peace.



Great news about the message of Christianity is You do not have to go find yourself. Instead, your identity can be found IN HIM. You don't have to find yourself and try to discover who you are, God finds you and shows you who you were always meant to be!

When I embrace Christ's righteousness

I don't find myself, I'm found in him (v.9)

What peace that brings. I've quoted that old hymn from James proctor to you so often. Lay your deadly doing down, down at Jesus' feet. And stand IN him and him alone, gloriously complete.

Second thing: In verse 9 - through faith in Christ we get GOD's righteousness. That's crazy to me. Because that is PERFECT righteousness. PERFECT VALUE. PERFECT ACCEPTANCE. PERFECT HOLINESS. The perfect righteousness of God is now yours.

When I embrace Christ's righteousness

I receive righteousness by faith not works (v.9)

I GET THE holy perfect righteousness of God by faith in what Christ did for me on the Cross. Because Jesus the perfect son of God transferred his righteousness to me. It's amazing. This is the gospel blessing.

- C.S. Lewis Great Exchange

SO good for the one striving and trying to be accepted and valued. Those past mistakes that you are trying to work so hard to make up for...so maybe you will be somebody again... you can rest. Receive righteousness by faith in what He has done for you.

Look at the next blessing of embracing Christ's righteousness:

You can KNOW HIM. Know Jesus. I say this every year when we study the Psalms. Our aim is not just to know ABOUT God, but to know God. Christianity isn't the study of God. It is the announcement of the possibility of a relationship WITH God. Where you can KNOW Him as a child knows his father. You can know Jesus Christ. He has sent His Holy Spirit so we can walk with him.

When I embrace Christ's righteousness

I can know Jesus (v.10)

There are so many views in the world on God right? There is the idea that God doesn't exist. It's not actually a popular theory anymore. Atheism is dying and religion is growing right now. Some view God as a force - that's like eastern mysticism and Star Wars. Some view God as a divine clockmaker. Kind of created the universe, got things started, and then has nothing to do with the world now. Others think he's just a divine law giver and score counter. Tallying up your rights and wrongs to



judge you at the end of your life. But what Christianity is saying is no, He's a father who IS all powerful and holy but is also accessible to you. How? Because He's granted you His righteousness first. So you are now holy like He is holy. And then He's granted you His presence. To walk with you every day and guide you. You can talk with Him in prayer. Know Him through His word. He's personal. This is the only religion like it.

And when you know Him, Paul says in verse 10 we can know the POWER of His resurrection. The POWER of His resurrection!? GUYS. This is AMAZING. There is this verse in Romans 8 that says the same power that raised Jesus from the grave is in us. Bringing us to life. And you have to understand this is why Christians believe there is always hope for us. When the world says "people don't change" we say true...unless they have Jesus. Because God brings dead people to life through Jesus. God changes your heart. God makes you a new creation.

**When I embrace Christ's righteousness
I can walk in resurrection power (v.10)**

So your addiction - CAN be broken not by willpower but by resurrection power. Your estranged relationship with your adult child - CAN be healed. Not by willpower but by resurrection power. Your bout with fear or lust or addiction - CAN be won. Not by willpower but by resurrection power. Your marriage that

is in a stalemate can be brought back to life! NOT by WILLPOWER but by resurrection power. Which is us getting down on our knees and saying GOD NOT BY MY RIGHTEOUSNESS. NOT FOR MY GLORY. BUT FOR YOUR GLORY AND BY YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. And we can watch God work.

And when I suffer...I can embrace it as fellowship with Christ himself.

**When I embrace Christ's righteousness
I can grow closer to him in suffering (v.10)**

We talked about this a couple of weeks ago. Sometimes you will suffer for being a Christian. And when you do, that is a holy opportunity to walk in the very footsteps of Christ. You draw closer to Him in suffering than in anything else. And whether your suffering is for your faith or just because the broken reality of this world brings about suffering...when you suffer you can draw closer to Christ because as we heard last week - HE SUFFERED. He willingly suffered for us so that we might be set free from eternal suffering apart from Him. So every moment here of pain and suffering is an opportunity to know Jesus. Christianity makes plenty of room for suffering. Scripture doesn't call it a faith "weakener" though. It's meant to be a faith strengthener. Because I don't drift further from Him I actually



am drawn closer to Him. I need Him more. What a gift Christ righteousness allows for us in suffering.

Finally Paul says in all of this

11 assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead

I love when Paul just talks real. And that's what this feels like. Like - ya'll I don't know how God is going to do it. Especially with a messed up person with my kind of baggage. Paul murdered christians after all. He complained plenty. He was far from perfect. And yet he says because his righteousness is found in Christ and not in his resume - because of that - he will REACH the resurrection from among the dead.

**When I embrace Christ's righteousness
My hope is in eternity with him (v.10)**

He's talking about eternal hope. The resurrection from among the dead - I'm not going to get into a new sermon here about exactly WHEN this happens. Instead I'll just tell you the hope in it. It's that one day we will arrive in the presence of Jesus where we will spend eternity. And that is better than anything in this short world. In fact Paul says my present sufferings aren't worthy to be COMPARED with the glory to be revealed in us.

We Christians believe because He's told us it will happen...that it will happen. In Christ, Eternity is our certainty.

WILL YOU LET JESUS BE YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Intentional closing time of prayer - OPEN HANDED

Scripture Memory: "... I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my lord." Philippians 3:8