Toby DeHay / General Adult

Philippians

Christ-Centered Worship

Phil 3:1-11

[PROPOSITION]

What we count as gain means nothing compared to gaining Christ.

Reject Confidence in Myself (1-6)

Treasure Christ (7-8)

Be Transformed by Christ (9-11)

Illustration:

During our 30-stadium MLB tour, we traveled to Canada. When we went shopping, we had several retailers who were more than happy to accept our U.S. dollars. But when we paid by credit card, we often

got a much better deal.

Our American money was real money. It had value. But just because a retailer was willing to accept it didn't mean it was our best option.

And that got me thinking about Philippians 3.

Paul had quite a résumé. He had the right religious background, the right ancestry, the right training, and an impressive record of religious achievement. If anyone had reasons to be confident in his credentials, Paul did.

But Paul discovered that what he had counted as gain couldn't give him what he needed most. His religious credentials couldn't make him righteous before God.

He needed something far more valuable. He needed Christ.

What we count as gain means nothing compared to gaining Christ.

Reject Confidence in Myself (1-6)

What do I need to reject?

(Central Statement to this section. On screen) **We must learn to stop trusting in ourselves and rest in what Christ has done for us, rather than in who we are, what we've accomplished, or how well we've lived.**

Rejoice in the Lord (1) *(Please place all 4 sub-points [rejoice, recognize, etc] on a slide together and highlight each as I go through them)*

Finally

Some theologians believe Paul is wrapping up his letter here and includes a *first* "finally" and then another in 4:8.

Others believe this word to be an idiom *(define overhead: Idiom: An **idiom** is a phrase whose meaning can't be figured out from the literal meanings of its individual words. "Spill the beans" means to reveal a secret, and "it's raining cats and dogs" means it's raining heavily.)*

Here, the word is translated as "to the rest," or "and so."

Here's how Moises Silva says it works as an idiom here:

Philippians Exegesis and Exposition
1Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. **[There is a matter, however, about which I must remind you.]**

Paul isn't taking an "aside," he is purposefully using wording that directs the reader/listener to place their confidence in Christ over ourselves.

The next phrase is important:

Rejoice in the Lord

Rejoicing in the Lord places our dependance upon Him.

Rejoicing sets our hearts toward righteousness and holiness.

“Rejoice in the Lord” sets up the hard words of warning and the truth that follows.

To write the same thing to you…

With this phrase comes this question: “When did Paul do this?

1. Maybe from Phil 1:27-30

Philippians 1:27–30 ESV
27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, **I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, 28 and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.** 29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, 30 engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

2. Maybe through Timothy

Philippians 2:22 ESV

22 But you know Timothy’s proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

3. Maybe through Epaphroditus

Philippians 2:25–26 ESV
25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, 26 for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.

Either way we can know two things:

1. Paul thought the issue to be significant enough to address repeatedly.

2. The issue persisted long enough for more communication.

Recognize False Confidence (2)

- Dogs, evildoers, and mutilators

Paul uses some colorful language here!

First, let me say he isn’t simply throwing out hurtful descriptive words like a schoolyard bully.

Sure, they are strong for effect, but there’s a purpose behind them.

Second, these words make a strong point to his audience and to those of whom he is speaking.

Dogs

To people in the east, dogs were generally seen as hated. Language around them was often derogatory.

Job 30:1 ESV
[1] “But now they laugh at me,

men who are younger than I,

whose fathers I would have disdained

to set with the dogs of my flock.

Those mocking Job aren’t from respectable families. “I won’t even put my dogs in their care!”

The ironic thing is that Jews often described Gentiles as “dogs.”

Dogs were known as scavengers.

Here, Paul applies it to the Jews-those adding works to salvation. These people are scavengers, preying on the weak, ill-informed, and theologically ungrounded members of the church.

Evildoers

This one’s funny because it points to the fact that these Jews were trying to orient salvation toward obedience to the law.

What they think is good is in fact evil.

Those who mutilate the flesh

They boasted in circumcision, but Paul says, “no, you are simply cutting.” There’s no value in circumcision apart from genuine faith in Jesus.

Let me give a pastoral exhortation here. Please don’t use verses like this one to beat up on others.

- It is so rare (within the body) that we would need to go around calling others out as Paul does here.

- These words are descriptive of a teaching/encouraging situation Paul is dealing with in a particular context.

- Taking them as prescriptive is dangerous, promotes disunity, and undermines the authority of the elders in a church to truly shepherd and care for the sheep.

- In other words, most issues are solved with prayer, open conversation, an open Bible, and a Spirit-empowered heart to listen.

As we move on to the second section, there’s another play on words that Paul employs here that his audience would have seen.

Rest Your Confidence in Christ (3-4)

Spiritually circumcised (3-4)

I don’t want to minimize circumcision completely.

Gen 17:9-14 describes it as serving as a physical marker of the

covenant identity of Jewish males.

Paul reminds these believers that they aren't marked by physical markers, but instead are spiritually circumcised in three ways:

- Worship by the Spirit of God.
- Glory in Christ Jesus.
- Confidence in Christ, not our flesh.

And with this, Paul uses verse four to set prove his point further.

He says, "I'm telling you truth. If the dogs and evildoers want to argue for confidence in the flesh, I'm more qualified!"

He's saying, "I'm better than you!"

Church, we need to remember something. Not only was the church at Philippi reading this, but so were the dogs, evildoers, and mutilators.

Imagine being on the receiving end of this rebuke.

Renounce Confidence in Your Credentials (5-6)

Heredity: What I Received (5a)

Paul lists four credentials that came from his birth, upbringing, and Jewish identity.

1. Circumcised on the eighth day — He followed the covenant requirement from infancy.

2. Of the people of Israel — He belonged to God's covenant people by birth.

3. Of the tribe of Benjamin — He could trace his ancestry to a distinguished tribe of Israel.

4. A Hebrew of Hebrews — He possessed a strong Hebrew identity and heritage.

Paul lists four things about his background, but he doesn't just toss them out in a random order. He arranges them like a sandwich.

The outside pieces are the two big claims:

- He was circumcised on the eighth day (he followed God's law from birth).

- He was a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (the most Hebrew you could be).

The inside pieces explain each one:

- He was from the people of Israel, which means he was no outsider or Gentile.

- He was from the tribe of Benjamin, which means he had a proud family line.

Each inside piece backs up the outside piece it belongs to. The first set shows he was truly part of God's people. The second set shows his heritage was the real thing.

Notice where the list ends: "Hebrew of Hebrews." Paul saves his

strongest credential for last, like building up to a big finish.

Achievement: What I Accomplished (vv. 5b–6)

Paul then adds three credentials based on his personal choices, efforts, and conduct.

When I was working in Kentucky encouraging churches to plant churches, I met a leader who introduced himself to me like this:

“Hi, my name is Dr. Timbo McChurchPlanter. I have two doctorates. One doctorate is in the field of church planting.”

What he was saying was, “I know more than you!”

1. Religious devotion — “as to the law, a Pharisee” (v. 5)

He belonged to a group known for its strict commitment to the law.

2. Religious zeal — “as to zeal, a persecutor of the church” (v. 6)

His commitment was so intense that he actively persecuted those he believed threatened Judaism.

3. Moral record — “as to righteousness under the law, blameless” (v. 6)

His outward conduct measured up to the standards of righteousness associated with the law.

The Point of Paul's Argument

Paul presents the strongest possible case for confidence in human

credentials. He had the right heritage, the right religious training, extraordinary zeal, and an exemplary outward record.

Yet these were precisely the things he would later count as loss because of Christ (vv. 7–8).

Transitional statement to point 2

No matter how impressive our religious background, accomplishments, or moral record may be, none of them is a reason to place our confidence in ourselves. Our confidence belongs in Christ alone.

Treasure Christ (7-8)

What do I need to treasure?

The previous section and verses easily show us how fruitless it is to place our trust in ourselves and this section points the way toward where our confidence is placed.

Paul is carefully explaining that believers need to stop trusting in what we can gain for ourselves and start treasuring the One who is worth more than everything else.

Christ is worth more than everything we could ever gain without Him.

Let's look at verses 7 and 8 for a few minutes and see what Paul says about treasuring Christ.

Philippians 3:7 ESV

7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Verses 7 and 8 provide the meat of Paul is saying in his warning to the Philippian church.

Stay away from the dogs, evildoers, mutilators, sure do that.

Don’t trust in yourself.

Paul takes a moment here to hammer this truth with his audience in three ways.

1. **He states it rather plainly.**

Philippians 3:7 ESV
7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

This likely refers to all that Paul had mentioned. His heredity. His achievement. All the gain Paul had through his birth and what he accomplished religiously and academically-counted as loss!

In your printed ESV Bible you may see a notation with a little tiny “a” in front of the word “whatever” in verse 7.

Luke 14:33 ESV
33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Jesus competes with nothing. He is Lord, or He is not. Paul isn’t saying things won’t come and try to compete with Jesus after you’re born again, he’s saying Jesus is so great, all the things gained by human means are ultimately worthless.

Paul states it plainly.

2. **He repeats himself, but more indepth.** (8a)

Philippians 3:8 ESV
[8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

The ESV translates the first word of verse 8 as indeed. Most other translations use:

- "What is more" or
- "More than that"

"More than that", I count EVERYTHING as loss!

Why? Because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord!

Notice the word choice here:

Christ | Jesus | Lord

He didn't simply say "Jesus," he purposely included the words for Messiah and King.

The Messiah Jesus is the culmination of the Law and Prophets!

John 1:45 ESV
[45] Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

3. **Everything is compared to RUBBISH.** (8b)

Philippians 3:8 ESV
8 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…

I love how Paul uses a strong and vivid word here to describe what the other strong words (dogs, evildoers, and mutilators) are after!

The language sounds like Is. 64:6

Isaiah 64:6 NKJV
6 But we are all like an unclean *thing,*

And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags;

We all fade as a leaf,

And our iniquities, like the wind,

Have taken us away.

Christ is worth more than everything we could ever gain without Him.

The question isn't whether you value Christ. The question is whether you value Him above everything else.

Be Transformed by Christ (9-11)

What does this treasure produce?

We are transformed by Christ when we know and live like changed people.

Those who have been born again.

Philippians 3:9 ESV
9 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—**

This is what the dogs, evildoers, and mutilators were missing!

Philippians 3:9 ESV
righteousness from God that depends on faith

Paul ties the bow in verse 9. We reject confidence in ourselves, in a system, a lineage, or our academic pedigree, and place it in the finished work of Christ.

Listen to what that does for the believer:

Philippians 3:10–11 ESV
10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Paul connects the power of Christ's resurrection with our future resurrection, and he connects sharing in Christ's sufferings with becoming like Him in His death. The pattern is resurrection, suffering, death, resurrection.

Why Does This Matter?

Paul wants us to understand that knowing Jesus means more than knowing facts about Him. It means sharing in His life and becoming more like Him.

Jesus suffered and died, but He also rose from the dead. Likewise, following Jesus means we may experience suffering in this life, but suffering will not have the final word for those who belong to Him. We have the hope of resurrection.

The big idea is this: To know Christ is to share in His life now, even in suffering, and to look forward to the resurrection we will experience with Him.

CONCLUSION

When we were in Canada, we had a choice about how to pay. We could use the money we brought with us, or we could use the option that was more advantageous to us.

But when it comes to standing before God, the issue is much greater than getting a better deal.

You can have an impressive religious background. You can spend years serving in the church. You can be a good person by the world's standards. But none of those things can give you the righteousness that comes from God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul had an impressive résumé, but he discovered that knowing Christ was worth more than everything he had counted as gain.

So what are you counting on? What makes you confident that you

stand right before God?

Don't trust in what you've accomplished. Don't rest your confidence in your religious background or your moral record.

Treasure Christ. Trust in His righteousness. And pursue the surpassing worth of knowing Him.

Because what we count as gain means nothing compared to gaining Christ.