

Losing Self, Gaining Christ

Philippians 3:1-11

Big Idea: True righteousness isn't found in our achievements or good works—it's filthy rags before God. Paul counted everything as loss to gain Christ. Stop trying to earn salvation. Jesus paid it all. When we lose self-righteousness, we gain Christ. That's the gospel.

Day 1: The Source of
True Joy

Reading:
Philippians 3:1;
Jeremiah 9:23-24

Paul's repeated command to "rejoice in the Lord" isn't mere optimism—it's a redirect of our hearts. Notice he doesn't say rejoice in circumstances, achievements, or comfort. The joy is specifically "in the Lord." Jeremiah echoes this truth: our boasting should be in knowing God, not in our wisdom, strength, or wealth. Today, examine where you're seeking joy. Are you looking to your accomplishments, relationships, or possessions? These will inevitably disappoint. But knowing God—understanding His faithful love, justice, and righteousness—brings unshakeable joy even in prison, as Paul demonstrated. True joy isn't found in what we achieve but in whose we are.

Reflection Question: What circumstance is currently stealing your joy, and how can you redirect your focus to knowing God more deeply?

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Day 2: The Danger of Self-Righteousness

Reading:
Philippians 3:2-6;
Matthew 19:16-22

Paul's impressive resume—circumcised on the eighth day, tribe of Benjamin, Pharisee, blameless under the law—would make any religious person envious. Yet he calls those who trust in such credentials "dogs" and "evildoers." Why such harsh language? Because self-righteousness is spiritual poison. Like the rich young ruler who claimed perfection, we're tempted to present our goodness before God. But God opposes the proud. Our best righteousness is like filthy rags before a holy God. This isn't discouraging—it's liberating! We can stop pretending, stop performing, stop exhausting ourselves trying to be good enough. The pressure is off because Jesus is enough.

Reflection Question: What "good things" about yourself are you tempted to present to God as credentials for His acceptance?

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Day 3: Counting It All
as Loss

Reading:
Philippians 3:7-8;
Luke 5:12-13

Paul uses accounting language: gain versus loss. Everything he once counted as assets—his pedigree, education, religious zeal—he now considers "rubbish" (literally, dung) compared to knowing Christ. This isn't false humility; it's accurate assessment. Like the leper who fell face down before Jesus, desperate and without pretense, we must come empty-handed. The leper didn't negotiate or present credentials—he simply begged for mercy. Paul discovered that clinging to self-righteousness prevented him from grasping Christ. We're like monkeys with fists stuck in gourds, unwilling to release what we're clutching. What are you holding onto that keeps you from fully embracing Jesus? Your reputation? Your achievements? Let it go. Christ is infinitely more valuable.

Reflection Question: What would it look like today to "count as loss" something you've been holding onto for security or identity?

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Day 4: Righteousness
Through Faith Alone

Reading:
Philippians 3:9;
Isaiah 64:6;
Romans 3:21-24

This verse is the gospel in concentrated form. Paul wants to be found in Christ, "not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ." There are only two religions in the world: DO and DONE. Every false religion says "do this and live." Christianity alone says, "It is finished." We cannot jump across the Grand Canyon of sin separating us from God—not even the most athletic among us. But Christ has bridged that gap. His righteousness, not ours, is credited to our account through faith. This isn't a license for carelessness; it's the foundation for authentic transformation. We don't obey to be accepted; we obey because we are accepted.

Reflection Question: Are you trying to add anything to Christ's finished work, or are you resting completely in His righteousness alone?

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Day 5: That I May
Know Him

Reading:
Philippians 3:10-11;
Galatians 2:20;
John 17:3

"That I may know Him"—this is Paul's singular passion and the heartbeat of Christianity. Not knowing about Him, but knowing Him. This knowledge includes three dimensions: the power of His resurrection (victory over sin and death), the fellowship of His sufferings (intimacy through hardship), and conformity to His death (transformation through dying to self). We love the first part, hesitate at the second, but all three are inseparable. The closest relationships are forged in shared suffering. God doesn't waste our pain; He uses it to draw us near and make us like Jesus. Paul's ultimate goal? To attain the resurrection from the dead—to be with Christ forever. This is eternal life: knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He sent.

Reflection Question: How is God using current difficulties to draw you into deeper intimacy with Him and transform you to be more like Jesus?

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