

To Gain Christ
Philippians 3:1-8

Good morning.

The music group “Bread” had a soft rock song in the early 1970’s called “*Everything I own*”. Some of the lyrics said...

*“You sheltered me from harm, kept me warm, kept me warm
You gave my life to me, set me free, set me free. The finest years
I ever knew were all the years I had with you.*

*And I would give anything I own I'd give up my life, my heart,
my home, I would give everything I own.”*

Although that is a secular song, I want us to think about some of those words when it comes to serving Jesus.

Jesus you sheltered me, kept me warm. You give life to me and set me free.

*“And I would give anything I own I'd give up my life, my heart,
my home, I would give everything I own.”*

Dog and cat theology is how some people treat the Lord.

Dog theology says, “*You do everything for me so I love you so much, that You must be God.*”

Cat theology says, “*You do everything for me so I must be God.*”

Please open your Bibles to ***Philippians 3***, as we continue in our verse-by-verse study of Paul’s Epistle to the Church at Philippi.

Last week the portion of the letter we studied commended Timothy as a son with proven character.

Paul said Timothy had a like-mindedness, to care for those believers just like he would.

Timothy had a pastor's heart for those believers.

Again, Paul said Timothy had a proven character as a son. The word *character* in the original language means proof of genuineness and **trustworthiness**.

Spiritual maturity and proven character go hand in hand, but spiritual maturity is impossible in our lives, without the Lord transforming our character, through the renewing of our minds.

After telling the Philippians how much he thought of his son in the faith, Paul said he wanted to send Timothy immediately to them.

But then Paul seemed to add a P.S. to the message, "*As soon as I see how it goes with me.*"

Then we were introduced to Epaphroditus (*EE-paFF-rodite-Us*) who was the one who delivered the original letter from Paul to the church in Philippi.

We learned it is our responsibility to show our children, a godly example to prepare them to live a life pleasing to the Lord.

Our children learn proven character by our example and humility.

I. Rejoice.

Read *Philippians 3:1*

Wiersbe said, “*Finally*” at this point does not mean Paul is about to close the letter, because he keeps on going. The word means “For the rest,” and introduces the new section.”

The word *rejoice* is actually an action **verb**, and the dictionary definition means to feel or show great joy or delight.

Remember, Joy is the theme of the whole letter.

An abiding joy in a believer reveals that we trust in the Lord, and we believe He is in control.

When we believe the Lord is in control of all things we will be filled with joy because we know our good Father is not out to **harm** us, through life’s circumstances.

Not all things that happen are good, but we know our good Father will work them out and He is always good.

We should not only rejoice during happy times, but also during sorrowful times as well.

The Christian can *rejoice always* because our joy is not based on circumstances, but it is based on the promise and trust we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John MacArthur said, “*There is no event or circumstance that can occur in the life of any Christian that should diminish that Christian's joy.*”

Circumstances always **change**, but the Lord never changes.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. NKJV

Some people, especially those who are going through trials, may say, “*It is impossible, to rejoice always, it can't be done,*” and in our own strength, they are right, rejoicing in trials is not natural.

Happiness comes from happenings, or because something happens our way. But the Lord instructs us to rejoice in all circumstances, in **afflictions**, as well as times of blessing.

Rejoicing in any situation comes from a supernatural joy which is only made possible by the Holy Spirit.

F.B. Meyer said, “*It is a duty for us to cultivate this joy. We must steadfastly arrest any tendency to murmur and complain; to find fault with God’s dealings; or to seek to elicit sympathy.*

We must as much resist the temptation to depression and melancholy as we would to any form of sin.”

We don’t rejoice because of tragedies in life, but we **believe** God is doing things in and through our circumstances, and He even turns evil into good, for those who love Christ.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. NKJV

God promises to give us beauty for ashes.

Even with sin, God can still work all things out for our good and His glory after the correction.

The enemy wants you to stress out, but God has a better plan.

Notice Paul said, “*For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.*”

Paul told these saints that reminding them to *rejoice* was for their safety.

Why was it **safe** to rejoice?

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. NKJV

In order to please the Lord, we must believe He exists and believe He wants to reward those *who diligently seek Him*.

Fear and negativity are **enemies** of faith in Jesus because both of these things hinder our trust and reliance on the Lord.

Rejoicing has many benefits for a Christian including:

Doctors have discovered that a joy-filled person experiences an improved immune system.

Joy and laughter can boost the production of certain cells, which help protect the body from some cancers and illnesses.

A joy-filled person experiences more pain tolerance because endorphins released by laughter can help reduce pain.

A joy-filled person has better heart health.

Joy can reduce stress hormones and blood pressure, decrease inflammation in the arteries, and increase good cholesterol.

A joy-filled person experiences stress reduction: Experiencing joy regularly can help reduce stress and speed up the physical recovery of certain physical ailments.

A joy-filled person has stronger relationships. Spending time with loved ones can increase our joy.

A joy-filled person has positive emotions.

Joy can release certain things in our brains that help us feel calm, safe, energized, and elated.

The chemicals joy releases in our minds, can help people feel good, which leads to more energy, creativity, and endurance.

II. Trying to earn God's favor.

Read *Philippians 3:2-3*

At that time, there were herds of dogs that prowled around some of the cities, feeding on the garbage in the streets.

Wiersbe said, "*Paul was not just using names; he was comparing these false teachers to the dirty scavengers so contemptible to decent people.*"

Over time, the orthodox Jews came to believe Gentiles were dogs who were good for nothing except to stoke the fires of hell.

But we now know that the Jew was to receive the Gospel first, and it was also for the Gentiles as well.

Romans 1:16 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. NKJV

The Lord loved the Gentiles so much that the prophet Isaiah declared that the Messiah was to come to be a light to the Gentiles so, they could find salvation in the Lord.

Isaiah 42:6 "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, NKJV

With the term *dogs*, Paul was referring to certain Jews who were trying to make the Gentile believers adhere to the Mosaic customs to try and earn the Lord's favor.

Peter fell into this kind of legalism one time and Paul confronted him about his hypocrisy.

Galatians 2:11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

Galatians 2:12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

Galatians 2:13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

Galatians 2:14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? NKJV

Next Paul said, “***Beware of evil workers***”.

F.B. Meyers said, “*These people are the ‘Crank’ of our Churches; they introduce fads and hobbies; they exaggerate the importance of trifles; they catch up every new theory and vagary, and follow it to the detriment of truth and love.*”

Next Paul said, “***Beware of the Mutilation***”, which is another reference to the Judaizers who were requiring circumcision for Gentiles who wanted to become Christians.

They said a person must become a Jew through the rite of circumcision first before they could become a Christian.

God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, where every male child was to be circumcised as a physical sign of the eternal covenant between God and the Jewish people.

Circumcision was the cutting off of the flesh as a sign and covenant with the Lord. It also represents the fact that God wants to be Lord, of even the most **intimate** parts of our lives.

Colossians 2:11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, NKJV

Here in *Philippians* Paul said, “*For we are the circumcision*”.

The Jewish legalists were saying they were the ones who were right with God because of their physical circumcision.

But Paul said that he and the followers of Christ were the true circumcision.

Notice, “*Who worship God in the Spirit*”

Those who are the true circumcision (God’s covenant people) are those who worship God in Spirit, not those who only show external worship like that of the legalists.

Kenneth Wuest said, “*The word ‘worship’ is the translation of the Greek word referring to the service of Jehovah by His peculiar people, the Jews.*

A Jew would be scandalized by the application of this word to a Gentile.”

Worshipping “in spirit,” means to engage your whole heart, while **exalting** the Lord.

Psalm 145:3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised

Jesus said in *John 4:24*, “*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*” NKJV

gotquestions.org said, “*True worship must be “in spirit,” that is, engaging the whole heart. Unless there’s a real passion for God, there is no worship in spirit.*

At the same time, worship must be “in truth,” that is, properly informed. Unless we have knowledge of the God we worship, there is no worship in truth.

Both are necessary for God-honoring worship. Spirit without truth leads to a shallow, overly emotional experience that could be compared to a high.

The best combination of both aspects of worship results in a joyous appreciation of God informed by Scripture.

The more we know about God, the more we appreciate Him.

The more we appreciate, the deeper our worship. The deeper our worship, the more God is glorified.”

And when we truly worship the Lord, we are telling Jesus what He is worth to us, and so, we have no confidence in our flesh.

III. It is all dung.

Read *Philippians 3:4-8*

Paul gave his resume and list of qualifications in these verses.

Paul was one of the best-educated men of that day when it came to the Mosaic Law and Judaism. He was more **qualified** than the legalists who were harassing the Philippian Christians.

Colossians 2:20 if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations —

Colossians 2:21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"

Colossians 2:22 which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

Colossians 2:23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. NKJV

The *Book of Acts* tells us that Paul was educated in the best schools, he had the best pedigree with his bloodline, and according to the standards of man, Paul was the most qualified.

Guzik said, *“Paul was of an elite sect (the Pharisees), who were noted for their scrupulous devotion to the law of God.*

“There were not very many Pharisees, never more than six thousand, but they were the spiritual athletes of Judaism.”

Paul could boast in all of the things of a good Jew, plus his zeal in persecuting the church.

vs 7 things were gain to me these I have counted loss for Christ

Wiersbe said, *“When Paul met Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road in Acts 9, he trusted Him and became a child of God.*

*“It was an instantaneous **miracle** of the grace of God, the kind that still takes place today whenever sinners will admit their need and turn to the Savior by faith.”*

Paul instantly realized that his whole life trying to earn the Lord’s favor by works of the Law, was worthless.

Kenneth Wuest said, *“The word ‘gain’ is plural in the Greek, namely, ‘gains.’... ‘Loss’ is singular. The various gains are all counted as one loss.”*

In **verse 8**, Paul said he counted all of his previous life’s work as rubbish, so that he may gain Christ.

The word “**rubbish**” in the original language only appears once in the New Testament and is better translated as **dung**.

In Greek, it means, animal feces or worthless or detestable.

Paul communicated that even if a person lost all worldly prestige, wealth, and fame; a personal relationship with Jesus Christ was the **central** point of any Christian’s life.

Acts 22:3 says Paul was brought up, ***at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, NKJV***

Here, Paul was basically taking his degree from seminary, along with his resume and **he tore them up** because knowing Jesus personally was more important.

In fact, Paul said his degree and his resume were animal dung compared to knowing Jesus.

Notice, *the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.*

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. NKJV

Paul said he counted that stuff loss so that he may gain Christ.

Matthew 16:25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. NKJV

Several weeks ago the words of Jim Elliott, “*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*”

IV. Practical Application. (tear up resume)

The music group “Bread” had a soft rock song in the early 1970’s called “*Everything I own*”. Some of the lyrics said...

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*The finest years I ever knew were all the years I had with you.
And I would give anything I own I'd give up my life, my heart,
my home, I would give everything I own.”*

Although that is a secular song, I want us to think about some of those words when it comes to serving Jesus. Jesus, you sheltered me, and kept me warm. You give life to me and set me free.

Gregory Brown asked, “*How do we gain Christ? How does a nonbeliever become saved, and how does a believer grow in intimacy with Christ?*”

Romans 10:9 if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. NKJV

Through Paul’s testimony we learn a great deal about how to gain Christ—both in salvation and sanctification.”

1. To Gain Christ, we consider our **achievements** as loss.

In *vs. 8*, the word “***rubbish***” in Greek only appears once in the New Testament and is better translated as **dung**.

The word in Greek means, animal feces or anything worthless or detestable. Our works apart from Christ are worthless.

2. To Gain Christ, we make Christ our **priority**.

Jesus must have 1st place and priority in every aspect of our life.

3. To Gain Christ, we must have **faith** in Christ.

Hebrews 11:6 without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. NKJV

In salvation, a great exchange occurs. On the Cross, Christ became sin for us. God placed our sins upon Him as He bore the wrath of God for us.

And, when a person believes in the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and accepts Him as Lord and Savior, God gives them Christ's righteousness.

4. To Gain Christ we continually cultivate our **desire** for Him.
 - We cultivate our desire for Christ by spending time with Him.

We spend time with Jesus through Bible study and prayer.

We cultivate our desire for Christ by being around believers who desire God.

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

Hebrews 10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. NKJV

We need to be around like-minded believers to encourage, to edify, to grow, and to share our burdens and blessings.

We cultivate our desire for Christ by persevering through trials.

We don't rejoice when something terrible happens, but we **believe** God is doing things in and through our circumstances, and He even turns evil into good, for those who love Christ.

Jesus is so much better than anything else in this life so, He is worthy of all of our worship and praise, and He is worthy of being our first love as well.