

Christ Is Better

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[0 : 00] Music. Philippians chapter 3 beginning in verse 1.

! Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.! To write the same thing to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.! Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also.

If anyone thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

[1 : 16] 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.

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. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

That by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection of the dead. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? I know that I've already shared with you what my philosophy of education was in high school and college, which was that D is passing.

And I drove my father and my mother crazy. Yeah, amen. Drove my father and my mother crazy with that philosophy. But I went to college and I went to college to play baseball.

Not to study. Not to do well in school. Not even because I was preparing myself for some kind of future career in my mind. Baseball was what I was always going to do.

[2 : 34] And so over those years, as my report cards would come home to my parents and as they would express that prayer request with their church, right, for their son who they don't know if he'll ever get done with college, there was a sense from many people around me, even my own friends, that I may never graduate.

They were worried and concerned for me. I remember towards the end of my time in college, on summer break, I was at home and I turned on the TV early in the morning and ESPN2 was on and they had a car show.

And on the car show, they revealed the fifth generation Mustang. This was back in 2004. And so they had a new Mustang that was going to come out in 2005.

And I fell in love looking at this thing. So automatically I'm thinking, okay, I'm going to graduate in about a year or two. By that time, I should have a career. I should have some money.

I could buy one used, you know, and I can have that car. And so I told my parents and I told my friends about this ambition of mine.

[3 : 52] And I always remember they kind of had this look on their face like, well, why don't you focus on getting out of college first, right, before you start making these big plans and buying this car that we don't know if you're going to graduate and be able to get a job where you can afford to do such a thing.

But I began telling people that this is what I'm going to do. And for the next year or two, that's what I said. I'm going to buy one of those cars. I'm going to graduate. I'm going to get a job. I'm going to buy one of those cars. So fast forward a few years later, that's what happens.

I eventually graduate. I was working for a company in their warehouse. They knew I was graduating. They offered me a job in the office. And so I took that job.

And so I thought I'm almost there. And so what I did soon after I got that job was went to the Ford dealership, found a 2005 Ford Mustang, torch red, and I bought that car.

And I remember pulling out of that parking lot for the very first time. I own this car, right? Actually, the bank owns it, but you know what I'm saying.

[5 : 00] I own this car. And I got to that first red light and looked around. And this car wasn't souped up, but it was fast. It was much faster than my Ford Ranger, which I traded in for.

It was a four-cylinder. It was fast. And I remember that first time at that first red light, I couldn't resist the temptation to rev the engine. Couldn't ever do that before in a Ford Ranger, but I could do it now in my torch red Mustang.

And so I revved, and I remember thinking in my mind, you know what? To all those doubters out there, you know, maybe I didn't do things your way, but in the words of Frank Sinatra, right, I did it my way.

And here I am in this car, and as I was revving that gas pedal, you know what I thought? I'm justified. I'm justified. I'm justified.

I did it my way. I got my diploma. I got my career. I got my car. I've proved to everyone that though I made my mistakes, I did it my way.

[6 : 08] And I'm justified. I did it. However, buying that car was one of the dumbest things that I've ever done in life.

First of all, I really couldn't afford that car, and Danny and I were married soon afterwards, and that car payment for those years where we had it was, it just strangled us.

It was so hard to have that car payment, and I felt terrible going to seminary and driving up in this really nice red Mustang, and all my fellow students were driving these beat-up old cars, you know? I didn't feel justified as much as I felt foolish. So it was actually a blessing when I totaled that car, and no kidding, I totaled that car and was able to take the insurance money and buy a car that was much more suitable for a young married couple with a newborn baby.

I wasn't, you know what, I don't think that I was doing anything differently than most people do when they buy a car like that. It's not the car, really, that's the bad thing.

[7 : 16] It's what the car says about them that they want to project. We want to feel like we're doing well in this world, don't we? We want other people to feel like we're doing well in this world when they look at us.

There are people in our lives who we want to impress, especially the people in our lives who doubt us, especially the people in our lives who have been critical of our choices.

We want to prove to them that we can do it. That's one of the things about Facebook. I think that's one of the reasons why Facebook is so popular is because it's a self-justification tool.

You make a post, it's funny or it's thoughtful and you got some picture of your family and you guys all look perfect, right, or you look perfect in that selfie and then you wait for people to respond.

You know, what a great picture, you look wonderful or your family, your kids are beautiful or what have you or oh, look at that car, that's awesome. And so the more likes that you get, the more comments that you get, the more positive feedback you get, the more you feel like I'm doing well, I'm justified by the world.

[8 : 28] Or likewise, if somebody doesn't like it or somebody doesn't comment and you're waiting for them to do it, you think, well, they're just jealous of me because I'm doing so well and they're not. And so Facebook really has become like that, sort of just a self-justification tool.

We even try to play this justification game with God, don't we? We say, look God, I've done all these good things that you like. I've read my Bible, I've gone to church, I went to Sunday school, I've been baptized.

These are all things that according to your word, I know that you like these things. So because you like these things, you should save me. Or because you like these things, you should give me the kinds of things that I want.

You should bless me. Or at the very least, you should protect me from having to endure any kind of suffering. And we play the same kind of justification game with God.

We spend a lot of time, we spend a lot of money, we spend a lot of effort pursuing and achieving things that we think will justify us in our own eyes, in the eyes of other people, and in the eyes of God.

[9 : 36] In verses 4 through 6, as we just read, Paul rattles off his list of religious achievements, and it's an impressive list. It's a list that few could compare with.

You know those one-upper types? We all kind of know who they are, you say something, and they've done it better, or they have more of it. And nobody could say that to Paul.

There was few who could one-up Paul. Paul, in regards to his own self-justification, was doing well. When it came to religious accomplishments, he had them piled high.

If anyone could achieve righteous standing before a holy God, what he's saying is, it was me. I was that person. In these verses, verses 4 through 6, Paul is talking about his pre-Christian life.

What he used to be. Who he used to be. What he used to count as gain. What he used to trust in for his justification. And then in verses 7 through 11, he compares that old way of life with his current way of life, which is a life in Christ.

[10 : 52] And he says that, by comparison, whatever gain I used to have, I count as loss for the sake of Christ.

And just in case, he said, you didn't hear me, he takes it to the next level. Indeed, he continues, I count everything. Not just my old religious achievements, but everything about that old way of life. I count it as loss, he says, for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ my Lord. He's saying, as I've come to know Christ more and more, the things that I used to value have lost their worth.

You know, you have a garage sale. And in your garage sale, you put out a lot of things that you used to value. They used to have a purpose. You spent good money to buy those things.

And for whatever reason, either they don't work anymore, or you bought something new to replace it, or you just don't need it anymore, you put those things out in the garage sale and you mark them down at a low price, right?

[11 : 57] You sell those things at a loss. Because they're not worth anything to you anymore. You just want them out of your house. And that's what Paul is saying here.

He says, now that I have Jesus, I don't need any of these old things. Those old things that I once valued, I don't value them anymore. Now that I have the Lord, I don't need any of that old stuff.

Everything that I once thought was in the credit column for me has been transferred over to the debt column because of my knowledge of Christ as Lord and Savior.

And then he increases his intensity, right? Not only does he say those things are worthless to me, but he goes on, he says, for his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and I count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

Paul gladly traded his list of accomplishments for a list of afflictions. Why? Why would he do that? Well, if your meaning in life is to know, is to please and to emulate Christ and to be with God, then suffering can actually enhance your meaning in life because it's through suffering that we are brought even closer to God.

[13 : 19] Let's look at Romans 5, 2 through 5. There again, the Apostle Paul says, through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

And so we see that as Christians, our suffering isn't pointless but purposeful. When you have no one else to turn to but God and when you turn to him in that moment where you're suffering and you find that he is there, that produces a hope within you that cannot be surpassed.

It spurs you onward. Sufferings don't extinguish a Christian's fire. In fact, suffering fuels it. Not only does Paul count his previous gains as loss, right?

I suffered the loss of all those things but he equates those old things to rubbish. In the Greek, this is *skybalah* and this is a word that's used to describe two things. The first is garbage and the second is excrement.

[14 : 46] Okay? So what he's saying here is not only do those old achievements have less value to me but as Paul grew to know Christ, when he looked back on his old list of achievements, he concludes that they had no value whatsoever.

Not only did they, not only were they were things like in your garage that you wanted to sell, these were things that I just would load up and throw in the dumpster because they have no value to me

whatsoever. And he makes his point very clear, doesn't he?

What is less valuable than garbage? What is less valuable than a pile of dung? And so he's saying these things have no value to me.

And what he's saying is you can either have the bread of life that eternally satisfies or you can have a pile of garbage. You can have a pile of dung. Which would you rather have?

The dung of religious self-efforts, right? And trying to justify yourself, right? Receiving earthly praise, having earthly possessions, or an eternal joy of knowing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

[15 : 59] And we see that Paul obviously made his decision and so here he's trying to help other Christians draw that same conclusion. Remember in Matthew chapter 16 Jesus said, what will it benefit a man if he gains the whole world yet loses his life?

Or what will a man give in exchange for his life? And so I want to ask you this question this morning. What do you want most today?

What do you want most this very moment? If somebody could have followed you around for the past year and documented your life, at the end of their putting together all of that footage, what would they determine as being the thing that you lived your life most for?

Paul suffered the loss of all things. He lost his friends. He lost his intellectual peers. He lost his home.

He lost his earthly security. He lost his status. He lost his reputation. And he says that, you know what? I have no regrets because Jesus is so much better than any of that.

[17 : 25] Do you agree? Do you agree with that? Have you come to that same conclusion? Again, what do you want most today?

So here's the main idea for this morning's sermon. It is better to be in Christ than to have all the treasure in the world. It is better to be in Christ than to have all the treasure in the world.

This is something that Jesus wants us to know. This is something that the Lord wants us to believe. Again, in Matthew chapter 13, he tells two parables. The parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl of great value.

And in each of those parables, what is he saying? Sell all you've got and invest it all in me. He's encouraging us to do this.

He wants us to do this. He wants us to know this, not just with our minds, but in our hearts. And so this sermon, I hope and pray, will answer that question of why it is so much better to be in Christ than to have all the treasure in the world.

[18 : 39] And so the first thing we see here in verse 9 is that being in Christ means that you have been justified by God. And again, there in verse 9, he says, 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.

In these verses, Paul contrasts two kinds of righteousness. If you remember from last week, the first kind of righteousness was an achieved righteousness. This is the kind of righteousness that men use to try to attain for themselves a righteousness of their own by keeping the law, right?

I'm going to be a good person and I'm going to earn my way to heaven. And we see that the Bible says it doesn't work that way. Why? Because sin prevents us from being able to achieve that kind of righteousness.

Romans 3, 23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All of us. We can't achieve our own righteousness. But then we see also from the Bible that only righteous people are going to go to heaven.

And so we've got a real problem here, don't we? Because none of us are righteous. But righteousness is required. So what hope is there for us?

[20 : 01] Well, what we need to have happen is we need an alien righteousness. Now, I'm not talking about E.T., right? Though E.T. was a made-up character, he seemed like a great alien.

We don't need an extraterrestrial righteousness. We need an external righteousness. We need someone else's righteousness.

And if you remember from last week, we need an imputed righteousness. Let's look again at Romans 3, 21 through 22 and verse 24. There it says, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus for all who believe and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

So through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God is given to us. This is called imputed righteousness.

[21 : 07] To impute something is to ascribe or attribute something to someone. When we place our faith in Christ, God ascribes the perfect righteousness of Christ to our account so that we become blameless in His sight.

this is an amazing truth. Christians are imputed with Christ's righteousness, right? So when you, by faith, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, the Bible says that God sees you not only as being innocent but as if you always obeyed what the law required, which Jesus and only Jesus was able to do.

We're imputed with His righteousness, right? Well, what happens to our sin? It's not like it just goes swept under the rug or God says, you know what? Forget it. Because we know that God is perfectly just.

What happens to our sin? Well, we see in 2 Corinthians 5.21 that for our sake He, Jesus, God, I should say, made Him, Jesus, sin, who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

God the Father again using that principle of imputation treated Christ on the cross as if He were a sinner though He was not and had Him die as a substitute to pay the penalty for our sins, the sins of those who will believe in Him.

[22 : 43] He was not a sinner but God treated Him as if He was guilty of committing all the sins of all the people who would ever believe in Him.

And there on the cross as He bled and died the wrath of God towards our sin was imputed to Him, to His account.

And the requirements of the law was met. This wasn't some kind of cosmic child abuse, right? God the Father didn't force God the Son to do this.

again we were not in chapter 2 all that long ago and there we see that Jesus knowingly and willingly and lovingly went forward as a propitiation for our sins.

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John Stott says the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God and the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man.

[23 : 51] I want to say that again. The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God and the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man.

Isn't the gospel good news? Man, that's good news. There's nothing more than that is more important in all the world than to be found in Christ.

There is nothing more important than that than to be found in Christ knowing that you have been imputed with his righteousness. You know why? Because a day is coming.

A day is coming. Jesus talked about it in Matthew 7 verses 21-23. He says, Not everyone who says to me on that day Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

On that day many will say to me Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name and then I will declare to them I never knew you.

[24 : 56] Depart from me you workers of lawlessness. You see this day is coming. This day is coming soon. This day could be today in fact we don't know.

But we see that salvation doesn't depend upon our own record. How good of a person we think that we are or how good of a person the world says that we are.

It doesn't depend upon your rank your ethnicity your righteous or your religious attendance I should say or your good deeds or any other thing.

it depends only and solely upon your faith alone in Christ's perfect work alone.

What he did for you on the cross. When that day comes will you be ready?

[25 : 56] if that day was today are you ready? We see Jesus from his own words there are going to be people on that day who say hey we did all this good stuff and we did it for you we thought we did it for you but they are going to realize that they didn't do it for the Lord they didn't know him they weren't in Christ only those who are in Christ will be spared on that day of God's judgment because

God's judgment has already been unleashed and poured out on Christ's son for us.

When that day comes are you ready? You know what a waste of time what a waste of our life to accumulate treasures here on earth so that we'll feel justified by other people so that we'll feel self justified for again Jesus says what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and on that day has to forfeit his eternal soul those things are going to matter for anything Paul recognized that and Paul recognized that in the universe which God created the best thing that there is is to know God by being found in Christ so justification is God's work secured by Christ's death and appropriated by faith being in Christ means that you have been justified by God which means that you know Christ and knowing Christ as your Lord and Savior is better than any other treasure that the world could ever offer you you know who understood this well was Isaac Watts a great hymn writer and one of his most well known and one of his most widespread and sung hymns is When I Survey the Wondrous Cross you guys know that song pretty well don't you the original title of that song was Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ I like that title as well but listen to his words we sing these words but there's some great theology in our in our old hymns but do we do we really allow what is being sung to sink into our minds and our hearts I want to read to you some of the verses from that hymn it says When I Survey the Wondrous Cross on which the Prince of Glory died my richest gain I count but loss and poor contempt on all my pride forbid it Lord that I should boast save in the death of Christ my God all the vain things that charm me most

I sacrifice them to his blood see from his head from his hands from his feet sorrow and love flow mingled down did e'er such love and sorrow meet or thorns compose so rich a crown were the realm of nature mine right if I had all the world that there were present far too small love so amazing love so divine demands my soul demands my life it demands my all it's so much better to be in Christ than to have all the treasures of the world secondly we see being in Christ means that you have been and are being sanctified by God in verse 10 Paul continues that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death so sanctification is a progressive work of God in man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives so sanctification what it literally means is to be set apart and as we've been over before sanctification is past it's present and it's future when you were saved positionally you were sanctified it's an instantaneous act of God where he by his grace declares you again righteous sets you apart and then it's also progressive meaning that as you live your Christian life you are becoming more and more like him through the killing of sin in your life as you suffer and endure for the Lord in this world according to the grace of his gospel you are growing you are maturing you're becoming more like him and then sanctification is also perfect there will come a day when what God declared there when we were saved will become our reality it will be realized we will be perfectly sanctified we will be glorified and we'll get to that in just a moment

Paul knew Christ but the more he knew Christ the more he wanted to know Christ so for those of you maybe you've had a really good friend a really best friend or maybe for those of you who are married remember that first time that you met that person and you liked him and you thought to yourself you know what I want to know this person even more and the more you got to know them the more you wanted to know them to the point if you're married to that person you said you know what I can't live my life without you and so I'm going to enter into the covenant of marriage with you because I always want you in my life and so likewise in the same way Paul's ambition was to know Christ more and more and the more he knew Christ the more he wanted to know Christ this was his life's ambition is there a better ambition in life than that to know Christ more and more specifically Paul mentions knowing Christ and the power of his resurrection and he says the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death so let's spend some time unpacking what does he mean by this well here's the thing we love the part about the power of the resurrection don't we oh man that's a great part the Holy Spirit of God is dwelling within me the Holy Spirit that rose that resurrected [32 : 36] Jesus right on the third day it's in me I got that power that feels good and we'd like to skip over that part about suffering wouldn't we suffering who wants any part of that how could Paul say that well if you know Christ right and if knowing Christ is your goal and suffering helps you know Christ better then welcome to suffering amen this flies in the face of the prosperity gospel doesn't it you're not going to hear that preached in their churches you know they'll say well if you have enough faith right you can be healthy you can be wealthy you can avoid trials you don't have to suffer but in that case is Jesus really their goal no is Jesus really your goal or is he just a means to an end right

I'll use him to get what I want back in Philippians chapter 1 verse 29 Paul said 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 that's tough but it's true and I wrote this quote in my Bible over this passage of scripture from Timothy Keller just as a reminder to myself and you can do the same if you would like to as well there he says suffering can refine us rather than destroy us because God himself walks with us in the fire where is God when you're suffering right by your side right by your side right next to you and so we can endure that suffering not because of who we are but because of who God is because of who Christ is he goes through it with us making us stronger making us wiser making us more faithful making us a weapon in which he can have greater ability to wield for his glory and his kingdom it's so much better to be in Christ and it's so much better to becoming like Christ than to have all the treasure in the world and then thirdly being in Christ means that you anticipate your future glorification and that's what Paul's talking about in verse 11 there he says that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection of the dead glorification is the final step in the application of redemption it will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died and reunites them with their souls and changes the body of all believers who remain alive therefore giving all believers at that time perfect resurrection bodies like his own no longer being able to be corrupted by sin no longer having a desire at all for sin Paul isn't uncertain that this will happen right the only thing he's uncertain about is when it will happen that's what he's talking about I don't know I know that it's going to happen I just don't know when but man I can't wait for it to happen we should have that same kind of anticipation looking forward to this wonderful day knowing that we are in Christ that we have this wonderful award re-waiting us reward awaiting us and so as we know that it will happen we should long for it just like him in the lives that we have to live and so Paul will end this chapter in Philippians 3 by saying this but our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a savior the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him to subject all things to himself it is so much better to be in Christ it is so much better to know that you are becoming like Christ than to have all the treasure in the world why? because the imperishable reward of glory awaits for the Christian in this world the best is always yet to come and I hope that we understand this so I was trying to think of how can this point sink in right?

because we've got one life to live and I'm not talking about the soap opera you know what I'm saying? we've got this chance Christ has caused us to be in him this is our opportunity opportunity and then to be his ambassadors right in Matthew 28 to go therefore to the nations to share the gospel to make disciples to declare the wonderful good news of Jesus Christ we have this life to do it so immerse yourself in it don't wait immerse yourself in it so I was thinking you know how can we get this point across or how can this point be more clearly presented and so I remembered to the cruise that Danny and I took last year last September and it was for our 10th anniversary and I'd seen the ocean but I'd never seen it like this and I remember on the second day waking up and looking out the porthole and seeing the beautiful island of

[38 : 28] Half Moon Key it's this little tiny island surrounded by this massive ocean clear blue waters white sand beaches and I remember waking up and looking out the porthole and all I could think is I want to be there I need to be there right and so I remember we got up we got on the boat to take us to the island and once we got on the island and I saw the water you know what my thought was I've got to be in that for a Kansas boy right who grew up without any ocean I need to be in that water and so you start out by dipping your toe in and it feels warm it feels good and then you put your foot in and then before you know it you're immersed in this giant enormous beautiful ocean it's like a whole other world in the ocean in the same way with the Lord you test the waters and you feel that it's good man it's good to be in Christ it's good to share the gospel with people it's good not just to talk about Jesus but to live like

Jesus and the more you do that the more you want to do that and the more that you are immersing yourself in the things of God before you know it you realize just how awesome he is and you realize just how itty bitty you are and yet this awesome amazing all powerful God who created everything who sustains it right he knows you personally and he loves you enough to die for your sins that you can receive his righteousness so that you can be with him forever is there a greater love than that is there anything in this life worth more to have than that nothing compares to being in Christ to knowing Christ and to be able to live your life for Christ it's the greatest life that there is to live and if

you don't know it if that seems like an alien concept to you but you want to know it you realize I don't have Jesus I'm not in Christ but I want to be I need to be and we're going to sing a song and I encourage you to come forward and I would love to pray for you and I would love to disciple you in the days ahead so that you know how much better Christ is than anything this world has to offer Christ is better Thank you.