

Forsaking All for the Gospel

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[0 : 00] Good evening. Let's please turn with me to Philippians chapter 3 verses 1 to 11.

Philippians 3 verses 1 to 11. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word.

Dear God, we confess this evening that we do not treasure Jesus, your Son, our Savior and Lord, the way we ought to.

Because we do not see Him as we ought to. We pray that you would take hold of our minds and our hearts this evening through Philippians 3 to captivate us, to show us the glory of Christ, so that we may see Him as we ought, and treasure Him rightly, that our lives might be oriented around Him.

So please meet with us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[2 : 07] Proverbs chapter 3 verses 1 to 11. Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.

To write the same things 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 else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. For the Lord, circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law of 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.

[3 : 28] 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 from the dead.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. Whenever a group of Christians who are zealous for God gather together in His name and seek to grow together in knowing God, our enemy seeks to sow spiritual pride, which is especially insidious because it masquerades as godliness.

We start to take pride in our theological tradition and precision, in our spiritual fervor, in our daily disciplines of prayer and Bible reading, in our social activism, in our cultural and missional awareness, etc.

[4 : 47] The Philippian church was experiencing a similar temptation, but Paul, in this passage, uses his personal testimony to remind them that they ought to put no confidence in their flesh, in their own righteousness, but that they should boast in Jesus Christ alone.

So first, we're going to look at Paul's former confidence in the flesh in verses 1-6, and then Paul's current confidence in Christ in verses 7-11. Paul begins in verse 1 with the familiar command, Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.

The word finally is a little misleading because it makes it sound like Paul's wrapping things up when he is in fact only half the way through the letter. It's kind of like the way some preachers say at times, in conclusion, and then preach for another 30 minutes.

But that's not, you know, what's probably going on here. The adverb translated, finally, literally means ask to the rest. It's a very versatile word. It can mean from now on.

That's the way it's translated in 1 Corinthians 7-29 or Galatians 6-17. It's translated henceforth in 2 Timothy 4-8. It's translated about the other things in 1 Corinthians 11-34.

[6 : 01] So basically, it's a transitional word that indicates that what he's about to say, all the things that he's about to say, all that remains are summed up well in the command, rejoice in the Lord.

It's the command that he repeats again in chapter 4, verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Paul frequently speaks of rejoicing in the book of Philippians. And nearly all of them refers to rejoicing in Christ specifically, in the events of the gospel.

And Paul, as he said in chapter 1, verse 25, is committed to the progress and joy in the faith of the Philippians. And that's what he's commanding here. Rejoice in the Lord. What does that mean? That means Christ is where our joy should be located. Our joy in life should consist in this, Christ and His gospel.

Paul will spend the rest of this passage unpacking in detail what rejoicing in the Lord looks like. Namely, putting no confidence in the flesh, in our own righteousness, but instead boasting in and trusting in Christ alone.

[7 : 10] What protects us from self-righteousness, what safeguards us from legalism, what keeps us from spiritual pride is joy in Christ. Christ.

But before he goes on any further, Paul adds this note at the end of verse 1. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Sometimes when we become familiar with certain passages of scripture or certain teachings, we become complacent.

When we hear a preacher saying something we've heard him say before, sometimes our eyes glaze over and our minds wonder, oh, I've heard this a dozen times already. When we come to a familiar passage of scripture in our Bible reading, sometimes we gloss over it.

Oh, I know what this says. I've read this many times. But Paul doesn't want the Philippine believers to brush aside what he is about to say.

There he goes again, railing against the Judaizers. No, he wants them to know this is important. So he says, therefore it doesn't trouble me to repeat this to you because it's safe for you to hear it again.

[8 : 23] The most important things that you need to know as a Christian are likely things that you already know. But as forgetful, sinful humans, we need to be reminded again and again.

We need to relearn, remember again and again. One of the fallacies of modern education is that it promotes and rewards novelty.

You can't receive a doctorate unless you contribute something new to the catalog of human knowledge. This works okay in certain fields where there are still vast swaths of ignorant abyss to be explored.

But when it comes to the study of theology, who God is, what he's already revealed to us about himself, when it comes to the study of anthropology, study of man, what God has revealed to us about humanity, this bottle doesn't work.

And divinity schools and seminaries that uncritically adopt this paradigm often become incubators of heresy. In such matters as this, it is tradition, not innovation, that needs to be given greater weight.

[9 : 42] The best Christian teachers are those who say the things, they're not those who say the things you have never heard before, but those who teach the same time-tested gospel and bring out their timeless relevance to bear on our lives.

And that's exactly what Paul does here. He knows the Philippians have heard this before, but he also knows that they need to hear it again. It's safe for them.

And what Paul warns the Philippian believers against is the teaching of the Judaizers, which Paul describes in verse 2. Look out for the dogs.

Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. The threefold repetition of the command, look out, is very forceful, and the description of these Judaizers become progressively more specific.

First, he says, look out for the dogs. Paul's not warning them of wild dogs with rabies. He's calling people dogs, which seems uncalled for until you realize that that's precisely what the Judaizers called Gentiles.

[10 : 52] The term Judaizer comes from the Greek word used in Galatians 2, verse 14, that means to live like Jews or to follow Jewish customs.

The Judaizers were Jews who claimed to be Christians but then promoted circumcision among Gentile believers, basically stipulating that in order to be a true Christian, in order to, if you really

want to be a Christian, if you really want to be part of the people of God, it's not enough to simply trust in Jesus.

You also must become a Jew. In the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, when some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, it is necessary to circumcise Gentile converts and to order them to keep the law of Moses, the apostles, at the time, led by the Holy Spirit, deliberated and then decided this question once and for all, and they decided that the Gentiles do not need to circumcise themselves and observe Jewish ethnic practices in order to be saved.

But Judaizers who followed Paul wherever he went sow trouble in the churches that he planted by spreading this false teaching. And Paul calls them dogs.

Dogs were not cute pets in the ancient world, but dirty scavengers, low-life animals, despised by Greco-Roman society and considered unclean, ceremonially unclean by Jews.

[12 : 26] And because Jews also considered Gentiles unclean, they sometimes called them dogs. So Paul is here reversing this epithet and saying that it's in fact the Judaizers who are trying to make Jews out of Gentile Christians who are unclean dogs.

Paul calls these Judaizers also evildoers. Look out for the evildoers. This too is ironic because the Judaizers saw themselves above all as good doers, doers of righteousness, the only ones who are truly pure and lawful in their pursuit of God.

But Paul calls them evildoers. Though they might think that they are doing good by promoting circumcision and making Jews out of Gentile converts, they are in fact doing harm, doing damage, doing evil.

Third, Paul says, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. This is the most graphic and ironic of all the descriptions, all three of them. The Greek word for circumcision is literally a cutting around because it involves cutting of the foreskin that covers the male genital organ.

But the word that Paul uses here is not cutting around but cutting to pieces, which is why it's translated mutilate the flesh. The same word, the same root word is used in the Greek translation of Leviticus 21, verse 5, to prohibit priests from ritually unclean practices such as making cuts on their bodies as pagan priests did.

[14 : 06] So then the very ceremonial marker that the Jews took so much pride in, the very practice that they sought to impose on these Gentiles in order to make them clean and acceptable to God, Paul argues, in fact, makes those who depend upon circumcision unclean before God because it sets up an alternate rival mode of salvation.

the Judaizers sought to secure their right standing with God through observance of Jewish law and they sought to bring Gentiles into conformity with their law as well, but Paul understood that insisting that you need Jesus Christ plus something else in order to be saved is tantamount to denying salvation by grace alone, in Christ alone, through faith alone.

And Paul would have none of it. In this emphatic threefold warning, you can almost hear Paul's righteous anger.

The people who are diverting people away from Christ and detracting from Christ's glory, their dogs, evildoers, mutilators of the flesh have nothing to do with them.

He says of the Judaizers in Galatians chapter 5 verse 12, I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves. Those evildoers who unsettle you and lead you astray by telling you that you need to be circumcised, oh, how I wish that they would be castrated.

[15 : 45] The entire letter to the Galatians is dedicated to addressing this issue and in Galatians 2, Paul recalls a time when he rebuked Apostle Peter himself who would dissociate himself from Gentile believers due to pressure from the circumcision party, the Jews, the Judaizers.

And Paul says about that time, when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, if you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Putting our confidence in our own righteousness through works of the law, putting our confidence in the flesh is not in step with the gospel. That's what Paul says.

So he says in verse 3, for we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

[16:51] This is a remarkable statement. Paul, instead of identifying himself with his fellow Jews, the Judaizers, instead identifies himself with the Gentile believers of Philippi and says, we are the circumcision.

They who insist on physical circumcision are in fact not the true circumcision, but we who put our confidence in Christ alone, we are the true circumcision.

In Romans chapter 2, verses 28 and 29, Paul calls this the circumcision of the heart. Quote, For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical, but a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart by the Spirit, not by the letter.

Paul is not innovating here wildly and creating a new religion to suit his preferences. No, this is what God himself had promised in Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 6, which says, And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.

That promise had been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The question of our salvation, the question of our inclusion in the people of God was never a matter of physical circumcision.

[18:16] physical circumcision was merely a shadow that pointed to the substance of heart circumcision that Christ would bring about by the Holy Spirit.

And how do we know that we belong to this true circumcision? We are those who worship God by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

The word worship here doesn't refer merely to the singing of worship songs or even to Sunday worship. That word is often translated service and it refers to a life lived as a servant of God.

A life of worship that Paul speaks of in Romans 12.1 to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

To worship God, that means to live a life that is completely entrusted to and devoted to Him in contrast to those who live with confidence in the flesh.

[19:17] And notice the God-centeredness of this description and how it contrasts with the man-centeredness of the Judaizers. The Judaizers said, you have to become like us.

You have to be circumcised. You have to join our Jewish nation. You have to become one of us. But the true circumcision are people who worship by the Spirit of God. Like Jesus said in John, for those who worship with spirit and truth.

Those who not by their own strength or their own works approach God, but those who worship God by the Spirit of God. And they do not glory in their own qualifications or accomplishments, but instead they glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

The word glory here, glorying in Christ, is the same word that's translated boast in 1 Corinthians 1, 28 to 31. So that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

This is the reason why God saves undeserving people by the grace of God. So that no human being might boast in His presence. And because of Him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

[20:27] So that as it is written, let the one who boasts boast in the Lord. If we are saved because we're ethnic Jews, if we are saved because we are properly circumcised, if we are saved because of our own righteousness, then we would get the glory.

To fixate on such things is to have confidence in the flesh. But true believers put no confidence in the flesh. Instead, they put all their confidence in Jesus Christ.

They boast in Christ alone. So where is your confidence? What do you trust in for your right standing with God?

Paul gives us some specific examples of what confidence in the flesh looks like in the following verses. These are the kinds of things that Paul himself used to boast about. What he used to put confidence in.

But now he says he puts no confidence in the flesh. Even though, as he says in verse 4, I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

[21:41] Paul is indulging in some holy trash talking here. You want to talk about some Jewish credentials? You want to play that game?

Well, I beat you according to your own terms too. Paul was not downplaying the importance of Jewish religious pedigree because he had none.

No, he actually had more than anyone else. If anyone had reasons for confidence in the flesh, he did. He says in verse 5, he was circumcised on the eighth day. The eighth day was when good Jewish families circumcised their newborn sons.

Paul came from an observant Jewish family. He wasn't circumcised late. He ticked all the right boxes.

He was circumcised as a Jew since he was eight days old. He was of the people of Israel. The Judaizers sought to make Gentiles become Jews through circumcision among other things.

[22 : 44] But Paul says, I was born a Jew. It's my birthright. I am of the people of Israel and not an Israelite from any ordinary tribe, of the tribe of Benjamin.

When there was a schism in the nation of Israel, when it broke off into Judah in the south and Israel in the north in 1 Kings 12, only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin stayed loyal to the Davidic monarchy from which the Messiah would come.

It's that special tribe of Benjamin. The first king of Israel came from the tribe of Benjamin. His name, as many of you know, was Saul. Paul's Jewish name is Saul.

Very well may have been named after the first king of Israel from the tribe, same tribe that he came from. For these reasons, he says, I'm of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a thoroughbred, pure stock, as authentic and respectable a Jew there is.

Paul continues, as to the law of Pharisee, the term Pharisee comes from the Hebrew word that means to set apart. Pharisees were the reformers of their day who sought to restore Judaism to its original purity.

[24 : 03] They were the Jewish cream of the crop. In Acts 26, verse 5, Paul says, according to the strictest party of our religion, I have lived as a Pharisee.

He was trained under Gamaliel, the grandson of famous Rabbi Hillel, and a noted rabbi himself who served as the president of the Sanhedrin, the highest judicial and legislative body within the Jewish community.

That's who Paul was trained by. In short, Paul was the best of the best. He had the Jewish Ivy League education. He belonged to the strictest Jewish sect.

In Galatians 1, 14, Paul says, I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. So extremely zealous was I for the tradition of my fathers.

So zealous was Paul that he says in verse 6, he was a persecutor of the church. By mentioning this, Paul is trying to say to the Judaizers, hey, you think you're zealous to guard our Jewish traditions?

[25 : 04] Before I became a Christian, I was the most zealous persecutor of the church. I approved Stephen's persecution and execution. I ravaged the church, entering house after house, dragging off Christian men and women and committing them to prison.

That's how zealous I was for the traditions of my Jewish forefathers. And finally, Paul says, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

This is the climactic claim that Paul's been building up toward. In Romans chapter 3, verse 10, Paul says unequivocally that no one is righteous, no, not one.

So he's not speaking here of that kind of righteousness. That's why he clarifies by saying, as to righteousness under the law, he was blameless.

Later in verse 9, he clearly distinguishes between righteousness of my own that comes from the law and the righteousness which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

[26 : 08] What Paul's claiming here, saying he's blameless, he was, that he was, he was, he had about the righteousness of his own that comes from the law. In the same way that Paul was formerly a circumcised Jew but uncircumcised in his heart, in terms of surface level observance of the mere letter of the law, Paul had an unblemished record.

Of course, he didn't understand at all the spirit of the law, the true intention of the law of God at all because he persecuted the church when the law itself pointed to Jesus.

And this is why after his conversion, Paul describes himself as formerly a blasphemer, persecutor, an insolent opponent of God. He calls himself the foremost of sinners.

But nevertheless, in terms of the kind of outward behavior that these Judaizers were preoccupied with, Paul had been blameless. He had always observed the Sabbath.

He had scrupulously adhered to the laws of ritual cleanliness. He kept all the food laws. In every manner, he had zealously guarded the traditions of his Jewish forefathers.

[27 : 29] And all of these things used to be points of great pride for Paul. He had put his confidence in these things in the past, but no longer.

He says in verses 7 to 8, 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. 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. Earlier in Philippians 1.21, Paul said, For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Profit. He uses that same word here. The things he had formerly put on the profit column, now he puts on the loss column.

Indeed, Paul counts everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of Christ Jesus. He has suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order to gain Christ.

[28 : 51] The word rubbish is translated as dung in the King James Version. Excrement. You can also refer to street refuse, garbage, compost, rubbish that people often threw to the dogs to forage through.

So in short, Paul regards all of the things that he had formerly put his confidence in as manure, waste matter, fit only for the dogs, which is especially fitting since he had just called the Judaizers dogs, and they are preoccupied with these things.

So he's saying, don't listen to the Judaizers. Don't listen to those who would have you put your confidence in the flesh. Don't listen to those who tell you that trusting in Jesus Christ is not enough. You also need to meet these other criteria, these other religious criteria, these other moral criteria. That's garbage. That's manure.

Don't go near it. It's all loss. Forsake those things so that you might gain Christ who has surpassing worth. That makes the loss of all these things more than worth it.

[30 : 10] In what ways have you been tempted to put your confidence in the flesh? Circumcised on the eighth day? Do you put your confidence in religious rites that you have gone through?

Baptism is important and commanded by our Lord, but it is only efficacious insofar as it is a genuine expression of a person's repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, of a person's identification with Christ, his union with Christ in his death and resurrection.

The ritual in and of itself cannot save you. If you put your confidence in the fact that you were baptized as a child when currently you have no faith or obedience to Christ to show for it, that's a loss.

It's rubbish. It's worthless. Or do you put your confidence in your religious heritage, your religious pedigree, that your father is a pastor means nothing, that your parents are missionaries mean nothing, that your family has been a Christian for a hundred generations means nothing, that doesn't save you unless you put your confidence in Jesus Christ.

What else do you put your confidence in? Of the people of Israel? Of the tribe of Benjamin? A Hebrew of Hebrews? Do you put your confidence in your race?

[31 : 48] Or in your ethnic or cultural or national heritage? Do you believe that your race, your ethnicity, your culture, your country is superior to that of others?

Not before the eyes of God. Not when it comes to matters of eternity. No group of people is one whit closer to God simply by virtue of their race or ethnicity, culture, or country of origin.

Paul's not telling us that we should despise our ethnic or cultural heritage. He had deep appreciation for his Jewish heritage even after his conversion. So he says in Romans 9, 3 to 5 concerning his fellow Jews, for I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

They are Israelites and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenant, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs and from their race according to the flesh is the Christ who is God over all blessed forever.

Amen. There were certainly things that Paul was grateful for and proud of as a Jew, but when it comes to the matter of salvation, when it comes to the matter of righteousness before God, when it comes to the matter of what your confidence is in, Paul puts zero stock in all of those things.

[33 : 19] If you're putting your confidence in these things, it's all refuse. What else do you put your confidence in?

As to the law of Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church? Do you put your confidence in the fact that you belong to the strictest sect or denomination?

That you're the most hardcore believer? That you're a Catholic or a Baptist or a sovereign gracer?

That you do well in Christian trivia and have lots of scripture memorized?

That you're reformed and have the most thoroughly biblical theology that other Christians are ignorant of or don't follow? That you're a Pentecostal and have the most robust spirituality and more numerous manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

That you're part of a church or a denomination that's more serious about evangelism than others?

These things can never save you. These things in and of themselves apart from Christ will never give you right standing before God.

[34 : 36] Apart from Christ, it's all garbage. what else do you put your confidence in?

As to the righteousness under the law, blameless? Do you ever feel like not praying or reading the Bible or going to church because you feel guilt or shame because of your sins?

Do you ever feel like you can't share the gospel with others or counsel others with scripture because you haven't been consistent enough in your spiritual disciplines?

Because you don't feel holy enough? Because you don't feel worthy enough? Well then, you're not putting your confidence in Jesus and what He has done for you after all, are you?

You're actually putting your confidence in yourself and what you have done in how you have lived on your behavior, on your good works.

[35 : 38] So where is your confidence? Do you put your confidence in the fact that you keep all the external markers of Christian respectability? That you go to church every week?

That you finish the Bible every year? That you use certain hashtags in your social media profiles?

That you read certain books? That you support the right political party or candidate?

That you have not committed any blatant sins recently? That you're an upstanding citizen that cares for other people by wearing masks properly and social distancing? That you recently experienced a spiritual and emotional high?

As a Jew, Paul ticked all of the boxes that signaled his virtue to others and yet considered it all a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

Even good things, even righteous things, if you put your confidence in those things for your right standing with God and not in Christ alone, it's all trash.

[36 : 46] It's the new year and I know a lot of us have New Year's resolutions. I do as well. And I want you all to read the Bible and pray more this year than you did last year.

I want you to do these things because it's good for your soul and it will help you in your walk with God. But I don't want you ever to put your trust in your own righteousness, in your own obedience to confer on you right standing with God.

God, your devotion does not save you. Your discipline does not save you. Your sincerity does not save you. Your consistency does not save you.

Your passion does not save you. Your morality does not save you. Your righteousness does not save you. Christ alone saves you. The word His righteousness alone is sufficient for you.

this is why Paul contrasts the righteousness that we attain of our own accord on the basis of the law from the righteousness that we receive from God through faith in Christ doesn't matter that you're a Billy Graham or a Mother Teresa your own righteousness is woefully inadequate there is no human righteousness that makes the cut our only hope is the righteousness from God righteousness not of our own but of another an alien righteousness or righteousness that is imputed to us or righteousness of another that is counted as ours for our sake God made Jesus Christ to be sin who knew no sin that we might become in him the righteousness of God a righteousness that is made available to us because Christ took our place on the cross and died for our sins because Christ was raised from the dead for our justification that's our only hope this is why Paul reiterates twice in verse 9 that this righteousness comes only through faith in Christ salvation is by grace alone through faith alone because this is the way that precludes all human boasting and makes us boast only in Jesus Christ faith is God's chosen means through which we appropriate receive this righteousness from God because faith is the empty work faith is not a work that we do to qualify for God's grace faith is an admission that we are unqualified and that we cannot save ourselves faith is an acknowledgement that we are helpless undeserving beggars who are completely disposed to the free mercy of God that's what faith is this is why we should put no confidence in the flesh in our own righteousness but instead boast in Christ alone confidence in the flesh and confidence in Christ

are mutually exclusive whenever we add something to God's free gift of righteousness that we call grace an additional criterion an additional requirement it nullifies the grace of God it ordains nothing never bounds interchangeable the grace of God's authority as BUT the truth of God from us we cannot boast in something in ourselves without detracting from the glory of Christ we cannot pretend that we have something worthy to contribute to our own salvation without obscuring the surpassing worth of Jesus Christ that's why it's our glory to be nothing that's why it serves us it's our lot to humble ourselves before him because he deserves all the glory and what God calls us to do here in chapter 3 mirrors what Jesus already did for us in chapter 2 in chapter 2 verse 6 it said that Christ though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant now the same word count is used in chapter 3 verses 7 8 whatever

[41 : 43] 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 for his sake I've suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I might gain Christ we are called to empty ourselves of all the vain glory in the same way that Christ emptied himself of his real glory by taking on human flesh likewise chapter 2 verse 8 said that being found in human form Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on the cross and now chapter 3 verses 9 to 10 tell us that we should be found in Christ Christ was found in human form so that we might be found in Christ and he was obedient to death so that we might share in his suffering becoming like him in his death just as Christ's humiliation preceded his exaltation it's only by sharing in Christ's sufferings becoming like him in his death in the present that we attain the resurrection from the dead and glory in the future since we are to share in Christ's sufferings the sufferings in view are not any kind of suffering and certainly not the suffering that we bring upon ourselves by sinning but rather the suffering that involves dying to ourselves to serve others suffering that is involves dying to ourselves for the sake of Christ and yes the Christian life is full of such sufferings Christian life is full of many deaths dying to self but they are a joyous they're joyous sufferings they're glorious deaths because in them we experience more of Christ our Savior and we become more like Jesus and we are more and more assured as we endure those sufferings and endure those deaths that we will be with him in glory they will be raised from the dead to identify ourselves with Christ and follow the pattern of Christ until that day when our union with Christ is consummated fulfilled that was Paul's lifelong aspiration and that should be our lifelong aspiration to be a Christian is to declare for me to live is Christ to die is gain to be a Christian is to deny ourselves and to take up our cross and follow Jesus to be a Christian is to love and treasure Christ more than anything else and anyone else brothers and sisters do you know that that is your main business in life do you know that that is your calling that that is the reason why you are alive today to know Christ to love Christ to make him your supreme treasure that's why you are breathing right now make it your first and foremost business each day to cherish Christ to count everything else rubbish compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ we must lay down all that we once held dear all that we once considered gain our intellect our degrees our spouses our children our abilities our career our status our charitable giving our giving our righteousness count them all loss for the sake of Christ

empty yourselves of these things as Christ emptied himself for us take up your cross as Christ took up his cross for us died to yourself as Christ died for us then and only then will you experience the fullness of joy that is found in Christ that's what it means to rejoice in the Lord that first command that Paul started with in chapter 3 isn't this a wonderful paradox in one sense God demands everything of us he bids us to die to die to ourselves and to live it to live to Christ to submit all our purposes and priorities to him to give up all our credentials pretensions and vainglory but all that we lose will be compensated in infinitely greater ways because those who partake in Christ's sufferings and death will also partake in his glory and resurrection life so in one sense God demands everything of us but in another sense God demands nothing of us he bids us come empty-handed he supplies everything that is necessary he supplies the atoning sacrifice for our sins in Jesus Christ he supplies the righteousness that we need and brings us into right relationship with himself he supplies the resurrection power of Jesus Christ that will raise us from the dead so that we should put no confidence in the flesh in our own righteousness but boast in Christ alone 18th century pastor Augustus Toplady puts it beautifully in his hymn that I think we have in the the projection for you in the hymn Rock of Ages cleft for me not the labor of my hands can fulfill thy laws demands could my zeal no respite no could my tears forever flow all could never sin erase thou must save and save by

grace nothing in my hands the hands i bring simply to thy cross i cling naked come to thee for dress
helpless look to thee for grace foul i to the fountain fly wash me savior or i die heavenly father
forgive us forgive us for the ways we get in the way of your grace forgive us that is so hard for us to
die we want we want you to receive all the glory we don't want people who look at our church we
don't want people who look at our lives to say oh they're so clever oh they're so zealous oh they're
so passionate oh they're so disciplined god when people look at us we want them to say oh christ is
so precious christ is so worthy christ is so sufficient god god humble us help us to die to ourselves
so that jesus receives all the glory and help us as your people with unfail unveiled faces beholding
the glory of the lord help us to be transformed
into the same image from one degree of likeness to another yes lord in jesus name we pray amen
yes yes now yes