

NYT columnist David Brooks famously distinguished between “resume virtues” and “eulogy virtues.” Resume virtues are what we talk about in life: what we do, our background, education, achievements, accolades, etc. Eulogy virtues are what others talk about when our life is over. Resume virtues focus on the here and now but eulogy virtues focus on the there and then. The Spirit would have us live for the long view, the ultimate, not the resume. **Phil 3:2-11** (922 this is . . .) - Main point: The people of God don't glory in the self, but glory in Christ. Two points:

I. The True People of God Put No Confidence in the Self – 3-6 - We have seen the importance of example in Philippians. We saw the example of Christ in 2:5, the example of Timothy in 2:19, the example of Epaphroditus in 2:25. We have also seen negative examples of those who preach Christ from envy, of those who are only concerned with their own interests and not the interests of Jesus Christ, namely the local church. Then in 3:2 we saw the negative example of those who put confidence in the flesh, in the fallen self. The flesh is that sinful orientation away from God and toward the world, that deeply rooted tendency to find the focus of our life in the self rather than Christ.

Now, Paul puts himself forward as an example.¹ Paul is an example of one who is living in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. He starts by playing their game. He says, “If anyone would have a reason to boast in the self, it would be me! He lists 7 characteristics, 4 inherited and 3 attained. He has both. Reasons for confidence by birth and by earning. Like Michael Jordan – sure helps to have genes to make you a sleek 6’6” and an abundance of fast-twitch muscle fibers, but he also worked like a dog.

Paul was circumcised on the eighth day, in exact compliance with the Law (Gen 17:12, Lev 12:3). From the beginning he was a law keeper! Out the womb he was obedient. I have already met my pastoral quota for the year on how many times I can use the word circumcised so I'll just move on. / Of the nation of Israel and tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was the only one of the 12 born in the Promised Land. Only Benjamin and Judah remained loyal to the line of David. The temple stood there and most Jews didn't even know to which tribe they belonged due to records being lost during exile and intermarriage. Not Paul / A Hebrew of Hebrews. Ethnicity and probably read Hebrew. A Pharisee, the strictest of the Jewish groups (Acts 26:5). They were the serious ones, especially when it comes to being pure. They were scrupulously devoted to the Law, the spiritual elites of Judaism. Had all the Awana patches.

So zealous he persecuted the church since he saw Christians as opposing God's way. Gal 1:13-14 "For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I persecuted God's church to an extreme degree and tried to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely *zealous* for the traditions of my ancestors." He saw Christianity as a threat because it threatened the purity and integrity of Israel. So he persecuted Christians *zealously*. Here, with the word for “zeal,” Paul alludes to Elijah and Phinehas. Phinehas was probably Paul's hero of the Jewish faith before submitting to Christ. Remember him? When Israelite men were led to worship idols by Moabite women, Phinehas saw an Israelite man bringing a pagan woman into his tent, he killed both of them with a spear and he is called “zealous” (Num 25:6-13, Ps 106:28-31, Jubilees 30:17, Sir 45:23, 1 Macc 2:26, 54; 4 Macc 18.12). First Macc, a Jewish document found in the Apocrypha, narrates the story of an unfaithful Jew who made a sacrifice to a false god and Mattathias saw it and “burned with *zeal* and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him upon the altar. At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. Thus he burned with *zeal* for the law, as Phinehas did against Zimri the son of

¹ See Harmon 330 for cf. Paul and Christ.

Salu.” Paul saw himself as standing on the shoulders of zealots such as Phinehas when he violently sought to protect the purity of Israel by killing Christians.

Blameless with regard to righteousness under the law. He does not mean that he was without sin; of course not! The law provided the means to temporarily atone for sin with the sacrificial system. The idea is that he could not be found to be at fault. None could accuse him externally. The outside of the cup was clean. If anyone could boast in the flesh, it would be Paul, but:

II. The True People of God Glory in Christ – 7-8 – We put no confidence in the flesh, but all our confidence in Christ. Confidence in Christ and confidence in the self cannot go together. And confidence in the self is a faulty foundation for life, like so many homes in Abilene, there are cracks in that foundation that will eventually cost you.

Paul disregards all of those past achievements focused on the self. They used to be gain, now they are loss. The Bible uses the language of a ledger here. All that was in the credit column has been moved over to the debit column. Paul says nothing compares to knowing Jesus my Lord. He has audited and edited his life ledger. Now, the loss column has a long list of everything. The gain column has one line item: Christ. He is of surpassing value, worth more than all we have. Here is how Jesus put it in Matt 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field." / Paul counts all as loss in comparison to knowing Christ. The surpassing worth of knowing Christ. All else fails in comparison to knowing him, to knowing Christ Jesus *my* Lord. Christianity is not private, but it is personal.

He has gladly lost all and counts it all as rubbish that he may gain Christ. The resume is rubbish. This word for rubbish is a crass word. It would have jolted his first hearers. Refuse, filth, excrement, rubbish, garbage. One commentator writes, "The very things that at one time were the basis of his identity, significance, and standing before God, Paul now regards as equivalent to that which is flushed away in the sewers."²

Paul just wants to *gain* Christ. This is the same word used in **1:21**. Why is death gain? Because in death we gain more of Christ. Paul was single-minded, wasn't he? Are you? Is it your life aim, your purpose in life to gain Christ, to know him? How does your life ledger look? What is in your loss column? What is actually in your gain column? Have you counted all as loss? What are you actually living for? In *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer writes,

"When Paul says he counts the things he lost *rubbish*, or *dung* (KJV), he means not merely that he does not think of them as having any value, but also that he does not live with them constantly in his mind: what normal person spends his time nostalgically dreaming of manure? Yet this, in effect, is what many of us do. It shows how little we have in the way of true knowledge of God."³

The people of God put no trust in pedigree or performance. We put no stock in who we are or what we have done. No confidence in the self. We dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name. But the temptation to trust the self is ever present. Are you trusting in Christ alone? Or are you trusting in self? That you were baptized (circ 8th day)? Christian family (of the tribe of Benjamin)? Know the right Bible answers

² Harmon, 337.

³ *Knowing God*, quoted in Harmon, 338.

(Hebrew of Hebrews)? The right denomination or stream (as to the law a Pharisee)? / We need to repent, not just of our bad works but also of our damnable good works if we put confidence in them. We must repent of our pedigree and our performance.

9 – Paul’s driving aim is to be found in Christ. He is in Christ now by faith, but this is pointing to the last day. He mentions two kinds of righteousness: one is my own that comes from the law. We could call it *earned* righteousness. The other kind is gift righteousness: it comes *from* God on the basis of faith. This really is what makes Christianity distinct from all other religions . . . Righteousness is what God requires. He requires perfect righteousness. The problem of mankind is that none of us are righteous. Rom 3:10: none is R, no not one.

Earned righteousness will get us nowhere. Look at Paul. You can’t out-perform him and all that performance and pedigree is nothing, garbage. Righteousness is not earned by your own doing. You can’t obey your way to heaven. You fall short. We need gift righteousness. You can never earn God’s favor. Whitefield **said rope** . . . We are receivers by faith, not earners by performance. Rom 4:4-5: “Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.” That’s why we sing, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling.” Or “Lay your deadly doing down - down at Jesus' feet. Stand in Him, in Him alone - gloriously complete.”⁴ Or “Not the labors of my hands can fulfill thy law’s demands.”

No, we need gift righteousness. We need the righteousness that is found *in him*. When we trust Christ, we are united with him.⁵ He becomes our representative and our righteousness. All people are either in Adam or in the Last Adam. We are counted R in him. Rom 3:24 “They are justified (declared R) freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Rom 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” 2 Cor 5:21 “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 1 Cor 1:30 “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” By faith, we are united to Christ. We are robed with the perfect righteousness of Jesus, clothed in him. We are counted R in him.

Not my own doing but faith in Christ. It depends on faith, on trust. It is important to note that it is not mere faith that is acceptable to God, but faith in Jesus Christ. People assume that all roads lead to God, as long as you “have faith;” as long as you are sincere in what you believe. I know this is offensive in our pluralistic context, but sincerity is garbage to Paul. Literally. Rubbish. He was sincerely committed to Judaism, advancing beyond his peers. But he came to find out that he was sincerely wrong. God demands perfect R, we can’t gain it, but by trusting in Christ alone, we are counted R in him.

In Christ, by faith, we receive gift R. This R is a gift of God. The R *from* God that depends on faith. We are given, granted the status of righteous when we trust Christ. Rom 10:3-4: “For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” God grants what he demands. It is gift righteousness.

⁴ James Proctor in TK *Gal*, 67.

⁵ Calvin said, “First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from Him, all that He has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us.”

Oh, and what a precious gift!? Infinitely more valuable than all the world's gold, the highest academic pedigree, all the respect of all the businesses of the world. "Dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne." You see the world says we have an outward problem with an inner solution. The Bible teaches that we have an inner problem and an outward solution. We need a R outside of us that we cannot produce & he has provided it in Christ, received by the empty hands of faith. When God looks at you, he sees Jesus. Your life is hidden with Christ.

It is important to get these two kinds of R right in your head and in your heart. Because if you don't you'll fall into one ditch or the other. If you think it is up to you and you perform well, you'll get puffed up with pride. You'll gain the false sense of independence. Or you'll fall and despair. Only the gospel of imputed righteousness keeps you on the path. Confident in Christ, but humble No confidence in self, all confidence in Christ.

Listen to the testimony of John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*: "One day, as I was passing into the field, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul: '*Thy righteousness is in heaven.*' And I thought that I could see Jesus Christ at God's right hand. Yes, there indeed was my righteousness, so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say about me that I did not have righteousness, for it was standing there before Him. 'I also saw that it was not my good feelings that made my righteousness better, and that my bad feelings did not make my righteousness worse, for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, '*the same yesterday, and today, and forever,*' (Heb 13:8). Now indeed the chains fell off my legs, and I was loosened from my afflictions and irons. My temptations also fled away so that from that time forward those dreadful Scriptures terrified me no more. Now I went home rejoicing because of the grace and love of God, and went to my Bible to look up where the verse was found that said, '*Thy righteousness is in heaven.*' But I could not find it. And so my heart began to sink again, until suddenly, there came to my remembrance I Corinthians 1:30, '*Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.*' . . . I lived here sweetly at peace with God through Christ for a long time. There was nothing but Christ before my eyes."

Christ is of more value than all things. Being found in Him is our only gain. One time there was very rich bachelor nearing his end so he had an estate sale. It was the talk of the town. The rich bachelor is downsizing. He had each visitor sign a sheet with various legal jargon but no one paid attention. The rich man had had a son with multiple disabilities, disfigured, wheel-chair bound, needed help with most things in life by a maid named Susan. And as part of the estate sale, the rich man was selling a portrait of his son. He provisionally sold item after item. Underselling various valuable things and then at the end all that was left was the portrait. Susan was poor, and loved the son. As she was cleaning up she said she'd like to buy the picture. She bought it and the rich man announced that the whole estate was going to Susan. He had written the waiver to say, whoever gets the son, gets it all. If we are in union with Christ, we have all we need.

10-11 – Here is the goal of being found in him and being counted righteous: to know Christ. This "knowledge" here is more than intellectual head knowledge (Gen 4:1). This is not just like knowing the answers to a test. This is experiential, participatory knowledge. It is one thing to know the wedding cake is over there in the corner, as you tap your watch wondering when they'll finally cut the thing. It is another to bite into it. In Ephesians Paul prays that we would know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. This is not just knowing about, but having relational knowledge of Christ.

But they are not mutually exclusive, but go together: doctrine fuels devotion. MLJ used to say, "I spend half my time telling Christians to study doctrine and the other half telling them that doctrine is not enough."

Doctrinal knowledge must lead to experiential knowledge. It would be like me saying I have a relationship with Alicia, but I just don't care about learning any more about her.

Paul wants to know Christ and the power of the resurrection. He wants to participate in and benefit from the resurrected Christ's gift of life. We will experience his power in daily life. **Eph 1:19-20**. And what does Ephesians go on to say we can do with that power? Be spiritually raised from death to life and walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called. Rom 8:11-13: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Because the Spirit who raised Jesus in us, we can live faithfully for God. We have the empowering and life-giving presence of God.

He wants to share in the sufferings of Christ. Power and suffering typically do not go together, like oil and water, North Carolina and Dook, Kamala in a MAGA hat. Power is the ability to avoid suffering, right? Not in God's economy. 2 Cor 12: when I am weak, then I am strong. Jesus suffered. So will we. **1:29**. He grants it and he uses it to conform us to the image of Jesus. Paul knows firsthand that suffering with and for Christ, produces experiential knowledge. Suffering strips the peripheral to help us hold to the essential. The flame will not hurt you, he only designs, your dross to consume and your gold to refine.

He wants to become like him in his death. That doesn't mean we'll be crucified by Romans, but that we die to self for the sake of others. We take up the mindset of Christ – **2:3-8**. It is the ongoing process of self-denial. What did Jesus say in Mark 8:34-36: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" As C.S. Lewis said, nothing not dead will be resurrected. If you want to get to the resurrection of the dead, this is the only path. The way to life is through death to self.⁶

And the end goal is resurrection. His aim is to finish well. That somehow, I will attain the resurrection of the dead. Whatever it takes. He says something similar in 1 Cor 9:26-27:

"So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." Paul doesn't believe in cheap grace. He knows he must remain in the race. He must persevere. He's a model for us here. He has a humble mindset that realizes that no matter how much spiritual progress has been made, there is always a race that must be finished. Always much ground remaining to be gained. That should not lead us to despair, but to a renewed sense of dependence upon the work of the Spirit to empower us to persevere. **3:12-14**. He will finish what he started – **1:6**. Or remember **2:12-13**: we work *because* he works. We work out what He has worked in.

This is the goal of humanity, the telos: to know Christ. Do you know him? Do you want to know him? Is he of surpassing value to you? Or are there a host of things, people, events that are of more value to you? Don't settle for mud pies in a slum when you could have a holiday at the sea. Choosing anything that this world has to offer over knowing Christ is short-sighted and silly. It is like being at a White Elephant gift exchange and keeping a tub of Bubble Yum when you could have passed it for a 10-karat diamond. No comparison.

⁶ Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Epistles*, 121.

Do you consider all things as garbage in comparison to knowing Christ? Do you glory in Christ? Is Jesus your constant boast? Paul was knocked off his horse 30 years prior to writing this letter and it is *still* is passion to know him. I wonder if this is true of you? Do you long to know Him? We will spend all eternity getting to know him better. This is eternal life, that they may know you.” It begins now.

Part of this involves renewing the mind. Taking thoughts captive. Keeping perspective. Paul uses this word “count” 3 times. Did you see that? **7-8**. To count is to regard or consider or reckon. It is the same verb he uses over in **2:3, 6**. The dictionary defines it as “to engage in an intellectual process.” We must deliberately work to count Christ as more valuable. Remind ourselves. Preach to ourselves. Zoom out and get a Christ-centered perspective. Look to Christ. Count him as better. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace.”

As we close, if you are not a Christian, you may think, God could never love me. I am too bad off. Listen, Paul killed Christians! Your right standing with God comes through faith in Christ, not what you have or have not done. The righteousness that counts before God is not your own! It is a gift from God received through faith in Christ.

It’s interesting that in our churches, we often hear testimonies about people leaving the rubbish of immorality in order to find Christ. The drunk, the addict, the wiccan. But we rarely hear testimonies about people leaving the rubbish of moralism. You know? A testimony that sounds like this: “I was a really clean and good kid raised around Christianity. Always obeyed my parents. Straight A’s. Drove the speed limit. Served on Sundays. But I was trusting in myself and now I see that was moralism, not the gospel so I now cling to Christ alone through faith alone. I was trusting in my own performance and pedigree and now I see all that as garbage, so that I may gain Christ.

We are the circumcision, the true people of God, we put no confidence in the self, we consider our pedigree and performance – indeed everything as loss that we may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a R of our own, but the gift of R that comes through faith alone and our main aim in life is to know Christ. The people of God don’t glory in the self, but glory in Christ.