



SERMON REFLECTION GUIDE

Joy to the World, Part 3: Joy When You Have Regrets - Philippians 3 - December 14, 2025

SERMON OUTLINE

Intro - "Can one really blame the soul? Strange positions I have put it in have lead to mis-measurements between the place where I am and the place I coulda been."

- Ryan Davis, *New Threats from the Soul*

The pain of **regrets**, exacerbated by the holidays. Can we have joy when we have regrets?

"Rejoice in the Lord" (v. 1) - a command, a focus, and joy is only "in the Lord".

Religiosity as a thief of joy (v. 2-3) - the "**dogs**" are likely those who enforce Jewish rituals (esp. circumcision) upon Christians.

Our traditions, plans, and even religious expression can sap our joy when made primary.

Paul as the Example:

A. Who Paul Was (v. 4-6)

Paul gives his pre-conversion resume in v. 5-6 to prove the "dogs" have nothing over him. He was most religious, most zealous Jew alive before he met Christ. It led to him committing awful atrocities against Christians around Jerusalem (see: **Acts 8-9**)

We all have a **resume** of our own, a list in our heads of what makes us worthwhile to God.

Paul has **regrets** like us - sinful mistakes, as well as foolish identities and expectations.

His conversion will necessarily include suffering (**Acts 9:15-16**) - but trading religion for suffering also meant trading **regrets** for **rejoicing**!

B. Who Paul Is (v. 7-12)

He comes to an awareness that his suffering is godly, because he shares it with Jesus - even if it leads to his death! (v. 10-11)

Knowing Jesus = surpassing worth & Works Righteousness = "**rubbish**" (v. 8)

"**Rubbish**" - **σκυβαλα**, a near-vulgar word for refuse or dung. Strong language to show the worthlessness of our works righteousness before God.

Gift Righteousness > **Works Righteousness**, Being in the Will > Having a good Resume
God is the gift-righteousness giver and the supreme gift of Christmas is Jesus Christ.

C. Where Paul is Headed (v. 13-21)

Towards the back half of Philippians 3, Paul shifts his outlook from the past to the future.

He decides to "forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead" (v. 13)

Threefold repetition of: **Press on, Strain Forward, Press on** (v. 12-14)

The future holds a "goal, prize, and upward call" (v. 14)

The mature in Christ have their minds set on the future glory instead of past regrets! (v. 15)

v. 18-19 are a call back to the "**dogs**" of v. 2 - those who are so earthly minded, they only serve themselves and are headed for destruction.

Opposing that mindset - is the mindset of having a home in heaven, where Jesus changes and glorifies our bodies to match his! (v. 21)

It is in this truth that Paul urges the Philippians (whom he loves) to "stand firm thus in the Lord."

Christmas is the ultimate new beginning.

Light out of darkness.

Rejoicing out of **regrets**.



SERMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Would you say that regrets play a regular role in your mind/soul? How much of your joy is stolen by regrets?
2. Similarly, how can a religious mindset also be a thief of joy?
3. When Paul looks back at his life, what does he notice? How does he measure his past as he evaluates it in Phil. 3?
4. Read Acts 8:1-3, and then read Acts 9:1-15 - why must Paul suffer?
5. Why is works righteousness "rubbish"?
6. Where is Paul's joy coming from when you read v. 7-12?
7. Sometimes "forgetting the past" is really hard to do - how can we follow Paul's example in v. 12-14?