

Good morning again. We'll start out this morning in Philippians chapter three, verses one through 11. Philippians chapter three, beginning in verse one, this is God's word. 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 in 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.

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. 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 in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Amen, and may God add his richest blessing to the reading and hearing of his holy word. Let's pray again. Father, it's our heart's desire that today would be extra a great preparation for the Lord's Day tomorrow, that today would be breaking the soul of our hard hearts, that we would be in a posture to know you more, serve and love you more, and to be loved by you. We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

You know, kids learn quickly, and you all who have kids have commented on this. At five years old, you think every one of my children are going to grow up to be a lawyer. They all are expert arguers. And one of the things they know how to do best is explain to you why their offense is not so bad after all. They are good at, well, I mean, I hear this all the time.

Oh, I got a mark at school why I was talking. But you don't understand, Dad. They were talking to me, and I just responded because I was being polite. But the teacher saw me, and I'm like, you forget I went to school, too. I know how this goes, right? They're experts at trying to minimize offense, experts at trying to wiggle their way out of stuff, right?

This passage is interesting. justification, sanctification, both flowing from union with Christ, both similar, both different. J.C. Ryle spends a lot of time in his book on holiness, really, and so does the larger catechism, how justification, sanctification are alike and differ.

So if we have to put words to it, in the first talk this morning, we are going to kind of lean into justification more. And then when we come back after a quick break, we're going to lean into sanctification more. But for this one, really, Paul's thought is loss is gain when it comes to the topic of justification.

And y'all, here's what I'm afraid sometimes we do if we're not careful. Like our kids, we try to minimize those threats to the gospel, those threats to justification by faith alone that show up on more of the older brother set of sins, if we're thinking about the parable of the prodigal son. We're very well aware of the things out there in society. We're very well aware of the ditch of licentiousness that can lead us away. And again, we're going to lean into that a little bit. But sometimes I think, sometimes I think we give ourselves a pass when it comes to the sins of the older brother.

I don't know what I was thinking. I possibly don't know what I was thinking. But back when I was doing RUF at Belhaven, Caleb Cangelosi was the outgoing moderator of Presbytery, and he was out of town for the meeting, so he called me and said, will you preach at Presbytery? Okay.

Now, I've said this before, I am in awe every time I open God's Word, particularly from the pulpit, but rarely am I nervous. There are a few times I've been nervous. The first time I ever preached at the other second pres in the denomination, there's only two. The first time I ever preached, the first time I preached at First Pres Jackson, I'm looking down like, oh, there's a lot of people here. The first time I preached in chapel at RTS, because I'm out there going, everything I learned today was in one of your commentaries. And then when I preached before Presbytery.

And I was like, what am I thinking? And for whatever reason, that day I was preaching on the parable of the prodigal son. And I looked at the room. Of course, what I said was biblical, but looking back, maybe I should have waited until I was a little bit older to say it, but I just looked at the room and I was like, if we read the minutes of Presbytery, I wonder if we've ever excommunicated anybody for self-righteousness.

Now, we all know the answer. No. I wonder. I wonder if we've ever done that. I wonder if we've ever looked at somebody's arrogance and said, this is mounting such a case against your conversion, against your calling, that something has to be done about it. We all knew the answer, the answer was no. But you look at a passage like the parable of the prodigal son, you look at a passage like this, and y'all, at least my own heart of hearts, intellectually, my bigger fear is what we're dealing with in this passage.

Intellectually, my concern for me is always, the list we're wrestling with here. So here's what I want us to see this morning. Here's the hook for us this morning. Anything that minimizes our need for a Savior is an affront to the gospel of Christ. It needs to be treated that way. Anything that minimizes our need for a Savior is an affront to the gospel of Christ. It needs to be treated that way.

And let's unpack that in three ways. In verses one through six, we need to be careful when the external is never internalized. We need to be careful when the external is never internalized. Secondly, in verses seven to eight, the righteousness of Christ is an all or nothing proposition. And then finally, in verses nine through 11, when we lose everything for Christ, we gain every spiritual blessing in Christ. In the first place then, we need to make sure that we internalize the external.

Right, y'all, you're reading this list and you're like, okay, how did we get here? How did this thing happen? And y'all, when you think about the story of the Pharisees, surely after we're done beating up on them, we've stopped to go, how did they get here?

At some point in time, they were what we aspire to be. At some point in time, they started out by saying, I want to be faithful. I want to be scrupulous in my understanding of God's Word. At some point in time, their heart's desire was to hold every thought captive. How did we get here? And by the way, y'all, I always laugh at this.

General Assembly, anytime somebody has something sharp to say, somebody, point of order, point of order, Mr. Moderator, that's not temperate speech. All I can conclude is the Apostle Paul would not be welcome at the PCA General Assembly. Because I've never heard anybody call a dog on the floor of GEA yet.

Now, if enough of us Mississippians show up this summer, it just might be the summer to happen, right? If this is being recorded, get that part out of it. But Paul was serious about this now. I mean, he's looking back at those who insisted on old covenant law keeping and a new covenant reality, and he's like, they're dogs, they're mutilators of the flesh, and I can't speak in a harsh enough tone. You have to watch out for them because what they represent is a danger. And again, how did we get here?

Because if you look at his list, none of those things in and of themselves are wrong, and in fact, those should be in an ideal world if all of the things he lists here, right? Of course, circumcised on the eighth day, in accordance with what? God's revealed will. He was an Israelite, God's chosen people. And then you go down the list, all of these things have meant to have been hallmarked steps in a life of sanctification, in a life of living before the Lord. Those were all supposed to be evidences of a justified life.

And yet, and yet, this list not only didn't lead him to a deep appreciation for and worship of the living God, it led him to hate, passionately hate the Lord Jesus Christ and anybody who dared love him as well. And y'all, this is why I say this passage scares me. There are a few of those passages in the Bible that haunt me. I told you last night, the whole book of Job haunts me.

I was talking in the parking lot. The passage in 1 Samuel where Israel demands a king so they can be like the rest of the world, that passage haunts me. You just stop and think about that for a minute. You have the greatest king ever. And you want to be like the rest of the world? That passage haunts me. This passage haunts me. And it really ought to haunt all of us.

This ought to be something that men of our conviction, that the camps we run in, this ought to be something where we always have our ears perked up and we're always ready for correction here. Because I'm going to tell you something, the jots and tittles of the Reform faith, if not internalized, will quickly have these same results. Let me make sure you hear me. The glories, the richness of the Reformed faith, the richness of deep biblical doctrine that we are graciously recipients of, that whole system of doctrine is meant to drive us in a deeper worship of the triune God. They're the means, not the end, right?

And we all know that, but again, we have to stop and make sure we wrestle through this and make sure we're internalizing all these things. Y'all, I say all the time, every chance I get at Grace Prevs, one of my biggest concerns and biggest fears for all of us is that we could show up every week and fake it. We could show up every week and

fake it. Now, this room, I think, other than these two, I'm the third youngest person in this room. But we've all seen this happen.

Can y'all not picture some of the empty seats in here of men and women that you just knew would be here and walking with the Lord until the day they died? And somewhere along the way, they've vanished. No longer proclaiming the name of Christ. Walked away not only from this church, walked away from the Lord himself. And you're going, how could that have been? I heard their testimony. I heard them teach Sunday school. How could that have been?

At some point along the way, they stopped internalizing. At some point along the way, these things that were supposed to be a spiritual work wrought by the Spirit became merely ritual, merely external measures. At some point along the way, they were faking it. They were faking it. And y'all, here's what's so dangerous about this. It is too easy to hide.

If you become a drunkard, an adulterer, a thief, if you start ruining your life in ways that the sin leads to physical manifestations, you can't hide that, right? And so you're putting yourself on display. If you do some of those things, it's gonna be found out. And so there's a mechanism in place for the church and for your brothers and sisters in Christ, particularly the men of the church, to come alongside you. But y'all, You can be guilty of these type of things and not only be self-deceiving yourself, nobody can know about it. You can hide this.

I wonder how far gone the Pharisees were before one of them looked up and said, I don't think we did this right. We know, think about the story of Joseph of Marimathea, right? One who was willing to go, wait, wait, wait, I think we got this wrong. If everything we are has led to this moment, we've gotten it wrong. And think about the Pharisees, the Sadducees that we don't have recorded in scripture.

You know good and well there was a remnant, there's always a remnant, who stood back and went, wait now. He is the coming Messiah. And what I thought we were doing is I thought we were building a system that was preparing for His coming. But now it's obvious to us the Messiah has come and we're rejecting Him.

Something went wrong. You see, at some point along the way when we fake it, does the Lord use the means of grace? Always. Not dependent on us. He uses them for His purposes. Yes, we believe that. We profess it to be true. Does the Lord sometimes delay His working to where we think somebody's far gone, but we hold out hope that before they die, the Lord will bring them back? Yes, we hold out that hope too.

But from an earthly standpoint, nothing but chaos ensues. when the people of God only, only ritualistically, only externally avail themselves of the means of grace and don't actually sit in here on the Lord's Day with a posture of humility and a posture of humble submission to the Lordship of Christ saying, use these means to shape me. What was supposed to happen in the Old Testament system? All of the temple cultic activities, All of the types and signs and shadows. All of the things that Paul has to bemoan and regret here. All of those things were supposed to drive home a complete and utter dependence on God to save a people. What they were supposed to do is magnify every time they walked into the temple, I can't pay for my own sins. Y'all, the first job I was ever given, I still don't know how this worked. I was at Second Pres in Greenville.

Hey, you're the new intern, great. You're going to teach fifth and sixth graders on Wednesday night, great. Which, by the way, preaching to a room full of adults is nothing. Try to teach some young kids. Yeah, we're doing Leviticus this semester. We're doing what? Again, y'all, I never taught anything. FCA devotions in college. Did you say Leviticus to fifth and sixth graders?

And somebody came up to me. Y'all, I did a funeral back at Second Prez in August. And a young lady who was in that fifth grade class came up to me. Obviously, that was 2016 years, so she's probably married and has a kid now. She came up to me and she goes, and everyone forgets.

At the time, I thought it was strange. But you kept driving home what a sight it would have been. to see a channel of nothing but blood flowing out of the temple. And at the time, I thought, this guy is kind of crazy. This is kind of gross. She goes, but I don't remember when, but at some point it hit me how powerful that illustration was.

Because that blood was a constant reminder somebody else has to pay for my sins. Somebody else has to justify me. Y'all, all of these things that should have been spiritual blessings for Paul, all of these things that should have led to a predicament where he said, all of these are driving home my need. Somewhere along the way for the whole system he was in and somewhere along the way in his heart, these things went from being an asset to a liability because for whatever reason, they diminished his thought that I need Jesus. I need a savior.

You know, this is one, by the way, you feel this as men, but I want to talk to the officers for a minute, too, in the church. This is one thing I always say. A downside if we don't instruct and disciple our kids, a downside of being raised in the church, of being baptized as an infant, a downside of doing everything the right way is we have to make sure we bake into that. Please understand that your baptism was not a sign that you don't need Jesus. Your baptism was a sign that Jesus meets your every need. Because if we're not careful, then what we're going to program people into thinking is, well, I've done everything right to date. How bad can it be?

Now, the overreaction of that is a pastor stands up. I'm not going to mention his name, but most of us know him. A pastor stands up at a large church in another state. And y'all, this guy literally said this from the pulpit. He said, I hope and pray that your sons and daughters go to college and have an awful time of it. I hope and pray that some of your daughters get pregnant out of wedlock and some of your sons become addicted to sex.

I'm hearing this live action, I was like, y'all, if I did that, Mr. Clayton would shoot me from the back. No, no, sorry. Carolyn Clayton would shoot me from the back. I would have to worry about it. One of my elders would take me off the scene. But here, at the same time, I was like, I know what he means though.

What he was bemoaning is how is it that we're hearing testimonies in our new members classes from people who either weren't raised in the church or for people who really did go off the deep end for a season. Why do they appreciate grace more than the covenant children? Now that's the question. Now the overreaction's absurd, but that's the question, right?

And I've wrestled through this with my elders. Why in the world are we having to teach our people who are supposed to know better that they need a savior, and the ones who on paper aren't supposed to understand anything coming up? I'll tell you one thing, I need a savior. So y'all, we have to make sure in circles where we do care about doctrinal precision, where we do make sure our formulations are all buttoned up neatly, and may that never cease, by the way. We have to make sure that what we're driving home in that system is, dear brother, dear sister, never forget you desperately need a savior.

That's what all this is about. That's what all of this is about. And so y'all wrestle through that as you have some kids. His kids, his kids wrestle with that. Y'all have taken vows to help Mike, to help Drew. Y'all have taken vows to make sure that their kids the whole time go, hey, hey, please, please understand.

You need Jesus. Y'all, that's why we believe in prayer meeting. It's why we believe in evening worship. Those things aren't so we can come back and pat ourselves on the back. Those things are us coming from a position. You know why we believe in evening worship? Because of what we preached on last night. We believe in weakness. And so evening worship is to strengthen us in Christ. And morning worship, regularly attending is a strength. All of these things are because we believe we need a Savior. Men, don't ever fake it when it comes to the Lord. Don't be self-deceived. Don't ever catch yourself going through the motions in this room. It's dangerous. Oh, it's dangerous. Don't ever catch yourself keeping the Lord out here in all of these professions out here. Make sure that they, yes, are rightly processed in our intellect and volition, but make sure they seep into the depth of our hearts, to the seat of our emotions. Make sure they find their resting place in that depth.

Because if they do that, trust me, what they'll testify to is, I need a Savior. And I have one. Secondly then, the righteousness of Christ is an all or nothing proposition. Listen to what he says here. Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Now, y'all hear me.

This is not him even saying, I have to deny all of these former markings about myself. This is not him saying all of a sudden, well, actually, I'm not an Israelite. Of course he still is. I'm actually not from the tribe of Benjamin. Of course he still was. Well, actually, you know what?

Let's go back and change the birth certificate. I was circumcised on the 10th day, not the 8th. That's not what he's saying. What he is saying is, when it comes to how I've been justified, When it comes to what I can put in my account for what will make me righteous for the Father, I had to get rid of all of it. I'd start from scratch.

You know in the Old Testament when God says, my glory I will not share with another. That's what Paul is saying here. His righteousness, His righteousness and His glory and saving of people. He's not gonna say, I tell you what, you can keep 10 or 12% of your righteousness, I'll cover the rest of the gap. Jesus doesn't look at people and say, well, I tell you what, bridge the gap as much as you can and whatever's lacking between your imperfection and my perfection, I'll pay the tab.

That's not how this works. You're either gonna be robed in His righteousness completely or He's not gonna give it to you at all. You know, if you're dealing with different construction stuff or if you're working on certain cars, high-end people won't use your materials. High-end people won't let you redo stuff. High-end people come in and go, I can't guarantee my work unless I start over from scratch, unless I use all of my own methods, unless I use all of my own materials. Y'all, please understand that what we need in a Savior is not some improvement. What we need in the Savior is not somebody to help us because sometimes we have a rough day. What we needed in the Savior is somebody who would give us a new heart. And somebody who would remove us from an estate of sin and misery, short of catechism language, into a state of redeemer. That's what we needed.

And Paul goes, you need to understand, If that's the righteousness you crave, if this is the Savior you want, then when He says, come unto me all who labor and heavy laden, He means it, but when you show up, it better be empty-handed. It's the only way you better show up. Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to that cross I cling. Oh, we sing that all the time. That is profound in its theology. And Paul's looking at the church going, You think you're going to bring circumcision to the table as a credit to your account? No. No. Only Jesus can save a people. And so he leans into it. I had to give up all of these things in the category of justification. None of them mattered unless Jesus did. None of that mattered. unless Jesus did. My father, he died of cancer 2017, April 2017. Can you believe it's been that long, by the way? It's crazy.

And y'all, I really think, and he was a Christian, we had great conversations, but I really do think that most folks around us do take the view of, well, I'm good, but not perfect. So most folks around us, I think, really do view the work of Jesus and justification as making up the difference. I really think that most Christians I've met hold that view.

Well, I'm not perfect, but no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Get rid of the but. I think you and I do. I think we walk around with well-meaning people who really are Christians and who will be in heaven with us, but who just think, you know, I'm not that bad, am I? Not that bad, am I? Well, y'all, if the Lord graded on a curve, I guess we could speak that way. But that's not how it works. Perfection. Perfection.

I know the things you hear as an RUF campus minister. I had a student, he was not in the core group. He just kind of showed up some in RUF. He looked at me in a meeting one time, and he was serious now. He looked at me and said, you know, I haven't sinned in three days, and I'm so thankful. I said, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Come again. Again.

He had a very neat external measuring system, and I was like, if deed, right, if you think about the phrase thought, word, and deed, If deed is the only place where we measure sinfulness, man, I got a pretty good track record, too. If deed, if the external is the only place we measure, yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, maybe my Hall of Fame bus is getting formed right now. But what about thought? What about your thought life? What about the intentions of your heart?

And y'all, he glazed over. You could tell it hadn't crossed his mind. I was like, you know, the Ten Commandments would be great. The Ten Commandments would be no hill for a climber. But then this pesky little thing called the Sermon on the Mount pops up. And all of a sudden you're like, wait, now. Jesus, what were you saying about the heart? What? And again, back to our first point, that was the biggest thing that the Old Testament system missed there. And so the Lord had to come and go, well, what about the heart?

The righteousness of Christ is an all or nothing proposition. He doesn't share his glory with another. and he doesn't share his work of saving people with another. He either saves us completely or we're not saved. We're either robed in his righteousness alone or we don't have the robe. It's not ours to claim.

And yet, y'all, how foolishly do we show up in some tattered thing and say, I want to keep this too. Y'all, I do that. Why do we do that? Why do we do that? Why do we show up acting like I'm going to bring something to the party? I was being polite and doing like my father told me to one time.

But basically, I offered to pay for some tickets in Mississippi State, some club-level football tickets. A guy invited me and my two sons to the game. I was like, hey, can I pay you for those tickets? And he smiled at me and said, son, you can't afford these tickets. And I thought to myself, yo, we can't afford these tickets.

We can't afford this robe of righteousness. And the only currency the economy of heaven trades in is the blood of Jesus. Paul said, I had to give it all up because he will not share his glory in saving me with another. And nor would we ever in our sane moments wish to try to detract from his glory in saving us.

You know, I never can We sing All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name probably six times a year at Grace, but on Reformation Sunday, I know it's not a holy day. Everybody relax a little bit. We do the same thing we do every other Lord's Day. But on Reformation Sunday, we'll sing the diadem tune to All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name.

You know, when the men and women are crowning Him a different... I never can get past the go spread your trophies at his feet without just losing it. And I don't like crying, I'm not the emotive guy, but I'm always just like, I don't, I'm in front of, I don't, I'm gonna lose it every time. Go spread your trophies at his feet.

Do y'all understand how profoundly worshipful, how profoundly formidable it was for Paul when he came to the conclusion that my job, my job consists of spending the rest of my life saying, look at our savior. Look at how gloriously he saves the people. I'm not trying to murder his people anymore. Instead, I'm in awe, marveling at the fact that he saves the people. Thirdly then, When we lose everything for Christ, we gain every spiritual blessing in Christ. Listen to him go on. I count everything as lost because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Y'all, at no point in time did Paul ever look up and say, you know, that way of thinking wasn't so bad after all. You know? Yeah, I mean, things are going pretty well. Now, did he miss friendships he lost? Oh, you know he did. Did he suffer from some of the ostracization that would have come from it? Yeah, of course. That's not what I'm saying, relationally.

You know, familiar, but from a theological standpoint, from a worship standpoint, all of a sudden, he found that pearl of great cost, and all of a sudden, he finds the glory of the Savior. And his conclusion is, But of course I'll give up everything, as long as I'll be found in this one. Of course I will. And y'all, on the one hand, we do, we say to folks,

I say to college students all the time, I often warn them, oh be careful, oh be careful, heeding the call to come to the Lord. Because he'll save you. But he demands the entirety of your life when he does. All of it. I'm glad we kind of got past that, at least in, y'all remember the Lordship controversy, right? Nobody on paper anymore says you can have Jesus, on paper, nobody says you can have Jesus as Savior without Lord anymore.

But if you see how that life plays out, you're like, no, wait a minute. You want the saving benefits without the new identity. Not gonna work. And then I immediately go, maybe you're just a Christian who hasn't been taught well, but at that point I'm always like, I just don't think you're converted. Because a converted person, one of the first things you see in them is a zeal and passion, usually it's still uneducated, usually we have to teach them theology, but what you'll see immediately is worship. And you're going, all right, hold, come back now, we'll do it this way, not that way, but what you see is worship.

Y'all, that was his immediate response is, I lost everything, everything. But look what I now have, a righteousness apart from the law that comes by faith, a righteousness from Christ. And immediately his conclusion is, and if this Savior is as precious as he says he is to me, and as this Savior is as precious as my heart testifies that he is, I'll die for him. Look how fast he went from that. Look how fast Paul goes from this Jesus is a threat to everything we are to I will die for this Jesus. as long as I know I'm in the power of his resurrection, even through his sufferings. Yes, when we come to Christ for salvation, for justification by faith alone, we've been told to give up everything. But never think that puts us on the losing side of a business deal. Because what we gain is Christ.

The oldest person in here, the godliest person in here, does it not still blow your mind when you think that we're called co-heirs? Wait, you're going to glorify me one day? But Lord, you know my track record. Lord, you know all of my done. Post-salvation, Lord, you're listening when we do that confession of sin, Lord? Yes, one day we'll be co-heirs. One day we'll be glorified. Paul got his mind around that, that when Jesus justifies a person, he will one day glorify the same person. And so Paul's like, I will walk away from it all, and I will put on prison chains.

Jesus, as long as you'll claim me as yours, as long as you'll be my elder brother, my prophet, priest, and king, as long as you'll do that, whether change or shipwreck, imprisonment, whatever may come, just be mine. Just be mine. You know, anything that minimizes our need for a savior is an affront to the gospel of Christ, and we must treat it definitively. We must exercise any notion of that from our hearts.

Y'all, the way you do that is personal meditation on the lovingness of Christ. People give us and give our theological forebears a bad rap for always being legalistic. I'm like, wait, wait, wait, wait. We've produced some of the greatest meditations on the personal work of Christ there are. At our best, that's what we major on, the greatness of who Jesus is.

And the same is true for you and I today. When we come to this conclusion that the Apostle Paul worked through, When we've gladly said, Lord, I'll lose it all, just give me Jesus, just give me Jesus. Then we'll find him more than sufficient, more than enough for all we need. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, let's pray. Father, thank you that you love us enough to give us your word and your spirit to work through the word. That's what we need this morning. And so we're glad we have it. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.