



Philippians 3:1-11 **Rejoice in Jesus, Not Your Resume**

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
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Our theme lately as we have been studying through Philippians has been ‘respond in obedience because it is God who is working in you.’ We’ve seen that:

1:6 – He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it

2:13 – He is working in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure

And we saw that God is surrounding you with others like Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, who, like Jesus, will love you, care for you, and try to do things that will help you.

So, what should our response to all of this be? Well, obedience is what we’ve been saying. And according to chapter Two verse 14, we should do it without grumbling or complaining.

That’s a rough charge for some of us. A sobering charge. But others in here are OK with that. You have this hunker down, “git ‘er done” mentality. You’re not intimidated by to-do lists. You’re not going to back down from a challenge – yes it’s a tall order, but that’s fine. You understand the mission and accept it.

In fact, that’s why many of you are here – you got accepted, you got promoted, you got hired, or you were assigned here because you were thought of as the man or woman who could get it done. That’s a great reputation to have in some ways, but it can also lead you toward a dangerous temptation to take pride in what *you* have accomplished and lose sight of what *God* has done for you.

So now we need shift gears for a minute, because Paul is about to change his focus from accomplishments to motivation. He knows that after all this exhortation to *do*, some of us need a counterbalance or we’ll go spinning off in the wrong direction – a great big ball of misapplied energy focused on what we can “do for God.”

See, God knows that some of us come to Him ashamed of all the wrong we have done, and others come to Him proud of all the good they’ve done. Both of them need forgiveness.

That’s the problem my son Christopher has. He’s good, he’s better behaved than his older brother Ben and he loves to point it out. When Ben gets in trouble Chris will frequently point out his own innocence to you.

But he’s also the little guy, and so for a while I was trying to encourage him as he attempted things that his brother was good at, and when he’d do a good job, I’d call him my super-star. So

when we were playing baseball in the backyard and he got a hit, I'd say "Chris, say, 'I'm a baseball playing superstar!'" And he would do it.

When we were out riding bikes and he did a good job I'd say, "Chris, say, "I'm a bicycle riding superstar!" and he would do it.

But one night we were at dinner and Ben was doing something wrong for the umpteenth time and needed to be corrected and Chris looks over me and says, "Um, daddy, did you notice that I wasn't doing that?" So, I looked at him and said, "Yes, Chris, but that's because you're self-righteous." And without skipping a beat he says, "I'm a self-righteous superstar!"

I had to excuse myself from the table so I didn't bust up laughing right there.

God knows that some of us are prone to being self-righteous superstars – proud of all that we have accomplished or how we've got it all together. So on the heels of everything that he has been saying about doing the right thing for the right reason, now he says:

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.

If you want to jot down your spiritual to-do list – if you want to be bear down and grind it out and make things happen, if you want to answer the call to obedience, make sure you don't neglect this one: first things first - rejoice in the Lord.

Now, why was Paul saying that? It's because a group of *Christians* were falling into an ageless trap – they were trying to come up with a list of things you had to do to be pleasing to God. They were spiritual mathematicians – they wanted to write their equations as Jesus PLUS _____ equals righteousness. And in this case, it was Jesus PLUS circumcision.

It wasn't enough to receive Jesus as your Savior, you also had to go and get circumcised to show you were serious about this thing.

So Paul says:

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

Every religion has it's list of do's and don'ts. Everyone has a list of what you should and should not do. And they all say that if you do a whole bunch of the right things and not much of the bad things, you're good.

But that's not Christianity.

Christianity says you **can't** do enough good things because if you do a single bad thing you're toast.

God's standard is perfection. Not pretty good, not almost. Perfect.

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Ever heard the expression “close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades?” When you throw shoes you want to try to get a ringer – to hook the shoe around the post. That’s worth the most points. But if you get close, within a shoe’s breadth – and you measure it by using another shoe – you get partial credit so to speak, not the full amount of points, but you get some and some are better than nothing.

And with hand grenades, the typical kill radius is about 5 meters, but the injury radius is 15 meters. So you don’t have to be a sniper to do some damage. In either horseshoes or hand grenades, close enough is good enough.

But not with God – again, His standard is perfection. And not just lucky perfection, consistent perfection. You have to be perfect all the time. Your whole life. None of us can meet that standard though, which is why He took it upon Himself to deal with our sin. This is why it was necessary for Him to provide Himself as the sacrifice for our sins.

So now, to think we need to add anything to that is to make His work less meaningful – it strips value away from Jesus and takes it to yourself.

So when we say things like:

You need to be saved and then listen to this style of worship music and raise your hands like this
Or you need to be saved and then spend a half hour in devotions each day
Or you need to be saved and go out witnessing at the mall every weekend
Or you need be saved and go on a missions trip,

Or you need to be saved and then anything - what you’re doing is taking value away from what Jesus did and saying He gets most of the credit, but then I get some of the credit too because I _____.

Now, none of those things are bad, *in fact they have value*, but they don’t save you. So rejoice in what Jesus has done, not what you have done.

Salvation comes from Christ alone. Without Him you have nothing and there is nothing you can add to Him.

Paul says the men who were advocating this kind of ‘Jesus AND’ view were dogs, evil workers, mutilators – that’s how he describes their desire to see people circumcised as a sign of their Christian faith – mutilation. Now men, if you realize what he’s talking about, stop and think about that for a minute and it will send shivers down your spine. But he’s that serious about it – it’s that important of an issue.

Unfortunately, this idea, that you could somehow please God by doing more, didn’t die in the first century it kept going. So you had this monastic movement toward the desert in the early centuries after Christ. You had people moving out away from everyone else so they could get alone with God thinking that this would increase their holiness or help them master their sin.

One guy who was famous for this was Simon the Stylite. He went out and built a pillar, some say 50, some say 100 feet off the ground with a little platform at the top and he lived his life up there. He disciplined himself to fast and remain erect throughout the whole period of Lent – that’s forty days! He lived on his pillar out in the desert for 36 years and eventually died there.

And then there’s the more current and extreme example of being personally crucified in an effort to please God:

17 crucified in Philippines in Good Friday re-enactment **ASSOCIATED PRESS April 6, 2012 6:50AM**

SAN PEDRO CUTUD, Philippines — Thousands have gathered in the Philippines to witness devotees nailed to crosses as they mark Good Friday by re-enacting Jesus Christ’s suffering. The yearly rites continue even as Roman Catholic church leaders discourage the practice.

Nine men were crucified for a few minutes in Pampanga province’s San Pedro Cutud village, while at least eight others were crucified in neighboring villages.

Many take part to atone for sins, pray for the sick or a better life or give thanks for what they believe were miracles.

Friday’s crucifixion was the 26th for Ruben Enaje, a 51-year-old sign painter. He began his yearly rite after surviving a fall from a building.

The spectacle is part of a unique brand of Catholicism that merges church traditions with Philippine folk superstitions.

Now I’ll grant you that those are extreme examples, but the point is that people still try to earn God’s pleasure by receiving Jesus *and then* doing their own thing too. Maybe you don’t go to these kinds of extremes, but you need to ask yourself – **what else do I think I need to do to make God happy?** Anything?

Paul’s answer was no. There is *nothing* you need to do to add to what Christ has already done.

[3](#) For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, [4](#) though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:

Paul says, “Look, I’ve been there and done that. These people think being religious is going to get them closer to God? I’ve done it all and it didn’t get me anywhere. In fact, *they’re nothing compared to what I was.*” And then he goes on to explain what his religious pedigree and resume looked like:

5 circumcised the eighth day,

He began life on the right foot – he was circumcised on the eighth day as God had commanded for all male descendants of Abraham – if you were with us when we went through Genesis you may remember that circumcision was given to the Jews as a sign of the covenant God had made with them.

of the stock of Israel,

Abraham had a son named Isaac, Isaac had a son name Jacob, but God changed his name to Israel – and then he had twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel. Paul is saying he was pure-bred. He wasn't from a family that had converted into Judaism – he could trace his lineage all the way back to the beginnings.

of the tribe of Benjamin,

Benjamin was the last son to be born to the man Israel – and the only tribe to be born within the borders of what would become the nation of Israel – his tribe had a number of distinctions: Saul, the first king of Israel came from Benjamin; after Saul you had King David who established his capital in Jerusalem, which was within the boundaries of the tribe of Benjamin; after King David you had King Solomon, but after Solomon the kingdom split up and ten tribes in the north went their own way, only Benjamin stayed with Judah in the South – Benjamin and Judah eventually went into captivity together in Babylon but later returned to re-establish the nation – meanwhile the ten northern tribes were assimilated into surrounding nations after being captured by the Assyrians and the resulting half-breeds were known as Samaritans.

a Hebrew of the Hebrews;

Rome was the dominant political power of the day, but Greek was the dominant culture. Paul was one of the few who had kept his roots – who wasn't following all the modern trends and leaving behind his traditions, He identified himself by his Hebraic culture.

concerning the law, a Pharisee;

The law was the religious code of the Jews – it covered every aspect of what they should do, how they should dress, how they should eat, etc.

The word Pharisee means “separated ones” they were hard-core committed to following the law. There were only about 6000 of them in Israel at the time. Jesus recognized how committed they were in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 where He said that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, you would by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

So, they're pretty righteous, but you've got to go even further than that if you want to enter into Heaven. How do you do that? After all, remember, you don't get into Heaven with horseshoes or hand grenades – there is no “close enough.”

6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church;

Paul didn't just talk the talk; he walked the walk. He took his religion serious and stood around holding the coats of his friends as they killed one of the first Christians, a man named Stephen, by throwing rocks at him until he died.

Then he started going around looking for Christians and having them arrested before God got ahold of him and changed his life.

concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

So, in light of all this, as far as keeping the rules went, Paul could say he was blameless.

Now does that mean he really was blameless? Maybe so *externally*, but what about *internally*?

Remember, here is where Jesus destroys us because He says, "I'm after your heart, I'm after your desires. It's not enough that you didn't DO what you thought about doing, you still WANTED to do it. Maybe you kept your mouth shut, but you still really wanted to say those words." Jesus judges on the basis of our desires, not just our actions. That's why we need Him to give us a new heart.

And Paul came to see that. Which is why he says:

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

That stuff didn't get me to where I needed to be. I didn't need a 12-step program; I needed a one step program – safely into the arms of Jesus. And if, in Jesus, you can find all that is necessary for life and godliness, why would you go trying to shackle yourself down with all these other obligations?

So he says,

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,

"The excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" – that's where we find what we need – in relationship with Him. Knowledge of Him and being known by Him is excellence.

Christ – the promised savior, in Hebrew, Messiah

Jesus – His given name

My – not just "a" or "the", but "my" - possessive, relational

Lord – the one I serve and obey, the one I belong to

for whom I have suffered the loss of all things,

Now remember, Paul is writing from a Roman jail. He is under house arrest – he doesn't have the freedoms that you or I enjoy. He can't go where he wants, when he wants or do whatever he wants, **but** *he still has unlimited access to Jesus.*

That's something we all need to consider – if your source of comfort, assurance, pride or safety comes from something other than Jesus - what do you do when it is taken away from you?

What do you do when tragedy strikes and knocks down your perfect little crystal palace?

That's why God wants us to put our trust in Him first, not our stuff or our accomplishments.

Paul says not only did I lose them, but I actually:

and count them as rubbish,

Literally, excrement or table scraps – not a pretty image. Paul de-valued all of these things so that he could re-value Jesus. Some of the things you are trying to do aren't necessarily bad things, but they can't take the place of Jesus in your life. You can't be happier about them than you are about Him. You can't need them more than you need Him.

that I may gain Christ [9](#) and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; [10](#) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, [11](#) if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Bottom line: I don't want anything that I have built up or made up with my own two hands – I want Him.

You, like Paul, might be able to build something pretty impressive with your own efforts. But it will never be enough. And it won't last. Someone will come along after you and destroy it, or some tragedy will strike and you'll be left with the pieces of what you tried so hard to build. Then what? Well, what were you building it for? For God's glory, or your own pride?

Now, it's not all bad news, there is an upside to this, and that is that the knowledge of Christ cannot be taken away from you. And your position in Him doesn't depend on what you have done or how much you have accomplished.

If you blew it this week as a mom, you're still saved. Rejoice in Christ Jesus.

If you didn't get the job or the promotion, you're still saved. Rejoice in Christ Jesus.

If you were tired and slept in instead of doing your devotions, you're still saved. Rejoice in Christ Jesus.

If you didn't win the game, you're still saved. Rejoice in Christ Jesus.

If you didn't score as well on your paper or your test as you had hoped, you're still saved.

Rejoice in Christ Jesus.

If Mr or Mrs Right hasn't shown up yet, you're still saved. Rejoice in Christ Jesus.

Everything else can, and might, be stripped away, but you can still be found resting in the righteousness of Christ. So let Him be your foundation and instead of trying so hard to build your picture perfect life, instead of feeling like the weight of the world is resting on your back, just rejoice in Jesus, the one who gave Himself for you and the One who can never be taken from you.

And then, from this foundation, go out and do whatever God is at work in you to will and do according to His good pleasure. But in your desire to get things done, make sure you never lose your focus: rejoice in Christ Jesus.