

Rejoice in the Lord

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[0 : 00] All right, now let's jump into our series in Philippians, back into the fun stuff, right? Right? Yeah? All right, chapter 3. So if you have a Bible, you can open up to Philippians chapter 3, or turn there on your phone or whatever device you got going on there.

And let me just say before we dive into it today, chapter 3 kind of is a big pivot. So Paul has just finished talking to them about not grumbling and complaining, and then he encourages them actually in ways to follow Jesus, and then commends a couple of guys to them. It's like, hey, here's some great examples. And he honors Timothy and Epaphroditus. And then he does this like sudden shift. And he actually says it's the final thing, the kind of final topic he wants to bring up to the Philippian believers.

And it's a very strong admonition, and it's this, rejoice in the Lord, right? Right? Rejoice in the Lord. This is serious business for Paul. And this is serious business for the Philippian believers. And you know what? It's very serious business for us today as well. And as we read this passage, let's consider how this whole passage is pointing to that truth that Paul is wanting the Philippian believers to know and understand and seek deep into their hearts.

[1 : 21] And so we get to read this, and we get to learn how to rejoice in the Lord. And before we read, let me just pray. Lord, we just come, we're about to come to your word. And we just ask that as we read your word, your word is good and beautiful and powerful and mighty.

It is your very words to us. And so we pray that as we read it, you would make it alive to our hearts. Help us to receive it today. Lord, we want to be a people that rejoice in the Lord.

Amen. So Philippians 3, we're going to read verses 1 to 14. It says this, 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. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews.

[2 : 37] 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. 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 of the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this, or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

[3 : 43] Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. This is God's word. Amen. Man, Paul knows how to catch our attention.

All right? How many of us, hypothetically, have been in a service listening to a sermon, and then upon hearing the preacher's words and in conclusion got pulled out of daydreaming?

I'm just saying. Anyone have that experience? We got Paul's version of that here. He says, finally, brothers. Right? If I lost you along the way, here's the time to re-engage.

I got one final point to make, and it's really, really, really important, so much so that I know I've said it before, but I am going to say it again. Rejoice in the Lord.

[4 : 50] And let me just say, for somebody to repeat themselves in written form back then, that actually cost something. That was a big deal because parchment was very expensive.

But that's what Paul does. He says, you know what, it's not a trouble for me to write this, to say this to you again. It's worth the price that I'm paying to do it because this truth is so important.

He actually calls it, it's safe for you. Actually, the word there, it's your safeguard. This truth about rejoicing in the Lord, it acts as a safeguard for you. And then the next verse, he goes to write why it's a safeguard.

He goes into what we're being guarded against, right? He talks about those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. And so right away, rejoicing in the Lord, we learn something about this and what it helps safeguard us against.

It keeps us safe from being infected by false gospels. Like Paul literally is hanging out at Beware of Dog sign here. But the warning isn't about rabid dogs in the church.

[5 : 55] It was for rabbis that had spiritual rabies is what's going on. To make sense of what Paul is trying to communicate requires some historical context here.

See, Christ died, rose again, ascended into heaven, and left to the apostles the task to multiply themselves, preach the gospel.

And that gospel began in Jerusalem. Then it spread to Judea. Then it spread further and further afield. But it began amongst Jews. It began with spreading amongst Jewish converts who were very devoted to Judaism.

And so, you know, there was confusion in that early church and in those early days as to the extent of Jesus's saving work. Was faith in him? Was faith in the cross, his death and his resurrection?

Was that enough? Or was it just a good start that also needed to be finished or completed by one's ability to keep the law of Moses? That was the tug, right? That was the argument back then.

[6 : 55] It started way back then. And you know what? We still wrestle with that same thing today, to be honest. How much of salvation is God's free gift of grace?

And how much is actually our responsibility to earn it? Some of the early Jewish converts to Christianity were also teachers of the law of Moses.

And so they both believed that Jesus was Messiah. They believed that he died and that he rose again. But they were also very zealous for the law of Moses. And they demanded continued obedience and observance to it.

They were called Judaizers. They were having a hard time navigating the relationship between their former and their new reality. And so they kind of had this interesting gospel.

It wasn't the pure gospel. It was an infected gospel that said you're saved by faith in Jesus and what he did for you, yes. Plus observing some other important Mosaic laws.

[7 : 55] And you have to realize what's going on here. For these guys, these new Jewish converts, for them, these Judaizers, for them, God's salvation was closely identified with being God's people.

And for a Jew, especially for a male particularly, that required the mark of circumcision. That was the symbol. That was the sign that you were in the tribe.

That you were one of his chosen. Right? Circumcision. There I said it. But sorry if this is the Sunday you chose to bring your friend to church for the first time.

And for your friend who's sitting there thinking, I've made a huge mistake. Just hang in there. It's going to make sense real soon. And I don't want to say it could be worse. Okay? I grew up in church in the 1980s.

And, you know, back then we kind of assumed everybody knew all the Bible stuff that was walking in. And, you know, at least in my church, we sang a song on Sundays that repeated the line, We are the circumcision that worship God in the Spirit.

[8 : 58] Right? And, right, straight from Philippians 3. Before you go boo-hoo on that. I was like, hey, they were singing the Bible. And it was a real toe-tapper. Right? It was kind of upbeat. It was a charismatic church.

So, imagine the scene, you coming into church for the first time, and it's something that looks like river dance meeting, people like singing, we are the circumcision that worship God in the Spirit over

and over and over again.

Right? That would be a tough one. That would be a tough one to get through. I'm just saying there's worse ways to, like, hear about circumcision for the first time in the church. Okay?

Here's the good news for us, you and me today. Okay. Paul won the argument here. Which means grace won. You don't have to be circumcised to put your own final stamp on the saving work of Jesus.

Now, you might be thinking, okay, Jess, so what? Who cares? Well, you should. Because it bears upon our faith today as much as it did back then. Because back then, the cultural pressure and beliefs around circumcision were incredibly pervasive, and they had significant religious meaning.

[10:13] Circumcision wasn't this meaningless thing. Okay? To be circumcised meant you bore the mark, proving that you were one of God's chosen people. You were in the tribe. You were good to go.

So can you see then how this is a contradiction with the gospel? And it was infecting people with this idea. It's Jesus, yes, but it's Jesus plus.

That's what they were bringing into this, this false gospel. This was the spiritual rabies that they were trying to infect the church with. And Paul is saying, look, if you do Jesus plus, you're not rejoicing in the Lord.

You lose. Jesus plus anything is nothing. So what are we left with then? Well, this. Jesus plus nothing is everything. And I'm not the first one to say that.

But it needs to be said over and over and over again. Because we so easily forget it, right? We Jesus plus stuff all the time, right? So we think, man, when you start to have a gospel of, man, it's Jesus plus my church attendance.

[11:21] Or it's Jesus plus my tithing. Or it's Jesus plus my passionate praise. Or it's Jesus plus my 20 years of ministry record. It's none of those things.

It's Jesus plus nothing. And that's rejoicing in the Lord. That's putting no confidence in the flesh. Any good endeavor done as a disciple of Jesus does not commend us to God.

Period. End of story. It is not why he saved you. God isn't, he didn't have like this sneaky thing of he's eternal. And you know what?

I'm just going to peek around the corner of time and see what's going on there with Yuri and Karen. And they're like, ooh, they're good people. I'm going to save them. And he didn't peek around, you know, Alex and my John and me like, meh.

I'm just kidding. We tease the ones we love. He didn't do that. He didn't look ahead and say like, oh man, I'm going to just save the people that are already looking that great.

[12:25] Why? Because if it worked like that, then you know what? There's something for you and me to boast about. But it says there in verse 3 that Paul says, we worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus.

And I can do all sermon just on what it means to worship by the Spirit of God and all that's implied there. Really, it means that like since Jesus died and rose again and sent him into heaven, we are in a new age.

The Greek word is eschaton, from which we get eschatology. And from now until the end of time, we are in the age of the Spirit by which everything past is gone. The temple stuff, all the stuff that depended on man and all those things, Jesus did it.

He fulfilled once and for all. And now we are living in a new age, a new age of the Spirit. We worship in the Spirit. That's what we do. And then we glory in Christ Jesus.

That Greek word for glory means to take pride in. It means to boast. That's what it's getting at. So where's our boast? It's in Jesus. What's missing from those two things?

[13:25] Worshiping by the Spirit, boasting in Christ Jesus. Our flesh, our effort, our strength, our resume. See, circumcision here symbolizes man's ability to do something that commends himself to God.

And this passage is taking all that away. At church, in my early 20s, a guy came up to me telling me how he goes evangelizing on the streets on the weekends.

And I was like, cool. But then he went on to say this, you know, only the real Christians evangelize. Man, homeboy got bit by a false gospel. He had spiritual rabies.

Evangelism, that is a good thing. But evangelism as a marker of who is in and who is out of God's chosen people, that is putting confidence in the flesh. That's Jesus plus.

Here's another one. I've heard it said many times, heard it said many times in charismatic circles, kind of the world I grew up in in church, that if you don't dance during worship, you probably maybe may not be saved because like if you really understand what Jesus did for you, you got to dance. [14:38] Is dancing a legit way to rejoice in the Lord? Absolutely. Is it proof of somebody's salvation? That's Jesus plus.

That's spiritual rabies. Look, rejoicing in the Lord can be expressed in many, many different ways. But here's the thing, friends.

None of them earn your salvation. Rejoicing is a response to what Jesus has done. Rejoicing in the Lord is Jesus plus nothing, which requires us to believe this about our efforts.

We have to be confident that our best is worthless. Just let that sit in your heart for a little bit. I mean, it's so funny that time.

I mean, we did not get together like, I didn't have a phone call with Leslie saying, hey, this is what my sermon's about. Can you talk about weakness and strength in the beginning? The songs that Philip led us in.

[15:35] I mean, there seems to be an interesting tie-in and theme that's been going on from the very beginning of the service. But that's what's happened. Don't put your, like, your confidence in your best is pointless.

It's pointless. It would be what the preacher of Ecclesiastes calls vanity of vanities. You'd be hopeless, worthless. It's a vapor. It has no substance.

It has no meaning. It has no value. And then Paul goes on. It's why Paul goes on about himself in verses four to seven. He is, like, giving us his religious resume.

And to anyone hearing it in his day, that would have been, like, really, really impressive, all the stuff he said about himself. It is like Billy Graham meets Tim Keller meets John Mark Comer meets Mother Teresa, right?

It would be, like, that impressive. He's got all the markers that the most devout religious followers of God had and could have in that day.

[16:37] He says, I am a true Jew. I am circumcised. I'm of the tribe of Benjamin, right? I am of that tribe. Like, and I can prove my lineage all the way back. I was like that tribe of Judah.

We weren't like those northern tribes that kind of, like, mingled and didn't have pure religion, you know, the Samaritan folks. I'm a Pharisee. I'm considered—I was a part of the most fundamental sect of the Jewish religion.

You know, to be a Pharisee, you had to have the law memorized. Like, he could quote the Bible from heart. It was that much in him. And he knew it, and he could teach it, and he strictly obeyed it. And he could say with confidence, according to the law of Moses, I was blameless. I did all the things. And you know what else? I was zealous for God. I was zealous for the pure religion of the law of Moses, for it to be followed, for God's people to obey God and not follow it after any false things.

And so he says, like, you know what that led me to? I thought I was doing the right thing by persecuting the church. That's how zealous I was for God. I wasn't going to put up with anybody that was spreading false teaching or upholding false teaching.

[17:48] But now he knows Jesus. Now he's got saved. Now things have changed. And so now he says, you know what all those things? Rubbish. Worthless. Vapor.

Actually, the word he uses implies that none of those things ended up being an asset at all. In fact, in the gospel of grace, in Jesus plus nothing, those things were a detriment.

They were a liability. Translate that to you and me today. Your most successful evangelistic day won't get you into heaven. It will not commend you to God.

A perfect record of daily devotions for the rest of your life won't get you into heaven. They will not commend you to God. Giving all your money and possessions to the poor won't get you into heaven.

It will not commend you to God. Keeping the Ten Commandments won't get you into heaven. It will not commend you to God. Being a member of a church and arriving on time and serving there won't get you into heaven.

[18:48] It will not commend you to God. Fostering, adopting, social justice stuff, anything that you can get involved in, it won't get you into heaven. It won't commend you to God.

All those things would be what people, religious or non-religious, would call deeds of righteousness, right? And here's the thing. I believe, because the Bible says so, that Christians should do deeds of righteousness.

Right? We see in Ephesians, he says, man, the Lord has prepared good works for us to walk into and to do. Right? Now, here's the thing.

You can do a lot of religious things. You can do all the stuff I said and more. You can pull off evangelistic crusades like Billy Graham. You can feed the poor in India for your whole life and commit yourself to that like Mother Teresa did.

And if you did that and you get to heaven and God says to you, show me your righteousness. And that's all you're depending on. This is what you got. Here's my righteousness, God.

[19 : 57] Little \$1 toy car. And then God brings out this brand new showroom ready Ferrari Testarossa. And he says like, you got anything like that?

Well, kind of. How about that? And he's going to say, it's not enough. And I can polish it up. How about now? It's like, nope. What if I pull out another toy car? Nope. You can do all that. But it's just not going to cut the mustard.

So stop boasting. Let's stop boasting in our \$1 righteousness. And let's just throw it away. Because it's worthless. Your best is worthless in comparison to Jesus.

Paul says in verses 8 to 9, And indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ, my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.

[21 : 07] In order that I may gain Christ. In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes through the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.

The righteousness from God that depends on faith. Friends, take hold of the righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus.

Let's do that. And now we're going to find out how we do that. Rejoicing in Jesus. It begins with this. Rejoicing in Jesus means taking hold of the one who has taken hold of you.

Rejoicing in Jesus means taking hold of the one who's taken hold of you. And this is the scandalous part of the grace of the gospel. You know, when you put your toy car on the table and God probably chuckles to himself thinking like that's really cute, but it's not going to be enough.

And then you know what he says? You know, I'm willing to put your name on the title of that Ferrari right next to Jesus's name. It's his.

[22 : 08] It belongs to him. But you know what? Because he loves you, he is willing to share all things with you. He is willing to share his righteousness with you.

And we're probably thinking, man, how much would something like that cost me? Nothing and everything. You don't have to earn it, but you have to receive it.

And in turn, what he wants for your name to be on that title next to his, he wants your heart. He wants your affections.

He wants your desire. And he wants your will. In short, he wants you. That's what he wants. And receiving means sharing in all that Christ has, and it means giving him all that you are.

And then and only then can you live a life of rejoicing in the Lord. And that is a life that doesn't keep track of what you've done. It's concerned with who you're becoming.

[23 : 11] A life of rejoicing in the Lord forgets what you've done. It forgets all the things behind you.

It's concerned with who you are becoming. Paul says he wants to become more like Jesus in verse 10. He wants to know him. He wants to know the power of his resurrection. He wants to share in Jesus' sufferings.

Become like him in his death. And that is Paul's confession of how he is taking hold of the one who has taken hold of him. And that might sound strange.

That might sound even contradictory. Rejoicing in Jesus means sharing in his sufferings and dying to myself for the sake of others. Taking up my cross, so to speak.

And it's going to be tough. It's not going to be super easy. And in those hard times, you know what? When things get difficult, we can start to focus on the suffering and lose touch with our Savior.

[24 : 10] But here's the thing, friends. He is always there. He hasn't abandoned you. He said he's never going to leave us or forsake us. Why? Because he's taken hold of us.

And so no matter where you are right now, no matter what's happening in your life right now, man, if you've had the, like, worst season of following Jesus and just feel like a total loser, just know that he has you.

He sees you. He has not forgotten you. He is near. He has taken hold of you. And it is never too late for you to take hold of him because of that.

And here's the thing, friends. The more you take hold of him, man, which means just receiving his grace, receiving what he has done for you, resting in that, enjoying wasting time with him, spending time with your Savior, enjoying his presence, knowing his voice and his truth and his promises over you and for his people.

The more you do that, the more he becomes the real prize in your life. And rejoicing in Jesus means keeping your eyes on the prize.

[25 : 21] Paul talks about, at the end of this, he talks about pressing on. Pressing on, making the resurrection his own. And he goes on to say why he does that, why he presses on.

Because he does it for the goal of the upward prize. What is the goal of your upward prize? If you want to get to heaven because you can't stand earth any longer, and you've missed the greater prize.

If you want to get to heaven because you would like a new body, maybe this one's breaking down. Can I get a witness? True, we're going to get a new body.

It's going to be amazing. But man, you've missed the bigger prize. If you want heaven just because, man, it sounds nice. It sounds easy.

It sounds fun. True. But you've missed the ultimate prize. The prize in heaven is Jesus. We get to be with him.

[26 : 24] Not like, we get to be with Jesus now. But like, and we get to experience his glory now. But guys, we can't even begin to fathom what it's going to be like to be in the fullness of his glory, in the fullness of his presence.

Like, that's going to blow our hair back, if we got any up there. But here's the thing. Heaven would not be heaven without Jesus.

That's it. And rejoicing in the Lord now will make you long for that upward prize that we are going to get one day of being able to rejoice in Jesus forever.

Amen. As the band comes up, and we look to respond. In a moment, we're going to take communion. And I want to say to you, my friends that are in the room and not yet followers of Jesus, man, congratulations for making it through the circumcision part.

Well done. Well done. Well done. But I want to be sober here. And I want to say to you, Jesus wants to take a hold of you.

[27 : 35] And that means you have to shred your resume. There is nothing that you can come with that he's going to be like, wow, I'm impressed with that. You've got to let it all go.

And you've got to not only shred your resume, you've got to rejoice in his resume. Jesus lived the blameless, perfect life. And he died to take on the penalty of our sin and your sin as well.

And through him, we get to receive that grace for us. It's literally, friends, it is just receiving that. You have to accept that as true.

You've got to accept and put your faith in Jesus as he says he is. As Savior and as King. And he is calling you today. And just remember, your righteousness amounts to nothing but a dollar toy car. And God is offering you something so much better today. Come and put your faith in him. And there's going to be an opportunity in a moment. There will be a prayer up on the screen that you can pray while we're taking communion.

[28 : 38] And I want to urge you, friends, put your faith in him. Come to him. It is the best thing you will ever do. Now to my friends in the room, if you're already a follower of Jesus, man, I really also want to commend to us and encourage and urge today.

Let's take hold of Jesus because he has taken hold of us. Let's stop boasting in our \$1 righteousness. Let's stop doing it.

Pursue him. Pursue your Savior. Enjoy him. Enjoy his presence. Enjoy time with him and with his people. You know, as we come to the communion table, we're invited to actually, I mean, think about, think about what we've been talking about.

Jesus has taken a hold of us. We get to take a hold of him. We come to the communion table. It kind of symbolizes that. We are taking hold of Jesus in a way. His body broken for us. His blood

shed for us.

We get to take those signs and symbols of that reality. And let's do that. Let's do that with faith. Let me pray. And you can go to the table nearest you.

[29 : 54] Take the bread and the cup. Bring it back to your seats. And just spend some time, a little bit, maybe with a friend or a spouse or a parent or whatever it is.

Maybe by yourself. Whatever you want to do. Just pray. Give thanks. And then partake of communion. So, Lord, I want to ask your blessing on this moment for your presence to be with us. And as we either respond with a prayer of repentance and salvation for the first time, that, man, you would lead us, lead my friends in the room that are in that place.

If you're helping us respond as we take communion, lead us on in that as well. We thank you for your goodness to us. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.