

Philippians 3:1-11 — Jesus Plus Anything Ruins Everything

July 12, 2020

Good morning CrossWinds! It is great to have everyone joining us in the building and online! Last Sunday, we celebrated COVID-friendly communion. We had sealed juice cups the size of coffee creamers with a wafer that tasted like Styrofoam on top. After church, a friend told me church just feels weird in a COVID world. After a communion like that, I agree. The good part is we are still getting together. That may be physically or virtually, but we are still meeting. Hebrews 10:25 reminds us that is important.

...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)

Gathering to study the Word of God and be encouraged by what it says is important. Gathering to sing the Word of God is also important for our walk with Christ. Being together to talk with one another and encourage one another as we live for Christ is important. In this COVID world of social distancing, don't give up on being together and encouraging one another. After church, encourage one another from a distance in the parking lot. If you can't come to church, call each other during the week to encourage people on the phone. Meeting together and being together is important for our walks with Jesus. It is as essential to our walks with Christ as water is to our physical lives. We need one another. We follow Christ together.

This morning, we are in Philippians 3. We are covering the first 11 verses. These are some great verses. We have a lot to cover. I will read the verses, then we will dive into our study.

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; 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 his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3:1–11 (ESV)

We will break our study this morning apart under three headings. They are: Religious people are dogs; religion is rubbish; Jesus is the answer. Before we dive into the meat of the text, Paul began with a transitional verse.

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Philippians 3:1 (ESV)

In these verses, Paul admitted he was writing to the Philippians something he already taught them, something they already knew. These verses are a little refresher course for the Philippians and for us. The reason Paul was reteaching them what they already knew was because it is easy to forget what we know in the busyness of life, so we occasionally need to go back to the basics so we don't forget.

If you have been around CrossWinds for any length of time, I hope this morning's study will also be a review for you. It should remind you about what you already know. That is not a bad thing. It is a good thing. We all need

reminders about things so we do not forget. If this morning's study is new for you, that is an especially good thing because we are going to talk about the most important thing we need to know.

Up to this point in the letter, Paul was very positive. He loved the Philippians. He prayed for the Philippians with joy. In these verses, Paul's tone changed dramatically. Paul used some very strong language, some very unsettling language. That is not because Paul was a grumpy old man but because he was a very concerned man who desperately wanted to save the Philippians, and us, from those who lie to us, deceive us, and speak untruths in order to warp our faith and twist the truth about Jesus. If we believe a lie about Jesus, it will ruin our relationships with Jesus and destroy our lives.

Since Paul was very upset when people spun and twisted the truth, if he was around today, he would be very upset with our media. Many journalists are spin doctors. They specialize in misrepresenting the truth to people. They are masters of deception. That is the kind of thing that made Paul come unglued, especially when it was truth about Jesus.

Who was Paul trying to protect the Philippians from because they wanted to deceive them? They were a group known as the Judaizers. Wherever Paul planted a church, they moved in and tried to undermine the church. Whatever Paul said, they would disagree with. Whatever he taught, they would try to refute. Anything Paul wrote, they would write a counter article. Every sermon preached, they would write a blog entry against it or a Twitter post undermining it. These were very wicked people who didn't want to just destroy Paul but they wanted to

destroy the faith of anyone who trusted in Christ. This is why Paul used some strong words against them in these verses.

If we want to boil it down to its most basic form, in these verses, the big ticket item Paul was concerned about was the problem of legalism. That is the temptation to think we are made right before God by something we do. It is the temptation to think we are made right before God, accepted by God, and forgiven by God based on our good works, not based solely on God's good work through Jesus. The desire to think we can save ourselves is deeply woven into the human heart, so it is very appealing. The problem is that it is a dead end road, and we are dead at the end of that road.

So these verses, and this message, is a refresher course on how we are made right with God. In a nutshell, the message is that we are made right with God by Jesus and Jesus alone.

Religious people are dogs.

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... Philippians 3:2-3 (ESV)

Paul pointed out there is a big difference between a Christian person and a religious person, between Jesus people and religious people. Jesus people understand they are sinners. They know they are saved by Jesus alone and they live new lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus people are filled with humility. We know we are not good people but Jesus is good. We know we have not lived good lives, but Jesus lived a good life. We know we don't deserve God's love but Jesus has given us God's love. Since Jesus people know they are completely undeserving people, that leads to

Jesus people being humble people because we know we didn't save ourselves. Jesus saved us. It was all a gift. We humbly receive it.

Jesus people live a life of joy. The pressure is off for us to perform. The pressure is off to make God happy enough to earn his favor. The pressure is off to be good enough to earn God's love. We are not good, but Jesus was good in our places. Once we trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives. The Holy Spirit is the one who empowers us to live God-honoring lives, not because we have to in order to be saved but because we want to now that we are saved.

In these verses, Paul contrasted Jesus people with religious people. While Jesus people are filled with humility and joy, he called religious people dogs, evildoers, and mutilators of the flesh. Those are strong words.

What did Paul mean when he called these people dogs? Many of us have pets. We love our dogs. Our dogs are trained, pleasant and man's best friend. In that day, the dogs he was spoke of were wild dogs that ran free. They terrorized people. They attacked people on the streets, biting them. As packs, they killed young children. They went to the bathroom everywhere. They chased and terrorized people. If you have seen wild dogs in Africa, that is a good picture of the kind of dogs described in these verses. Paul said religious people are like that. They are violent. They are mean. They bite people. They hurt people. Stay away from them.

Religious people masquerade as good people but **they are really evildoers**. They are very evil people who try to enslave you. They bait you into trying to live a lifestyle in which you think you are saving yourselves by living a

certain way. They tell you that if you just live by their rules, regulations and prohibitions, you will save yourself. Their long lists of restrictions do not save anyone. They frustrate everyone.

That is why God hates religion, in all of its forms. Religion is disgusting in God's sight. It is a sick and awful thing. Unfortunately, Christianity often wrongly gets put in the category of religion.

Christianity is not religion. It is radically different. **Let me detail the difference between Christian people and religious people.**

Many religious people don't rely solely on a list of prohibitions to save themselves. They also turn to Jesus. Religious people believe Jesus helps save us but Jesus needs help saving us. They believe Jesus isn't enough. They believe Jesus may do 80 percent of saving us but we need to do the last 20 percent. Religious people think Jesus couldn't do it all and didn't do it all. As a result, religious people are not humble. They are proud, critical, mean, and self-absorbed. They think they are good. They look in the mirror with pride thinking they are saving themselves. Either they think they saved themselves in full or in part with Jesus' help, but at the end of the day it is all the same. People rely on themselves in whole or in part to earn their way to heaven. The Bible says no one gets to heaven by earning it.

Christian people are different. We say all we have is Jesus. All we need is Jesus. All we trust in is Jesus. We believe we are saved by faith in Jesus alone and trust in Jesus alone is what makes us right with God. We believe Jesus plus anything ruins everything.

Paul called religious people not just evil doers, **he called them mutilators of the flesh**. What does that mean? Paul was referring to the Judaizers, who were the religious people of his day. They came to cities where Paul preached the gospel and preached a different gospel. They would say, "Paul was right about Jesus, but Paul only had part of the story. You do need to trust in Jesus to be saved but you also need to adopt Jewish customs and Jewish traditions to be saved. After all, Jesus was Jewish. Shouldn't you be Jewish?"

One of the Jewish customs was circumcision. The Judaizers said that for adult men to be saved, they didn't need to just trust in Jesus, but they also needed to be circumcised. As you can imagine, the thought of a sharp object near a very sensitive part of a man's body sent Gentile men running from the church in fear. They were interested in following Jesus but were deathly scared about being circumcised. I don't blame them one bit.

The Judaizers said that to be saved you needed Christ plus circumcision, plus Jewish holidays, plus Jewish customs, plus Jewish clothing. They said Jesus was not enough. Jesus did 80 percent of saving us. We needed to do the last 20 percent. As a result, that had people looking in the mirror thinking they saved themselves either in whole or in part by what they did. That doesn't bring anyone to God.

Let's take a moment to talk about circumcision. Where did it come from? Circumcision came from the Bible. When God called Abraham, and God began making the Jewish nation from the descendants of Abraham, God told Abraham to circumcise himself as a sign of the relationship between him and God.

Circumcision didn't put Abraham in a right relationship with God. It was an external sign that he was now in a right relationship with God. Circumcision was like a wedding ring. Wearing a wedding ring doesn't make you married. It is an external sign that you are married.

The point of this is that circumcision was a sign for the Jews that they were God's people. The sign isn't what brought them into a relationship with God. It only showed others they were in a special relationship with God. When Jesus came, how did things change? The Bible says that when Jesus came the Old Testament signs that pointed to him were fulfilled. They were no longer necessary. We need to picture the Old Testament like a massive Google Maps program. It points us to our destination, which is Jesus. It helps us find Jesus and recognize Jesus, but once we arrive at our destination, we don't need Google Maps anymore. It is the same way with the Old Testament and Jesus. The Old Testament leads us to Jesus, but once we have Jesus, we don't need the rules and regulations that brought us to him.

For example, in the Old Testament, the Israelites had a temple. The temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and never rebuilt because we don't need it. Before Jesus came, God dwelled among his people in a building, the temple. Now that Jesus has come, God dwells among his people in a body. The temple as God's presence among God's people was no longer needed after Jesus came. In the Old Testament, there were priests that would mediate the relationship between God and the people. Nobody could come to God directly without a priest. The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is now our great high

priest. We don't need Old Testament priests any more. We go to God through Jesus, who is our great high priest who made obsolete all Old Testament priests. In the Old Testament, they offered sacrifices for sin. We don't need to offer sacrifices for sin. All the Old Testament sacrifices did was point to Jesus. The Gospel of John says we now have Jesus. He is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Animals sacrifices are no longer necessary. That all pointed to the need for death to pay for sin. Now that Jesus has died for sin, the Old Testament sacrifices that point us to him are no longer necessary. We have arrived at our destination so the massive Google Maps program that pointed us to Jesus is no longer necessary because we have arrived.

Look how Jesus spoke about his relationship to the Old Testament.

[“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Matthew 5:17 \(ESV\)](#)

Jesus said he didn't come so that we would throw away the Old Testament. He came to fulfill the Old Testament. He came to show us how everything in the Old Testament was pointing to him and preparing us for him. We no longer need all the Old Testament Jewish rituals and traditions now that Jesus has arrived.

The religious people, the Judaizers, were coming into towns after Paul told people about Jesus and they said, “You need Jesus plus to obey all the Old Testament commands.” They were saying Jesus' death on the cross for you was not enough, that we need to do more than trust in Jesus to be saved, that we need to be Jewish to be saved.

That is the definition of religion. Christianity says faith in Jesus is enough. Jesus did it all. Religion says, “Jesus did some of it. I need to work hard to do the rest of it.” Paul said Jesus plus anything ruins everything.

Thankfully, Judaizers do not exist today. We don’t struggle with that problem in the church. While the Judaizers, who wanted to add Jewish tradition to Jesus, no longer exist, there are plenty of people who are using the identical strategy of telling us to trust in Christ’s work plus our work to be saved. It is a deadly combination. Let me show you show examples.

Some people say to be saved you need to trust in Jesus plus live a moral life. They say we need to be good people for God to love us. We need to try really hard. We need to help people. We need to recycle. We need to give money. We need to coach kids soccer. We need to feed the poor. We need to contribute to a cause. We need to pick up litter. They say we trust in Jesus to be saved but we also must live good and moral lives to be saved. That sounds good, but it is not the gospel. It is a formula that will send people to hell.

Other people say that to be saved we need to trust in Jesus plus be religious. We need to trust in Jesus plus speak in tongues, plus be baptized, plus vote for a certain political party, plus be a home-schooler, please wear Christian T-shirts. All these things, whether in their moral form or in their religious form, take away from the sufficiency of Jesus.

Paul said people who are teaching you that you need to do something besides place your faith and trust in Jesus to be saved are dogs. They are evildoers. They are dangerous people. They are enslaving people to lists. They

are destroying people's relationships with God, because instead of trusting in Jesus alone to save them, they are trusting in themselves to save them. The only way to be saved is to trust in Jesus alone, not in our good works. Paul then moved from talking about the danger of religious people to talking about the danger of religion itself.

Religion is rubbish.

...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. Philippians 3:4–6 (ESV)

Paul had an impressive resume.

In these verses, Paul gave us his resume before becoming a Christian. You and I will all stand before God on the day of judgment. Paul was thinking about that day. He was living his life trying to write a good resume for that day. Paul lived a very devout life. He expected God would be very pleased with him on Judgment Day when he whipped out a resume of all the good things he had done. He thought God would put his stamp of approval on it and that would get him into heaven.

Paul said that if anyone thinks they have confidence in the flesh, he had more. Paul challenged people to try and beat his resume.

...circumcised on the eighth day...

Jewish parents were to circumcise their sons on the eighth day. Paul said that he grew up in a good Jewish home with good Jewish parents who did everything proper and right. They circumcised him according to the Bible on the eighth day after he was born. He was circumcised as early as possible. He

wasn't a Gentile who became a Jew later in life and was circumcised as an adult. Paul was a Jewish thoroughbred. If the Judaizers wanted to focus on circumcision, you couldn't have a better circumcision than the one Paul had in his life.

...of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin...

Paul didn't come from just any tribe. Benjamin was a distinguished tribe. The Promised Land was divided among the 12 tribes. Jerusalem was in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. When the kingdom split into the northern and southern kingdoms in the Old Testament, only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty. As a Jew, Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews because he came from the highly-esteemed tribe of Benjamin.

...as to the law, a Pharisee...

The Pharisees were the most devoted sect of Judaism. They weren't content to follow the hundreds of rules in the Old Testament. They made up additional rules beyond the Old Testament and enslaved themselves into following those man-made rules as well. They were so fastidious about this that Jesus made fun of them because they insisted on giving a tithe of the herbs they grew in their potted house plants. They trimmed five oregano leaves off the oregano plant to season a meal. They put half of one leaf into a Ziploc bag for the offering plate. They were crazy fastidious about observing all the Old Testament rules. You couldn't beat the precision of their lives when it came to following God's law. Paul was that guy.

...as to zeal, a persecutor of the church...

Before he came to Christ, Paul was especially fired up about persecuting anyone that was a Christian. He went out of his way to destroy anything and anyone that did not follow traditional Jewish customs. Paul was holding the jackets of people who killed Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Paul wanted to make sure they could get maximum velocity out of their pitching arms when it came to throwing rocks to kill Stephen. Paul even traveled from town to town arresting and imprisoning Christians. You could think about Paul like a modern day rioter. He traveled from city to city to burn Christian businesses, loot Christian households, ruin Christian lives, and take them away in chains to be held for trial in Jerusalem. That was Paul. Who could beat his passion for God?

...as to righteousness under the law, blameless...

The Old Testament has more than 600 commands. Paul was not saying he was sinless and had never broken any of them. He claimed he was blameless. That means if he broke a command, he fastidiously offered the sacrifice for forgiveness of that sin. As far as other people were concerned, Paul was spotless.

That was Paul's resume before he met Jesus. That is what he was trusting in for the day he died and stood before God. Paul was filled with pride. He couldn't wait to show God all he did. He was sure God would be pleased and welcome him in to heaven.

Then Paul met Jesus, and things changed.

Paul threw away his resume.

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. Philippians 3:7–8 (ESV)

Paul said religious people have a resume. They say, “Here are all the good things I have done and the bad things I haven’t done. I want God to look at my resume, stamp me as a good person and let me in to heaven. I earned it.” Paul said, that was how he used to think until he met Jesus. “Now I consider my resume rubbish.” There was only one word on Paul’s new resume. It was the name Jesus. Jesus lived the perfect life because Paul couldn’t live the perfect life. Jesus died the death Paul deserved. Jesus paid the penalty for sin that Paul deserved to endure. Jesus rose to new life to give Paul new life he didn’t deserve.

I ask you, what is on your resume that you plan to show Jesus when you die? Do you plan to show God a list of all the kind things you have done to show him you have been a decent, moral, and good person. Do you think God will give you a passing grade because you are better than most or not bad as some?

Paul said all of his old achievements were rubbish. They were worthless. They were useless when it came to his relationship with God. If you think your life is good, trust me, it isn’t as good as Paul’s life. If Paul’s resume was worthless, that means your resume is also worthless.

Let me talk about the word rubbish. While I like our ESV translation, the word rubbish is a rather soft English translation of a very strong Greek word. I am not trying to be crass, crude, or sensationalistic when I tell this to you but the Bible uses some very bad words to describe some very bad things. Religion is a very bad thing, which is why the Bible uses bad words when talking about it.

Religion, which is thinking you can earn your way into God's favor by doing a few good deeds, is extremely offensive to God.

The ESV uses the word rubbish. Some other translations use the word refuse, others use the word filth, others use the word dung. Religion, that is trusting in a list of all the good things I have done to earn my way into heaven, is so offensive to God that to him it looks like a hot steaming pile of dog poop. Yes, God is extremely offended at us trying to use our good works or think our good works will in some way contribute to taking care of the problem of sin and bringing us to heaven. Those good words look like a big dog turd on the lawn in the eyes of God. Incidentally, there is a translation of the Bible from the 17th century that uses the "s" word to translate this word, but that is what our good works look like to God.

Why are our good words so offensive to God? Think of this from God's perspective. Our sin is such a serious thing and even one sin is enough to send us to the lake of fire for eternity. Our sin is so serious that the only way to solve the problem of sin was to have God's own son become one of us and die for our sin. The idea that a commitment to recycle and pick up litter will in some way deal with our problem of sin and merit us heaven is ludicrous. It is insulting to God. That is why God is so offended and repulsed by the idea.

As I said, thinking we can earn a right relationship with God by good behavior completely miss the seriousness of our sin and misunderstands the incredibly steep price that needed to be paid by God to save us from our sin.

If that doesn't connect with you, we can go to the Old Testament to drive the point home.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment... Isaiah 64:6 (ESV)

When it says all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags, that isn't referring to the old shirt I wear when I change the oil in my truck. The Hebrew word behind this is much stronger. Here again we find this word under-translated to avoid offending people. A polluted garment refers to a woman's menstrual cloth. Isaiah says all of our attempts at self-salvation by doing a few good things are as offensive to God as a used menstrual cloth. I tell you, God is extremely offended when we think we can save ourselves by a few good works and we ignore Jesus' great, costly, and final work.

Some of you are getting upset with me. "Pastor Kurt used dirty words in church. He talked about dog poop." Before you get too upset, remember I read these words out of the Bible. God wrote them. I just read them. The Bible says all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, correcting, and training, in righteousness, so it is good for us to hear them. For me to hide what God actually said in these texts would be a great disservice to you because you wouldn't realize how offended God is when we think we can save ourselves with good works and how angry God is when we think Jesus did part of the work of saving us and we need to do the rest of the work. The very concept of rejecting Christ and trusting ourselves turns God's stomach.

This is the difference between religion and Christianity. Religion says you save yourself. Christianity says God saves you and you do nothing other than

trust what Jesus has done. To drive a nail into a board, you need to hit it multiple times with a hammer. To drive this point into our heads, let me hit it multiple times to show you what I mean.

Religion is all about me and what I do. Christianity is all about Jesus and what he has done for me.

Religion says that if I obey the rules, then God will love me. Christianity says God chose to love me through Jesus even when I wasn't obeying the rules. When I trust in Jesus, God gives me a new nature and a new power so I can obey God's laws.

Religion sees good people and bad people. God loves the good people and hates the bad people. Christianity says all people are bad people. All have sinned and fall short of God's glory. The only good person to walk the planet was Jesus. I trust in him to get forgiveness of sin and any goodness in my life comes from his life to me.

Religion is about what I must do to please God. Christianity is about what God has done for me through Jesus because I can't please God.

Religion is about me trusting in my works. Christianity is about me trusting in Jesus' finished work.

Religion confuses justification and sanctification. Justification is how we are made right with God. Sanctification is how we live for God after we are made right with God. Religion says if you live a sanctified life — a good life — then God will justify you and accept you. That is wrong. The gospel says Jesus died for me. I am justified and made right with God not by my works but by trusting in Jesus'

finished work on the cross for me. It is after I trust in Jesus to save me that God sends his Spirit and puts his Spirit inside of us and begins the sanctifying process in me. God changes me from the inside out after I trust him to save me, not before I trust him to save me. We don't need to fix ourselves to be saved by Jesus. After I trust in Jesus the Holy Spirit starts changing me from the inside out. It is after I am justified by Jesus that the Holy Spirit gives me new desires in my heart and a new power to carry out those good and God-honoring desires.

Religious people hate to repent. They believe they are basically good. They believe that if you acknowledge your sin or admit your sin, you are taking away your goodness. Religious people hate to say they are sorry. They hate to admit they have done something wrong. Christians are different. There is room for repentance. We repent of our sin to Jesus all the time. Since we are saved by Jesus, not our perfection, we can admit our sin. We can say we are sorry for our sin. We can confess our sin.

Religion leads to uncertainty in our standing before God. When we die and stand before God, will you go to heaven or hell? Religious people don't know. They don't know if they have been good enough. They don't know if they have tried hard enough. For Christians, it is different. We know our standing before God at all times. It is always good as long as we are only trusting in Jesus. In the Bible, it is very simple.

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:12 (ESV)

Religion leads to pride or despair. Pride for the really devoted people, pride for the people who have put many spiritual notches in their religious belts.

They look down on others because they see themselves as better than others. The other result is despair. Those are the people who have tried to measure up but just can't. They have tried to say no to sin but keep falling into the same trap of sin. They are filled with despair. Rather than being proud of themselves for all the good things they have done, they are filled with despair because they can't consistently do good things.

The gospel, the good news of Jesus, goes the opposite direction. It leads to humility and joy. We are humble because we know we are not saved by anything we have done. No matter how good we are, we are not good enough. We are humble because Jesus loved us enough to be good enough for us and to die for us. We don't deserve that, so we are filled with humility.

We are also filled with joy. We are in a right relationship with God. We are forgiven by God and loved by God and the most blessed beings in the universe because Jesus loves us. How can we not be filled with joy?

So, religious people are like dogs. They want to ruin us and destroy us by enslaving us to rules and regulations they claim will make us right with God. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Religion is rubbish. The idea that we can somehow earn forgiveness of our sin and deserve heaven with a few good works is extremely offensive to God. It is like a big steaming pile of dog poop. It completely misunderstands the seriousness of our sin and what we deserve because of it. It misunderstands the costliness of the price that needed to be paid to solve the problem of sin. How

can you think a few good deeds will accomplish what only the Son of God on the cross could do? That brings us to the third point.

Jesus is the only answer.

Now that Paul dismantled religion, he showed us how to become a Christian. This may be new for some of us. It will be a review for the rest of us, but it will be good for all of us. Verse 9 tells us how a person becomes a Christian. Verse 10 show us how we lives as Christians. Verse 11 show us the eternity we look forward to as Christians.

If you want to use big religious words it goes like this. Verse 9 is about justification. Verse 10 is about sanctification. Verse 11 is about glorification.

Justification — I trust Jesus alone to be made right with God.

...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... Philippians 3:9 (ESV)

The problem is, only righteous people go to heaven. Only perfect people can be with God. Any sin cuts us off from God. Look how the Bible describes our state.

...as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." Romans 3:10–12 (ESV)

It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore. Isaiah 59:2 (NLT)

All of us are sinners. We sin in the actions of our lives and we sin in the thoughts of our minds. We sin by the things we choose to do wrong and the things we fail to do right. We may not be as sinful as we could be but every part of us is controlled by sin and addicted to sin. Our sin has cut us off from God.

There is no way we can get our sin forgiven by our own effort. Even if there was some monstrous costly price we could pay to pay for just one of our sins, 10 minutes after we paid for it, we would commit more sin because we are so addicted to sin. We are in a hopeless situation. This is why only God can rescue us. Praise God he did rescue us.

God made a way for us to be right before him. It is not a righteousness we earn by our behavior. It is a righteousness we are given by God because we could not earn it. It is a righteousness that comes to us by faith and faith alone.

When we trust Jesus to pay for our sin by his death on the cross, a great thing happens. Not only does our sin go to Jesus, but the righteousness of Jesus is given to us. When God the Father looks at us, he no longer sees our sin and our filth. He only sees the righteousness, purity, and perfection of his own son when he looks at us.

Martin Luther described what happens when we place our faith alone on Jesus to save us from our sin as the great exchange.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

When we place our faith in Jesus to pay for our sin, Jesus takes our place for the punishment we deserve, and we take Jesus' place for the reward, joy, and honor he deserves for living a perfect and sin-free life.

What could get better than this?

Trusting in Jesus to save us from our sin and asking Jesus to be in charge of our lives is the most important decision we must make in this world. It is more important than if we are black or white, if we are rich or poor, if we are well-

educated or a high school dropout. It is more important than the family we come from, the career we have chosen, the marriage we enjoy or the relationship we wish we had. Our decision about Jesus is more important than politics, than sports, and even more important than social media. What we decide about Jesus is the most important decision in our lives. The only way we can be saved of our sin is by completely giving up any attempt at saving ourselves, giving us any attempt at helping Jesus save us and trust Jesus alone. The only way to be saved is we need to burn our old resumes with their lists of accomplishments. We need new resumes with only one word on it — that is the name of Jesus and Jesus alone. That is the only way to be saved.

This is what sets Christianity apart from all other world religions. For Christians, Jesus has done all the work and all we do is trust him. For all other religions in the world, we must do all the work and trust ourselves. Let me show you.

Buddhists say you save yourself by ceasing all desires. Confucianism says we save ourselves by pursuing education, reflection, and a moral life. Hinduism says we save ourselves by detaching ourselves from ourselves and living in unity with the divine. Judaism says we save ourselves by obeying God's laws in the Old Testament. New Age says we save ourselves by connecting ourselves with the divine oneness. Taoism says we save ourselves by aligning ourselves with the Tao and learning to go with the flow. Islam says we save ourselves by following the five pillars to earn our way to heaven and hoping our good deeds will outweigh our bad deeds.

In all honesty, Christianity should not even be in the same category as all the other religions of the world. What we believe is very different. All other religions of the world are based on lists. They are instructions on how to attempt to save yourself. Christianity says there is no way we can save ourselves. Trying to save ourselves is terribly offensive to God. We trust in God's own son to save us. We just place our faith and trust completely in heaven, and ultimately, we do nothing beside believing completely and totally in Jesus.

I ask you, are you a Christian? If you die tonight and stand before God, what would you say? If you were to stand before a holy God, would you whip out a list? Would you whip out a resume of all the good things you have done? Would claim that since you are better than most people, things will go well? What will you do when God demands perfection in your life?

The only other option is trust in Jesus' perfect life rather than in the good works of your life. Will you trust in Jesus's righteousness and payment for your sin that God is offering to you? Will you receive the undeserved gift of Jesus today by faith? Will you trust in him alone?

Sanctification — Now that I am saved by Jesus, I want to know Jesus better and become more like him.

...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death... [Philippians 3:10 \(ESV\)](#)

Once Paul trusted in Jesus and was saved by Jesus, that wasn't enough of Jesus. Paul didn't get bored with Jesus but found himself constantly wanting to learn more about Jesus so he could know Jesus better. The focus of Paul's life became knowing Jesus better from that point forward. The purpose of our lives is

not marriage. It is not money. It is not entertainment. It is to know God better through Jesus. The most important thing you can pass on to your children is not a good education or a comfortable home, not that those aren't good things. The most important thing you can give your children is that they would know and love Jesus and then spend their lives pursuing knowing him better and loving him more. The purpose of life is to know Jesus better and love Jesus more. That is the focus of our lives on this planet — not money, marriage, travel and adventure.

Paul didn't just want to know Christ, but he said **he wanted to experience the power of his resurrection**. According to Ephesians 1:19, the same power that raised Jesus from the grave is at work in us making us into new people, giving us new desires for godly things and new power and strength to pursue those things. It is God at work in us. He makes us into new people. God takes our dead souls and sinful hearts, and after we trust him, he raises our hearts from the dead, Just what God did with his son's physical life when he brought him out of the grave he does in our hearts when he brings our souls from death and sin to life and freedom.

Paul also said **he wanted to know Christ's sufferings**. Let's not skip over this part. Paul said in other parts of the Bible that we are given the gift of suffering for Christ. This flies in the face of a popular belief called prosperity theology. Prosperity theology says we trust in Jesus to be healthy, wealthy, and rich. Trust in Jesus to have all the trials in your life go away. That is a lie. Paul did not say that. He said that if we pursue knowing Christ, there will be times when

we will find ourselves suffering and facing trials in our lives. That is normal. That is to be expected.

Remember the word that I said to you: “A servant is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you... John 15:20 (ESV)

Paul also said that when we find ourselves suffering for Christ, it is in our suffering that we will come to know Jesus better and experience him more. When we are suffering for Christ, we grow especially close to Christ as we call out to Jesus in our weakness and pain. It is then when Jesus comforts us and draws especially close to us.

Glorification — I look forward to eternity with Jesus in a resurrected body like Jesus.

...that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3:11 (ESV)

At first glance, Paul sounds confused. He said he looked forward to the resurrection of the dead *by any possible means*. What does that mean? Was Paul uncertain about the resurrection of the dead? Absolutely not! Paul was uncertain about the timing of the resurrection, not the fact of the resurrection. He thought the resurrection might take place in his lifetime. Jesus could have returned and given him a resurrected body before he died. On the other hand, Jesus' return might not be until far in the future. Paul knew his body may die, while his spirit went home to be with Jesus, and then his body would wait in the ground until the return of Jesus. When Jesus returns, that is when Paul's resurrection will take place.

The glorious hope we look forward to as Christians is not just that we are forgiven of our sins and made right with God because of Jesus. It is not only that

in this life we become more like Jesus as we get to know him better and love him more. It is ultimately that when we die, our spirits go home to be with Jesus.

When Jesus returns, the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead will raise our bodies from the dead. Our bodies will be transformed to be like Jesus' resurrection body. Our spirits will be united with our resurrected bodies and we will ultimately live in resurrected bodies on a resurrected planet where heaven and earth are combined and we spend our days serving and knowing Jesus.

Nothing could be better because Jesus is the very source of all joy in this world, like the sun radiates its light and heat.

Conclusion

Today was a refresher course for many of us, but it was new for some of us. We learned the only way to be saved. We learned religious people are dogs. They want to ruin your life by trying to get you to trust in yourself. Religious people want to enslave you to lists of do's and don'ts. We learned all religion is rubbish. All of our righteous deeds to earn God's favor are ineffective before God. They are repulsive to God. The good news is Jesus. By placing our faith in Jesus alone we are justified and made right with God. By walking with Jesus and knowing Jesus better in this life we are transformed to be made more like Jesus. By dying with our trust in Jesus we will not only be with Jesus when we die but just as Jesus' body rose from the dead to live forever, our bodies will one day rise from the dead to live forever.

My friends, get rid of the old resume. Burn that list of accomplishments that you think is a good thing but God thinks is an extremely offensive thing. Trust in Jesus alone. Remember that Jesus plus anything ruins everything.



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