



PHILIPPIANS: GAINING BY LOSING

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Scripture Reference: Philippians 3:1-11

Hi, I'm Adelle. We are going to be reading scripture together today. If you have one near, please grab your Bible. We are going to be reading Philippians chapter 3, verses 1 to 11. Please stand in your homes for the reading of God's word.

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worshiped by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh -- though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put 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; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, 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 is through faith in Christ -- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Good morning, Doxa. If you're new with us, my name is Donald and I'm one of the elders here and a pastor on staff. This is the last sermon for a while that we're going to walk through in the

book of Philippians together. For the fifth time as a church, we are calling on gifted and godly leaders from outside Doxa this summer to come and encourage and challenge our church -- It's a series we call Voices, and actually as a positive byproduct of COVID and travel restrictions, we actually have a very stacked lineup this year. We have Jackie Hill Perry, Jon Tyson, a pastor in New York City, John Mark Comer is coming back to share with us again, and his Australian counterpart, Mark Sayers will be with us as well. So that all starts next Sunday. You're not going to want to miss that.

We're going to be in Philippians 3 today. So open up those Bibles at home. I want you to see what God's word is saying and know that I'm not just making stuff up. The most important thing that we can offer you today in your home is for you to clearly hear God's word, for you to sing God's word, for you to pray God's word. And not just so that you would have more information or facts about God, but that you would actually grow in your affection toward him and live a little differently this week because you want more of him.

Paul is going to continue his letter, what we call chapter 3, like this. He says, Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

So Paul here is suggesting that he has shared with them before, probably in person when he was at the church in Philippi. And he doesn't mind coming back to that same message of the good news of Jesus Christ. That repeating the gospel is in of itself a protection, that the church will be protected from legalism and false doctrine, false gospels, by listening to, singing and praying the true gospel regularly.

It's as if each time we rehearse these things together as a church, we are laying down another brick in this wall of defense that shields us from attacks from the enemy. And to be clear, the enemy is the devil and his army, it is not non-Christians, it is not the Democrats, it is not the Republicans. It is the devil and he is our enemy. And so repeating the gospel over and over again, it builds up our defenses. It's like a tried and true medicine that cures what causes spiritual sickness in us.

So then why wouldn't every Christian just do that, right? If it's that easy, why would we not just do that? And I want to suggest that it's because we often avoid repetition as Christians, because we like to feed our heads and sometimes starve our hearts. We've been told that the medicine in our Christian life is new information. And in some ways I know this isn't your fault because it's how we were raised, it's our personality, it's where we've found success, it's our desire to keep things clean and tidy and not messy because we all know that when you start messing with the matters of the heart that things can get messy. And many Christians, particularly men, go so far to say that we should not trust our emotions, but only trust our thinking and rely on logic as if our theology would tell us that the fall somehow doesn't affect our ability to rationalize, doesn't affect our intellect, doesn't affect our thinking.

We've bought this lie, that discipleship happens in the head. If we believe rightly then we will behave rightly. That thinking is where the battle is won and we've reduced along the way Jesus to a subject to be studied. If we could just get our thoughts and our thinking straightened out, then we would finally crest the hill and really grow as believers.

You'll see this show up in a few ways in the church. You see it in the ways that we get antsy or bored, if we feel like the church or even our personal devotion times are repeating the same things, because new information is the medicine we want. You can see this in the way people will reduce belief to an intellectual decision, which is not what the Bible does at all. You can see it in all of the stale, bored and lifeless Christians wandering churches that have a whole lot of information in their heads about what Jesus said.

And you see it in the ways that many of us have been stuck in the same sins for a really long time. I want to, for a moment, describe two kinds of people in the church. And I want you to be honest with yourself about whether you identify with person A or person B. Person A, they do an occasional devotion, they hope that new insight will jump off the page. But there's this underlying disappointment that arises when this doesn't happen, and they find a general lack of motivation to read the Bible. Person B sees their devotion times more like a coffee or a lunch appointment with Jesus. Sometimes they read, sometimes they pray, sometimes they just sit in the silence, knowing that Jesus is there.

Person A shows up to Bible study or DNA with their discussion guide in hand, ready to share their insights, and it feels good to share what they know with others. When someone is struggling or hurting, they know just the verse to give them.

Person B enjoys DNA mostly because it's a space to be real. They often confess in that group and they feel grateful to have the group because it gives them a space to not feel so alone. Person A feels super nervous about sharing Jesus with their non-Christian neighbors, coworkers, friends, family, because they don't feel like a Bible expert. And they're afraid that they won't have all the answers to the questions that they might be asked about Jesus or their church or their faith. Person B loves spending time with non-Christians, loves asking questions about their lives. Typically others will do most of the talking, and non-Christians feel really comfortable around them.

All right, one last one. Person A walks in Sunday, they show up about 15 minutes late, because let's be honest, the sermon is the point of it anyway. A good Sunday is when they learn something new, but some Sundays they hear the same old thing again, and they wish they had stayed home.

Person B comes in, sees someone sitting by themselves, greets them, says hello. As the service starts and the songs began, they let the truth of God in those songs wash over them. And they let the volume of all the anxiety they felt in their own chest, and that volume turned down. They hear the Spirit applying familiar verses in new ways to their current struggles and victories.

Church, we can't continue to score our own discipleship with only head wins. We need heart wins, too. Facts alone about Jesus do not regulate my faith and my doubt. Facts alone about Jesus do not level out my good days and my bad days. Our thoughts and emotions, they change like the tides, which is exactly why we need the word of God to anchor us, but we need the word to shape our minds and our hearts for real change to happen.

And this lie about only paying attention to our heads, it will sabotage, if it hasn't already, your walk with Christ, because we are more than thinking creatures. Please don't hear shame in any of this, I feel the same thing in my own chest. What I'm trying to help answer is the question you might have. You might be saying, where has the passion and the heat gone from my relationship with Jesus?

I want you for a moment to picture your best friend, your favorite person in the whole world. And just think of this one question: Would you rather spend time with them or study for a test?

I have to believe that many of us approach the Bible as if the test is coming and we need to brush up. What I'm saying is your affections matter. And if you don't spend time figuring out the kind of people and places and practices that stir up your affections for Christ, you can guarantee watch the temperature in your own heart towards Christ continue to drop. A repeated gospel message will bore you. A repeated gospel message will frustrate you, and you will not enjoy the protections of the gospel repeated.

Is it possible that you don't need a new message? Maybe you need to take the risk to actually obey the things you already know to be true, to experience those things. The gospel is medicine to the soul. And that medicine still works. At Doxa we're going to keep coming back and administering that medicine over and over and over again. Do we ask our artists and our communicators to use their gifts, to tell the unchanging gospel and fresh ways? Yes, absolutely. And we'll do our best to apply God's word to our circumstances, but the power of the gospel to heal isn't in the newness. We feel no need to come up with a new message. We're going to continue to give out the gospel on as many Sundays as the Lord gives us.

What is the gospel? The gospel is that God made the world and you and I. We have all participated in the rebellion against him in countless ways. The cost of turning away from the source of all life is death. And our only rescue is the God man, Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven, walked in the same trials and troubles as you and I. Never once sinned. Always obeyed the Father, always believed the Father. He was killed like a criminal. He walked out of a borrowed grave after a few days. He gave us the Spirit, he went back to heaven, and he's coming back to clean house one last time on this earth, where anyone, regardless of age, skin color, background or track record is invited to trust him with their whole lives. Anyone who does so will enjoy him in a perfect, new creation forever.

This is the gospel. And it's a defense for us as God's kids. Paul says, it is for your best and no bother to him to repeat this over and over.

Paul continues in verse 2, he says, Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh -- though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

Paul now issues a warning to them and you and I, and he's saying, watch out. As my friend, Tony Murrieta, he's a Bible scholar and professor of theology in Raleigh, North Carolina. He says, False teachers have missionaries, too. And this is part of what Paul is warning us against. He's doing a bit of wordplay because the Jews commonly referred to the Gentiles, that is the non-Jews, most of us here at Doxa, as dogs. And this was a 10 out of 10 cultural insult. Dogs weren't pets in that culture. They wandered around, they were nasty, they were unclean. They were without a home. They spread sickness. They attacked people on occasion. This is not your boutique labradoodle. This is more like what we who live in Woodinville would think of when we think of the coyotes that come through. Wandering scavengers.

And Paul flips this term on them because they were adding requirements for the people of faith. They insisted that you and I needed to follow Jewish rules, do Jewish customs, like circumcision to make it into God's family. Instead of trusting in regeneration, they wanted mutilation. And I know for us in this context that sounds weird or off-putting, but this issue for them in this moment was searing hot. Not unlike all of the conversations around racism and injustice are for us right now.

And incidentally, believing that the most important thing about yourself is the appearance of your body is not terribly far from where many of us struggle. Is it? I mean, what happens in your heart when you gain or lose five to 10 pounds? There is no scale and no gym selfie that makes you worth more or less to the Father. And that's a sermon for another day.

So for these Jews, salvation looked like Jesus plus rules, Jesus plus rituals. And yet Paul, in another letter to the church in Galatia says, For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing. What matters instead is a new creation.

They were adding something to Jesus. So if you're new with us today, new to Doxa or new to Christianity, I want you to hear me say this very clearly. We are not Jesus plus _____ people. We are Jesus alone people. Jesus is the beginning and the end, he is the start and the finish. He is the top and the bottom, the East and the West. And his message, his gospel is not, as many have mistakenly believed the ABCs of Christianity, but the A to Z. It is the front and the back of everything we need in this life to endure every hardship, to remain strong in every suffering, and celebrate with more joy than anyone else.

Jesus himself is more sufficient as a savior, and his message is worthy of a lifetime of reflection and application.

And so Paul is saying, watch out. Watch out for those that add to Jesus. Watch out for "Jesus plus" people. Alarm bells should go off in our heads anytime we hear someone saying, you need to do more to be accepted than receive Jesus by faith.

And I'll tell you that includes the voice in your own head. In fact, you need to be extra suspicious of anything that sounds like this inside of your own head, because no one talks to you more than you do. No one gets more time on the mic.

Paul continues in verse 4, he says, If someone else thinks they have reasons to put 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; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

Man, there's so much crammed in this one passage, it's a whole sermon just in that verse. But here's how I would summarize it, in these few short sentences, Paul is saying this: your rituals don't save you, your ethnicity doesn't save you. I think of all the times I've heard people say, yeah, I'm a Christian, I grew up in the Russian church, I grew up in the Korean church, I grew up in the white Baptist church. Your ethnicity doesn't save you.

Your rank doesn't save you. CEO, CFO, Jesus doesn't care. In heaven there is a three person board with no vacancies.

Your tradition doesn't save you. Liturgies, doing things the old way, all good stuff -- cannot save you.

Your rule keeping doesn't save you. Your zeal doesn't save you. This one is a big one for us in this cultural moment, because so much of what culture tells us is if you stay true to your own hearts and chase it with everything you've got, that that's the best possible outcome. And Jesus says, no. Jesus says, it is actually possible for you to invest all of your passion and your energy and your time and your resources into the wrong thing in this life.

That's a hard word, but Jesus doesn't pull any punches. He wants to make it clear that we can waste our life chasing down the wrong things with all the passion in the world.

I live in a neighborhood in Woodinville that borders on a little residential lake called Cottage Lake. And our neighborhood has a little beachfront with access to that lake so we're down there in the summertime with the kids, the neighbors are all down there, it's a great, great thing, it's one of our favorite things about living where we do.

And a few years back, someone gifted me this old, seventies, plastic, little bass boat thing. And so we use that to cruise around the lake, I've got a little electric outboard motor, and we take the kids swimming and fishing, and enjoy our time out there.

But I was thinking this last week about our time out there on the water and at the bottom of the boat is this little plug. It's a little tiny plug that screws into the bottom. And when the boat is

on land, you take this thing out and you can drain any water that's come into the boat. When the boat is on water, this plug needs to be in the bottom, or you're going to sink faster than the Titanic.

And I was thinking this last week, how I can have all the passion and all the zeal and be convinced in my deepest parts of my being, but I don't need this plug in my boat to have a good time out there on the water. But that doesn't change anything. There is an objective truth. There is a fact, this saves me from disaster, and in the same way, our zeal will not save us. I can convince myself I don't need Jesus, but that doesn't change anything.

On the whole, in church world, I have seen two kinds of people avoid Jesus. And you have probably heard someone language this before. The legalist and the licentious. The self-righteous and the runaway. The religious and the rebel, the older brother and the younger brother from the prodigal son story.

And listen, I don't know who you are. I don't know what hangs you up. I don't know what haunts you. I do know that as a church on the whole, I think we lean towards the older brother. Now, both brothers need the medicine of the gospel. Both of them need it's protection, it's healing, they need to look in the face of Jesus and see that they are more love than they know. But Doxa, we lean older brother. And I want to speak plainly, self-righteousness is repulsive to God. And it's also repulsive to those outside the faith. It places mountains between the outsider and the gospel, where Jesus has made a straight path, and it's lethal to your own spiritual vitality. What does Christ say to those outside, to those not born again? Figure it out and then we can talk. Stop all your sitting first. That's not how any of us got into the kingdom. So let's own our self-righteousness when it arises inside of us, let's repent and run back to Christ.

So Paul here he's flexing on the Jews who were trying to claim superiority. He's saying I did all this stuff better than you. I thread the needle. I did the work. I did the religion. I did the rules. I did the rituals. And I'm saying to you, it doesn't mean a thing.

Paul continues in verse 7. He says, But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.

Catch this, please. This isn't hypothetical. This isn't maybe one day I will lose something. He's saying I have lost all things.

He says, I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ -- the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

He says they were gains. What's he saying church? He's saying there were things I gave my life to. There were things I cared a lot about. That occupied my thoughts. Determined what I did with my time. We have to remember Paul wasn't born holy, he has quite a past. And he has

learned over time that Christ beats the best of what the world offers. Compared to what I know now about the person of Christ, this stuff is like trash.

Think about the times you've experienced something that recalibrated your preferences. The first time you had a perfect steak, and it made every other steak seem a little less. I'm from Nevada and had a friend there for a long time, whose family owned a cattle ranch, 800 cattle, and I remember the day he brought me a pack of fresh ground beef from his ranch. Put almost nothing on that, threw it on the grill, was the best burger that has ever touched my lips in the history of my life. It was like seeing color for the first time.

Many of you, if you think back to the time when you met your spouse and you started dating them and you thought to yourself, yeah, there's something, there's something different here. This is one that rises above the rest. Those were JV, this is the real deal.

And isn't that how it works? You have an amazing experience when you're trying coffee or wines or cheese or cars or tools or even an app on your phone, and when you experience that kind of greatness, it clarifies what it looks like and changes your opinion about the previous. And that's what Paul is saying here is comparing his life before Christ to knowing Christ. And it's in that, that he sees how piddly this other stuff is.

And you might be sitting at home right now and saying, if I'm super honest, my life of Christ, isn't that great. I don't feel that peace. I don't feel that power.

Listen, in God's economy, faith is the currency. And you will not experience the power of the King unless you act in faith. You actually have to take some risks to enjoy the rewards. It's the players on the field at the end of the game that hold the trophy up. It's not the spectators, it's not the referees. And some of us are trying to work out this life of faith by doing as much as we can with no risk.

Faith requires risk. That's part of what faith is. In Matthew 14, Peter walks on water, you know the story. Here's my question for you, the next day, who is the most excited to tell that story? Whose life is the most impacted by the event in that storm? Is it Peter or the rest of the disciples in the boat? Who took the bigger risk? What I'm saying is nothing in the Christian life beats getting out of the boat. Not studying about getting out of the boat, not memorizing some scriptures about getting out of the boat, not gathering in a small circle with our friends and discussing what it might one day, hypothetically look like if one of us actually got out of the boat.

If you feel dry and dead in your walk, it's possible that it's not because Jesus is lacking because he is not. It might be because it's been a while since you have actually taken a risk in your faith.

All of the best stuff that we are promised are out there on the water, where the risk is. Do you really want to settle for dry, boring monotony of staying in the boat because it feels safer? I'm telling you, there's nothing safe about it. If you stay there, you end up growing cold, or in some

cases, even walking away thinking that you've tried Christianity, when in fact you've never even scratched the surface.

For some of you, the risk God is asking you to take involves walking away from something. And you have felt that tug in your heart for a long time. And maybe today is a day that your feet finally touch water. I'm telling you right now, the cost of losing that thing is probably far less than you actually think.

And I'll add this, if you have been living in sin for a long time, you need to be honest with yourself that you may not be seeing things clearly. You may need to listen to your community about the things that they say you should probably walk away from. And I get it, they might not have all the facts, they might not know all the details. But even in that, they still might be seeing things more clearly than you are.

Church, I get if you stare at the stuff in this world, it looks all right. And yet when we get a glimpse of the majesty of Christ, things get very real, get very clear, very fast. And Christ is so patiently gracious to show us that these same truths in our lives over and over and over again.

We'll finish with this, skip down to verse 10. He says, I want to know Christ -- yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

All right, I want you to turn to someone and say, here comes the good news. Good news number one, there is more to Christ. Of all the people on the planet, doesn't it seem like if anyone knows the power of the resurrection, it's the apostle Paul. Like, doesn't he get it already? Isn't he in? And yet he's here saying, I want to know Christ. Give me more. There is always more with Christ. He's inexhaustible. There's an infinite number of angles and ways that Christ lets us in a bit more. It's a lifetime membership because it'll take that long for us to scratch the surface. That's good news for me. I get easily bored and that's good news for you too.

You can't outpace him. You can't out do him. You can't outrun him. He sees you hiding behind your doubts and your let downs and your wounds and your fears and your insecurity that you repay and call confidence. He sees all of your mess ups, your church attendance, your job title, your resume, your marriage, your kids, your friends. He sees past all of that, and he sees you with more love in his eyes and you have ever known.

Good news number two, doubts and questions are welcome. Paul ends this section with this phrase. I want to know Christ, somehow attaining the resurrection of the dead. Here's what I'm saying. If the apostle, capital A Apostle Paul doesn't feel like he perfectly understands all the ins and outs of the resurrection, is it possible that even in the midst of your doubts and your questions, that God is a big fan of you?

Is it possible that God is not actually waiting for you to get your act together, but that you are already more loved than you know. That you have been loved since before time began, since your first mess up, since the first thing you ever did right, your first thought, your first word -- before you did anything at all, that God loves you.

God is not a disappointed dad. He is not an irritated manager. He is not an impatient landlord, frustrated with you because you haven't kept up on your spiritual rent.

He is the very definition of love. And coming back to him over and over and over again is where we gain protection and medicine for our heads and our hearts. There is no expiration date on the bottle of the gospel. So hold Christ up, alongside everything in your life. See how he's better. He's inviting you to drop whatever is in your hands, and finally get out of the boat. I'm telling you church, that's where all the good stuff is.

Pray with me. God, we need you to help us. We are easily distracted, easily discouraged, easily bored, help us receive the protection of repeatedly hearing and singing and praying the gospel. Give us the resolve to make changes. Maybe we've held onto something for a long time because of what it does for us. A source of income, a boyfriend or girlfriend, a title at work, a circle of friends, help us hold these things up alongside you to know their real worth. Give us the courage to ask if these things are moving us forward or holding us back. You invite us out of the boat with a hand that will not be moved or shaken. Help us get out there with you. Amen.