



## PHILIPPIANS OVERVIEW

Stuck in house arrest, Paul writes to encourage the Philippian church to live as citizens worthy of the Gospel in the midst of their suffering. Many of us are also suffering right now. During this pandemic, we are experiencing loss, but we are not losing. We are in this together, growing in Christ and in unity, and God is refining us through suffering and purifying us through loss. To live for Christ and die to self in community in the midst of suffering and loss is to Christ's glory and our gain.

Paul's letter to the Philippians is so apt for us today. We need his words that can enable us, in light of and because of Christ Jesus, to rejoice in the midst of suffering, trial and loss. Now is the time to be a united church on mission together, willing to lose it all for Christ's fame and our gain.

## WEEK 8: GAINING BY LOSING

Read the text: Philippians 3:1-11

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.

In today's passage, Paul reminds the Philippian believers again of the Gospel he had already preached to them. This reminder was necessary because the Gospel offers medicine we never stop needing. Just like Paul, the Philippians, and we along with them, often look to something or someone other than Jesus to save us. We look to our goodness, our position, our track record, our relationships, our families, and even our ethnicity or cultural heritage to save us. Yet Paul is incredibly clear; only Jesus can save us. And Jesus is ultimately better than all of those other things. Paul calls them, and us, to take the risk of putting our faith fully in Jesus; to step out of the boat and trust that He can give us all we need. And the good news is, there's always more with Christ! We'll never outpace Him, outrun Him, or grow tired of Him.

### **Discussion Questions:**

*These questions are written for DNA groups, but you can use in any setting, including missional communities. Because they were written for the intimacy of DNA friendships, you may need to adjust for larger groups.*

1. Pastor Donald reminded us that we all need the medicine of the Gospel and will never stop needing it. If you're honest,

are there ways you have begun to think you need something, or someone else, other than Jesus, in order to be saved? During the unknowns and uncertainties of the last four months, we may cling to what we can control, ultimately forgetting that only Jesus can save us. Maybe you want new (or more) information, a solid track record, the right relationships, good theology, or something else? What do you sometimes hope in to “save you” instead of Jesus? What would it look like to count those things as “rubbish,” as Paul says, in order that you might gain Christ?

2. Pastor Donald invited us to step out in faith alone in Jesus to save us. Faith requires risk. It's stepping out beyond what we can see. What are you holding onto because you're not sure Jesus is enough? What risk is Jesus asking you to take out of faith that He can give you what you really need? Take time to share with each other what it might look like tangibly for you to trust that Jesus is enough and to follow Him into the unknown.
3. Pastor Donald reminded us of the story of the prodigal son, from Luke 15:11-32. In the story, there are two brothers; the one who left and ultimately faced despair believing that his sin and failure was too great to be forgiven, and the one who stayed and believed his righteousness deserved good gifts from his father. How were both of them thinking little of their father's grace? Which brother do you think you resonate with right now the most? Depending on how each of you answer, take time reminding each other of the good news of Jesus.