

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11 MANUSCRIPT

1. INTRO

1. Good morning City Life. My name is Evan...partner here.

1. They asked if I could preach this summer and I said, yeah sure, and to be honest, I just picked a date that worked for me. And I went and looked at the corresponding passage, Philippians 3:1-11, by the way, and at first glance I was like, "Oh, this one easy! It's a pretty, straight-forward argument. Paul doesn't mention any weird stuff like visions or snake bites or anything so great. Easy."

2. But as I started to dig in a little, I realized, "This is actually hard."

3. Let me clarify, it's a hard sermon to preach IF I want to communicate something of substance to you...if we want to get anything out of it.

2. What do I mean?

1. There's a verse in this passage that you've heard before even if you don't go to church a lot.

2. "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ."
3. It's a very powerful text so what's the problem?
4. If we're honest, this is a verse that most of us tend to hear or read and we go.."aww...neat! well, let's grab some lunch."
5. It's a coffee cup verse! Or it's on a short-term missions t-shirt.
6. This is a very that we take and we stick on a coffee mug and we put it up there on the shelf and keep it at a safe distance.

3. Why?

1. I count everything as loss? I count my career as loss? I count my kids as loss? I count my most intimate relationships the people I care about most in life as loss?
2. Let's be honest, if we take this verse seriously AT ALL, then this quickly becomes a very intrusive concept. So instead, we keep it in the realm of an "ideal" and it ends up having little

to no practical value.

4. But the problem with that is...Paul didn't say this like it was supposed to be a cute ideal. He actually did decide at one point to give up everything in his life that he had worked for, every accomplishment and merit, he counted as loss when he stacked them next to Christ.
5. The question we should be asking is: **How is that possible?**
6. Look, if we're being honest, I would argue that most of us are in this spot where...we're Christians and we know we're supposed to love God supremely but, let's be fair, we usually don't do. We can't reconcile truly living that way...at least consistently.
 1. Day to day we love our security more. Our comfort more. Our money more. Our family more. Our identity more. Our control more than God.
7. And so for many of us Christ ends up being more of an accessory to life. Our faith doesn't actually have any major affect on how we live life or love or work or experience joy or pain.

8. And others of you...you're not a Christian. You don't care about loving God or maybe you don't even think God exists. I get that; been there.
9. But no matter what...there's not one person in this room who, if we met a guy like Paul at a party...cultural elite of his day yet he could said, "All that status and accomplishment and merit..I found something better. All the stuff that usually sucks up your life, it doesn't control me...because I found something superior and that other stuff doesn't compare."
10. There's not one of us that wouldn't at least be interested in exploring what on earth did you find, Paul?
11. I've heard this illustration before: When we're out at night and see the stars, they are beautiful and meaningful. But when the sun comes out we can't see them any longer. Not because the stars went away, but because something superior has come. A greater, brighter, more powerful thing.
12. What did Paul find?

2. TRANSITION

1. Let's take this passage that we've put up high in a safe place and abstracted....let's take it down off the shelf this morning and allow ourselves to feel the weight of it. I think we'll find that yes it's incredibly heavy, but it's also incredibly freeing.
2. Here's where we're going. We'll trace Paul's thought through a few headings this morning..first, we'll explore the idea of a **resume**, then we'll talk about **righteousness**; lastly, we'll talk about the **freedom** that's at stake...a freedom that represents a superior, brighter sun. Those are our headings this morning: Resume. Righteousness. Freedom. [Pray]

3. OUR HOPE IN A RESUME

1. We've got to briefly **set the stage** here.
2. Paul opens up in verse 1 saying...[read v1]
 1. *“Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. 2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no*

confidence in the flesh...”

3. CONTEXT

1. So, real quick, let me explain what Paul is doing.
2. It's not directly spelled out here but we know from the broader context that one of the things Paul wanted to address in this letter to his friends in Philippi was **false doctrine**...bad teaching.
3. There was a group of people called the **Judaizers** who were hanging around with the Philippians church. Saying that they were Christians, but long and short, they were teaching that, contrary to the gospel, you had to do a bunch of religious ritual stuff in order for God to love you.
4. And if you ever want to see Paul mad...this kind of thing that is going to do it. So he takes dead aim at this group calling them “dogs, evildoers, and mutilators of the flesh.”

1. Most revealing, I think, is the “mutilators of the flesh.”
2. Why? The Judaizers were teaching that one of the things you had to do to earn God’s affection was get circumcised. Now that was an important ritual dating back to the OT, but Paul was arguing, “Hey, because you’re doing this to earn God’s approval, you’re not really circumcising in the true sense, you’re just chopping away at people...the act is meaningless.” Paul is so furious because this kind of teaching led people away from the gospel which says Christ did all the work & there is nothing we add.
3. Paul then says of the Philippian church WE are the true circumcision WE worship God and know God and are in relationship with God NOT because we perform these little rituals but because we worship by the Spirit of God and we glory in Christ, that is we celebrate Christ and his work on our behalf. We don’t put confidence in all that religious stuff. The flesh. In other words, true, Spirit-led worship is internal rather than external. It’s a matter of the heart, not just the action someone performs.

5. So Paul writes and points out that this group was totally misaligned with the teaching of the Christian church and he's correcting that type of thinking... that's how he sets up our passage. Let's continue.

6. PAUL'S RESUME

1. We'll pick it up in vv. 4-6
2. *“4 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: 5 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; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”*
3. What is Paul doing here? Paul is giving us his list of accomplishments, this is his resume, if you will. Why is this impressive? Let's explore...
 1. Circumcised on the eighth day a people of Israel...that is he was **born into Judaism** and didn't convert over to it.

2. He was one of the two tribes that were true to the house of David..he was **racially** pure.
3. A Hebrew of Hebrews...he was **culturally** pure.
4. A Pharisee...that is, he had the **highest educational attainment** available at the time...he a **cultural elite**.
5. Faultless...he kept all the rules and laws...**ethically** pure.
6. Persecutor of the church..now we tend to think of that as a dirtbag thing to do, but it means that by cw was an **activist** and leader in his community.

7. CULTURAL EQUIVALENT

1. The Judaizers could not have scripted a better resume, by the way. Now I know, this list might not seem that impressive to us...we lose some of it. I mean, let's be honest, you're not likely going to put "Of the tribe of Benjamin" on your Tinder profile. Nor is that what you're looking for..."no, no," swiping left, swiping left, "oh!

Circumcised on the eighth day! THAT'S A MATCH!"

2. So let's translate this...what's the modern day equivalent?4

It would be like saying that you were born into an elite family...zipcode...K-12 school that has the world "Preparatory" in the title...then you followed family legacy and did undergrad at Stanford; onto MBA work at Harvard but ah ha you didn't finish because while at Harvard you invented a disruptive technology and sold it for a ton of cash and then you shifted gears and invented the tube top and now you live in the Bay area where you run your Venture Capital firm and do high profile philanthropy work and every few years you get invited to Taylor Swift's birthday party.

8. That's the kind of resume that Paul had in his first century world. You could not have asked for something more impressive.
9. This is everything he had worked his life to attain.

4. THE POINT OF A RESUME

1. Why did Paul give us his resume? He's making a point here about how we tend operate as human

beings. Remember the backdrop of Judaizers.

2. What's the purpose of a resume? Yes it's a list of your accomplishments and merits and your pedigree. But that's **CONTENT**.
3. The **PURPOSE** of your resume is what? To get you into a group that you're currently outside of. It's to gain entrance. To prove yourself. It's means to justify yourself. It's your ticket in.
4. And I think point Paul is trying to make is that, fundamental to being human, is this propensity to want to define ourselves by our resumes...our achievements in life...our pedigree.
5. Our default mode of operation is to use those things to manufacture our self-worth. To try and earn the favor and acceptance of others.
6. And if you think about it, our entire world is structured on this kind of economy. Want to get that job? Spruce up your resume. Want to get into graduate school? Work on your resume. Right school. Right experience.

7. But it also **goes beyond institutional acceptance**. We do this all the time **relationally**.
8. We're constantly sizing each other up based on what we do for a living, where we live, if we rent or own, where did you go to school, who are you with? And we use that information to determine whether we should let somebody in.
9. I know I said it jokingly, but what is a Tinder profile? A resume! You're trying to convince someone that you're at least worth a swipe.
10. Think about social media. For some of us, every time we simply post a photo we're trying to prove to the world that we're worth something. When's the last time you posted on Facebook saying, "Here's a photo of my amazing vacation spot on the Amalfi coast but I couldn't afford to go there because I don't make that much money and speaking of that I've made some bad careers choices and I'm also up like 15 pounds."
11. You've probably never done that, right? Because we're way too busy trying to make ourselves look great, earn the affection of our peers, prove to the world that we're worthy and lovable.

5. FROM EXTERNAL TO INTERNAL

1. It's bleak but gets worse, because it doesn't stop there -- Tim Keller, a minister out of Manhattan, calls this type of system an "economy of effort," and he says, "We don't just do this externally but we also do it internally. We apply this economy to ourselves."
2. We all tend to have this idea in our heads that we ought to be a certain way or have a certain type of position or make a certain amount of income by the time we're a certain age and if we don't live up these standards, we get down on ourselves. And some of us get depressed.
3. So not only do we use this economy of effort to determine whether we'll let others in, but we apply this same system to ourselves to determine if we'll even let ourselves in.
 1. Let me give you an example from a few years ago. I went to seminary. Wanted to work at a church. Cultivated concept of who I was going to be. Seminary graduation being a terrible day. 6 churches. What was going on?? For me, going to seminary and becoming a minister had become my identity. It was going to be the thing that made me worthwhile. And, because it

didn't work out, I was crushed. I hated myself. I was a failure. And I felt that way about myself for a long, long time.

6. TRANSITION

1. I don't know what it is for you. Maybe it's your job. Maybe it's your marriage or simply getting married at all. Maybe it's the image of yourself that you project, the person everyone thinks you are.
2. But the Bible is clear on the fact that, by default, we're all trying to manufacture our own worthiness. Our own righteousness. Something we can use to face the world, to face ourselves, to face God.
3. Because, deep down, we know that we're deficient. We know something is not quite right, so we cover ourselves. Adam and Eve...they had fig leaves...we have our resumes.
4. But, Paul knows this isn't going to cut it. We need something greater.

7. THE NEED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

1. He goes on to say in verses 7 and 8...[read vv.7-8]

1. ***“7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 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”***

2. Paul says here that he “suffered the loss of all things and counts them as *rubbish*.”

3. Now, this is one of those times that the original Greek language is a lot spicier than we typically translate. The ESV translation says “rubbish” others say “garbage.” The KJV gets a bit closer to the sentiment here saying “dung.” Paul is saying, **“All that stuff I accomplished, everything that I thought made me worth something before God and others and myself...it’s all crap.”**

2. What’s also interesting here is the accounting terminology of **gains and losses**. Assets and liabilities.

1. He’s not just saying that, “Oh hey, I have a lot of stuff to be proud of in my assets column, and

I found something *even* better.”

2. No. He’s saying, “I had this very impressive list of achievements and I found something that not only negated that list, it not only cancelled it out, but it actually exposed all that stuff as a liability in my life. It had become an issue for me.”
3. One commentator puts it this way, “Paul tells us that he now regards his previous assets as not merely without worth but as positively damaging, as spiritual “liabilities” ...it was not [his] heritage that he revolted against, but the viewing of that heritage as a human right or achievement, thus obscuring [his] need for full dependence on God’s grace.”
4. Paul’s realized that his resume had become the very thing that kept him from realizing his need for Christ in the first place.

3. Paul goes on here”

1. ***“...I count it all as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ [‘VERSE NINE’] 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.”

2. A righteousness not from the law...but a righteousness from God that depends on faith.

8. RELIGION VS THE GOSPEL

1. Let's get something clear here...if you don't pay attention to anything else this morning please pay attention to this...
2. We tend to think of "righteousness" like when we hear that word we tend to think of "doing good." Not doing bad things. Being a good person.
3. With the gains and losses talk, Paul is blowing this concept up.
4. Paul was, outwardly, the most religious person you could find. Morality wasn't his problem.
5. One minister put it this way: Here he's saying the thing that made him a Christian wasn't his attitude toward his sin but instead his attitude toward his righteousness. It wasn't that he needed to repent of his sin...it's that he need to repent of his

righteousness...his self righteousness.

6. This is completely different from most religion. It's what makes **the gospel, completely unique**.
7. **Religion** says, "I'm going to follow all the rules and be good and because of that, God will love me. I'll be a good Christian."
8. What's the problem with that? It's still an economy of effort. It's righteousness from the law. Within that system, you don't need Jesus because fundamentally, you're trying to become your own Savior! It comes down to control...we don't want to give up our control. And the only way you can keep control is if we believe that God owes you. If I act good enough, God will have to let me in. He'll have to!
9. In this system you use Christ as a model. An example to follow.
10. And if you're successful then you'll become proud and you'll be self-righteous and if you fail then you'll hate yourself. And if things go wrong in your life, you'll be angry! After all, God owes you!

11. But the **gospel**, turns this economy on its head and says that true righteousness is not something earned, it's something gifted. Christ lived the life we should have lived and he died the death we should have died and in so doing he earned us the righteousness of God. He gives it freely because he loves us. He's not our example, he's our savior.
12. We've got to move past religion, self-salvation, and toward the gospel, Christ-salvation where we say "My only true resume is the one that God gives me. And he doesn't owe me anything because I don't deserve it. I never could have earned my way in."
13. Unless you get this and unless this fundamentally changes the way you think about yourself and how you relate to God, you can't be a Christian. You can't earn it. Christ has already earned it. The gospel is so radical in this way.
14. We've got to let go of our efforts and our achieving and control. Let go and of your resume and grab hold of the resume of Christ that makes you perfect. This is the righteousness that comes from God and when you have it, no matter what you've done, no matter who you are, God looks at you and finds you beautiful.

15. His yoke is easy and his burden is light.

16. Allow this to become more important than anything else.

9. TRANSITION

1. And what happens when we do? Let's very briefly touch our last point...**freedom**.

10. FREEDOM

1. Paul writes in our final two verses, that he *“counted everything as rubbish in order that he may gain Christ and be found in him [‘VERSE 10’] that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”*

2. Long and short, Paul is talking about the ongoing Christian life here.

3. These verses have been called “The Essence of Pauline Theology.”

1. V. 9 is about receiving justification that is a right standing before God. God looks at you and he sees perfection and beauty but Christ has given you that record.
2. V. 10 living in Sanctification that is the ongoing work of becoming more and more like the person God had designed you to be.
3. And lastly v. 11 hope in glorification which is the idea that Christ will one day return and remove all sin and sickness and death from reality.
4. Look, obviously these concepts cover a lot, but I want us to hone in on how this relates to what we've been talking about. What do we stand to gain from this true righteousness from God? What happens when we can live out of a place where we no longer have to tie our worth and our worthiness to our little resumes but instead accept Christ's resume as our own.
5. Think about it this way -- what would it be like for you to have freedom in your work? To just work for the sake of enjoying what you do? Work the sake of working, not for the sake of building your identity?

6. Or what would it be like for you to have freedom in your relationships? You can date someone and love someone for their own sake? Not just to bolster your self-image or use them to feel like you're good enough.
7. What about creating art for the sake of creating and not the approval of others? Raising kids? Exercising and eating healthy?
8. What if we could do all this stuff for the sake of just being whole and happy and healthy and enjoying God's gifts and being better able to be the person God designed you to be. That whole sanctification thing? Yes, it's about moving away from sin and your negative behaviors, but the purpose of all that is that you would become better able to take your place, partnering with God to bring good to the world until ultimately all sickness, poverty, brokenness, and sadness is gone.
9. Here's what I'm saying...
10. When we take do this...something amazing happens...
11. You're free'd up to experience life for the sake and for the joy of living as the person you're made to be

because now your effort is an outpouring of the love you've been given instead of the source of your identity and self-worth. You don't have to objectify everything and squeeze the life out of everything trying to make it give you something.

12. What freedom! What a life! What a fantastic way to minister to those around you and show them the peace that Christ brings.

13. And look, this also frees us up to handle pain, disappointment, hurts. Hard times will come for all of us. Rejection will come. Pain will come. Like they say, if you live long enough, you will suffer immensely. Christianity doesn't ask us to keep smiling and move ahead...live in denial.

14. But...if the righteousness from Christ is at the center of your life, then no matter your external circumstances, you know deep down that you're okay. When we feel rejected we know that God himself accepts us and calls us perfect. When we feel unlovable you reflect on how God came for you in Christ, he entered into space and time to save you. When we feel pain and loss and can't make sense of a tragedy in our lives, we know that's not the end of the road...Christ will return, and he will make all things right. As C.S. Lewis puts it "Heaven, once

attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory.” We will be glorified.

11. CONCLUSION

1. The sun is up. This is the superior thing.
2. Take your resume, and tear it up, and replace it with Christ’s, then no matter what happens you can say, “My true righteous persists.”
3. And God looks at you and he sees his beloved bright and good and lovely and worth it.
4. You don’t have to earn your way in.
5. The door is wide open because of the what gospel has done for you.
6. Come. Be free.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This

cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”