

**Philippians 3:1-21**  
*Be Church With Tears*

**Main idea:** Our world is broken. Weep over it, but also weep with joy, that it will be redeemed.

This morning, we're going to soar through Philippians chapter 3 together. Please turn there with me. In this chapter, Paul gives us his testimony and goal for his life,<sup>1</sup> and pleads with all of us to have the same goal as him.<sup>2</sup> And all of this is in the context of how we're to see and relate to the lost,<sup>3</sup> and even that's in the larger context of what our major outlook in life ought to be.<sup>4</sup> So let's start there. Verse 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. (Philippians 3:1)

Apparently, the last time Paul was with them, he wrote the same things to them, encouraging them in the same way: rejoice! This is so important that Paul is going to come back to this at the very end of his letter as well.<sup>5</sup> Rejoicing in the Lord ought to characterize the believer's life. Make it your goal to rejoice in the Lord all the time. Rejoice, even if you face persecution. Rejoice, even if you find yourself in prison. Rejoice, because God is faithful, and Jesus is victorious, and He is Lord and Savior, and all of your sins have been forgiven. Rejoice.

Verse 2.

Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. (Philippians 3:2)

Now, wait a minute, Paul. You just told us to rejoice, and now you're telling us to look out? So which is it? Should we fear not, or should we be looking over our shoulder? Should we have full confidence in God's ability to protect us, and rest in Him, or should we constantly worry about all the evil in this world, and constantly complain about how bad things are getting, and point out every little thing that's going wrong to all of our friends on facebook? Should we rejoice, care-free, or look out?

I heard an author named Tim Shoemaker share at a conference about how to teach your kids to trust God, even when they might be scared. One evening, Tim took his kids on a ride in the car, but before starting the car, he made each of his kids put on a blindfold. If you've ever worn a blindfold before, you know that after a few minutes, even if you're perfectly relaxed, you start to become disoriented and maybe even a little anxious. After a few minutes, Tim stopped the car at a dark spot behind a gas station, a place they had never seen before, and he asked them if they knew where they were. They all said no. Then he had them put on their blindfolds again. Tim took them to two other dark places they had never been, and each time Tim would let them take off the blindfolds, and each time, they didn't know where they were. The last time, it was behind a grocery store, and after they said they didn't know where they were, he told them to get out of the car. Then he took them around to the front of the store, where they went in and bought ice cream.

After that, Tim took his kids home and asked them if they were scared at any point. They all said no because they trusted their dad, and he did silly illustrations with them all the time to teach them about God. And here's

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<sup>1</sup> Philippians 3:7-9

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 3:15

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 3:2, 18-19

<sup>4</sup> Philippians 3:1, 20-21

<sup>5</sup> Philippians 4:4

what Tim told them: when you allow God to take you where He wants, you might not always know where you are or what dark things you'll see along the way, but you can trust Him to take you where you need to be that's for your good and His glory.<sup>6</sup>

Well, there are certainly evils in this world that we need to watch out for, but I'm not sure that's all that Paul is talking about in verse 2. We need to dig deeper. Paul comes back to this, but first he chases a rabbit trail for the next 15 verses, starting in verse 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— 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. (Philippians 3:3-7)

Paul was saying of himself that when it came to religious superiority, he had it. He was born in the right family, he was a teacher of the law, and he observed the law blamelessly in the eyes of men. But none of that mattered. Because God isn't looking for people who are the best people among people, because no matter how good you can be compared to other people, you're still a sinner before God.<sup>7</sup>

Jackie Gleason once wrote:

**"Even if you win the rat race, you are still a rat." - Jackie Gleason**

A lot of people, even Christians, think that God loves them based on how well they run; that is, how well they live the Christian life. But to quote Brennan Manning:

**"God loves you unconditionally, as you are and not as you should be, because nobody is as they should be." - Brennan Manning**

You see, God doesn't forgive us based on our imperfect running, but rather on the basis of Christ's perfect life and death. We're saved by grace, through faith in Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

So God doesn't look at the outward appearance, but at the heart.<sup>9</sup> Tying it back into verse 2, Paul was saying that if all you do is try to obey the Bible, even as the Jews practiced what God commanded them in circumcising their male children, but you do it thinking that your obedience is going to earn you brownie points with God, then all you're really doing is mutilating the flesh. But if you believe, if you've allowed God to circumcise your heart,<sup>10</sup> then you'll worship by the Spirit of God in you, and you'll glory in Jesus Christ, and put no confidence whatsoever in your ability to run.

Verse 8.

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:28

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 64:6

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9

<sup>9</sup> 1 Samuel 16:7

<sup>10</sup> Romans 2:29

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 3:8-11)

Okay, so here's a question. Paul wrote that whatever gain he had, he counted as loss for the sake of Christ. So how is it that gaining things is a loss? We often act like the object of life is to gain as much as we can. Some people try to gain stuff, whether money or possessions. Others to try gain status, whether through a career or even just recognition. Many of us try to gain through having good family and friends. But it's all the same thing. We act like this life is about gaining as much as we can for ourselves.<sup>11</sup>

But Paul was clear that no matter what we gain, it's far greater to know Jesus. And if you really make it your aim to know Him, and by known by Him,<sup>12</sup> then all of these other things will suffer in some way. You might not make as much money as you would have, or maybe you'll make even more, but give most of it away.<sup>13</sup> You might not have as good of a reputation, or maybe you'll have a great reputation, but you'll use your position not to glory in yourself, but to point to Jesus, who's even greater.<sup>14</sup> Or maybe your family gets a little less of your time, because instead of making them your ultimate priority, you spend a good portion of your time in God's word, and with God's people, and you invite them to join these things with you, but so often they refuse, and they might even accuse you of hating them because of your greater love for Jesus.<sup>15</sup> And so it hurts so much, and you count it a loss.

And yet you're thankful even for the loss of these things, because in losing them, you see that these things led you to a deeper devotion to something even greater: Jesus Christ.

Near the end of *The Greatest Showman*, P.T. Barnum, played by Hugh Jackman, sang this:

If all was lost  
Is more I gain  
'Cause it led me back  
To you

- P.T. Barnum, *The Greatest Showman*

In the movie, Barnum realized that he thought he had it all. He had immense success in his circus business. He drank champagne with kings and queens. And yet, in the process, he lost his family, which in the movie represented everything good and holy. So, in the end, he counted everything that he gained as a loss, and yet was thankful that in losing everything, it led him back to embrace again what was truly good.

Maybe you feel like you've lost it all. But maybe that's exactly the realization you need. The object of life is not to run and gain as much as you can, but to finally see that what you need more than anything else is to know Jesus Christ,<sup>16</sup> and to rest in His great love for you.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 16:26

<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:3

<sup>13</sup> Luke 16:10

<sup>14</sup> John 3:30

<sup>15</sup> Luke 14:26

<sup>16</sup> Colossians 1:16

And then, once you've received the love of God, all you really want to do is to run. Verse 12.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)

What prize are you working for? Is your prize a certain amount of money, so that you can retire and live easy? Is it a certain lifestyle that you're working to obtain? Is it simply watching and hoping that your children do well? What's your prize? Paul wrote that his prize was the upward call of God. In other words, his prize was the journey itself. We don't press on in order to receive a greater blessing from God in heaven, because we've already received eternal life by grace. So we don't run in order to earn anything. We run because in Christ, we're given the ability to run.<sup>18</sup> We're given the ability to rejoice.

Verse 15.

Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. (Philippians 3:15-17)

So this is the end of the rabbit trail that Paul started on in verse 3. But it's an important rabbit trail, because it gives us a glimpse of the life that we're to live in Christ. Imitate Paul. Keep your eyes on the prize. Consider everything that this world offers as loss in light of the fact that your greatest gain is Jesus. Even be willing to suffer for your faith, sharing in Christ's suffering, and becoming like Him in His death, because this is a picture of the beautiful new life that we have in Jesus.

And then, contrast that with verse 18.

For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. (Philippians 3:18-19)

Basically, this whole chapter is written in order to point out just how different believers are from unbelievers. We have a completely different purpose. Believers have an upward call, and unbelievers serve the god of their belly, their appetites. Believers glory in Jesus Christ, and unbelievers glory in their shame, things that they ought to be ashamed of. And we have a different destination after this life. Believers have a citizenship in heaven, but the end of unbelievers is their destruction in hell. But we don't point any of this out so that we would gloat over unbelievers, but so that we would weep over those who haven't yet experienced God's forgiveness. Our hearts ought to break over the lostness of our world.<sup>19</sup>

So weep over the lost. Weep over sin. Weep over our broken world, whether it be the brokenness of a family member, or your neighbor, or even yourself. Be the church with tears.

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew 11:29

<sup>18</sup> Isaiah 40:31

<sup>19</sup> Romans 9:3

It's true that there are many things in this world for which we might have a righteous indignation. We can get angry that our nation often celebrates the legalization of certain sins, like homosexuality<sup>20</sup> and abortion.<sup>21</sup> We can get angry about the mistreatment of those who are marginalized and abused.<sup>22</sup> And I think we should certainly get angry at our own sin, and because of the presence of sin in this world.<sup>23</sup> But rather than blaming and being angry with people, we ought to recognize that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.<sup>24</sup>

So many are still held captive to those forces. So many are enemies of the cross because they haven't yet found freedom in Christ. Pray for them. Long that they might see where their sin is leading them, and plead with them to receive Jesus and be saved. Be church with tears over this lost and broken world.

But also rejoice, because this world will be made new.<sup>25</sup> Verse 20.

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

This chapter presents Paul's passion in his ministry. He weeps over the lost (verse 18), and even laments over his own imperfection (verse 12), but he also knows that all things, which includes himself and all people, will eventually be subject to Christ (verse 21).

Therefore, as it says in verse 2, look out for the dogs and evildoers, these enemies of the cross. Paul was talking about unbelieving Jews, who are loved by God, and yet are enemies in regards to the gospel they've rejected.<sup>26</sup> But we could also talk about so many other enemies of the cross today. Everyone who claims that life is about anything other than Jesus is an enemy of the cross. Every commercial that entices you to buy a product because it will make you happy is an enemy of the cross. Everyone who exalts one group of people over another because of gender, or race, or citizenship is an enemy of the cross, because no one is better than anyone else, because as it says in Romans 3:23-24:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:23-24)

Salvation doesn't come through our efforts, but through what Jesus did for us on the cross. Salvation a gift.<sup>27</sup>

So don't be persuaded by enemies of the cross. Look out for them. Test everything.<sup>28</sup> Don't be tempted to think that life is all about what you do, or what you can gain in this life. And even, according to verse 18, be broken over those who think that way with tears, because, verse 19, their end is destruction, and without faith in Jesus, they're lost, with no hope.

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<sup>20</sup> Romans 1:27

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 139:13-14

<sup>22</sup> Isaiah 1:17

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 7:11

<sup>24</sup> Ephesians 6:12

<sup>25</sup> Revelation 21:5

<sup>26</sup> Romans 11:28

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 2:8

<sup>28</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:21

And yet, as it says in verse 1, rejoice, because, verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. All things.

You see, Jesus gives hope to the hopeless. We ourselves were dead in our trespasses and sins, and yet Jesus raises us to life.<sup>29</sup> He transforms us. And anyone who puts their faith in Jesus will be forgiven and transformed. And, in the end:

**At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10-11)**

And so, Paul is clear. All things includes all things. It includes us. It includes the enemies of the cross. It includes all of this broken world, and in the end, everything will be made new, as Jesus says in Revelation, "Behold, I make all things new."<sup>30</sup>

So yes, in this world you will have troubles, but take heart, for Jesus has overcome the world.<sup>31</sup>

Here's all that I'm really trying to say:

**[Video Clip: "From Now On" from *The Greatest Showman*]**

I saw the sun begin to dim, and felt that winter wind blow cold  
A man learns who is there for him when the glitter fades and the walls won't hold  
'Cause from then, rubble, One remains, can only be what's true  
If all was lost is more I gain, 'cause it led me back to You

I drank champagne with kings and queens, and politicians praised my name  
But those are someone else's dreams, the pitfalls of the man I became  
For years and years I chased their cheers, the crazy speed of always needing more  
But when I stop and see You here, I remember Who all this was for

From now on, these eyes will not be blinded by the lights  
From now on, what's waited till tomorrow starts tonight  
It starts tonight  
Let this promise in me start like an anthem in my heart  
From now on, from now on, from now on

And we will come back home  
And we will come back home  
Home, again!

In the movie, at his lowest point, Barnum wept in a bar. But when he remembered his first love, he repented, and he ran from that place with joy, being born again.

So church, weep with joy, because God is making all things new. So, rejoice, from now on.

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<sup>29</sup> Ephesians 2:5

<sup>30</sup> Revelation 21:5

<sup>31</sup> John 16:33