

The Book of Philippians

Chapter 3 Part 1 Verses 1-8

“For The Excellency of Knowing Jesus”

Message given after the Arizona Wildfire destroyed our Home in Heber Arizona, June 24, 2002

How do you put into words, what it is like to live in a home where your children grow up. Where there is love and laughter. Fighting and Forgiveness. Cold and Warmth, Sunlight and Darkness.

How do you explain what it is like to have the fellowship of loved friends and family, Prayer and Bible Study. Good food, laughter and the depth of the love from wonderful people in your home?

Walks in the coolness of 400 year old trees, hikes in the mountains that the Lord created by the words of his mouth. Catching snowflakes on the tip of your tongue, dancing under the stars in delight of the Lords greatness.

Is there an adequate expressions of all that you have felt in a house that was your home.

It is apparent this morning, that most likely, the home that Elsie, Robert, Michael and I shared our lives together in, was consumed by fire in Heber last night.

Around the year 1600, Jakob Böhme (1575-1624) said:

“We are all strings in the concert of his joy.”

So I ask, Shall we not also praise Him and trust Him, even when everything in this world that we have is consumed?

We have had many calls from concerned friends and family about how we are doing in the midst of losing our home.

I will answer how we are doing, through the study this morning in Gods word, in Philippians chapter 3...

Philippians 3

1 **Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.** For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

How many of us really rejoice when things in our life are not going well?

Paul is writing this encouragement to us this morning, while he himself is in a prison cell!

1. **Notice that he says** to **“Rejoice in the Lord”**.
2. **Paul didn't say** that we should rejoice in our difficulties.

3. **If any person focuses on their hardships**, sickness, losses or disappointments, they will always be overwhelmed with sadness.
4. **If any person focuses on what Jesus could** do through the trial, how he can turn it around and make awesome things come from it, **we can rejoice in that.**
5. **You see, sometimes we forget that Jesus is still on the throne**, He is still in control of this great big universe, nothing is out of his power or control.
6. **I can rejoice that I know Jesus**, that has this ability to overcome anything.
7. **So although we might be grieved over our difficulties**, we can rejoice in what Jesus will do.
8. **It is all a matter of where** we place our focus.

1.... For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

In the first chapter of Philippians, Paul told the Philippians:

Philippians 1:3

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
6 being confident of this very thing, that **He who has begun a good work in you will complete it** until the day of Jesus Christ;

When Peter wrote his second letter, he also said that he wanted to remind us...

2 Peter 1:12

12 For this reason I will not be negligent **to remind you always of these things**, though you know and are established in the present truth...

When Paul was with the church at Philippi, he had taught them to not focus on their problems, but keep their focus on Jesus.

Here in Philippians chapter 3, He said that **I am writing this to remind you**, and I know that this will not be like I am nagging at you, but just to encourage you in where to keep your focus in life.

1. **I think that there are certain basic things** that we need to constantly be reminded of in our desire to follow Jesus.
2. **Over time, it is our human nature** to forget some of the things that the Lord has already taught us.
3. **So, for this reason**, we need to be reminded from time to time, of the basics.
4. **This is why** every summer after the kids are out of school, and the weather warms up and we have more daylight hours, I start the **“Boot Camp Series”**.
5. **Boot Camp is getting back to the basics, the fundamentals of 1 who we are, 2 what we are doing, and 3 who we are doing it for.**

One of those important fundamentals, is to remember who is really in control of everything.

1. **It is so easy to forget** that Jesus really is in control of our life, when things get tough.
2. **Elsie and I** have had to continually remind our self that Jesus is still on the throne when it comes to this fire up on the mountain.

3. **As I put this study together**, there was about a 90 percent chance that our family's home up in Heber was going to be consumed by the fire.
4. **Not ours alone**, My dads, Christopher and Sarah Susag, Joel and Ann Henning, as well as thousands of other people. In the summer there are over 12,000 people in H/O.
5. **The first question** we ask when things like this happens is **WHY?**
 - **Lord, if you really are in control** of everything, why did you let this happen?
 - **Lord, if you really do love me**, why did we have to go through all of this hurt or loss?
 - **Lord, what did I do wrong** that you are punishing me like this?

In fact, most of the time, we have an incorrect understanding of **WHY** the Lord works the way he does, and **How** He works.

Isaiah 55:8-9

8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. NKJV

When Job suffered the loss of everything that he owned, after a while, he also began to question the ways that the Lord was doing things.

In response to Jobs questioning of Gods plan, The Lord asked Job...

Job 38:4

4 "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.

I think that sometimes we think that the Lord is either not going to work in our situation, or He can't for some reason...Or we don't like the way that He is working...

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Isaiah 59:1

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.

I believe that we constantly need to be reminded that the Lord has not slipped when it comes to our life, he hasn't forgotten to take care of us.

1. **I do not understand** why the Lord has allowed so much destruction to take place up on our beautiful mountain.
2. **I do know that He loves us** and somehow will work out a wonderful outcome to all of this.
3. **I have already been able** to experience some wonderful things as a result of this tragedy, that I have to say would not have happened if these things did not take place.
4. **I have been sharing Jesus** with people that would not be open to listen if this had not happened.
5. **I have seen people get their focus** off of the things they own materially, and begin to focus on what really matters, people.

Philippians 3:1

1 So, For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

Paul says: “I just wanted to remind you that the Lord is still on the throne...”

Philippians 3:2

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

Beware of dogs...The lord is not talking about Chihuahuas or Golden retrievers...

Isaiah 56:10

10 His watchmen are blind,
They are all ignorant;
They are all dumb dogs...

Isaiah is talking about those who teach things different from what Gods word already has said.

1. **The false teachers**, he calls them “**Dumb Dogs**”.
2. **In the Greek language**, this type of “**Dog**” is called the “**KUON**”.
3. **In Israel**, there is a particular type of dog that roams the country in packs.
4. **They are very similar to our “Coyotes”**, with the exception that this particular dog is very mean, they are known to attack people and other animals.

Here, Paul says that we should beware of teachers who attack the good news that Jesus paid the full price for us.

- **These “Dogs”**, are constantly attacking the fact that Jesus sacrifice was sufficient.
- **They always diminish who Jesus is**, and they always diminish the completeness of what Jesus did.
- **They seek to add to Jesus sacrifice**, those things that you must do in order to be saved.
- **They are those** that attack those that teach the Word of God, and criticize the teaching of the Word of God.

This is where it is very important to pay attention to the individual words that are used in the Bible, because the Holy Spirit had an intention in putting each word exactly where it is in the Bible.

1. **It is also important to have a Hebrew/Greek dictionary**, so that you can look up individual words, and see what they mean in the original language that the bible was written in.
2. **If you are really serious about the Bible**, then you will be paying attention to the little details in each individual word.
3. **A perfect example of this**, is found in Matthew chapter 15, because Jesus says some things there, that if you did not know what the words that Jesus used meant, you might come away with an incorrect understanding of what Jesus was saying.

Matthew 15:21-31

21 Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, **"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."**

23 But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."

24 But He answered and said, **"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."**

25 Then **she came and worshiped Him**, saying, "Lord, help me!"

26 But He answered and said, "It **is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.**"

27 And she said, **"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."**

28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, **"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire."** And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

1. **This woman** was just looking for some help from Jesus for her daughter who had been Taken over by demonic beings.
2. **Jesus tells her something that seems shocking**, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs"
3. **Man Jesus!**, that is pretty cold and heartless, calling this woman **"a little dog!"**
4. **This is where it is very important to know who Jesus really is.**
5. **If you really know a person**, if someone else were to write something about that person that seemed harsh, you would know whether or not it was true yourself, because you know the person.

I know that everything that Jesus does, is both kind, merciful and good.

1. **If I read something about Jesus** that seems to not be like Him, I know that I need to dig a little deeper.
2. **There is more going on** here than what seems to be, Jesus is never harsh or rude to anyone!
3. **This is where a little study** in the individual words is helpful.

Jesus didn't use the Greek word **"KURIION"**, here for dogs, he used the Greek word, **"KUNARION"**, Which is **"A little puppy"**.

- **This is the kind of puppy** that the children play with, that had free reign of the house, the kind of puppy that the little children fed their scraps to under the table.
- **This woman knew** that Jesus was not putting her down by calling her a wild scavenger dog.
- Jesus was calling her **"The little Puppy"** who get the scraps...The woman understood that, and continued on with her persuasion of Jesus by saying that **Even the little puppies can eat the crumbs from their masters table"**.

This was exactly the response that Jesus was looking for. He didn't want to discourage her, he wanted to challenge her to step out a little further in her trust.

When she did stretch her trust, Jesus reinforced her efforts by healing her daughter as she asked Jesus to.

1. **When you go through a difficulty**, rest assured the Lord will be challenging your faith, “Will you even trust me and love me, if this happens...?”
2. **Like this woman**, we should never let anything stop us from pursuing out trust in Jesus throughout the whole trial.

Back to Verse 2 here in Philippians chapter 3, Paul is using a totally different word for “Dogs”, he is telling us to be watching for people who tear apart the Good News about Jesus. Those “Dogs” that:

1. **Tell you** the Bible is not the Word of God.
2. **Say** that Jesus is not the only eternal God of the Universe.
3. **Tell you that** you have to do other things to be saved, in addition to believing in Jesus sacrifice.

Paul says, “**Beware of the Mutilation**”. These were the Jews who insisted that you could not be saved just by believing in Jesus, you also had to mutilate yourself by being circumcise and becoming a Jew.

Philippians 3:3

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

In the book of Romans chapter 2, Paul said:

Romans 2:28-29

28 For he is not a Jew who is one **outwardly**, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

29 but he is a Jew who is one **inwardly**; and **circumcision is that of the heart**, in the Spirit, not in the letter (of the law) .

The Lord is not looking for a change in your behavior only, he is looking for a change in your heart.

1. **If a person has a knowledge of religious things**, or even a knowledge of God, or even the name Jesus only in knowledge, **that person is not saved.**
2. **There will be many people who will miss heaven by 18 Inches**, the approximate distance from your head to your heart.
3. **You might know Jesus in your mind**, but if it has not moved down into your heart, all that you have is a “**Religion**”.

What is the one thing that every human being wants in their life? To be loved and to have someone to love, why is that?

You were created with this hunger inside of your heart for love and fellowship, because God made you to have fellowship with Him.

1. **Nothing else that you will ever do** and experience in your life will satisfy the longing of your heart, until you find love and relationship with the true and living God.
2. **If you become a very religious person**, go to church, read your bible, do your religious duty, **but do not fall in love with Jesus the man, all you have is Religion.**

What God wants for you to do this morning is just to come to Him right now, as you are, and give your life to Jesus.

Believe that Jesus paid for all of your sin, and then live the rest of your life trying to get to know who Jesus is.

- **You will discover** that once you really know Jesus, you will fall in love with Him.
- **You will want to live** to please only Him.
- **You won't want anything** to interrupt you from knowing Him and pleasing Him.
- **You won't be able to wait for Him** to return to get you.
- **Nothing else in this world** will ever again hold the attraction that Jesus holds for you.
- **You will be satisfied** and fulfilled.

Philippians 3:3

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and **have no confidence in the flesh**,

...knowing this then..."Have no confidence in your flesh..."

People who live on this earth base their importance on how much they have attained, and who they have become in this world.

In Jesus kingdom, the lower you make yourself, the greater you will be.

Mark 9:35

35 He sat down and called the twelve disciples over to him. Then he said, "Anyone who wants to be the first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else." NLT

1. **The reason** that we have no confidence in our own flesh, is because everything in regards to these bodies of ours is **lacking, and dying**.
2. **One of the most deceiving things** in our lives is when we try to rely on ourselves, **our abilities, our understanding, our power to do anything**.

If you have ever relied only on yourself, then you know how unreliable this flesh we live in is.

Ephesians 3:4

4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, **I more so:**

Paul says, if you have tried to have confidence in your own abilities, let me tell you about my abilities...

Philippians 3:5

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of **the tribe of Benjamin**, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

6 concerning zeal, **persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.**

In other words, As far as a Jew is concerned, I am as about as well qualified as a Jew can get...

1. **Paul kept the law**, in every respect.
2. **Even from his birth**, his parents had Paul circumcised on the 8th day according to Gods law.
3. **He was descended from the tribe of Benjamin**, who was the most favorite son of Jacob.
4. **When the other tribes in Israel** turned against Solomon's kingdom after His death, **only Benjamin remained faithful.**
5. **Paul was also a Pharisee a teacher of God's law**, Educated by the greatest teacher in Israel, Gamaliel.
6. **When this new cult called "The Way"**, made up of the followers of Jesus sprang up, Paul was chief amongst those who tried to destroy them. Paul was responsible for the death an imprisonment of many of the new believers in Jesus.
7. **Then Paul says something absolutely amazing, "Concerning Gods Law, I was blameless"**

Do you know what that means, Every part of Gods law, Paul kept it!

I don't know anyone that could say that, do you?

- **So, regarding confidence in their own flesh**, if anyone had the right to have confidence in their training and abilities, it was Paul.

But notice what Paul says about all of this training and abilities in the next verse:

Philippians 3:7

7 But what things were gain to me, **these I have counted loss** for Christ.

One day, a young man came to Jesus and asked Him what he needed to do to go to heaven.

Jesus told Him...

Mark 10:19-21

19 You know the commandments: **'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'**"

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, **all these I have observed from my youth.**"

21 Then **Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."** NKJV

The 10 commandments are broken down into 2 parts.

Notice that Jesus tells the young man those commandments that deal with the way that we are to treat other human beings.

Part one of the 10 commandment, 1-4, deal with your relationship to God.

1. **Love the Lord first** above everything else, with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength.
2. **Don't make an image** of anything in your life that you worship, that takes the place of God.
3. **Don't use His name**, with no thought or respect for who He is.
4. **Rest and honor the Lord** on the 7th day.

Part Two, commands 4-10, deal with your relationship with other people.

5. **Honor your father** and Mother.
6. **Don't Kill**.
7. **Be faithful to your wife, Don't Commit Adultery**.
8. **Don't Steal** from each other.
9. **Don't Lie** to each other.
10. **Don't envy and desire** what other people have.

The commandments that Jesus lists With this rich young ruler, those that deal with relationships between people, He says that he has had no problems with these.

Then Jesus tells him to go and sell all that he has....Why.

- **Apparently, this was** where this young mans problem was, **Not the commands dealing with other people, the commands dealing with his relationship with God.**
- **How do we know** that the young man had a problem here?
- **When Jesus told him to take all that he owned and sell it**, what was the response of the young man?
- **Sorrow**, you see, **he had placed what he owned in front of God**, the things he owned had become his God.

He had only broken one of the 10 commandments, but just one meant that he failed completely.

James 2:10

10 And the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as the person who has broken all of God's laws. NLT

In other words, there are 2 ways that you can to get into Heaven.

1. **Keep all of Gods law, perfectly** from the day you are born, never break one of the 10 commandments. Remember, one of them is Lying!

2. **Accept the fact** that Jesus perfectly kept all of Gods law for you, paid the full price for all of your sins, and now owns the control of your life as Lord of your life.

Exodus 20:3-17

3 **1.** You shall have no other gods before Me.

4 **2.** "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

7 **3.** "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

8 **4.** "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.

11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

12 **5.** "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

13 **6.** "You shall not murder.

14 **7.** "You shall not commit adultery.

15 **8.** "You shall not steal.

16 **9.** "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 **10.** "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's." NKJV

So, what is the point of all of this...I have no idea!

No, remember, Paul said...

Philippians 3:6

6concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless

Paul claimed that he had kept all of Gods law, and yet,

Philippians 3:7

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

Not even keeping all of the commands, Paul said, are important any more to me...All of the things that are in this world, are nothing compared to knowing and loving Jesus for who He truly is!

Those things that I once counted on for my happiness, my security, my peace, my self worth, they mean nothing to me now...

Years ago, the loss of that beautiful home in Heber, and all of the material things that we accumulated over a life time, they were very important to me.

It appears this morning, that our home may be completely consumed in the Chediski fire, along with most everything that we own.

Through all of the process that we have gone through in all of this, **I can honestly say, that what was once gain to me, I now count as loss**, for the privilege of knowing Jesus and the fellowship of his Cross.

Philippians 3:8

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

It is this relationship that I have with Jesus that has really sustained me and given me peace in all of this.

This was Paul also was speaking of...

He said **“For whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, (refuse, waste) that I may win Christ,”**

All of the past was just a waste. I count them as loss. They are no longer important.

I pray that you are also encouraged to “Count all things as Loss for the excellence of the knowledge of knowing Jesus...”

Have you ever considered the construction of an Arch?

You have 2 very weak structures, that are leaning against each other to make a single strength. When we are weak, and lean into Jesus, we find that we are made a single strong tower to which we can run into when everything else fails us...