

Title: The Bad News and the Good News of the Christian Message

Text: Philippians 3:1-11

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INTRO. Let's pretend I'm going to announce some really good news. And the good news is: we are all going to Hawaii! Wow! How fun! What great news!

But now, some news that isn't so good: to get to Hawaii, we aren't going by plane or boat. We must swim. We have to swim to Hawaii from the coast of California (the shortest distance is actually 2,500 miles).

Here's the truth: we are not all going to Hawaii. And if we tried to swim there, every single one of us would drown!

- You can't swim to Hawaii!
- Some might swim 7 miles, or 12 miles, or 28 miles...you will still drown!

FACT: to know the good news of Christianity...you must first admit the bad news.

Bad news: because of your sins...you cannot get to God.

Good news: because of God's grace...despite your sins...God has come to you!

Background. Paul shares some of the most profound themes of New Testament theology in Phil 3:1-11. He's basically focusing on the idea that even the most admirable human accomplishments and achievements fall short of the standard God requires for "righteousness" at the final Day of Judgment.

- Left to ourselves...even our best achievements are not sufficient for our salvation.
- But through Christ, God has provided the means by which people can be rescued!

First, Paul encourages us to put no confidence in the flesh, and to trust only in Christ (3:1-3). In 3:1, Paul instructs the Philippians to have joy in the Lord – yes – even as Paul is about to discuss a few unpleasant matters. If you have Christ, there is always reason/cause for joy!

"To write you again is no trouble for and is a safeguard for you." (3:1).

Paul is happy to repeat his point (3:1). He doesn't mind being redundant.

- He undoubtedly preached this to them in person.
- He now writes this in his epistle.

Notice his language → *it's no trouble...*

- You NEVER get into trouble trusting Jesus Christ!
- You ONLY get into trouble when you trust in yourself, and not Christ.
- Prov 28:26, *The one who trusts in himself is a fool, but one who walks in wisdom will be safe.*

- Prov 3:5-6, *Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, He will make your paths straight.*

Notice this → (*trusting Christ*) is a safeguard for you...

- Safeguard – be reminded; a safeguard is like guardrails.
- You need guardrails – when you fall asleep, doze off, let your guard down...
- Guardrails – prevent even further disaster from taking place.

Paul's point? I am willing to sound redundant – because the biggest need of your life and church will always be: *watch out for those who trust in themselves, and always remember to trust only in Christ.*

Paul also identifies the problem – the Judaizers (v 2). Who were the Judaizers? They were Jewish Christians who taught one must still follow all the OT laws/customs taught under Moses (they mandated circumcision), and that grace alone was not sufficient for salvation.

Paul says, “Watch out” for these Judaizers. Watch out = be aware, pay attention, this could hurt...”

- 1) Dogs – dogs roamed streets, were wild, vicious, scavengers.
 - a. Normally the Jews called the Gentiles “dogs”
 - b. But Paul flips the term and calls the Judaizers “dogs”
- 2) Evil workers: they pride themselves on their personal righteousness, but they're actually evil.
- 3) Mutilate the flesh: this is the language of circumcision.
 - a. “*You cut your flesh...but your heart remains unchanged.*”

Paul also identifies the true Christian believers (v 3). “*For we are the (true) circumcision.*” These are the marks of the true believer: they worship by the Spirit of God...they boast only in Christ...they put no confidence in the flesh.

What does it mean to worship by the Spirit of God?

- It means you love Him with your whole being.
- Where God's Spirit is, there is freedom (2 Cor 3:17).
 - This does NOT mean you worship as you choose.
 - It means you are free to love Him with your whole being; all the time.
 - It means worship that truly honors God.
- It means worship that changes me to become godlier.
- Spirit filled = it's all about God...its God saturated.

What does it mean to boast only in Christ Jesus?

- To glory in Christ...to rejoice in Christ...to rely on what Christ alone has done.
- It means to remind ourselves:
 - Who is the King? Jesus.
 - Who is the servant? Me.

What does it mean to put no confidence in our flesh?

- It means we put away everything that is outside of Jesus Christ.
- We know that compared to Jesus – how could we possibly brag on ourselves?
- It means – I know I can't save myself, or make myself more marketable.
 - But I believe God can do anything!

(ILLUS: *I cannot flap my wings and fly to Jerusalem...but I believe I can get on an airplane that will take me there!*)

- I can't save myself, but I believe in Jesus Christ!

Second, Even if we *think* we have a reason to brag about ourselves, stop and think again. We have no reason to brag outside of Christ (3:4-6). Sure, there are a few human reasons we might consider boasting (or thinking that we have a dimension of personal righteousness). Our natural tendency: *we fail to give God enough credit...and we over-credit our good works.*

It's been like this since the Garden of Eden!

- Remember the serpent – Take and eat...you'll be like God.
- But God's command – do not eat from the tree...you don't have the capacity to be God!

What possible ways do we brag?

- I do good things...I'm a good person.
- I'm not that bad.
- I'm better than so and so _____.

There's only one problem: God's standard is complete perfection! Anyone who sins just once falls short of His glory (Rom 3:10) (Rom 3:23).

So we must measure our lives according to the Bible, not our feelings, not by other people, not by pop culture, etc.

Notice, at the risk of sounding quite arrogant, Paul basically says – *if you think human effort/achievement improves your standing with God – then Paul has many reasons to boast!*

Paul lists seven items he once placed in his spiritual profit column:

1. Circumcised the 8th day.
2. Of the nation of Israel.
3. Of the tribe of Benjamin.
4. Hebrew of the Hebrews.
5. A Pharisee of the law.
6. With zeal he persecuted others.
7. Righteousness of the law? Blameless.

But he now, no longer, boasts in these things:

1. Not saved by ritual – not by ceremony, mass, baptism, Lord’s Supper, etc.
2. Not saved by race – not because we are Americans, or “free” or civilized.
3. Not saved by rank – not by ethnicity, education, or class.
4. Not saved by riches – not by zealous devotion to anything (money, work).
5. Not saved by religion – no priest, monk, or scholar is smart enough on their own.
6. Not saved by resilience – religious zeal/effort, if not channeled properly, means nothing!
7. Not saved by personal righteousness – no such thing as doing good enough to get credit.

Q: Well then, Jeremy, how is a person saved?

A: A person is saved (born again) when they humble themselves before God...admit they are a sinner...repent of those sins...and trust in the blood of Christ to

Third, everything in life that we think is beautiful, actually contains no beauty at all, compared to the beauty of knowing Christ (3:7-8). Notice the way Paul’s language actually strengthens, or intensifies, with each phrase in vv 7-8.

“Everything that was a gain to me...I now count/consider it a loss compared to knowing Jesus” (v 7).

What were the gains? (gains = victories, trophies). In Paul’s day, the gains were: birth...race...family pedigree...education...religious fervor...intellect.

- But nothing compares to knowing Jesus!

“Furthermore, everything including my gains look like losses compared to knowing Jesus!” (v 8)

- Think about this statement: even my wins...look like losses...compared to knowing Christ!
- Wow, without Jesus, my early wins are eternal losses (Phil 1:21).

“Everything else, compared to knowing Jesus Christ – is like dung/rubbish” (v 8).

- Paul uses the strongest language he can here.
- Because he has gained Christ – he’s okay with losing everything else.

But he goes even a step further → everything else in the world → compared to the riches of Jesus – is like garbage! Like manure!

- Imagine the smells: landfill...garbage site...Truck Stop restroom...airport restroom...
(This is the aroma of your life without the Lord!)

Fourth, what does it mean to know God? To be clothed in His righteousness? It means that Christ has saved me and replaced my sin with His perfection (3:9-11).

Sean McDonough, *To be found in him means being spiritually united to Christ and therefore found not guilty before God as divine judge. God “imputes” Christ’s lifelong record of perfect obedience to the person who trusts in him for salvation; that is, he thinks of Christ’s obedience*

as belonging to that person, and therefore that person stands before God not as “guilty” but as “righteous.”

John MacArthur, *To “know” Christ is not simply to have intellectual knowledge about Him; Paul uses the verb means to know “experientially” or “personally”*

“*Found in Him*” (v 9).

- Where is Jeremy Morton?
- As far as God is concerned, He is IN Jesus Christ! (ILLUS: when I got my first truck at 16...I signed the document...but I had nothing...what gave it authority was my grandad’s signature next to mine)
- Do you want to find Jeremy Morton?
- Then look for where Jesus Christ is!

“*I have no righteousness from the law...*” (v 9).

- The Scripture doesn’t attest to my personal righteousness.
- The Scripture actually testifies to my unrighteousness!
- The Scripture reports the problem (my sin) AND the solution (Christ’s righteousness on my behalf).

FACT: I am saved...I receive right standing before God...when I put my faith in Jesus Christ alone!

“*That I may know Him...and the power of His resurrection*” (v 10).

- Only Jesus can bring life out of death (Ezekiel 37; Luke 7; John 11).
- Oh Jesus...make dead things come to life in my life and character!

The reality of sin in the world is this → *(I don’t have good character...I’m not a good dad...I don’t have what it takes...I’m just bad at marriage...I’m unqualified for my job...)*

The reality of Christ in me is this → All the promises of God are YES in Him (2 Cor 1:20).

“*I want to know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to his death*” (v 10).

- Am I willing to suffer for Christ?
- Am I willing to endure pain FOR my faith...and still keep clinging to my faith?
- Do I believe Christ's power is actually made perfect in my weakness?

Big Idea. The bad news is this: you are a sinner, and you are unable to save yourself. The good news is this: Jesus Christ has provided everything you need through his life, death, burial, and resurrection. Turn to Christ today, now, and always!

If you are an unbeliever today – you need to be saved! (Romans 10:13)

If you are already a believer – what you are going through isn't final! If God's already provided for your eternal need, don't you think He will provide for your early needs?

- If you are a believer → then be a believer (*God will work it out for our good!*)
- Romans 8:32
- Luke 11:11-13 (fish/snake) (egg/scorpion) (good gifts, The Holy Spirit).

Lesson: the best part of your resume is not what you have done in your life for Christ. The best part of your resume is what Christ has done for you!

- Stop sharing your resume!
- Start pointing people to Jesus.

CONCL/Song:

*O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior, and life more abundant and free!*

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face!
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.*