

Do the Math

Series: J.O.Y. Jesus, Others, and You - #5 A Study of the Book of Philippians

Text: Philippians 3:1-11

Introduction: When you were growing up, were you ever told you must wait 30 minutes after eating before you could go swimming? Why? You might get cramps and drown. Your parents told you that because they loved you. Sounds like great wisdom, but it's not true.

What about, don't swallow your gum, it will stay in your stomach for seven years. Guess what? Also, not true. It will pass through your digestive system in about seven days.

The truth is that you could swallow a whole pack of gum and jump in the water and swim right away, and you'll be fine.

At one time or another, most of us believe lies. We don't know they're lies. If we knew, we wouldn't believe them. **If you believe** swimming within thirty minutes of eating is dangerous you won't do it. That gives the lie the same power over you as if it were the truth.

When you believe a lie, it changes the way you live. The bible teaches that Satan in the "father of lies." He is out to distort God's truth and lead us away from God. One of the biggest lies we are told is, **"You deserve to be happy; God wants you to be happy."**

We really don't want this to be a lie, but we see it in the bible.

Eve thought eating the forbidden fruit would make her happy.

Cain thought killing Abel would make him happy.

Joseph's brothers through getting rid of him would make them happy.

Samson thought marrying a Philistine woman would make him happy.

David thought sleeping with another man's wife would make him happy.

We see it today...when I get married, when I have kids, when I get a promotion or a raise...fill in the blank.

The best lies mix in a little bit of truth, so it seems right that our Heavenly Father would want us to be happy, right? The pursuit of happiness is even in our constitution.

First, if you believe that God wants you to be happy, you'll believe that anything that makes you happy, must be right.

Second, you'll start thinking God exists to serve you.

Third, there's a good chance you'll be led down a path away from God that is often called the "pleasure paradox" or the "happiness illusion."

What we see in the book of Philippians is something better than happiness, it's called Joy. It's a fruit of the Holy Spirit and in this letter, the apostle Paul tells us that it is found in a relationship with Christ.

The apostle Paul lived differently. Apparently, he had been liberated from the need to be liked, or even respected. He moved from town to town, in and out of crowds, anchored in the safety and satisfaction of knowing Jesus. Many adored him, even to the point of worshiping him, and others hated him, even to the point of trying to murder him. But he lived and served above approval ratings. He worked for someone else's fame, whatever that fame might cost him personally in popular opinion.

Everywhere Paul went, he met dramatically mixed reviews. During his and Barnabas's time in a town called Lystra they came to a man crippled from birth. He had literally never used his feet (Acts 14:8). Paul saw through the man's disability, into his heart, and he saw faith — a strong belief that Jesus could heal him inside and out (Acts 14:9). So, Paul healed the man's legs (Acts 14:10).

The crowds saw the man walking, after sitting for so many years, and they rushed Paul and Barnabas. They treated them like gods (Acts 14:11) — not like governors, or star athletes, or movie stars, but gods. They called them "Zeus" and "Hermes" after familiar figures in the pantheon (Acts 14:12). They even brought oxen to sacrifice to them (Acts 14:13). Imagine your neighbors trying to worship you by slaughtering their animals.

How do Paul and Barnabas respond to these acts of worship? Do they bask in the attention? Do they relish the over-the-top affirmation and support? Do they retweet a few lines of the people's praise?

No, they ran from their raging fans as fast as possible. ***“Men, why are you doing these things? We are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them”*** (Acts 14:15).

To Paul and Barnabas, the allure of human approval — acceptance, esteem, and intense admiration — seemed more dangerous than enticing. So, they confronted them, risking their social status, with a brave call to worship the living God and Him only.

“Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them” (Acts 14:18).

The very next verse in the story reads, ***“But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead”*** (Acts 14:19).

Having narrowly escaped being worshiped by the crowds, Paul immediately faces a new crowd — a mob that responds very differently, even violently, to his news about Jesus. One group tries to worship him, and the next tries to murder him. One moment, he's exalted as a god; the next, he's brutally beaten. One moment he's the celebrity pastor; the next, a notorious villain being executed in the street.

He wasn't snubbed at the office, unfollowed on social media, or ignored by friends and family. He was beaten with rocks, and then left for dead — all for simply giving them the good news about Jesus. How did Paul respond to the attempt on his life — the most severe criticism, opposition, and persecution imaginable? Did he give up?

No, he went to another city to talk about Jesus (Acts 14:20), and then he went back into Lystra — where stones still laid covered in his blood — to encourage the believers there (Acts 14:21–22).

Paul accepted their rejection, embracing the hostility, because he did not live for what they thought of him, but for what he thought of Jesus. Paul did not make

decisions so that more people would like him, but so that more people would love and follow his Savior.

Whether the world applauds us or attacks us, if they do not worship Jesus, they will die without hope. **Are we willing to change the world in Jesus's name without being loved, liked, or even noticed for it?**

We need to be content in what God says about us because we are in Christ.

Find your identity and confidence in Christ alone, not in what people think about you or in your status here in this life. It will fill us with joy and free us to tell the world the Good News it desperately needs to hear.

Philippians 3:1-11: ***“Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. 2Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. 3For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4though I myself have reasons for such confidence.***

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

7But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”

PRAY

The first three verses begin with a warning. The Apostle Paul says, in verse 2: “Beware of dogs.” You’ve seen that sign before, haven’t you? “Beware of dogs,”

and then, he says, “Beware of evil doers.” And then, he says, “Beware of the mutilators of the flesh” (Philippians 3:2).

What’s he talking about? Who are these dogs? He’s talking about the legalists—the Judaizers. Those who were coming along, after Paul would preach the gospel, and they’d say, “Well, you’re not just saved by believing in Jesus. You’ve got to keep the Law of Moses. You’ve got to go through certain rituals. You’ve got to go through certain ceremonies.” And, Paul said, “Beware of dogs.”

The word here doesn’t mean, “a little house pet.” He’s talking about those cruel, vicious, snapping, snarling, barking, biting, alley dogs.

Paul is saying that some of the meanest people in the world are religious. And, Paul says, “Don’t think just because a person is religious, he’s nice. You will find more meanness in the world of religion than perhaps anywhere else. Just so you know, it was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus.

Paul says: “Beware of dogs, beware of evil doers, and mutilators of the flesh” (Philippians 3:2). The King James version uses the word **concision**. He’s making a play on the word circumcision. They were the ones who were always preaching circumcision. He calls them mutilators.

You must be born again. Religion without Jesus Christ is a terrible thing. Religion cannot save anyone. The Apostle Paul was very religious. He had just enough religion to keep him out of trouble, but he didn’t have enough righteousness to get him into Heaven. Religion without righteousness is repulsive to God.

Paul here is warning against self-righteousness. He is showing that religion cannot save. He’s showing that legalism cannot save. He’s showing that ritual cannot save.

Paul looked at his life before Christ, and he saw that he was bankrupt despite all of his religion. And then, he found the Lord Jesus Christ, and he took stock again, and found out that he was immensely wealthy.

This is the 5th message in our series on Philippians and today’s title is... **Do the Math.**

Info about math.

Show YouTube clip: *Ma & Pa Kettle do math*, time 2:15

I. The Old Math of Life

He says in verse 4, *“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh.”* When he’s talking about confidence in the flesh, he’s talking about those things that people depend upon to earn human merit or achievement for their salvation.

Paul was dealing with those who were bragging about how good they were. Paul says, “If you want to get into a bragging contest, then I’ll get into one with you. You think that you’ve got something to boast about. I’ve got more to boast about than any of you.” Then, Paul goes on to talk about the things that he could boast about in the flesh.

A. Our Rituals

Paul says, “Circumcised the eighth day” (Philippians 3:5). He had all the ritual performed on him, and it began with his circumcision when he was eight days old.

There are a lot of people who believe just being a good person is enough for eternal life. There are others who like to talk about how they were baptized as a child or sprinkled. They really do believe a little water is enough to save them. Baptism, whether a spoonful or a tank-full, can’t take you to Heaven.

B. Our Relationships

Not only did he have ritual, he also had the pride of relationship. He says again: “Circumcised the eighth day, of the people of Israel” (Philippians 3:5). His family tree was respectable. He was from the Jewish aristocrats. Yet, the Apostle Paul came to find something that I trust you’ll come to find: that God has no grandchildren—only children. And, your mom and dad may be right with God, but that won’t make you right with God.

C. Our Respectability

Paul was a man who had not only pride of ritual and a pride of relationship, but had pride of respectability. He goes on to say, here in verse 5, “of the tribe of Benjamin” (Philippians 3:5). When the other tribes had gone astray—not Benjamin. Israel’s first king, Saul, came from the tribe of Benjamin.

In the Old Testament there is a passage that says that in the tribe of Benjamin there were 700 left-handed warriors. The Bible says that they could throw a stone at a hare and not miss. They were the elite; they were the special troops of Israel.

Yet, Paul is saying this: “I don’t care how respectable you are, you are still lost if you’ve not been brought to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

D. Our Race

Furthermore, Paul had the pride of race. Notice again, in verse 5, he says, “I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews.” That is, “I’m as pure as you can get. No Gentile blood mingled in my family. We didn’t take on the ways of the Greeks, and no Hellenist is in our family. We’re pure blue bloods. We kept all the rituals. I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews.” He had pride of race, but he found out that **it’s not race—it’s grace—that gets a man to Heaven.**

E. Our Religion

Paul is not finished yet. He says, “Now, if you want to brag, then I could brag.” He had pride in religion. In verse 5—he says, “***in regard to the law, a Pharisee.***” Who were the Pharisees? These were the strictest sect—the most orthodox. When one talks about religion, about morality, or about belonging to the right church, Paul did. He was intensely orthodox. He had zeal and defended his religion. He persecuted the church because he was standing up for his religion. There were approximately 6,000 Pharisees in the first century.

F. Our Reputation

Next, there was the pride of reputation. In verse 6—he says: “***as far as righteousness which is in the law, faultless.***” Had you followed the Apostle Paul, he would have said, “I am blameless—not sinless in the eyes of God, but blameless in the eyes of men.”

No one could have pointed a finger at the Apostle Paul and said, “He’s a thief”; or “He’s a liar”; or “He’s a hypocrite”; or “He’s an adulterer.”

He continues and says in verse 6, “Concerning zeal, persecuting the church.” Paul is saying, “I was zealous.” Was there anyone more zealous than Paul? He was so zealous that he would kill anybody that disagreed with him.

We could conclude, “If religion could get a man to Heaven, then religion certainly would have gotten the Apostle Paul to Heaven.” Yet, Paul says: “When I took all of this into account, when I added all this up, it amounted to nothing.” In verse 7, we read, **“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ”** (Philippians 3:7). He’s saying all of this was a total loss. Good works do not and cannot save.

For Paul, everything was a total loss. It’s amazing that people think that you’re saved by good works—by self-righteousness. These people are the hardest people to reach because they’re satisfied—they’re good people.

You say, “pastor, I’m a moral person. I live a good life.” That’s wonderful. But did you know that you could be morally good in terms of outwardly keeping the commandments of God? There may be nothing that anyone can accuse you of, nothing for which they can put blame upon you, and yet, you are still not saved.

II. The New Math with The Lord

Paul states in verse 7, **“But whatever were gains to me...”** [everything in the credit column: rituals, relationships, respectability, race, religion, reputation] ... **“I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.”** Something happened to Paul. Something took place which changed Paul’s method of mathematics.

We read in verses 8-9, **“What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, 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 is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.** (Philippians 3:8–9, NIV).

One day, Paul was on the road to Damascus. He had the official papers in his hand giving him the right to persecute believers, and something happened to Paul that completely changed his method of calculation. Suddenly, everything he had placed in the credit column, he moved over to the debit column.

Everything he had bragged about and counted upon as his spiritual wealth, he discovers that all of it is worthless.

Previously, he valued his race, his religion, his self-righteousness, and so much more. These were not bad, in and of themselves. He was not ashamed that he was a Hebrew. He was grateful that he was also a Roman citizen. **But what Paul is saying is that even a good thing is a bad thing if it becomes a substitute for the best thing.**

What was it that changed his mathematics?

He made the startling discovery that Jesus Christ was not dead, but that Jesus Christ is alive. Everything Paul had depended upon to save him and to earn and merit his salvation, turned up in the loss column.

Suppose you love to hike and camp out under the open sky, and you have a backpack, and you put your canteen, spoon, fork, snacks, and blanket in it. You board an airplane to fly to the place where you are going camping. While you are in the airplane, it starts to go down. And rather than grabbing a parachute, you grab your backpack and jump out. There is nothing wrong with a backpack, but if you grab a backpack rather than a parachute, that backpack and your life are a total loss.

Paul said, "I count all these things but loss." He wasn't saying that they were bad in and of themselves. However, the worst form of badness may be human goodness when that human goodness becomes a substitute for salvation by grace in Jesus Christ. Paul said, "You want to brag? I'll brag right along with you. I've got the pedigree: I'm a blueblood; I'm a religionist." Yet, ***"I count all of these things but loss, that I might gain Christ."***

A. What Did It Cost to Gain Christ?

Think about what it cost Paul to come to Christ. It cost him **financial** stability. I have reason to believe that Paul was quite a well-to-do man, or certainly his family was wealthy, because he was able to travel all the way from Tarsus to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel, one of the greatest teachers of the day. Yet, when he came to the Lord Jesus Christ, he became an itinerant preacher who moonlighted fixing tents, as a second job, to preach the Gospel.

I think about all the **fitness** challenges that he went through to come to Christ. Read 2 Corinthians 11, and you will see all that Paul went through physically to

serve the Lord Jesus Christ. He was stoned three times, beaten with rods, shipwrecked, and the list goes on.

I think about what it cost Paul in terms of his **family**. Have you ever noticed that Paul never mentions his family? So far as I can tell, there is no mention of his family in terms of a personal relationship. I believe that when Paul gave his life to the Lord Jesus Christ he may have been disinherited by his family. He lost personal relationships.

The worst thing with some people is that they don't realize that they're lost. Many of them are religious. Many of them belong to good churches. Many of them give their money. Many of them have been baptized. They have their name on the church roll, but not in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Sometimes it's hard to let go of our sins, but it's ever harder to let go of our righteousness, and say, "Lord, I don't have anything to offer to you.

Jesus said: ***"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it"*** (Mark 8:35). That's what Paul meant when he said, **"I count all these things but loss."** Not only am I willing to turn from my sin, but I am willing to turn from my righteousness, which in the sight of God is only filthy rags.

B. What Do We Gain with Christ?

1. The Knowledge of Christ

What did Paul gain? So far, we have written about the old math of life. Now, we will learn about the new math with the Lord. Paul writes, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" (Philippians 3:8). The very first thing that he gained as new wealth was the knowledge of Christ. Not knowledge about Christ—the knowledge of Christ: to know Him, to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Fellowship of Christ

In verse 9, Paul says: "And be found in him..." (Philippians 3:9). Now, that's a safe place to be, isn't it? You see, it's not that I'm just a church member; I am in Christ.

I am in His body, and He is in me. You talk about fellowship, you may be alone but never lonely because the Lord Jesus Christ is in you, and you are in Him.

Paul exchanged rituals and rules for a friend, that sticks closer than a brother and who will never leave you or forsake you. Wouldn't you rather have a friend than a set of rules? Before this, he had the law. Now, he has the Lord!

3. Righteousness Through Christ

To be “in Christ,” for Paul means, it is worth more than all of the religion, and all of the Pharisaism, and all of his culture, and all of his race, and all of his ritual. It is Jesus—not only knowledge of Jesus, and not only the fellowship with Jesus, but righteousness through Jesus.

Notice how Paul writes, ***“and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.”*** (Phil. 3:9).

Paul is tired of trying. He is going to start trusting. I am tired of trying to work my way to Heaven. Legalism is a terrible taskmaster for people. We need to do the same thing, stop trying and start trusting in the finished work of Christ.

Paul said, “I don’t have this self-righteousness anymore—I have God’s righteousness, which is imputed to me.” Do you know what the word impute means? It means it’s been credited to my account. Paul wrote in the Book of Romans, ***“However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.”*** (Romans 4:5, NIV).

Paul has been doing some accounting in his life. “His faith is counted for righteousness.” Romans 4:6 says, ***“David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.”***

When I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from my works, apart from my baptism, apart from my church membership, apart from trying to keep the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule, and come to the Lord, and say, “I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”—that moment, God credits righteousness to my account. What a wonderful miracle!

When God looks down on you (if you are born again) or me, God sees us as righteous in Jesus Christ— not because of my righteousness. You may say, “Who do you think you are?” A Christian— that’s who I think I am. not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ” (Philippians 3:9). The righteousness that is imputed—glory to God—that’s what Christianity is all about.

[What do we gain in Christ...knowledge of Him, fellowship with Him, His righteousness, and we ...](#)

4. Experiencing Christ’s Power Through Suffering for Him

In ***All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten***, Robert L. Fulghum writes: All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be, I learned in kindergarten. These are the things I learned:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush...

...When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.

I'm sure all those things are good to know, and they do cover a large part of life. But for those of us who are Christians, lessons from kindergarten don't cover all we need to know.

How do we draw closer to Christ? The apostle Paul pondered that question and wrote the answer to his dear friends in Philippi in verse 10.

Paul claims that if you are to know Christ, you must experience the power that comes to you through His resurrection. When Jesus rose from the dead, He proved He was the Son of God and that His Spirit could give you the power to live life as Christ would live it.

The Resurrection means that He is alive and that He can prompt you and strengthen you to approach situations the way He would approach them. You can face situations without being devastated or defeated. You'll be able to triumph through life because of the power that's available to you because of Jesus' resurrection.

Paul goes on to say that to really know Christ, you need to sense this power in situations of suffering. If you want to know him, you need to experience the sufferings he experienced, and react to them the way he reacted. You must know the "fellowship of sharing in his sufferings."

Why is that the case? Because our greatest spiritual growth always comes when we successfully endure situations of suffering. We have the greatest advances in our spiritual life when we face something that hurts badly—the loss of someone or something dear to us, a betrayal by someone close to us, injustice, or overwhelming sorrow. If you look back on your life, you'll likely see that it was during such times—if God's Spirit was producing a godly response in you—that you came triumphantly through suffering and grew spiritually.

Some of you have been rejected by spouses and deserted by boyfriends or girlfriends. Some of you have been kept out of schools you wanted to attend or fired from businesses you poured your heart into. You've been spurned by children and betrayed by people you trusted. Some of you have been misunderstood, maligned, and mistreated. When you realize that Christ also suffered such things and let his power bring a godly response from you, you grow spiritually and know him better.

You want to know Christ. It comes from sharing His sufferings and triumph through His power. We have been called to a rich life in which Christ's triumphant power is available to us so that the sins and injustices of the world cannot defeat us. This kind of life draws us closer and closer to him as we share his sufferings and learn his heart.

Closing

When we see the bankruptcy of the old man, not just our sinful things, but also our good things; we lay them all aside so that we might gain Christ. Christ is not a prize at the end of the race. He's a gift so you can run the race.

Salvation is not easy, free, or cheap. Jesus Christ died in agony and in blood, so that you might be saved. Will you trust in your self-righteousness, your legalism, and your good deeds to be saved; or will you trust in the righteousness of God, which is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His shed blood. Which do you choose?

Paul is saying do the math. If you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, He will exchange all your sin and all the religious garbage you've been depending on to get you to heaven, for the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ and what He did for you on the cross.

If you choose this world and what it has to offer, you have everything to lose and nothing to gain. If you choose Jesus and what He did on the cross for you, you have everything to gain and nothing to lose. **Just do the math, and find yourself having not just happiness, but a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. That joy is only found in Christ.**