

Losing to Gain
Philippians 3:1-11
Rev. Brian Bill
March 8-9, 2025

Sometimes people put things on their resume to make them sound better than they really are, like the grocery store “bag boy” who referred to his job as “Customer Service Representative.” I came across some other funny resumes and cover letters online which made me lol.

Cover Letters

- “I would be prepared to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss what I can do to your company.”
- “Looking for a party-time position.”
- “Thank you for your consideration. Hope to hear from you shortly!”

Qualifications

- “Here are my qualifications for you to overlook.”
- “I went to University from August 1890 to May 1993.”
- “I desire to be a profreader. Quick learner, good at mats and speling.”

Key Skills

- “Excellent memory; strong math aptitude; excellent memory.”
- “Fantastic ability in multi-tasting.”
- “Perfectionist with a keen I for details.”
- “Whilst working in the hairdressers I had to deal with a lot of old biddies.”
- “Grate communication skills.”
- “Good people skills, except when people get on my nerves. Which is hardly ever, no more often than once every ten minutes.”
- “None of my references really like me, so please don’t believe what they say.”

Here’s our main idea today: *A relationship with Christ, not a religious resume, is what makes us righteous.*

Philippians 3:1 begins with a preacher's favorite phrase: ***"Finally..."*** When you hear me say that word, you should be prepared for at least 20 more minutes. Here, Paul is only halfway finished with his letter. It literally means, *"As for the rest."* Paul has addressed several topics and now he wants to tackle a few more: ***"Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you."***

Paul circles back to ***"rejoice in the Lord"*** because joy comes only from Jesus. I love how Paul works this theme into every seam of Philippians. It seems whenever he changes subjects, he reminds us to rejoice. Notice: it is ***"no trouble"*** for him to repeat the need for rejoicing, referring to it as ***"safe"*** for them, also translated as "a safeguard." This word is the opposite of the verb meaning, *"to trip up, or cause to stumble."* Paul's passion is for believers to stand firm, to be steady and secure.

His concern is three-fold.

1. Watch out for the expectations of others. Verse 2 contains a warning about false teachers: ***"Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh."*** Using strident speech, Paul moves from some sweet words to several strong warnings. Let's refresh our memories about some tensions in the early church.

When Christianity started, it came out of the Jewish religion and was seen as part of Judaism. In Acts 10, Peter preached the gospel to Gentiles, and this caused some concern and conflict for those who believed a person needed to become Jewish first.

Now that the door had been opened, Paul was sent to the Gentiles in Acts 13, but it didn't take long for the "Judaizers" to cause the church to have its first doctrinal disagreement in Acts 15. The conclusion of this council was that Gentiles did *not* have to keep the Jewish law to be saved. Acts 15:19: ***"Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God."***

But the dissenters were not happy with this decision, so they followed Paul wherever he went, stirring up the churches and pulling people away from the gospel of grace by insisting on the ritual of circumcision.

The Philippians were told three times to **“look out,”** or perceive with their eyes, by paying close attention to these men.

In the original, Paul uses alliteration (he’s my hero). All three phrases begin with a hard “k” sound, which makes them spit out of his mouth in rapid succession. We get a similar effect by saying, *“Watch out for the canines, those corrupt workers, those cutters of the flesh.”*

Paul described these false teachers in three strong terms:

- **Dogs.** Don’t think of a lap dog or a nap dog. These were not pampered pets or docile dogs, but rather dirty, despised and diseased scavengers. I wanted to sing the song, *“Who Let the Dogs Out?”* but you would be out of here if I did! These mangy dogs often traveled in packs, intruding where they were not wanted. We saw a lot of these cantankerous canines when we lived in Mexico. Paul is really asking, *“Who Let the Dogs In?”* The Jewish people often referred to Gentiles in a derogatory way as “dogs” because they were ritually unclean. Ironically, the Judaizers had become just like those they had been trying to avoid. There are all sorts of spiritual dogs today who preach a false gospel.
- **Evildoers.** Their mission was evil, not good. I’m reminded of what Jesus said about them in Matthew 23:15: ***“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.”*** These missionaries of misery may have come across as sincere, but they were sinister.
- **Mutilators of the flesh.** Paul used a play on words to show these men, who preached circumcision as a requirement for salvation, were mutilating the message of the Gospel. The Greek word for circumcision is *peritome* and means, *“to cut around.”* But here he uses the word *keritome*, which means, *“to chop into pieces.”* Paul views these mutilators as destroying Christians. He used even stronger words in Galatians 5:12: ***“I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!”***

In essence, they were adding to the gospel, which always leads to a false gospel. Paul tells us to watch out for those who would draw our attention away from Christ. While the issue of circumcision is not a big deal today, there are religious leaders who insist on other issues, which have become a false gospel

today. We especially see this in “progressive” Christianity, where Scripture is reinterpreted to accommodate aberrant sexuality and transgenderism.

Allow me to illustrate. On 2/28/2025, the Dispatch-Argus ran an editorial from a local pastor in Davenport, which I found to be disturbing, troubling, and frankly, heretical. I won’t use his name, but I do want to share some concerns I have. Edgewood member Mike Russell did a great job responding to this in a letter to the editor, which has not run yet.

This pastor argued that just as God changed Abram’s name to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah, so transgender people recognize their names and identities given at birth “do not always encompass the fullness of who God is creating us to be.” This is an absurd argument because there is no evidence God changed anyone’s gender.

His biggest flaw came when he made this statement, “*Scripture tells us that all people are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) which does not define gender identity, just the sacredness of each person.*” It’s hard to believe a pastor could even make this statement because he left off the last part of Genesis 1:27: “***So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.***”

While he argues for justice, compassion, and love, we must never equivocate or add to God’s authoritative Word. I like how Mike put it: “*Clearly, God’s creation was assigned a specific gender at birth.*”

In contrast to the spiritual charlatans of his day, who were adding and subtracting from Scripture, Paul described real religion in verse 3 with four terms: “***For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.***”

- Christians are “***the circumcision.***” In a spiritual sense, every Christian has been circumcised in his heart.
- A Christian “***worships by the Spirit of God.***” Instead of exalting the externals on a religious resume, a true believer, as Jesus said in John 4:24, worships in “***spirit and truth.***”
- A Christian focuses on the “***glory in Christ.***” Our confidence must be in Christ alone.
- A Christian determines to “***put no confidence in the flesh.***” This literally means, “*And not in flesh having confidence.*”

A relationship with Christ, not a religious resume, is what makes us righteous.

2. Weigh your accomplishments against Christ. In verses 4-6, Paul opens his soul by describing his spiritual resume: ***“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.”***

Some of Paul’s achievements were inherited and others were earned. He had every reason to be confident because frankly, he had more fleshly accomplishments than most. I’m grateful to Wil Pounds for this helpful outline.

- **Right Ritual.** Paul was ***“circumcised on the eighth day.”*** He was a Jew by birth, not a convert later in life. This literally means, ***“In circumcision, an eighth-day man.”***
- **Right Relationship.** He was ***“of the people of Israel.”*** He was from the spiritual stock traced through Jacob. When the Jewish people wanted to stress their special relationship to God, they used the word “Israelite.”
- **Right Respectability.** Paul came from one of the most highly esteemed tribes: ***“of the tribe of Benjamin.”*** Benjamin was the youngest son of Rachael, the well-loved wife of Jacob.
- **Right Race.** Paul declared that he was a ***“Hebrew of Hebrews,”*** meaning that both of his parents were Jewish. He was a pure Jew, growing up speaking the language and practicing all the customs.
- **Right Religion.** Paul stated, ***“as to the law, a Pharisee.”*** Over time, the word “Pharisee” came to be synonymous with hypocrite or legalist, but back then, a Pharisee was the highest religious level one could achieve.
- **Right Reputation.** No one could question Paul’s passion because he was a zealot for what he believed: ***“as to zeal, a persecutor of the church.”***
- **Right Righteousness.** Amazingly, Paul could look at his external actions and declare, ***“As to righteousness under the law, blameless”*** because he kept the legal, ceremonial, and moral aspects of the Mosaic Law. He could say with the rich young ruler in Mark 10:20: ***“...all these I have kept from my youth.”***

If anyone had reason to hope they would make it based on their birth and background, along with their “goodness,” it was Paul. However, as good as he thought he was, he knew he didn’t measure up.

Listen to Philippians 3:7: ***“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”*** The word ***“but”*** serves as a contrast and the word ***“profit”*** is in the plural, meaning that all the “right” things he had going for him were like credits on a profit/loss statement. That is, until he took the time to ***“count”*** what he really had. This is a mathematical word, meaning to carefully add things up. When he got out his calculator app, he recognized all those things he thought as gain were ***“losses”*** when compared to knowing Christ.

It’s not Jesus plus your good works; it’s Jesus and Jesus alone. We come back to a phrase we’ve used before: Jesus + Nothing = Everything.

Paul stamped the word “loss” across all those things he thought were profits because all his credits had become debits. Weighed against the weightiness of Christ, his good works were worthless.

Verse 8 begins with an unusually strong word, ***“Indeed,”*** which reads like this in Greek, *“But indeed therefore at least even.”* Let’s look at the verse: ***“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.”***

He uses the word ***“count”*** again and concludes that ***“everything”*** was a loss compared to ***“the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”*** The word ***“loss”*** is used in Acts 27 of the cargo thrown overboard in a storm when the sailors got rid of stuff to save their lives. It was valuable but it had quickly become worthless when the sailors were faced with a crisis. *The cargo had to go if they wanted to go on.*

I think of what Jesus taught in Matthew 13:44 when he said the kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man gave up everything for: ***“Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”*** He had accumulated much but saw everything as worthless when compared to the surpassing treasure of Christ.

Paul went even further, using graphically gross language to make a point: ***“I count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.”*** The word ***“rubbish”***

is cleaned up a bit because it refers to manure, dog doo-doo, or human excrement. He's being deliberately vulgar as he communicates how his gains are garbage, his self-righteous deeds are like dung, what he thought was excellent was really excrement.

When we were missionaries in Mexico, I got to know an engineer who worked for a company that installed and serviced sewage treatment plants. To build a gospel bridge with him, I asked if I could tag along one day when he traveled to a town which was having some problems with their system. After driving for three hours, we came up to the facility and I was immediately overcome by the smell of raw sewage. My friend told me that since things weren't working right, they were unable to treat the wastewater, so it was just overflowing and dumping on the ground. I have never smelled anything so foul in my entire life. I got queasy and tried to get away from the nauseating smell. Unfortunately, we spent the entire day there. Did I mention it was extremely hot and there were flies everywhere?

With that image in your mind (and in your nose), in God's math, Paul's religious accomplishments were like overflowing raw sewage. Some of us are uncomfortable with these kinds of words in church but let me say it strongly. If you are trusting in your religious resume to get to Heaven, you will never get there because compared to a saving relationship with Christ, your spirituality is like a smoldering stew of sewage, and your good deeds are like rancid garbage.

Paul is illustrating the words of Isaiah 64:6: ***"We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment."*** Speaking of vivid language, the word *polluted* is a translation of the Hebrew word which literally means, *"the bodily fluids from a woman's menstrual cycle."* Our ***"righteous deeds"*** are considered by God as repugnant as a soiled feminine hygiene product.

Here's the rub. Most of us have no trouble admitting that our sins are smelly but secretly many of us think our "good" deeds help balance out the bad. One pastor put it this way: *"It is not your attitude toward your sins that fouls you up; it's your attitude toward your own goodness."*

Notice it's only when we count good things as garbage will we ***"gain Christ."*** We need to tear up our religious resume and instead trust in a relationship with Christ. When we realize we have nothing left but Christ, we will find that Christ is everything we ever needed.

*Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me Savior, or I die.*

Write this down: *A good thing can become a bad thing if it keeps us away from the best thing.* As Jesus said in Mark 8:36, ***“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?”***

It’s possible to be sincere and be sincerely wrong. When Paul compared himself with these seven measuring sticks, he thought he was fine but when compared with Christ, all his gains were garbage.

A relationship with Christ, not a religious resume, is what makes us righteous.

3. Widen your experiential knowledge of Christ. Verse 9 describes the amazing transaction that takes place when we refuse to trust in the smelly refuse on our spiritual resumes and put our faith in Christ’s resume alone: ***“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.”***

This passage hit John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, as he walked through the cornfields one night, wondering how he could stand before God. Suddenly, he saw himself not just as a sinner, but as the embodiment of sin, from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet.

In the greatest exchange ever, when we are converted, Jesus takes our rottenness and transfers His righteousness to our accounts. Christ received our punishment, though He never sinned, and we receive His righteousness as a gift, though we don’t deserve it.

Verses 10-11 establish the two goals of the Christian life: To know Christ and to show Christ: ***“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.”*** The word **“know”** is experiential, not just intellectual and has the idea of “knowing absolutely.”

Salvation is knowing Christ, not just knowing about Him as Jesus said in John 17:3: “*And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*” Do you know Christ?

I’ve always liked this quote from *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer: “*Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life’s problems fall into place of their own accord.*”

Warren Wiersbe points out some helpful truths about knowing Christ from these two verses:

- It’s personal – “***I***” want to know Christ.
- It’s powerful – the “***power***” of His resurrection.
- It’s painful – the fellowship of sharing in His “***sufferings.***”
- It’s practical – “***becoming***” like Him.
- It’s pleasant – he looks to “***attain the resurrection of the dead***” in the world to come.

This passage covers the three main truths of the Christian life.

- Joy comes from full justification (9).
- Joy comes from forward sanctification (10).
- Joy comes from future glorification (11).

Friend, settle this. The good stuff and the gross stuff in your life will only lose their grip on you when displaced by a greater joy. Have you found true joy, which is found only in Jesus Christ? Once you experience the surpassing value of knowing Jesus, He will give you a revulsion for your religious resume, and in its place, you will encounter the living and loving Lord Jesus.

When we consider the worthiness of Christ, everything else will become worthless because Jesus is infinitely and incomparably better! This enjoyment alone has the power to kill sin in our souls.

This is illustrated by Augustine’s conversion. His mother, Monica prayed for her son for years. Later, he came under the influence of a pastor named Ambrose, who now has a college named after him.

By his own confession, Augustine was a *“wild and lawless youth. My mother commanded me not to commit fornication...and I took pleasure to do it.”*

Augustine’s major obstacle was not intellectual, but moral, as he often spoke of how lust raged in his soul: *“Bodily desire...clouded over and obscured my heart, so that I could not distinguish the clear light of true love from the mark of lust.”*

All this changed when the Lord sought him out, and in a manner of speaking, cornered him in a small garden attached to the house where he lived:

“I now found myself driven by the tumult in my breast to take refuge in this garden, where no one could interrupt that fierce struggle in which I was my own contestant...I was dying a death that would bring me life...I was frantic, overcome by violent anger with myself for not accepting your will and entering into your covenant...I tore my hair and hammered my forehead with my fists; I locked my fingers and hugged my knees.”

Finally, while praying, he uttered: *“How long, how long? Tomorrow and tomorrow? Why not now? Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?”* Then came the miracle of saving grace:

*“I was saying these things and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when lo, I heard the voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, coming from a neighboring house, chanting, and oft repeating: ‘Take up and read; take up and read.’ I grasped the Bible, opened, and in silence read that paragraph on which my eyes first fell: **‘not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.’** No further would I read, nor did I need; for instantly, as the sentence ended – by a light, as it were, of security into my heart – all the gloom of doubt vanished away.”*

His resistance was overcome by “sovereign joy,” the name he gave to divine grace: *“How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose! You drove them from me and took their place, you who are sweeter than all pleasure...O Lord my God, my Light, my Wealth, and my Salvation.”*

I hear in Augustine's confession an echo of Paul in Philippians 3. Where Paul spoke of ethnic pride and education and self-righteousness, all of which he came to view as nothing in comparison with knowing Christ, Augustine spoke of "fruitless joys" which were replaced in his soul with the God who is "*sweeter than all pleasure.*"

In light of the worthiness of Christ, everything else is worthless.

As Sam Storms says, "*Augustine was convinced that if not philosophy, then fornication...would bring him optimum, maximum joy...until he met Jesus Christ. When by grace he tasted the goodness of God, the sweetness of salvation, those joys that so long held his heart captive turned sour in his soul and became bitter to the taste and a stench in his nostrils...transformation will never happen until your heart is captivated by a rival attraction that is comparatively superior.*"

We began with some resumes. I came across a document called, "The Resume of Jesus Christ." Here are a few excerpts.

Cover Letter:

My name is Jesus Christ. Many call me Lord! I've sent my resume because I'm seeking the top management position in your heart.

Qualifications:

- I founded the earth and established the heavens (see Proverbs 3:19).
- I formed man from the dust of the ground (see Genesis 2:7).
- I redeemed man from the curse of the law (see Galatians 3:13).

Occupational Background:

- I've only had one employer (see Luke 2:49).
- My employer has nothing but rave reviews for me (see Matthew 3:15-17).

Skills and Work Experiences:

- Some of my skills and work experiences include healing the brokenhearted and setting the captives free (see Luke 4:18).
- I am a Wonderful Counselor (see Isaiah 9:6).

- Most importantly, I have the authority, ability, and power to cleanse you of your sins (see I John 1:7-9).

Educational Background:

- In me are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (see Colossians 2:3).

Major Accomplishments:

- I laid down my life so that you may live (see 2 Corinthians 5:15).
- I defeated the archenemy of God and made a show of him openly (see Colossians 2:15).
- There are many more major accomplishments, too many to mention here. You can read about them in the Bible.

References:

- Followers worldwide will testify to my salvation, deliverance, restoration, joy, and supernatural guidance.

Summary:

Now that you've read my resume, I'm confident that I'm the only candidate uniquely qualified to fill this vital position in your heart. Once you invite me in, I will direct your paths (see Proverbs 3:5-6) and lead you into everlasting life (see John 6:47). When can I start? Time is of the essence (see Hebrews 3:15).

Ray Fowler suggests three penetrating questions.

- Is there anything in your life that is drawing your attention away from the Lord?
- When it comes to acceptance before God, in what are you placing your confidence?
- Do you want to know Christ more than anything else?

Many of us subscribe to the oldest religion in the world – the do-the-best-you-can religion. The problem with this is that our best is really a mound of smelly manure in the nostrils of Yahweh. Even the good things are garbage to God.

Are you ready to put your faith in Christ right now so you will be found in Him?
We could define faith this way.

Forsaking
All
I
Take
Him

It's time to do a new accounting of your life so you will forsake all and take Him right now. Picture Jesus on the Cross with all the accumulated stench and foulness of the world being poured onto Him. As one pastor says, *"What we really need is to be clothed in a perfect righteousness that doesn't simply mask our sin and guilt but exchanges them for a real righteousness that is bulletproof from condemnation."*

Do you echo these same questions Augustine had? *"How long, how long? Tomorrow and tomorrow? Why not now? Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?"*

The Holy Spirit is at work! Check out this update from Lance Heuer on Friday – *"Edgewood's support of El Monte can be done with confidence...we had a group of over 100 come to the camp facilities a week ago. 39 people accepted Christ and were baptized in the swimming pool! I had a hard time sleeping last night just contemplating what that means...please pass on my love and appreciation to all the Saints at Edgewood! Dios le bendiga!"*

If so, it's time to be saved...right now. If you're saved, it's time to surrender.

Invitation

Interview with Andrew Hofer with FCA

New Members

Vance DeBruine (9:00)

Nick and Vickie Seefeld (10:45)