

“Résumé for the Good Life” // Philippians 3:1–11 // Secret to the Good Life # 7¹

Announcement

Let me introduce myself for those of you who may not recognize me: My name is J.D. Greear, and I’m one of the pastors of this church.

For the last month, I’ve been in Europe. It started with me serving as a chaperone on my daughter’s high school senior trip in Italy, which was kind of like a mission trip for me, just the high school students I was with were my mission. I was back in my old student pastor days—it was great.

- And then when that was done, the rest of my family joined us in Rome, and we spent some time traveling up the Italian coastline by train.
- Then the family came home, and I flew to Spain and spent some time with some of our Summit missionaries there, and then joined a couple of our Summit College teams doing college campus and beach outreach evangelism in Barcelona—and it was AWESOME.
- Summit, listen: We currently have 264 of our members who live overseas working on teams focused on church planting among the unreached, and this summer several hundred of our college students and high school students and a bunch of other members are going out on short-term mission teams to assist them in the work.
- In fact, one of the City Project students I was with in Barcelona showed us **THIS PICTURE**—he is a UNC student, and he showed us this screenshot from his Find Me app (you know how all these Gen Z students track each other’s locations)—anyway, this is his circle of friends this summer, all of whom are doing Summit City Project, and they are scattered around the world, sharing the gospel in various cities.

So it was a joy and very refreshing for me to join our members in the work. Praise God, Summit, for what’s happening through our members around the world—I hope you’ll pray for them and for God’s work to flourish in these places. You can pray for them using our Daily Revival app—one of the missionaries will come up every day as you work through that. And I hope you will pray about joining them, whether short term or long term, in some of these places. There are truly some remarkable things happening in these church plants.

Introduction

Now, if you have your Bibles, open them to Philippians 3 ... and let’s all stand for the reading of God’s Word. I’ll be reading the first 11 verses:

1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. (By the way, Paul is nowhere near the end of his letter to the Philippians. Like any good Baptist preacher, Paul ends his sermon multiple times. He opens this chapter by saying, “in conclusion,” and then he’s got two more full chapters worth of stuff to say. So it’s not just me that does this.)

¹ Sources consulted: Tim Mackie, [“The Book of Philippians Summary”](#), November 15, 2016; *Philippians for You*, Stephen J. Lawson. And others as noted throughout.

To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. (I don't mind being repetitive!)

2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. 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**—(How much confidence, church? Say it with me: NO confidence in the flesh.)

4 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: 5 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; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 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 9 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— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Leader: *This is the Word of God for the People of God.*

Congregation: *Thanks be to God.*

In the book of Philippians, Paul has been sharing with us his secret to “the good life,” demonstrating to us both what “the good life” is and how we can obtain it, and in chapter 3 Paul lays out an important component in anyone’s quest for “the good life,” and that is what you think qualifies you for the good life.

Philippians 3 is Paul's résumé, so to speak, of what he believed, pre-Jesus, qualified him for "the good life," and how he sees things now after meeting Jesus. A résumé, when you think about it, is essentially an argument—an argument for why you deserve something.

- So if you're applying for a job, your résumé is your argument for why YOU belong in that job instead of others.
- Or if you are applying to a school, your application, which is a kind of résumé, is your argument for why *you* should be admitted instead of others.

I've heard it said that for most of us, the closest we'll ever come to perfection in this life is our résumé. You may not overtly lie on your résumé, but you might stretch the truth to its limits—

- One of my jobs in high school was mowing lawns, so someone encouraged me to write that down on my college application as "architectural landscaping engineer."
- If you babysat in high school, you might write down "Early Childhood Development Supervisor."
- No, that wasn't just a couple of random things you sold on Ebay; you were "entrepreneur and small business owner."
- You didn't just help grandma figure out her iPhone—you provided "senior adult technology consulting."
- No, you didn't waste three hours every night playing Xbox online with friends—you were Founder and President of a strategic decision-making consortium.

Hopefully none of you stretched the truth that much, but if you've ever been in a position to review résumés, you know that what I just shared is not much of an exaggeration—bro, you said you "handled financial transactions for a multibillion-dollar corporation," but in reality, you were a cashier at a McDonald's. People polish that résumé and make it look as good as possible—and that's because a résumé is an argument for acceptance.

Again, Philippians 3 is Paul's résumé, pre-Jesus, of what he believed qualified him for "the good life." Now, I'll warn you, his résumé will be different from yours—Paul lived in a different era that valued different things. But the point is that all of us carry around a little internal résumé that is our own internal argument for why we deserve the good life. We carry it into every conversation. **We're always subtly presenting it to others and to ourselves. This internal** résumé is your source of personal confidence. Notice that Paul calls it that three times in **verses 3–4**—he's asking, "Where do you find your *confidence*? Confidence that you deserve the good life? Confidence that you will experience good things?"

Now, one quick word of context before I walk you through Paul's pre-Jesus résumé—otherwise, some of Paul's imagery won't make sense. Paul's specific target in this passage—the ones whom he is arguing against—is a group in the early church known as the Judaizers, who were a sect of Jewish Christians that professed faith in Christ but also had a long list of things that they believed made them more acceptable in God's eyes—regulations on dress and diet and lifestyle—and the first thing on their list was circumcision: You should of course believe in Jesus, they said, but you must also be circumcised—that's the first thing after faith in Christ that boosts your status in God's eyes. And then they followed that up with a whole list of other Jewish laws and customs that they believed made you even more pleasing to God. Paul is thinking about them in vs 2 when he says: **2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.**

He doesn't mince words. People who teach that circumcision boosts your status with God are theological dogs, he says. Body mutilators. (By the way, whenever I mention anything about circumcision, I get so many questions that frankly I got tired of answering, so I appointed one of our pastors on our staff to become our resident expert on circumcision. **PIC**. It's John Muller. And he's studied hard to answer all your questions—he got a certificate in circumcision expertise—so here's his email. He'd love for you to ask him your most thoughtful, detailed questions about circumcision and he's committed to answering all of them to your satisfaction.)

But here's the thing about circumcision: I would guess that none of you have ever thought about circumcision as an important element in pleasing God. None of you have ever said, "I'm really struggling to feel close to God. I know, I'll go get circumcised." None of you've ever been talking to a friend who says, "I just feel disconnected from God" and you said, "Well, are you circumcised?" I'm confident that conversation has never happened at The Summit Church. And so you get to a passage like this one and think, "Well, this just isn't that relevant for me. I'm not asking this question."

But **GET THIS Paul uses circumcision simply as an EXAMPLE of ANYTHING we look to in our flesh or about our person** (or anything we put on our résumé) that we think elevates our position above others or makes us more acceptable to God. And you have your own list full of those kinds of things. So that's the relevance to you. So, as I review Paul's very Jewish résumé, I want you to start thinking about what's on yours.

Alright, here we go.

Vs 5: Paul starts his résumé with ... *circumcision*. He says, I was "...circumcised on the eighth day" (which was exactly the way the Mosaic law prescribed it; all Israelite males were to be circumcised eight days after their birth.) I was, Paul continues, "of the people of Israel" (and the word he uses there for 'people' is '*genos*,' which means "ethnicity," which meant that Paul was true Jew, not a proselyte or convert to Judaism—no, he was home grown), "of the tribe of Benjamin" (This may not mean much to you, but the tribe of Benjamin had a special status in those days because Benjamin was one of only two tribes in Israel that was still fully intact—Benjamin and Judah; the rest of the 12 tribes had been forced to intermarry with Gentiles, which meant that most Jews in Paul's days were some mixture of Gentile and Jew—they were Muggles, but Paul was pure blood. Furthermore, Paul's original name had been Saul, which means he was named for the first king of Israel, who had also been from the tribe of Benjamin, suggesting Paul may have been a direct descendant of King Saul—so Paul was saying, "I am not just pure blood; I'm blue-blood, descended from royalty")². I was "a Hebrew of Hebrews;" (Which meant he'd grown up in a Hebrew-culture household, speaking Hebrew as his first language. By this point in history, the vast majority of Jews were what we call "Hellenized," which meant they grew up speaking Greek, because that was the majority language around them. Paul said, "Not me. Our family was committed to the old ways. I was uncut, unfiltered Jew; 200-proof Jew; USDA Prime Jew.")

... as to the law, a Pharisee; Now, "Pharisee" in our day usually carries the connotation of someone who's self-righteous and hypocritical, but in those days, "Pharisee" was a badge of honor. The Pharisees were the moral and religious heroes of Israel. There was a common saying among Jews in Paul's day that if all Israelites would live like the Pharisees for even a single week, the Messiah would return immediately and set up his kingdom.

² Jacob's favorite son; first king from the tribe of Benjamin; they remained faithful to David in Absalom's rebellion.

Paul says, vs 6: ... as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; (And you might be tempted to think of this one as Paul slipping in a negative—shamefully admitting that he'd gotten carried away and killed people, but in this context Paul was presenting that as a positive. You see, there was a famous story from the Old Testament commonly told by the Pharisees during that time—we find this story referenced all over rabbinical literature from the first century; it's from Numbers 25—about a man named Phinehas who lived during an era when all the men in Israel were corrupting themselves by taking pagan wives. And because of that—God had warned them not to do this—God sent a curse on the people. Well, this guy Phinehas got so angry about one of his neighbors sleeping with a pagan woman that he took a javelin into their tent and pinned both of them to the bed while they were sleeping together. And for that act of zeal, God stopped the curse.³)

That's Numbers 25, and the Pharisees used this story as an example of the kind of zeal that they believed would bring God's blessing back into Israel. Paul was like, *"I was Phinehas; persecuting, even to the point of bloodshed, any I saw bringing compromise to Israel. It was a messy job, but I was so committed to the Law I was willing to do it."*)

Paul's point is NOBODY cared more about Jewish customs and laws more than he did ... as to righteousness, under the law blameless. I kept all the laws; I was in church every week; I had all the books of the Bible memorized. I tithed; I double-tithed! I fasted twice a week. I only ever listened to Christian music. I never missed prayer meeting. I used my summers to go on mission trips. I saved sex for marriage. I had a purity ring tan line, in fact. I carried a Bible so big it needed its own shoulder strap. I knew all the motions to the "Father Abraham" song and could quote all 418 verses of "Just as I Am." I ate clean. I recycled. Etc, etc.

People in Israel would have killed for a résumé like this. Paul was the best of the best. And so what Paul says next is absolutely shocking:

7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (Not only were these things ultimately unhelpful, they were actually *harmful* in my quest to obtain the true "good life.") **8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.**

Paul then uses these next few verses to give us

- (1) **A New Definition** (of the good life),
- (2) to establish **A New Résumé** (a new set of criteria for obtaining that goal) and then #
- (3) **A Warning about Success**
- (4) **A Promise about Suffering**

1. A New Definition (vv 8–10)

Let me make an obvious statement: *The most important question in pursuing "the good life" is determining what it is.*

³ Numbers 25:1–13

Paul says, “My definition of the good life, what I’m striving for, is knowing Christ. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection (vs 10). That has “surpassing worth” (vs 8) to me.

In fact, Paul says, **vs. 9**, knowing Christ makes everything else in my life seem like *rubbish*.

- By the way, our ESV translation here says “*rubbish*,” but honestly, that word doesn’t do the Greek word here justice.
- You see, the Greek word there is *scubala* (**rubbish = scubala**). Everybody say “Scubala.”
- Now, everybody look at your neighbor and say, “Awww ... You just said a bad word ... You just said a wirty dord.”
- “Scubala” is the closest thing we have to an expletive in the New Testament. In fact, I can’t even give you its closest English equivalent, because then I’d be in some deep scubala with our elders.

Paul said, “Compared to knowing Christ, everything else in my life seems like ... scubala.” And that’s because for Paul, knowing Jesus was the essence of life. It’s not that Jesus connected him to the good life or could provide him with the good life, but knowing him was itself “the good life.” Remember that from chapter 1? He said, “For me to LIVE is *Christ*.” Knowing Jesus *IS* life itself.

- Everybody’s a little bit into soccer right now because of the World Cup ... There was a really popular comedy that came out a few years ago about a redneck American football coach who went to coach a soccer team in England, and he just can’t understand the European fascination with soccer or a lot of the customs around the game. And it’s got a lot of hilarious moments in it. I’m talking about *Ted Lasso*, of course. It’s on Apple TV, but especially for you parents, I’d suggest you watch it on VidAngel to cut out some of the vulgarity ...
- But there’s this one player who joins the team named Dani Rojas, who always has this huge smile on his face whenever he’s playing soccer, and the only line he really says throughout the show is “Fuuutball is life.” Dani Rojas is not into soccer for the money or the fame; he just loves playing.
- For Paul, knowing Jesus—being assured of his love, trusting in his promises—that WAS life. Knowing Jesus was a source of joy that could lift Paul above any pain or disappointment he went through so that even when he found himself unjustly imprisoned between two smelly guards, he could say, “I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content because I have life already; it’s Jesus.”

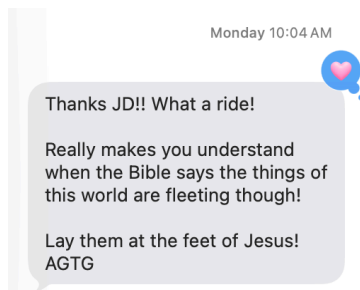
You see, one of the questions you need to consider in your pursuit of “the good life” is how easily whatever you’ve established as your source of the good life could be taken away.

- It’s a point made even in *Ted Lasso*. There’s a point in the show where the team starts doing terribly, and then Dani misfires a penalty kick and inadvertently kills the team dog, Earl. And so Dani starts saying, “Fuuutball is death.” And it’s kind of sad/funny, but here’s the thing: Most of the things we establish as “life” can turn into death.
- Money is life ... yeah, until you lose it; or until it turns you into a shallow, materialistic person who alienates your family; or until you discover that you can’t take it with you past the grave and that it’s kept you from focusing on the things that really matter—then it’s death.
- Or, “Other people’s opinions are life ...” Yeah, until those friends let you down or one of them betrays you or the group falls apart, then other people’s opinions are death.

- Last week I listened to a podcast with the really popular German biotech engineer Christian Angermayer, who explained that real life is found in human maxxing. Using supplements and injections and human enhancement drugs and even the occasional psychedelic mushroom to elevate your lived experience. He said, “We’re now able to prescribe things that tangibly increase people’s quality of life by 10 full years.” People can feel younger and look younger and live 10 full years longer. And I kept thinking, “Yeah, that’s awesome! But is 10 years really that long? I mean, what about after that? Or what happens in your awesome maxxed life when your wife or one of your kids dies or your marriage falls apart? Can human maxxing save you then?” In fact, in this podcast he talked about dealing with suicidal thoughts—and my heart went out to him, but I thought, “If your maxxed-up life still leaves you with suicidal thoughts, can you say it’s really been successful?”

Paul says, “Jesus is life, who gives a joy and fulfillment that nothing else rivals and that disappointment or death cannot take away.”

Some of you know that Jaccob Slavin, defender for the Carolina Hurricanes, is a member here at The Summit Church. Last week Jaccob became one of only two people in history to win a gold medal and the Stanley Cup in the same year. I was over in Europe during the final round of playoffs, so I had to get up at 2 a.m. several nights to watch it. When they won the final game, I texted Jaccob and said, “Hey man, congratulations. This is a big deal, and I’m grateful for how you are stewarding this moment for Jesus.” I didn’t expect to hear back from him since I was sure they were up to their eyeballs in champagne, but he shortly **texted back**,



(Notice the time on the text is **10:04 a.m.**—but that was my time, in Spain, which is several hours ahead. That was 1 a.m. Jaccob’s time, late Sunday night, just a few hours after they’d won the cup. He hadn’t even gone to bed yet! Already he’s saying—even this, the Stanley Cup, is not life. Let me tell you what I love most about Jaccob—I have a nearly identical text from him after they lost last year in the semifinals to get knocked out of the tournament. I was like, “Hey man, you played a great game. You deserved that win.” And he said something like, “Man, I was disappointed to lose, but no big deal. Winning or losing, AGTG. (Know what that means? All glory to God).”

And he gave me permission to share that as long as I used all the proper hockey terminology and didn’t call it a tournament or say that he hit any three-pointers or kicked any field goals or anything like that. But take it from those who’ve gotten the gold medals and the trophies. Even the Stanley Cup is *scubala* compared to the joy of knowing Jesus.

Listen: Some of you who have been in church a long time have never thought about Jesus this way. You've thought of Jesus as someone primarily useful—I mean, you can't get to heaven without him, so you know you need him. He's someone you want on your team, helping you with your family and career. But there's a difference between something being **useful** to you and it being **beautiful** to you. **Something that is** "useful" is helpful in obtaining something else you really want. For example, I have a tire iron in my car. I'm really glad I have it. It's helped me out in some really bad situations: When I had a flat tire; if someone were chasing me through a dark alley, I'd want to have it nearby. But that tire iron, while very useful, isn't beautiful to me. I don't take it out and look at it or carry around a picture of it or show it off to my friends. And if it breaks, I throw it away.

That's different from how I feel about, say, my wife and kids: They're not so much "useful" to me as much as they are *beautiful* to me. I don't love them because of all the other great things they can bring to my life—like millions of dollars. Now, to be clear, that would be a nice benefit, and I'm counting on at least one of my kids striking it rich. But that's not why I love them or keep them around. I love them for them, because they are beautiful to me.

For some of you, Jesus is **useful—you think** he'll help you obtain heaven and avoid hell, or you're looking to him to provide a good marriage or give you help with your kids. But for Paul, Jesus was beautiful. Knowing him was "the good life," even when everything else was going wrong; even when he sat, unjustly, in prison, chained between two smelly guards.

That's the question for you: **Do you think Jesus can help you obtain "the good life" (good marriage, good health, good kids), or do you think knowing him IS "the good life"?**

Which brings me to #2—the qualifications for obtaining this kind of relationship with Jesus. And this is where it gets really good.

2. A New Resume (vv 8–9)

Look again at vs 8, where Paul says, I count everything 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—**

Notice that Paul in this passage talks about his relationship with Christ with confidence. He uses phrases like, vs 8, I've "gained" Christ; and I "know" him; and vs 9, I've been "found in him."

What gives Paul that confidence? (You know, when you think about it, it's a pretty big boast, isn't it? "I *KNOW* he is mine and I am his; I know he is in me and I am in him. I know I'll go to heaven when I die. I know he's on my side in every situation working for my good." That's a huge flex.) **What qualifies Paul to say that?** Is it his impressive résumé? No. That used to be his source of confidence, but it's not any longer. Now, he says, vs 9, **"...**

NOT having a righteousness that comes from the law, but [one] that which comes (only) through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God that depends (only) on faith.

There is a righteousness that God offers in the gospel, Paul says, that comes not from obedience to the law, and not from any kind of human accomplishment—but only through faith in Christ. It's what we call **gift righteousness**—write that down: **"Gift righteousness"**: Christ's righteousness given to us as a gift. And that gives you a confidence that even the most impressive résumé never will. It's when Christ's record—Christ's résumé—gets credited to your account. It's what Paul calls **"imputed righteousness."** "Imputed" is a legal term that means something is credited to you. A status is given to you.

Imputed righteousness ≠ Infused righteousness. **Imputed** righteousness is when you are positionally put into Christ so that when God sees you, he sees Christ. **Infused** righteousness is the process of that righteousness seeping into you and slowly infiltrating you until it completely takes you over. Imputed happens to you all at once; infused righteousness happens over a lifetime. It's the process of sanctification or growth in Christlikeness.

Here's a way to see it: Let this represent you: You're baby Yoda. This is Christ: jar of water. When you put faith in Christ, when you accept him as your Savior, you get put into Christ. That's the language Paul uses in Philippians 3—I've been "found in him." So now, when God sees you, he sees Christ. He can't see you without seeing Christ first.

Now, something else happens to baby Yoda when he's in the water. Slowly, the water of Christ's righteousness seeps into him. This is infused righteousness, the process of Christ's righteousness slowly seeping into you. That's an important part of your spiritual growth too, but it's not the same as imputed righteousness. Imputed righteousness is a legal declaration that happens all at once the moment you get put into Christ.

I take pains to explain this because our Catholic friends often confuse the two, which is why so many of them, frankly, lack an assurance of salvation. They teach that righteousness gets put into us little by little by means of the sacraments. It's infused into us over a lifetime. God's righteousness, they believe, is like a medicine—the more you go to church and confession and the more you take the eucharist, the more righteousness comes into you. So they are always going to mass or confession, but the problem is they never know if they have enough righteousness inside of them to really say they fully belong to Jesus and are assured of heaven—which is why when you ask many of them if they are sure they are going to heaven, they'll tell you they don't know and assume they'll probably have to finish the righteousness-saturation project in purgatory. That's because they confuse infused righteousness with imputed righteousness.

In this passage Paul is talking about that moment where positionally you are put into Christ all at once. Where Christ's résumé literally became his.

Martin Luther had a way of expressing this. When we get put into Christ, he said, we are **"simultaneously righteous and a sinner."** **Simultaneously fully righteous in God's eyes, even while I'm still sinful and sick on the inside. Right now, even before I'm soaked all the way through, when God sees me, he sees Christ first. Christ's résumé is credited to me all at once.**

Imagine you were applying for entrance into Duke University. Now, the average SAT score for incoming freshmen at Duke last year was something like 1550, and Duke has a 5 percent acceptance rate, which means 19 out of 20 applicants get a “no” response. But you really want to become a Blue Devil. The problem is you got straight Ds in high school, and your SAT score was so low that when you tell people what it is, they think you’re telling them your ACT score. (By the way, if you don’t get that joke: The SAT is on a 1600-point scale, and the ACT is on a 36-point scale.) So you turn in your application, and you’re pretty nervous about your chances of acceptance. But you find out at the last minute that the admissions committee has decided as the basis of your admission, they’re going to consider Albert Einstein’s résumé as yours. They’re literally going to take Einstein’s résumé and credit it to you as the basis of your application. So now you’re feeling pretty good. You’re not as nervous. Other applicants say, “Well, I got 1570 on the SAT.” And you’re like, “Yeah, but I came up with $E=MC^2$.” And they say, “Well, I wrote a killer common app essay about my grandmother’s impact on my life.” And you say, “Yeah, but I developed the theory of relativity.”

Albert Einstein’s résumé makes everything else on your résumé seem like *scubala*. This is what God invites us to do with the *résumé* of Christ. Christ’s *résumé* counts as mine. Gift righteousness. Jesus’ *résumé* in my place.

Friend, I often tell you that I’m sure of my salvation. I’m sure I’ll go to heaven. In fact, it’s the core, the basis, of my spiritual life. And it’s not because I have an impressive résumé. In fact, that’s the point—it’s not about my résumé at all anymore. Christ’s résumé is now counted in my place.

And that brings me to #3, how Paul uses this insight to give us a warning about our accomplishments.

3. A Warning about Accomplishments (vs 7–8)

I pointed out when we were walking through this passage that Paul said, **vs 7**, that his accomplishments were not just neutral to him, they actually became a loss, and that’s because one of the most distorted things about our sinful hearts is how we use our accomplishments to elevate ourselves in the eyes of God and others, and our pride in our accomplishments keeps us from receiving the grace of God, which is offered only as a gift to those who know they can’t earn it.

That’s why **Billy Graham** always said, **“It’s not people’s sin that usually keeps them out of heaven; it’s their good works.”**

In a few weeks we’ll all be celebrating America’s 250th birthday, which will be awesome. I’ve got my American flag Crocs and my Toby Keith and Lee Greenwood playlist, and I’m ready to go. And we’ll hear a lot about the Founding Fathers and the Declaration of Independence, and all of that is awesome. But maybe more significant to me is that all of this happened 250 years ago in the wake of what Christians historians call “The Great Awakening,” the greatest spiritual revival in Western history. Christian scholars say that Great Awakening preaching basically had only two points. First, Great Awakening preachers told people they must repent of our sins. And that made sense, of course. We have to stop our sinful defiance. Duh. But second, they said, we must repent of our religious deeds. Because our self-righteousness deludes us with false confidence and keeps us from gift righteousness. From grace.

There was a man who was saved during the Great Awakening named Nathan Cole. He was a poor farmer, but he kept a journal which you can still see in a museum in Connecticut, and in this journal he recounts hearing one of the Great Awakening evangelists. And here's what he wrote ... I love this: "As I heard him preach, it gave me a heart wound. By God's blessing my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me."

Notice he didn't say, "When I heard him preach, I got motivated to try harder." Or, "Hearing him preach, I decided to become more moral." He wrote, "My foundation was broken up." True gospel preaching *wounds* the very thing you are trusting in to make you "good enough" for God. True gospel preaching shreds your résumé. **"My old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me."**

By the way, this is not only something that happens one time at salvation. This is the ongoing secret of the Christian life: Just as you looked to Christ's righteousness to save you instead of yours, you learn to look to Christ's power to sustain you instead of yours. You don't have what it takes to live the Christian life. To overcome temptation. To accomplish the will of God. The more you know of Christ, the more you'll say with Nathan Cole, "My old foundation is broken up, and I see that just like my own righteousness could never save me, my own power could never keep me." It's his righteousness, not mine, that sustains me; it's his resurrection power, not mine, that sustains me. Jesus in my place.

Learn this, Christian: All the gospel's blessings come not through accomplishing but through receiving. Not through our impressive résumé but through humbly receiving gift righteousness and gift-power.

And that means there is hope for you, no matter how messed up you feel. Because it's not about your power for God; it's about *HIS* power *IN* you.

That brings us lastly to ...

4. A Promise about Suffering (vv 10–11)

Maybe the most surprising thing for the Philippians is what Paul says at the end. Paul says, vs 10, that because my goal is to **"...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, (therefore I am happy to) and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."**⁴

The gateway to resurrection power, Paul says, is through suffering. And so my own failure helps me, Paul says, trust in Jesus instead of me.

⁴ (BTW, some of you see that phrase in vs 11, "by any means possible" and wonder if Paul is saying, "Look, I'm not sure I can make it to the resurrection. I sure hope so and I'm trying my best." No, Paul is not trying to communicate uncertainty there, even though it sounds like that in English. In Greek, that phrase carries the connotation of simply it just hasn't happened yet, and I'm willing through whatever means for God to bring me to the power of resurrection, even if it goes through the valley of suffering. Paul says, "Whatever the path, I'm here for it.")

And when something blows up on me, or really disappoints me, it gives me a chance to tell myself and others—my hope is not in my strength; it's in Jesus.

And here's what's more: When I suffer unjustly, when I'm persecuted, that becomes a **gateway to spiritual power**. Think about it, Paul says: God brought salvation into the world through Jesus dying unfairly, in weakness and in shame. God didn't bring the power of resurrection into the world through Christ's perfect résumé; no, he brought resurrection power through Christ's unjust suffering.

And so that means when **I** suffer unjustly, when I feel like I'm bearing a cross, when I feel weak, I have access to that same power. That doesn't mean that I seek out crosses or that I don't try to avoid them, just that I recognize when I can't avoid them that they give me access to God's resurrection power.

I was talking with a really good friend of mine about a month or so ago. Both of us have gone through something similar that's felt unfair and been really painful. And I won't go into the details, but it had to do with lies and false accusations spread about us, lies that we just can't fully clear up—not because the truth isn't clear, but because the lies are too widespread. And I asked him how he coped with those people who continue to believe false things about him, and he said, "This is one of those places where the Lord has said to me: 'In this one you get to experience what Jesus experienced, bearing his shame, and that's the portal through which I'll pour resurrection power.'"

Listen, nobody likes suffering, and God wants you to do all you can to avoid it.

- And I want to make this abundantly clear: If you're in an abusive situation, I'm not saying that you should just stay there. No, contact us today, contact somebody, we want to help you. I'm just saying when you have done all you can do to avoid suffering, or clear your name, or stop the lies, and you can't, just know that Jesus says, "Blessed are you when you suffer wrongly, even unfairly ... because yours is the kingdom and power of heaven." If you share in his sufferings, you'll share in his resurrection power. When they put upon you the cross of false accusations, as you become like him in his death, his resurrection power will flow through you.
- And while I hate suffering, that's a pretty good trade.

It's not J.D. Greear's résumé the world needs. It's resurrection power, and that comes through my failures—realizing I'm not that impressive—and my suffering, which allows me to partake of the suffering of Christ so I can experience the power of resurrection.

Listen, some of you are suffering right now, I know. In a marriage; at work; friends are unkind to you. And you should do all you can to clear it up. But just know that through that suffering, if you go through it with faith, God is pouring resurrection power into you and through you, into those around you. By sharing in his sufferings, you partake of his power.

Conclusion (VAMP)

The Apostle Paul in this passage asks us to consider:

- **What's your ultimate goal? (How do you define "the good life")?** (Do you see Jesus as useful for obtaining the good life, or do you see knowing him *as* the good life?) Listen, if "the good life" for you is anything but knowing Christ, it's going to leave you empty and broken.
- **What qualifications entitle you to "the good life"?** What résumé do you carry around in your heart? Are you still trying to prove yourself to God and others, or have you accepted the gift righteousness of Christ given to all who will simply receive it by faith?
- And: **Do you see your failures and frustrations as invitations to experience the power of resurrection?**

If so, you're well on your way to "the good life."

Invitation:

Some of you need to make a switch:

- Christ's power for yours
- Christ's agenda for yours
- Some of you just need that resurrection power. (You need to ask him to help you suffer well so that others around you can experience the power of resurrection through you.)

How is the Holy Spirit drawing you to respond? Maybe you can use our altars to respond to the Holy Spirit and lay down your power and ask him for his.