

Talk – Phil 3:1-11 – Reasons for Confidence

CHECK TIME

Talk

Dad Joke

It's Fathers Day – I have four children, so I think that entitles me to four bad Dad jokes!

1. How do you make holy water? – You boil the hell out of it!
2. I asked my Dad what was his favourite Father's Day joke – he said 'You!'
3. I told him I wanted to be a comedian – no one is laughing now!
4. He said I should get a job at a restaurant – I said 'I can't wait!'

Those jokes have nothing at all to do with what we are going to look at from the Bible!

Prayer

Lord,

Help us to rejoice in you and in what you have done for in Jesus Christ.

Father, there is so much that competes for our attention – please help us now and in the next few minutes to profit from what we look at in your word.

And equip us to stand firm in Christ. AMEN

Rejoice in the Lord

- The first sermon I ever preached was on Philippians Chapter 3 – all lot has changed around me since that day – but this passage has remained the same – and for that I am very thankful.
- The Apostle Paul in this chapter calls on the church of Philippi to 'Rejoice in the Lord'.
- Because when they *look back* – they can see great reasons to rejoice.
- And when they *look forward* -they should see further great reasons to rejoice.
- In the chapter before, Paul has painted a picture of Jesus and described what he did – that is, he humbled himself from his position in heaven and made himself *nothing* by taking on the nature of humanity.
- Where his heavenly status was out of reach for man – he became man to reach out to those bound by their worldly status.
- Then died – in place of humanity.

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- He was raised and exalted to the most honoured position – so that those he died for might be exalted in him.
- Paul says – when you *look back* at what Jesus has done for you – there are great reasons to rejoice.

- In Chapter 3, he gets the church in Philippi to look at where they stand and cast their *eyes forward*. And he says – rejoice because you are in the Lord.
- This whole chapter (of which we'll only look at the first half of today) is about *the value of being known by Christ*.
- And it is helpful – because it recognises the 'now but not yet status' which believers find themselves in.
- Rejoicing because they are in the Lord *now* – but conflicted because they are also still in the world and that brings with it a whole bunch of conundrums and conflicts – issues that will not be resolved until heaven.

- Paul wants to be found in Christ – not outside of Christ.
- And Paul wants the church of Philippi to be found in Christ - and not outside of him.
- And we should be able to relate to that as believers today - we want to be found in Christ - and not outside of him.

- So, let me show you how Paul makes his case.
- Paul describes two different groups of people.
 - Those who rejoice *in the world* – or as he puts 'in the flesh'
 - And those who rejoice *in the Lord*.
 - Look at verse 2 – he says '*watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh*'

- He is talking about those who at that time were the Jews – the descendants of the nation of Israel – and particularly he is taking aim at those who were the leaders of Judaism.
- A distinguishing mark of being Jewish was that the men were circumcised. They lived by the law with all its rules and regulations and they separated themselves from the other nations who were (in their minds) corrupt and unclean – like dogs - in those days were not family pets, but scavengers and pests.
- Paul says in three ways – watch out for those people – and he turns their prejudices against them:
 - Calls them dogs (what they would have called the gentiles),
 - calls them evildoers (instead of doers of the law) and

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- calls them mutilators of the flesh – this one would have stung! (to be circumcised in their minds made them better than others – and Paul says that is just mutilation)
- His complaint – these Jews have got lost in the world and think that these worldly practises are what saves a person.

- Now contrast those three aspects with the next three aspects which Paul says are the marks of a person who rejoices in the Lord – those who are of the *real* circumcision.
- In verse 3 – they are the people who:
 - Serve God by his Spirit
 - Boast in Christ Jesus
 - And put no confidence in the flesh.
- This is a threefold commendation
 - Serving in the Spirit highlights how important it is to *look up* to God, not down to the world
 - Boasting in Christ highlights how important it is to live *life outwardly* and visibly before others - so that Jesus gets the glory
 - And to have to no confidence in the flesh is a way of saying, don't think that what saves you is something that you have been able to orchestrate or achieve by your own means.
 - Up, Out and In!
- There is an obvious contrast – they put confidence in what they do in the flesh, Paul says it should be completely the opposite – there is no confidence in the flesh.

Reasons for Confidence

- Now I could look around and come up with a modern-day illustration for this
 - bosses who just think they are so much better than the workers,
 - the tennis player who thinks because they have won more than their opponent that it entitles them some special treatment,
 - the Politian who thinks that it his right to be served rather than to serve.
- But Paul beats us to that punch – because he uses himself to illustrate his point.
- Look from the middle of verse 4 [*READ Phil 4b-6*]

circumcised on the eighth day
of the people of Israel
of the Tribe of Benjamin
a Hebrew of Hebrews

a Pharisee

Being found *in Christ*

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persecuting the church
faultless (in the eyes of the law)

- These are Paul's boasts. Perhaps in this day, boasting about your station or achievement in life may have been quite acceptable – and Paul had good reason to boast.
- On your outline I have tried to group them.
- The **first set of boasts** all relate to Paul's *inherited privileges* – his natural station in life thanks to his birth status.
 - *Circumcised on eighth day* – according to Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3 – a true boy of Israel would be ceremonially circumcised on the eight day.
 - Of the *people - or race - of Israel* – Paul was born into an esteemed race – those who traditionally were the Old Testament people of God.
 - But not just Israel, he was a descendant of *the tribe of Benjamin* – of all the children of Israel, Benjamin the last son was the only one born in the actual promised land. It is in Benjamin line that Paul comes (Gen 36:16-18).
 - And then a *Hebrew of Hebrews* – which suggests that both his parents were Hebrew – and Paul would have spoken both Hebrew and Aramaic (the ancestral languages of Israel) unlike many of the Jews of the day who would only be able to speak Greek.
- In other words – Paul was a pure blood – he could never be accused of being a mud-blood!
- The **second set of boasts** all relate to Paul's *achievements* – his education, his zeal, his ability to live by the law.
 - *He was a Pharisee – his education in the law would have been second to none, and as such had been appointed a religious leader – the elite of the day.*
 - *He persecuted the Church of Christ* – he led the charge against the 'Christians' – we know from Acts 7 that he was the one who authorised the stoning of Stephen.
 - In terms of a law-based righteousness – he was faultless. If laws measured righteousness, then Paul was the exemplar. It is his way of saying that he was self-righteous.
- Paul was in a class of his own – on just about every measure he surpassed that of any contender – He was the Judastic superman.
- At every point – he has the qualifications.

Illustration

- Consider the foreigner who hopes to qualify for citizenship in modern day South Australia.

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- They fill out the form hoping that they have the qualifications to be excepted as a South Australian...
 - *Born with a cricket bat in your hand* - tick
 - Descendant to Captain Cook – tick
 - Free settler (with definitely no convict blood) – tick
 - In fact, related to Queen Elizabeth - tick
 - Speaks English – tick
 - White skin - tick
 - Perfect health – tick
 - Educated at Oxford *and* Cambridge - tick
 - Has never been fined, disqualified, even warned by the authorities – tick
 - Knows Peter Dutton – tick!

- At every point – Paul has the qualifications!
- If there was anyone who had reason to be confident in the flesh – to be confident in his own flesh – it was Paul.

- And what does Paul do?
- He makes a mockery of his own heritage and achievements.

Why?

- Because he knows that no matter how impressive that is in the eyes of the world – it is not what God is looking for when it comes to granting citizenship in heaven.
- Those impressive things of the flesh – are the wrong measure.
- Verses 7-8 [READ Phil 3:7-9]

- When Paul looks at his list of qualifications – and he tallies them all up and looks at the sum total at the bottom – it reads Zero.
- It is worth nothing – in fact is on par with garbage.
- As far as I am aware – verse 8, is the only verse in the Bible that contains a swear word ‘I consider them ‘garbage’ – Paul is saying he considers his qualifications as valuable as ‘dung’. They are as valuable as ...insert swear word!

- But for all that loss – there is but one thing on the positive side of the ledger – that he might be found to be *in Christ* – on the basis of faith.
- In place of the word ‘Loss’ it simple reads ‘Christ’.
- The most important measure – do I know Christ?

PAUSE

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- But friends, this should not be a surprise.
- Because Christ humbled himself from his very high position in heaven and made himself nothing by taking on the nature of humanity.
- Jesus lower himself to the value of ‘dung’ – compared to what he had – by coming into the world in human nature.
- Where his *heavenly status* was out of reach for man – he willingly lost it all
 - and took on a *worldly status*
 - so that all those who believed in him could take *his status*.

- And so, friends, if that you think the most valuable treasures available to you will come because of that which is established and located in the world - then you will not see that Jesus has left even better treasures to save us.
- And you will fail to see that confidence in this world is worth about as much to God as that which we flush down the toilet, compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord.

Know Christ

- Paul with crystal clarity sees this – which is why he says in verse 10 ‘I want to *know* Christ’

- He is not saying I want to know *about* Christ – I want to *know* Christ
 - If it is his business then I want it to be my business
 - If he thinks it is important, then I think that it is important
 - If he gives time to it, then I want to give time to it
 - Where he goes, I go.

- And he develops that a little bit further when he says...
- I want to know **the power of his resurrection**
- In other words, I want to experience his resurrection and join him in it.

- I want **to participate in his sufferings**
- That is a bold prayer isn’t it. In fact, the word behind ‘participate’ there is the same word he has used throughout this letter to say that he would like to be *in partnership*.
- If there is benefit of being in partnership with Christ for eternity, then Paul wants that to start now – and recognise that means experiencing the same kinds of sufferings that Christ did when here on earth.
- He knows that you never really truly know what it means to be *in Christ* without being tested in some way.

- And he says, I want to **become like him** – humbled in death, to be glorified and exalted by the Father.

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- A desire like this is not for the faint hearted – it is asking for a lot, and a lot that won't seem good in this world.
- He asked for it, because ultimately he wants and knows that is to...

- **attain to the resurrection from the dead.**
- The hope of the Christian believer – is that *in Christ*, you are given the same resurrection that was given *to Christ*.
that *in Christ*, you are given the same resurrection that was given *to Christ*.
- He may have earned it - we can't.
- But he earned it - so that we might be given it.
- And that is what it means to attain to the resurrection of the dead.

PAUSE

Pauls' Letter to the Church in 2018

- Right, in Adelaide in 2018, we don't have that many of Judastic persuasion calling for circumcision – as a mark of salvation.
- If Paul were writing the same letter to us, what do you think he would say?

Perhaps this:

- First - he might address *those who may not yet know Christ*.
- And he might say, that if you think that being a 'good person' is what gets you into heaven, then it may be a good idea reconsider that stance.
- If the Apostle Paul wasn't 'good enough', then it is highly likely that you aren't either.
- He would then point you to what Jesus did for you and suggest that you check him out for yourself.
- The benefits are eternal!

- Second, he might then turn to *those Christians who think that the mark of a good Christian is measured by what they do*, how they serve, whether they have baptised, how much they give, or how long they have been a member of any particular church.
- And he might say, be careful you are not putting your confidence in the church world – rather than in Jesus.
- And he would point you to Jesus and suggest that you get to know him and rejoice in him rather than what you can do or have done.

- Third, he might then turn to *those Christians who are living with a foot in two worlds*.
- Those who want to know Christ and know the world.
- The reality is that you live in both worlds, so he would understand the dilemma.

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- And he might ask you – where does your priority lie?
 - He would see the value of work, and of education, and of family, and of leisure, and of money and many others things
 - I suspect he would be thrilled to see Christians living their lives out in the world in many different ways.
 - It is wonderful to have Christian lawyers, and Christian teachers, and Christian bankers, and Christian Engineers, and Christian Tradies, and Christian Doctors and nurses.
 - Yet I suspect that he would point out that if being successful in a career, or diligent as a student, or having the best social life, or obtained the nicest things – if that came at the expense of your relationship with Christ – then he would quite forcefully suggest that you changed something about the way you have arranged your life.
 - Don't expect to change God expectation of what he thinks is successful! Change you expectation of what God thinks is successful.
 - Because, when you add up all the promises that the world offers, none seems to promise anything after death – except that which comes in Christ.
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- I think Paul would like to challenge us to change or relook at our priorities to ensure that our desire is to be *known by Christ* now out weights our desire to be *known by the World*.
 - So rejoice in him.

Closing Prayer

Lord,

Help us to know Christ – and the power of his Resurrection – and the partnership in his sufferings – and the joys of becoming like him in attaining the resurrection from the dead.

And help us to rejoice in Him