

Even If I Lose Everything [Philippians 3:1-11]

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Big Idea: What we gain in Christ exceeds what we lose in Him.

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// INTRODUCTION

We live in an accumulation culture. Think about this... Here in America, there are more than 50K storage facilities. Let me put that in perspective. **We have more storage units than we do McDonald's, Starbucks, and Dunkin' Donuts COMBINED!** We have so much stuff that we literally can't fit it all into our homes anymore, so we pay a monthly fee for a separate building just to hold things we rarely use.

But it's not just the physical stuff. **We accumulate everything.** As I mentioned last week, we seek more influence and followers. More security. More options. More control. More credentials. We often measure our success by what we gain, building our lives on addition, not subtraction.

However, we're going to see here in Philippians 3 that Paul flips this idea completely on its head. **He measures life by what he's willing to lose.** Then he goes even further... he doesn't just tolerate or manage loss, he actively chooses it. He looks at everything he's accumulated and calls it trash compared to knowing Jesus.

Which raises the question for us...

What would you be willing to lose?

- Your career trajectory?
- Your financial security?
- Your friend's approval?

- Your reputation?

Paul's answer is basically, "Yes, *all of it. And it's not just yes, I could make it through if it happened. He means I consider all of those things trash compared to knowing Jesus.*"

// PRIMARY TEXT: Philippians 3:1-11

Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. [Philippians 3:1]

**** Leave this up until the next section. ****

Whatever happens. Let's just stop right there and let that sink in. [Pause]

Paul doesn't say "when things go well" or "if circumstances improve" or even "once you get through this." He says, "*Whatever happens, rejoice in the Lord.*"

Here it is... "even if" language. Even if life doesn't go the way you planned. Even if you don't get what you want. Even if you're overlooked. Even if you lose everything. Rejoice in the Lord.

Here's what makes this so remarkable.... Paul is writing this from prison. He's writing from prison, where he's chained to a guard 24 hours a day. **Yet from that kind of place, he writes, "*Whatever happens, rejoice in the Lord.*"**

Notice WHERE he locates the joy... "*rejoice **IN** the Lord.*" That phrase should change everything for us today. He's not saying, "be happy ABOUT your circumstances." **He's not advocating for toxic positivity where you slap on a smile and pretend everything's all good while your world is falling apart.**

He's saying your joy has a location. And that location isn't your circumstances. **It's not in** whether or not things work out the way you want or hoped. **It's not in** whether you keep all you have or get what you want. **Your joy's location is IN THE LORD.**

This is why Paul can say "*whatever happens*" because "*whatever happens*" to his circumstances doesn't change what he has in Jesus. The prison doesn't change it. The uncertain future doesn't change it. The loss he's about to describe doesn't change it.

Then Paul adds this... "*I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to SAFEGUARD your faith.*" To safeguard. To protect. To guard your faith against danger.

What's the danger that Paul sees that could threaten our faith? He's about to tell them here in the next verse that there are people who are teaching a different gospel, telling them that Jesus isn't enough. Because when you believe that Jesus isn't enough, you start looking for other security in other things. Your credentials. Your performance. Your accumulation. Your control.

And when those things get threatened or taken away, your faith collapses because your faith was actually in THOSE things, not in Jesus.

This is what we've been looking at throughout this whole series. We've been asking...

- **How do you have joy when life doesn't go as planned?**
- **How do you hold onto hope when you don't know what's next?**
- **When you don't get your way?**
- **When you're overlooked and undervalued?**

Paul's answer keeps coming back to the same thing... **your joy isn't dependent on your circumstances when your joy is rooted in Jesus.**

Today, Paul's going to show us what "whatever happens" and "even if" look like when you live it out. He's about to get really specific about what he's lost, what he's willing to lose, and what he's gained that makes it all worth it.

// THE THREAT TO OUR FAITH

What's this danger to our faith that Paul's identifying?

²Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. [Philippians 3:2]

Paul uses some harsh language here. In fact, it's some of the harshest in all of his letters. **He's talking here about a group of people we call the Judaizers.**

- Judaizers were Jewish Christians who believed that faith in Jesus wasn't enough.
- They believed Gentile converts also needed to follow Jewish law, particularly circumcision, to be truly saved.
- They would literally follow Paul from city to city, visiting the churches he planted and telling their congregations, "What Paul taught you is incomplete. You need Jesus PLUS the law. Faith PLUS circumcision. Grace PLUS your performance to be truly saved."

The fact that Paul calls these Jewish Christians "dogs" is significant because in Jewish culture, a "dog" is what Jews would call Gentiles. They were the outsiders, the unclean. Paul flips it completely, saying these Jewish teachers are the ones outside the true gospel.

Here's why that matters for us today... the moment you add ANYTHING to Jesus, you've actually subtracted what really matters.

Because now your standing with God depends partially on what Jesus did and partially on what you do. Which means your security is only as strong as your performance. Your peace is only as stable as your ability to maintain whatever you've added to Jesus.

Truth is, we still do this today. We may not say "*Jesus plus circumcision,*" but we do say things like...

- ***Jesus PLUS my good behavior...*** as long as I'm keeping it together morally, I'm good with God.
- ***Jesus PLUS my service...*** as long as I'm serving, giving, showing up to church, I'm secure.
- ***Jesus PLUS my theological correctness...*** as long as I believe all the right things and avoid all the wrong positions, I'm in good standing.
- ***Jesus PLUS my spiritual practices...*** as long as I'm praying enough, reading my Bible enough, worshipping enough, God is pleased with me.

Hear me... those things aren't bad. They're good and important things. The Bible says a person's fruit demonstrates salvation. ***The problem is when we subtly start trusting in them IN ADDITION to Jesus.*** When we ADD them to the foundation of what it means to be saved and made right with God.

Because here's what happens... when you fail morally, when you're too exhausted to serve, when you have doubts about your theology, when your spiritual life feels dry,

your faith collapses. NOT because you've lost Jesus, but because you were trusting in those things alongside Jesus.

When you trust in your performance, you can't afford to lose anything. Every loss becomes a threat to your standing with God.

// PAUL'S LOSS

Paul then lists all that he had. Not as some kind of religious bragging but as an example of the kind of real-life security, identity, and success we build our lives on today.

"I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one!"

- ***Paul came from the right kind of family.*** Generational wealth and influence. He was born with connections, with a name that opened doors, with a heritage people respected. It's like he's saying, *"I went to the right schools, know the right people, and I had the pedigree."*

"I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law."

- ***The Pharisees were the top 1%.*** These were the scholars of their day, the experts, the ones with credentials that everyone else aspired to have. It's like he's saying, *"I have degrees from the best schools. I'm at the top of my field. I'm the one other people come to for answers."*

"I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church."

- **Paul was all in.** He was committed. His performance was off the charts. He didn't just show up; he set the standard and was willing to do whatever it took.

"And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault."

- **By every measurable standard, Paul lived flawlessly.** His performance review would have been perfect. There was nothing anyone could say or point to that was lacking in Paul's life.

Here's what we need to understand about all of this. Paul's not just talking about religious achievement. **All of these things gave him real, tangible security in the Roman world.** Pharisees had social respect and influence. Paul had career prospects. He had safety and security. He had a community that honored him. He had financial stability. He had an identity that everyone around him validated.

It would be like having a career you worked for your entire life. The financial security you build slowly over decades. The reputation you carefully cultivated. The respect of your peers. The approval of your family and friends. The identity you constructed that makes sense of who you are.

Paul had everything our accumulation culture says you need to be secure and successful. **And then he met Jesus.**

⁷I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.

*⁸Yes, everything else is **worthless** when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as **garbage**, so that I could gain Christ... [Philippians 3:7-8]*

**** Leave this up. ****

Worthless. Garbage. Trash.

That word garbage in the Greek is “*skubala*.” ***The congregation in Philippi would have been shocked to see this in a letter from Paul.*** It’s crude language. It’s the kind of word you use for... excrement... poop, something nasty you wouldn’t want near you. A word pastors avoid in sermons. But Paul uses it because he wants them to feel the intensity of what he’s saying here... ***everything he accumulated looks like “skubala” compared to knowing Jesus.***

He gave it up willingly. ***Because he found something, someone, who was worth far more.***

// BIBLICAL PATTERN THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE

Think about Job. In a single day, he loses everything. His wealth, his livelihood, and his children have all died. All in ONE day. What’s his response to this?

²¹He said, “I came naked from my mother’s womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The LORD gave me what I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!” [Job 1:21]

Put yourself there in that moment. Imagine you get a phone call and in one conversation you find out your business has collapsed, your retirement is gone, and God forbid, your children have all died. All in one day.

What would your first response be?

Most of us would be on the floor. Most of us would be screaming at God, demanding answers, questioning everything we’ve ever believed about Him. And by the way, Job does that later. We see his raw lament, his honest wrestling with God throughout the entire book. ***His initial response doesn’t mean he didn’t feel the pain of it all.***

But even in the immediate shock of losing everything, Job's foundation holds. Because his foundation wasn't in what he had, it was in who God is. **Job had spent his life trusting that the Giver was more valuable than the gifts.** And when the gifts were stripped away, the Giver remained.

Fast forward to the early church. The writer of Hebrews is talking to followers of Jesus who were facing real persecution.

³⁴*You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever. [Hebrews 10:34]*

Think about what this means. Imagine. Government officials show up at your home. They inventory everything you own... your home, furniture, your savings. And they take it all. And you're left with nothing.

Could you joyfully accept that? Would you?

Most of us would lawyer up. We'd fight back. We'd be consumed with anxiety about how we're going to survive, where we're going to live, and how we're going to feed our family. We'd be asking... "God, how could you let this happen? I've been faithful to You, and this is what I get in return?"

But these Christians did the math differently. They looked at what they were losing and what they had gained in Jesus... and they concluded that what they had in Jesus is better and it lasts longer. Everything else? Temporary. But Jesus? He can't be confiscated.

This is exactly what Paul is talking about here in Philippians 3. He's living out the same reality that Job lived, that the early church lived, that God's people throughout history have discovered.

When you truly know Jesus, when you experience the infinite value of knowing Him, everything else gets revalued. ***Not diminished but put in a proper perspective.*** And that perspective allows you to say, even if you lose it all, what I have in Jesus is better.

// KNOWING CHRIST IN SUFFERING

Remember, Paul started with, *"Whatever happens, rejoice in the Lord."* Now listen to how he ends this section.

¹⁰I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, ¹¹so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! [Philippians 3:10-11]

**** Leave up through this section. ****

Paul here writes that he wants 3 things... ***to know Christ, to experience His power, and to experience His suffering.***

That word "know" there isn't intellectual knowledge. It's not, "I want to know facts about Jesus" or "I want to understand doctrine about God." ***This is an intimate and experiential knowledge.***

And that phrase, *"I want to suffer with Him."* We need to wrestle with that for a moment. Because if we're honest, most of us don't want to suffer at all. ***We want the power of Jesus, but not the suffering of Jesus.*** Paul actually says he desires both!

Some of you are in the middle of suffering right now. Real suffering.

- Maybe you're watching someone you love die slowly from a disease, and you feel helpless.
- Maybe you've lost a job you've poured yourself into, and you don't know how you're going to make it financially.
- Maybe your marriage is falling apart, and you're terrified of what comes next.
- Maybe you've been diagnosed with something that's changed your entire future.
- Maybe you're grieving a relationship that's ended, a dream that's died, a hope that didn't materialize.

And the last thing you want to hear is someone spiritualizing your pain or acting like it doesn't matter because "you have Jesus." The suffering is real. The loss is real. The pain is real.

Neither Paul nor I is minimizing that today. When he says, *"whatever happens, rejoice in the Lord,"* remember, he's not saying rejoice about your circumstances. He's not saying, *"be happy about your suffering."* ***He's saying, "rejoice IN THE LORD, even in the midst of it."***

- Even if you're walking through loss, rejoice in the Lord.
- Even if you're facing uncertainty, rejoice in the Lord.
- Even if life has taken everything you thought you could count on, rejoice in the Lord.

- Even if you lose everything, rejoice in the Lord.

The rejoicing isn't about what's happening to you. It's about who's with you in what's happening. Paul isn't saying the suffering is good. He's saying Jesus meets you in the suffering. And knowing Him there, experiencing His presence in the hardest moments of your life... that becomes the treasure. That's where you find the joy Paul is talking about.

// HORATIO SPAFFORD

Horatio Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago in the late 1800's. He and his wife, Anna, had four daughters. By all accounts, they had a great life with financial security, a thriving law practice, real estate investments, and a beautiful family.

- ***In 1871, the Great Chicago Fire destroyed much of the city,*** including most of Horatio's real estate holdings. Years of investments gone in one single night. But Horatio and Anna were followers of Jesus and threw themselves into helping the city rebuild and ministering to those in need.
- Two years later, they decided their family needed a break, and they planned a trip to Europe. At the last minute, Horatio had to stay back due to some urgent business matters, so he sent Anna and their four daughters ahead. He would follow shortly after.
- ***On November 22, 1873, in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, the ship that Anna and their daughters were on collided with another ship.*** It sank completely in 12 short minutes. Anna was pulled from the water and barely survived. All four of their daughters (Annie, Maggie, Bessie, and Tanetta) had drowned.

- When she reached land, Anna sent Horatio a telegram. Just two words, “*Saved alone.*”
- Horatio immediately took the next trip to meet his wife, and as his ship passed over the approximate spot in the Atlantic where his daughters had died, Horatio went to his cabin and wrote these words...

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

Whatever my lot. Whatever happens. *Even if.*

// SONG: “It Is Well”

Horatio wasn’t in denial. He wasn’t pretending it didn’t hurt. His grief was real. The loss was devastating.

But he had found what Paul found. He had done the math Paul did.

What he had in Jesus, the presence of Jesus, the intimate knowing of Jesus, the treasure of Jesus, exceeded even the love he had for his children. Not because he loved his children less, but because he had discovered that Jesus was that valuable.

It’s the only way you can write the words “It is well with my soul” in that kind of moment. Not because everything is well, but because Christ is well. Jesus is enough. Even when everything else is taken.

Whatever happens, we can rejoice in the Lord. ***Even if we lose everything, we haven't lost Him.***

// PRAY