

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: The Resume

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Scripture:

Philippians 3:1-11

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

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put 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; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

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

Transcript:

Great to see you, those of you in this room. Those of you joining us online, thank you so much for making us a part of your Sunday and worshiping with us. The scripture is very similar to what we just sang, and it comes from Philippians Chapter 3, "Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again and it is a safeguard for

you. Watch out for those dogs, those evil doers, those mutilators of the flesh." Ooh, those don't sound like good people, do they?

"For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh, though I myself have reason for such confidence. If someone else thinks that they have reason to put 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 in regard to the law, a Pharisee. As for zeal, persecuting the church. As for righteousness based on the law, faultless but whatever regains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What's more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ, yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings becoming like him in death, and so somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead." Holy Spirit, use these words to help us know you better. We asked this in your name, Jesus. Amen.

Well, as you know, earlier about a month ago, I was in Congo and Rwanda with some people from this church and was so encouraging. The people in Congo are so grateful for the food and the reconciliation work that we're supporting. We went to the Center for Champions in Rwanda, which we, as a church built and over the years, they have helped a thousand street kids, over a thousand street kids get job skills and get into great jobs. Most of them have become Christians. God is doing good things through this church. Thank you for making that possible.

One of the people that went to the Center for Champions with this is Adrien. He's from Congo. He's one of our worship leaders, as you know, and as we've shared with you before, Adrien is very famous in Rwanda because of his music. He's a celebrity. When we got there and the kids saw Adrien, the kids at the Center for Champions saw Adrien get out of the car, they were super excited and you could kind of hear them whispering, "Adrien, Adrien, Adrien." Same thing happened two years ago when we were there.

They assembled all the kids together. The director said to all of these kids, "This is Scott. He's the senior pastor of the church that built this school. Because of Scott and his church, you're getting this education and this new life. Who do you want to hear speak, Scott or Adrien?" I was like, "Oh dude, I am so going to lose that contest." I so lost that contest, right? All the kids were like, "Adrien, Adrien. We want to hear from Adrien."

It was beautiful. Adrien, I just love this guy. He sang for them. He encouraged them. As street kids, they, in their wildest imagination, would never think that they would get to meet a celebrity. It was just awesome, but clearly Adrien's credentials beat mine, right? Pastor of the church that built this school and is giving me this education, whatever, but Adrien. If in that moment, I was relying on my resume, my job title, my credentials for my confidence, it wouldn't have worked.

What makes you feel confident? What makes you feel like you will be accepted and approved of? What makes you feel confident? Is it your looks? Is it your education? Is it your job? Is it the kind of car you drive? Is it how popular you are? What makes you feel confident and worthy of respect and admiration? Is it bulletproof? Is it bulletproof?

Is it enough to give you indestructible courage and hope and joy, even when your circumstances are terrible because that's what the apostle Paul is talking about in the text that I just read? He says the only thing that can give us indestructible courage and joy and hope is being in the presence of Jesus. Everything else is going to ultimately fail us. He says, "Watch out for those dogs, those evil doers, those mutilators of the flesh for it is we who serve God by his spirit and who put no confidence in the flesh."

What he means by the mutilators of the flesh, he's talking about a group of teachers who were saying that in order to be reconciled to God, you need Jesus plus follow all the Old Testament rituals and rules, including circumcision. Their message is what makes us right with God is Jesus plus religious rules and rituals. Anytime the formula for salvation is Jesus plus anything, it is always heresy.

Paul says, "No. What makes us right with God," the word he uses is righteousness, "Rightly related to God isn't our good deeds. It's not our religious rituals." He calls all of that. Putting confidence in the flesh, the things we can see like circumcision. He says, "What makes us right with God is that Jesus died on a cross to pay the price for our sins and if he is our leader and our forgiver, then we are forgiven." We are made holy. We are cleansed. We are made righteous in his sight period. End of sentence. No footnotes. No fine print. Jesus full stop.

Now, that's not permission to sin because sin hurts us and others. With God's help, we can rise above it, but spiritually speaking, Jesus reconciles us to God, not our performance or good deeds.

Now, if you've been around churches, you've heard that before you know this, but we have a really hard time living it out in real life, don't we? Because for all of us, there's just all of this striving to prove ourselves worthy of acceptance, worthy of admiration. You see it on social media, around politics, on both sides. People constantly virtue signaling to win the approval of their particular political tribe.

Look at me. Look at me. I believe all the right things. I vote all the right ways. I hate all the same people you guys hate. You accept me, right? We think if I'm a good parent, if I'm a good student, if I'm a good athlete, if I'm a good leader, if I'm good looking, then I will be accepted, loved, and admired, but I got to have that resume. I got to have those credentials. That's seeking an acceptance. Paul calls it, righteousness that comes from our own efforts, that comes from our credentials and it's killing us.

Our need for the approval of others, it just makes us anxious what people think about us, our need for success means we're stressed out and overworked and all kinds of stuff. What is it that you feel like you have to do, say, have to be accepted? What is it that you feel like you have to do, say, have in order to be accepted? To figure that out, one of the questions to ask is what do you worry about? What do you worry about? Is it career? Is it relationships? Is it finances?

Pastor Tim Keller says that when things are going wrong at his church and things are going badly at his church, he gets stressed out and his wife says, "Well, we just have to trust God," but then when something's going wrong with one of their kids, it looks like they're on the path to being a juvenile delinquent or something, his wife gets super stressed and he says, "The difference is what our resumes are." For him, it's his job. That's how he's kind of seeing himself as acceptable. For her, it's her role as a parent.

Now, career, relationships, education, success, all of those are good things, right? It's great to have a good resume. We all have different skills and gifts that God uses. Those are all good things, but if we're relying on those things, for our sense of acceptance and approval, that dog don't hunt because what happens when those things are taken away? What happens if you face a career setback or a relationship setback, but then what happens? It's fine to have the resume, but we can't rely on it for our confidence because it will eventually fail us.

The apostle Paul knows all about this because he lived it. He says, "If someone else thinks that they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more." Okay, this is first century trash talking. This is Paul going, "Okay. Oh yeah. You think you're something special? You think you're something special. Check out my credentials." Circumcised on the eighth day, which means I'm not a convert to Judaism. I was a Jew from the beginning of the tribe of Benjamin, which is the tribe where Israel's first king came from. His name was Saul, just like Paul's name was before he became a Christian. Tribe of Benjamin was one of only two tribes that remained loyal to king David. This is a prestige tribe. This is a status tribe, a Hebrew of Hebrews.

In other words, I'm not like those other Jews who act like they're Greeks or Romans. No, I am culturally pure. A Pharisee, which means he's had a lot of education and he has a prestigious job. Faultless in righteousness, I kept all the rules. He's got family status, social status, educational status, career status, moral status. This is a drop dead resume. This is like, I got a PhD from Harvard and I'm CEO of Fortune 500 Company. I know all the right people. I hang with the absolute coolest crowds. I love kids and puppies and sunsets. I'm awesome.

All good things, but they were keeping Paul from Jesus because he was relying on those things for his confidence instead of Jesus. You see, this is important. This is important. It's not bad things that kept Paul away from Jesus. It was good things. He doesn't need to repent of his sin. He knows his sin is bad. He needs to repent of his "righteousness," the resume, relying on the resume for his sense of acceptance and worth and value.

Now, it is true that in this world we have to rely on the resume system for a lot of stuff, right? To get into college, to get a good job. What else is an online dating profile, but a resume? Look at how smart, how thin, how rich I am. Don't you want me? Don't you like me? Won't you accept me now? We even apply the resume system to ourselves and evaluate ourselves. If we're lacking things, we think we need to have, we get depressed. We get discouraged. We feel inferior, but Paul has the cure for that.

He says, "But whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ." Okay. That word garbage is a, Scott Mann's laughing because he knows the Greek, that word garbage is a very timid translation of the actual Greek word in the original text.

Actually, no translation will give you the right word because it's a word that I can't say in church, even though it's in the Bible, I can't say it in church. Weird, huh? How did we become more uptight than God? I'll let you meditate on that. How did we become more uptight than God? Somehow we are. I'm not going to say the word because then there's emails and all kinds of stuff. Right? Okay.

The Greek word means excrement, only more vulgar. You know the word I'm talking about, right? We all have that word that I'm talking about. You know the word, right? Paul says all of those

good things that I have is like a dirty diaper compared to knowing Jesus. By knowing Jesus, he does not mean just intellectually, because he says, "I want to know Christ to know the power of his resurrection." That doesn't sound intellectual and participation in his suffering. That's not head knowledge. It's an experience. He's even willing to share Christ's suffering so he can experience him more. Do you know Jesus like that? Do you know Jesus like that?

Yes.

So that even the greatest things in life, family, career, health, pale in comparison to knowing him because when we experience that kind of connection to Jesus, we get three things: indestructible freedom, courage, and joy. Let's take those one at a time.

If Jesus is our confidence, we have indestructible freedom from all the stress that comes from trying to prove ourselves worthy with our resume, with our accomplishments, with our achievements. Again, success, achievements, all good things, but if that's where our confidence is, then we're in bondage to success or being good looking or whatever it is to make sure that we keep being accepted or sometimes Christians will try to prove themselves worthy through following a lot of legalistic rules. I don't drink. I don't chew. I don't accurately translate Paul's Greek because that would be offensive. One person found that funny.

That's not freedom because now I'm in bondage to being successful or staying good looking or whatever it is, is not freedom. Then, I'm in bondage. I've told you before about a time when our daughter was around five years old and she was misbehaving and my wife kept telling her to stop, but she didn't stop. Finally, my wife said, "Lucy, don't be naughty." Then, Lucy said, "I don't care if you think I'm naughty." "What? What do you mean you don't care if we think you're, you have to care, right? You're taking away one of our essential parenting tools, threats and bribes. That's all we have. You just took half of that away."

Then, I realized, you know what, she's the youngest, the last born, the baby of the family. The whole family dotes on her. She has this absolute confidence that she is loved simply because she's there. That's freedom from the perform to be accepted demon that just wrecks our lives. The one place you do not have to perform to be accepted or loved is in the presence of Jesus. Everywhere else you do, but in the presence of Jesus, you don't. Your worth is not in your credentials or in your accolades. Your worth rests in the fact that you are a child of God, redeemed in Jesus Christ, freed by his grace to walk in his power, live in his integrity, rise in his victory and shine with his joy.

When we experience that presence of Jesus, we're free. I don't care if you think I'm naughty. I don't care if you don't think I'm thin enough. I don't care if you don't think my job title is impressive. I'm a child of the Most High King. That's who I am. Freedom, which brings us the second thing when Jesus is our confidence and that is courage.

For instance, courage, to fail for the right reasons rather than succeed for the wrong ones. Who cares if people think I'm a failure? I know my Lord loves me and approves of me and accepts me. Courage to play to win rather than play not to lose, not to make a mistake, not to upset people. What risks don't you take? What things don't you do for fear of what other people might think? How often do you duck sharing your faith? How often do you go along with the crowd simply because it's easier? How often do you avoid the difficult conversation, even though it might lead to breakthrough because you're playing not to lose rather than playing to win?

Jesus gives us indestructible. When Jesus is our confidence, we have indestructible freedom, courage, and finally indestructible joy. We've talked about this all summer. The book of Philippians uses the word joy over and over and over and over and over again. It's all through the book. Paul begins his chapter saying, "Rejoice in the Lord." It's no trouble for me to write the same thing to you again. A few verses later, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Again, I say rejoice.

As we've said, all this joy talk is odd coming from Paul, because he's writing this from prison, not usually a joyful place. People aren't singing, "Yay. I'm so glad to be in prison. Yay. Yay. Yay." Yet, Paul has found a joy that cannot be canceled by his circumstances because his joy is in the presence of Jesus and he can never be taken away.

Paul says, "There's no trouble for me to keep saying this to you over and over and over again because he knows we forget and need to be reminded over and over and over again that when there's nothing more important to us than Jesus, than no matter how much hardship we face, we never lose our joy because the most important thing to us, Jesus can never be taken away."

That's when we're able to say, "If my love life, or career, or my health, isn't going the way I want, I will grieve. I will be sad. That will hurt," but if it creates a closer connection to Jesus, I will count it as joy. The worst thing that can happen to me, death is not, I'm not afraid of it because even in death, the one thing I love the most, Jesus only gets better and closer in death.

Then, practically, how do we do this? Practically speaking, how does Jesus become the most important thing in our lives? A couple of things real quick. First, got to ask the Holy Spirit, because this does not come naturally to us. This comes supernaturally. We need his help.

Second, connect with Jesus through the big four that we always talk about. We cannot experience the presence of someone we never connect to, that we never talk to. Connect to Jesus daily through prayer and leaving space in prayer to hear those thoughts that maybe come from him. Scripture, community worship, as we're doing here, and especially when we gather together with other believers in the same room and worship, we can experience, it helps us experience the power of Jesus. Connect with Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit, connect with Jesus.

Then, finally, think about this question. What are you willing to lose to gain more of Jesus? Paul says, "I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing words of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things." It wasn't bad things that was keeping Paul from Jesus. It was good things. He is willing to lose those good things. What are you willing to lose to get closer to Jesus? Would you be willing to lose some of your reputation to do something Jesus asked you to do even if everyone else thinks you're crazy doing it, but if it got you closer to him, would you be willing to lose your reputation?

Would you be willing to give some of your money away so that you can see Jesus provide, which would draw you closer to him or maybe it's not about losing something. Maybe it's just being okay with not having it all. Maybe it's just being okay with being average so we can spend more time with Jesus and the things that he calls us to. Whatever it is, surrender those things to Jesus in prayer because if our fists are clenched tightly holding onto what we already have, then they aren't open to receive this so much more that God wants to give us.

There's a woman I follow on social media who was dying of cancer. She wrote about how Jesus was meeting her in that. They're very moving posts. In one of them, she said, "I haven't posted

in a bit. I've been busy dying. Takes a lot of naps, trips to the bathroom or team effort, I decline daily, but also new things appear daily, like a surprise visit from a puppy that my dad arranged for me, which was amazing. As I await for my final breath, I've been reading through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

It leads me in awe, the God who came in the flesh and was willing to die in a cross in brutality and rise again for the sin of humanity. I'm dying in a boujee pillow top bed. Jesus died, naked and exposed among criminals. I get kind notes from friends. He had insults hurled at him. My best friends visit me. His, abandoned him. Every step of this process, makes me even more related over the gift of knowing Jesus."

See, she's participating in Christ's suffering on the cross and is bringing her closer to him. She says, "Salvation is a thing that is better than a million puppies, which is another way of saying, I count everything as garbage compared to knowing Jesus." She says, "This is hard and I am too weak to do this, but my God is strong.

The apostle Paul emphasized how no human might or virtue can compare to the greatness and majesty of God and the weaker I get, the stronger God shows himself to me. People ask me how I'm so strong. It's simple, I'm not, not at all, but my God is strong. All I have to do is humble myself before him and sit on his shoulders as he carries me through. God's got me, even if I have to take lots of naps."

She died a few days later, but her friends testified that she died with courage and freedom and joy and hope because she knew that in death, she would gain a greater experience of Jesus, who was the object of her affection in life. She experienced loss and grief and pain and sorrow, but there was also freedom and courage and joy because center and circumference for her was Jesus.

Last week, Ryan said that when we have this kind of supernatural joy, we are dangerous to the devil. Imagine how frustrating and how dangerous for Satan that he threw his worst at this woman suffering, grief and loss and she still had joy. Satan lost that battle.

This week, how can you begin to let go of some of those things you're relying on, offer them to Jesus and grab onto him for your hope and your confidence and your sense of acceptance, so that you and I, so that we together can experience the freedom, courage, and joy just like this woman, even in the worst of circumstances and so that we can do what the apostle Paul tells us to do, that we can rejoice in the Lord, always rejoice in the Lord. He doesn't say rejoicing your 401(k). He doesn't say rejoicing your GPA. Doesn't say rejoicing your job. Rejoice in the Lord. When? Always. Again, I say rejoice.

Jesus, thank you that in you, we find freedom, courage, and joy. Lord, we ask that you would help us, help us grab onto you through your power, Jesus become the most important things in our lives to set us free, to give us courage, to give us joy. Lord, we love you a little. Help us love you a lot. We pray this in your name, Jesus. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- In verses 4-6 the Apostle Paul lists all his credentials which were highly valued at the time. What would be your version of verses 4-6? How much do those things give you confidence?
- Paul says he is willing to lose all things in order to know Jesus better (verse 8). What things have you willingly lost or sacrificed in order to know Jesus better? What were the results? What things do you sense you might need to let go of now to experience Jesus more?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.