

## JOY – Count ALL: Faith to Know Jesus Christ

Philippians 3:1-11

**MPS** Christians count all of life by faith to know God and become like Jesus Christ.

**OBJ** Christians can share in God's true power through Jesus Christ by two admonitions and one exhortation.

**INTRO** Wrong counting methods. **Has anyone showed you how to count eleven fingers?** I know this may sound strange, coming from a guy from Arkansas, but it's true. [Show fingers on hand.] One – Two – skip these three – Four – Five – Six – Seven – Eight – Nine – Ten – Eleven. And you questioned by ability to count! It's a simple trick. But it shows how big mistakes can get made when we "count" wrong. **Today, we will see that how you "count" your life is really important!**

**READ** Philippians 3:1-11

*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.*

<sup>2</sup>Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. <sup>3</sup>For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup>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: <sup>5</sup>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; <sup>6</sup>as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup>But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>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 <sup>9</sup>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— <sup>10</sup>that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

**Christians count all of life by faith to know God and become like Jesus Christ.**

**Paul begins calling the Philippians to rejoice!** He crescendos his teaching to help them understand why and how they can rejoice. But here he makes a decided shift. Paul exhorts them to lead their life with their rejoicing. One commentator writes, "This is not an admonition to some kind of superficial cheerfulness that closes its eyes to the surrounding circumstances. Rather, the apostle is inculcating a positive Christian attitude of joy that finds outward expression in their lives and that realistically takes into account the adverse circumstances, trials, and pressures through which the Philippians were called to pass."<sup>1</sup>

**ILLUS** **Steering a ship in a storm.** When a storm arises at sea and the waves begin to swell, a ship's captain must make a strategic decision for how to steer the ship. Sometimes it may be possible to sail around the storm and avoid it all together. At other times, it may be an option to sail away from the storm. But very often it is not possible to run from nor avoid the storm. And in this moment a decision must be made for how to address the storm and rough seas. The ship will quickly lose control to sail sideways. The best way to control the ship in a storm is to turn the ship and sail directly into it.

Rejoice is the disposition and expression for how a Christian moves forward in life, regardless of the situation or circumstance, because in Jesus Christ we have all we need to rejoice and this sets our heart and mind to look to Him.

**OBJ** Paul focuses us for how we move forward in daily life. **Two admonitions and one exhortation to know God.**

**TRANS** First, Paul warns...

**"Look out" for False Worship .2-3**

<sup>1</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, [The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 349.



Paul begins with an admonition, a word of strong caution. Three times he states, “*Look out for...*”. He is not saying, “Y’all be careful out there, ya hear.” His repetition emphasizes the vigilance that must be taken to guard against these things. **And what must guarded against?** Dogs, evildoers, and those who mutilate the flesh. These references were not to some social ills they were facing. Sometimes we are prone to think that the greatest threat to Christianity is the darkness of sin in the world. But that is not true, and surely not the case here. Paul is referring to religious people who claim right worship but that stand in direct opposition to the gospel. *Dogs* were those who followed them to antagonize and harass, threaten and intimidate them into stopping. *Evildoers* refers to those who cloak their actions under a label of “godliness” or maliciously seek to use God’s name to pursue their own end. And *those who mutilate the flesh* refers to religious fanatics who perform useless and dangerous acts for no good purpose. All three are people and ideologies to vigilantly guard against in faith and practice. As it was in the First Century, so it remains today. **The greatest threat to Christianity is a false worship that skews and deceives, and all in the name of Christianity.**

Paul confronts these false religious practices and points to true worshipers when he states, “*For we are the circumcision*”. Paul uses “*circumcision*” to mean “true” followers of God, who represent His true covenant given in the Old Testament. Even in the Old Testament, circumcision practiced always pointed to a future reality. One commentator writes, “Within the OT ‘circumcision’ came to be understood in a transferred and ethical sense as pointing to the ‘circumcision of the heart’ (Dt. 10:16; Je. 4:4; Ezk. 44:7) in which Israel was to give evidence of its true circumcision by complete obedience to the commandments of the Lord, the covenant God.”<sup>2</sup> Circumcision is the sign of those who claim God’s promise in Abraham; but because of Jesus circumcision is no longer of the flesh. **In Christ is the true worshiper worships from the heart by Holy Spirit to glory in Jesus Christ with no confidence in self.**

**Religion that honors God is not about outward performance, but inward alignment of the heart.** So, Paul says, bark away you mangy muts. Scheme and execute your plans you workers of evil, Satan’s advocate. Destroy one another in grand displays of religious exhibitionism and pseudo-sacrifice. But none of this is from God. **The true worshiper draws all strength from Jesus by the gospel to guard against the evil attacks around us AND prideful self-righteousness within.**

**Look out, Christian, for all the false, deceptive, and destructive substitutes that claim but know nothing of God’s true power!**

**TRANS** Paul moves from outward threats to what actually fuels them, confidence in self. Paul’s second admonition warns... **Refuse to Put Confidence in the Flesh .4-6**

Paul shows the vanity of confidence in self accomplishment by listing his own. These verses are often referred to as Paul’s resume. He was born of highest regard among Jews in his heritage. And, he held the highest in education and accomplishment among Jews. Paul had superior reason to put confidence in the flesh, according to their argument, but that it was useless. **No one gains anything in standing with God by natural lineage, moral nature, nor personal achievement.**

*Confidence in the flesh* can be any manner or measure of personal merit or meritorious achievement. But it never adds anything to our standing before God.

**ILLUS** I was born into a family as a fourth generation Christian. All my great grandparents, grandparents, aunts and uncle’s, and even cousins, and parents and siblings were all Christians. But all of this added nothing to my standing with God. All my participation in the church and good deeds added nothing to my standing with God.

Paul does not list his heritage to win the argument, though he does decidedly. Rather, he lists it to show how completely inept it was to make a spiritual significance in his life without Christ. By it he gained great prominence in the Jewish standing, a grand “platform” one might say but it did nothing for him in his standing with God. More often than not, the greatest threat to de-rail your faith does NOT come from the outside opposition, but from inward deception that glorifies self.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, [The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 356–357.



And to this threat Paul warns to put no confidence in the flesh. [Christians refuse to put any confidence in the flesh knowing that only by faith in God's grace through the gospel of Jesus Christ can one know God.](#)

**TRANS** Look out for danger of false worship and the deception of trusting in your flesh. Instead, Paul exhorts...

**Count ALL of life by Faith to know Jesus Christ .7-11**

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>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 <sup>9</sup>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— <sup>10</sup>that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. **Phil 3:7-11***

Paul says that whatever gain his “flesh” may have added, he counted it all as loss because of what he came to know of God in Jesus. “Count” becomes the action that faith produces, where we consider all of who we are and what we have done. We move all of life from the “asset” to the “liability” column. This forms the Christian life accounting by faith, that when by faith we count all our life as rubbish and loss, we come to know the immeasurable riches of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

[Knowing God in Christ Jesus is immeasurable in every way, not comparable nor competing with but far surpassing all other glory.](#)

**The way we count our life by faith makes all the difference!** We “gain Christ” by faith alone when we count everything as loss, nothing, and worthless to know His surpassing worth. And this “counting” is not of our own doing, but by God's revelation. We count all as nothing because of the surpassing glory of Jesus Christ. The glory of Jesus is our motivation because nothing competes (loss) with Him nor compares to Him (worthless). Jesus' glory is surpassing in every way, might and power, wisdom, beauty, and love! This is no risky proposition, but a sure guarantee. Some of you are still “shopping” God, comparing “prices” of His righteousness against your ability. [Nothing compares to Jesus!](#)

**The one who counts their life by faith gains Jesus' righteousness, Jesus' perfection!** We no longer have to measure up or earn anything. We cease from our striving to appease or impress. We give up every useless asset of self-righteousness to take on Christ. He is the One who supplies for us what all our striving, earning, achieving, and longing for acceptance attempts, but fails. And when one gains Christ, we are found in Him, no longer separated from God. [The fallacy of self-righteousness is washed away when by faith one counts their life as nothing to gain Jesus' righteousness and be found in Him.](#)

**The one who by faith counts their life to be found in Jesus comes to know God.** Knowing God through Jesus is what it means to experience God's whole and complete fullness in life. One commentator explains, “To know Jesus is to live fully in His atoning work. The person and work of Christ are inseparably joined. To gain him is to have him as one's all-prevailing merit; and, in the classic words of Melancthon, to know him in the intimacy of personal trust and surrender is to know his saving benefits.”<sup>3</sup>

**ILLUS** THIS is **Christian life accounting**, when by faith we “count all of our life in the “liability” column, all our nature, being, ability and achievement, and God by His resurrection power “credits” all of Jesus into our “asset” column, by sufficiency in suffering, transformation of being, and resurrection unto eternal life.

Counting life by faith as loss brings us into the knowledge of God, salvation, to experience His power in our life. God draws us into intimacy with Him to experience His resurrection power, of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like Him, and ultimately, to attain the resurrection from the dead. [What a power we receive when we count our life as loss, knowing God's power over sin, death, Hell and the grave!](#)

<sup>3</sup> Ralph P. Martin, [Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 155.



Joy from God lasts through every circumstance because His resurrection power sources life at all time from Knowing Him.

**APPL** **Friend, Do you know God?** How are you “counting” your life? Have you found the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus, to share in His resurrecting power? Not the general benefit or even the advantage of claiming Him, but the whole worth of counting everything as loss and nothing so you can know Him as everything! Have you “counted” your life in such a way so that you no longer strive to earn anything, champion your merit before God, or celebrate your accomplishments, but instead you have “gained Christ”? Count all of life by faith to know Jesus Christ!

**Christians count all of life by faith to know God and become like Jesus Christ.**

**CLOSE** Is there anything about your life that you hold to because you believe God is impressed with it, loves you more because of it, should be recognized for the accomplishment...Anything?

Have you had an encounter with the living Lord Jesus Christ that has “cooked your books” and moved everything about you to the liability column so Jesus alone occupies your assets column, so you can say “all for naught except to know Christ”?

Let me finish with one last illustrative image from Charles Spurgeon. Today Jesus invites you to pile all your sins in one big pile, to heap them up as high as they will go. And then, to take all your good deeds, all your best accomplishments and accolades, and heap them upon your sins into one grand pile. The same pile, because neither can keep you from nor get you to Jesus. Then, run and run to Him. Jesus invites you to share in His divine, resurrection power, but you can only take hold of it by counting your life as loss to know God. **Why not today, friend?** Jesus waits for you.

