



11/10/2019  
Philippians 3:1-11

## BIG IDEA

Our righteousness was never ours.

## LOOKING BACK

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

*Invite members to share any questions or points that came up in their family discussions regarding last week's study. Invite them to share ways God continued to speak to them as they sought to apply those truths throughout the week.*

- What ideas come into your mind when you think of the word "priority"?
- Do you often associate the idea of joy with the word "priority"? Why or why not?
- How would you respond to the statement, "Joy is the priority of the Christian life"?

The priority of joy highlights the God-centered nature of the gospel and the Christian faith. If God is of highest worth and value, then it follows that we enjoy Him above all other things. Further, joy in the Father is not simply an inner blessing we receive, rather it is a blessing we must extend to others—by proclaiming the gospel so that their joy might be full (1 John 1:4; cf. Rom. 15:13). The righteousness we have received was never our own, and matters too much not to share it with our friends, family, strangers, and enemies!

## LOOKING IN

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

| *Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 3:1-11.*

- Why do you think Paul wanted to repeat familiar instruction to the Philippians (v. 1)?
- Does it seem fair to you to receive an obligation that involves your emotions? Why or why not?
- How does the command to rejoice relate to the "protection" of the Philippian believers?
- Look at verses 2-6. What are some examples of false teachings today that deprive us from finding true joy in God?
- All of us are tempted to look to some autobiographical details that cause us to trust in the flesh. Paul seems to speak as if it's either/or— either the works of the flesh or gaining Christ. Is it possible to have both? Explain.
- What "gain" would you struggle to consider as "loss" for the sake of knowing Jesus (i.e. wealth, career, a relationship, etc.)? Is Paul saying you should give that thing up? What is he saying?

- Put verses 8-11 in your own words.
- Glance back over the passage. After verse 1, do you find anything that speaks to you about joy? How does this help you better understand the true meaning of joy?

## LOOKING FORWARD

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

- Why should we be concerned, like Paul in verse 1, about our fellow believers' joy in the Lord? What can we draw for ourselves and for others from his intentionality of including this exhortation and concern?
- Why is it important to distinguish the gospel's objective truthfulness apart from our personal experience? How can we do that?
- What are some tangible ways that we can pursue the same goal as Paul in seeking to know Christ and the power of His resurrection?

## FAMILIES

*Use the following questions and truths to disciple your children throughout the week.*

- Name something you've done that you're proud of. There are two ways you can think about your accomplishments —as reasons to think highly of yourself, or as reasons to think highly of God. What do you need to do so that God can use your accomplishments to point people to Jesus? Alternately, what do you need to not do so that you don't mistakenly communicate a righteousness apart from Jesus?

## PRAY

Father, may all of our pursuits in life be subordinate to knowing Your Son, Jesus Christ, and the power of His resurrection. Fill us with a joyful zeal to proclaim the gospel so that others might experience the joy that comes exclusively from knowing Christ. In His name, amen.

## COMMENTARY

### | *Philippians 3:1-11*

3:1 Paul marked a transition point in his letter with a term that can mean "finally" but often indicates something like "well, then, or furthermore" (v. 1). He is only halfway through his letter at this point. In spite of Paul's difficult circumstances, his relationship with Christ provided him with joy. He encourages us to "rejoice in the Lord." This spirit or attitude of joy permeates this entire letter. Joy comes, however, only as one lives in the Lord. He is joy's only source.

3:2-3 As a father protects his children, Paul wanted to keep his spiritual children from harm (v. 2). He warned them in strong language of opponents who would tempt them to false doctrine. These men were unclean "dogs," not qualified to enter into spiritual worship. A group of Jews in Paul's day attempted to distort the gospel by adding the requirement of circumcision plus faith in Christ as necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1). Their false way of salvation was evil, as it could cause great confusion to the true message of Christ. They misunderstood the teachings of the Old Testament on circumcision and the Christian gospel of salvation by grace through faith. They wanted to preserve the Jewish heritage at any cost.

In disagreement with the teachings of his opponents, Paul took over their claims as belonging to the church and not to the Jews (v. 3). The opponents claimed to be the true Israel, circumcised in the flesh, being the truly spiritual ones, and glorying in their worship and goodness as measured by obedience to the law.

Paul turned the tables. Believers in Christ are the true circumcision (Rom. 9:24-26; Gal. 6:16), having their hearts circumcised. Christians put no confidence in the flesh, neither in the ritual of circumcision, nor in the practice of obeying a law. This stands radically opposed to the false teachers who said Gentiles had to be circumcised to be acceptable to God. The Philippians and modern readers must make the choice—glory in Christ or in human religious achievement. Genuine believers have their complete hope or confidence in Christ's finished work on our behalf on the cross rather than anything done by them for God or in God's name. Trusting in anyone or anything besides the true Messiah is foolishness.

3:4-6 If anyone had bragging rights about their status and achievement, Paul did (vv. 4-6), but Jesus showed him that just being Jewish did not make him righteous before God.

3:7-8 While these credentials and accomplishments are impressive, Paul placed no "stock" or confidence in them (vv. 7-8). His relationship with Christ was far superior to his Jewish background. The things of the world—all human accomplishments—are viewed as rubbish or garbage in comparison to gaining Christ. Paul's focus changed completely. No longer did personal religious ritual and obedient religious acts occupy center stage. All eyes were on Christ and on him alone.

3:9-12 Paul's description of his desires pointed forward to a goal (v. 12). Not yet mature, he was still very much in the race of the Christian life. The perfection he would have at the future resurrection was not yet attained. He still had to deal with what in Romans 7 he calls "the flesh," an innate pull to sin. He had to deal with his sinful body and was only too aware of the need for further spiritual growth. He purposes to press on as he had not attained the intense personal knowledge of Christ that he desired and had not become all that Christ wanted him to be. Paul always held God up as the source of every part of the salvation experience.