



SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE

Philippians: The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ, Pt. 1

Pastor John Riggs

Summary:

This sermon from Philippians 3:1-16 emphasizes the radical difference between religion and relationship with Christ. Paul warns the Philippian church against false teachers (Judaizers) who were adding works and requirements to the simple gospel of grace. The central message is that salvation comes through faith in Christ alone, not through religious rituals, good works, or human effort. Paul contrasts his former religious credentials as a Pharisee with the incomparable value of knowing Christ personally. The sermon challenges believers to recognize that Christianity is not about following rules to earn God's favor, but about experiencing the freedom and joy that comes from being "in Christ" through faith. It warns against modern religious systems that keep people from truly knowing God and emphasizes that righteousness comes only through Christ's finished work on the cross, not human merit.

Video Breakdown:

- Chapter 1: Introduction: Rejoice in the Lord and Scripture Foundation. 0:00 - 3:00
 - We begin with the affirmation that Scripture is God-breathed and profitable, setting the foundation for understanding the joy found in Christ regardless of circumstances.
- Chapter 2: Warning Against False Teachers and Religious Legalism. 3:00 - 12:00
 - We are warned to beware of false teachers who add requirements to the gospel, turning the freedom of Christ into religious slavery through works-based salvation.
- Chapter 3: Paul's Religious Credentials and the Greater Worth of Christ. 12:00 - 22:00
 - We examine how Paul counted all his religious achievements and credentials as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus personally.
- Chapter 4: The Gospel Versus Religion Across All Faiths. 22:00 - 35:00
 - We contrast the gospel with various religious systems that rely on human works, showing that only through Christ can anyone truly know God and have assurance of salvation.
- Chapter 5: Closing Call: Know Christ and Share the True Gospel. 35:00 - 47:58
 - We are called to examine whether we truly know Christ or are merely religious, and to share the gospel with those trapped in works-based religious systems.

Scripture References from the Sermon

Directly Quoted or Read:

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God
2. Philippians 3:1-16 - Main text of the sermon (read in full)
3. Philippians 1:15 - Some preached Christ out of envy and rivalry
4. Galatians 1:6-9 - Warning against deserting the gospel
5. Revelation 22:12-17 - Warning about dogs outside the city gates
6. Matthew 9:37-38 - The harvest is plentiful, laborers are few
7. 2 Corinthians 11:13-14 - False apostles, Satan disguises himself as angel of light
8. Galatians 4:5-25 - Referenced but not fully read in transcript
9. Matthew 18:19-20 - Where two or more gather in my name

Alluded To or Referenced:

10. Romans 3:10 - None righteous (implied in discussion of human sinfulness)
11. Isaiah 64:6 - Our righteousness as filthy rags
12. John 8:36 - Whom the Son sets free is free indeed
13. Romans 10:13 - Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved
14. John 14:6 - Jesus as the only way to God (implied)
15. Ephesians 2:8-9 - Saved by grace through faith, not works
16. Philippians 2:12 - Work out your salvation (referenced earlier in series)

Relevant Verses for Main Themes:

17. Colossians 2:13-14 - Freedom from religious requirements
18. Galatians 5:1 - Stand firm in freedom, don't submit to yoke of slavery
19. 1 John 5:13 - That you may know you have eternal life
20. John 17:3 - Eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ

Discussion Questions:

Paul warns against 'dogs' and 'evildoers' who pollute the gospel with religious requirements. How can we discern today between genuine gospel teaching and messages that add human requirements to salvation by faith alone?

The sermon emphasizes the difference between knowing about God through religion versus truly knowing Christ personally. What does it mean in your own life to know Christ rather than simply practice religion?

Paul counted all his religious credentials and achievements as 'rubbish' compared to knowing Christ. What accomplishments, identities, or religious practices might we be tempted to rely on instead of Christ alone?

The pastor states that joy can only truly be found in Christ, not in worldly circumstances. How does Paul's ability to experience joy while imprisoned challenge our understanding of where we seek happiness?

The sermon discusses how religion across various faiths involves works-based systems where people never have assurance of salvation. How does the certainty of salvation through faith in Christ alone transform how we live and relate to God?

Paul uses strong language, even saying those who preach a false gospel should be 'damned.' Why is protecting the purity of the gospel message so critical, and how do we balance truth with love when encountering false teaching?

The message warns against adding 'but' to the gospel, as in 'saved by faith but you must also do this.' What subtle ways might we or our churches inadvertently add requirements to the simple gospel of grace?

The pastor mentions that many sitting in churches today are simply religious people not genuinely converted by the Spirit. What are the marks of true conversion versus mere religious adherence?

Paul speaks of 'the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus' as the central value of his life. If someone examined your priorities and pursuits, what would they conclude you find most valuable?

The sermon emphasizes that we are declared righteous not because of our own righteousness but because we are 'in Christ' and clothed with His righteousness. How does understanding this positional righteousness affect your daily struggle with sin and sanctification?

NOTES:

Small Group Guide: The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ Jesus Philippians 3:1-16

OPENING PRAYER

Begin your group time by thanking God for His Word and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and reveal truth to each person present.

ICEBREAKER

Share about someone who introduced you to something valuable that you might have otherwise missed. How did that change your perspective or life?

SERMON RECAP

Paul warns the Philippian church about false teachers who add works to the gospel of grace. He contrasts his impressive religious credentials with the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus. True Christianity isn't about religious achievement—it's about a relationship with Jesus that transforms everything.

KEY SCRIPTURE READINGS

- Philippians 3:1-16 (primary passage)
- Galatians 1:6-9
- 2 Corinthians 11:13-14
- Revelation 22:12-17

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Understanding the Message

1. **Paul uses strong language— "dogs," "evildoers," "mutilators of the flesh."** Why do you think he was so passionate about protecting the gospel from being mixed with works-based religion?
2. **What's the difference between "working FOR salvation" and "working OUT salvation"?** How does understanding this difference change how we live as Christians?
3. **Paul lists his impressive religious credentials in verses 4-6.** What was he trying to communicate by sharing his background? What did he ultimately say about all those achievements?

Personal Reflection

4. **The sermon emphasized the word "know" in verse 8.** What does it mean to truly *know* Christ versus just knowing *about* Him? How would you describe your current relationship with Jesus?
5. **Paul counted everything as "rubbish" compared to knowing Christ.** What things in your life compete with Christ for first place? (Career, reputation, comfort, relationships, achievements, etc.)
6. **The pastor mentioned that religion focuses on rules while relationship focuses on knowing God.** Have you ever found yourself slipping into a "checklist Christianity"? What does that look like for you?

Application & Action

7. **Paul says in verse 12, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on."** What does "pressing on" look like in your daily walk with Christ? What specific area do you need to press forward in?
8. **The sermon mentioned people who are "stuck in religion" rather than knowing Christ.** Do you have family members, friends, or coworkers who fit this description? How can you share the true gospel with them?
9. **Verse 13-14 talks about "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead."** What past failures, regrets, or even past achievements do you need to leave behind to fully pursue Christ?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone**—any addition of works makes it a false gospel
- ✓ **Christianity is about knowing Jesus personally**, not following religious rules or accumulating good deeds
- ✓ **Paul's impressive credentials meant nothing** compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ
- ✓ **We must guard against false teaching** that adds requirements to the simple gospel of grace
- ✓ **Spiritual maturity is a process**—we press on toward Christ, not claiming to have arrived
- ✓ **Joy comes from Christ alone**, not from circumstances, achievements, or worldly success

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

1. **Relationship Audit:** Spend 30 minutes in prayer asking God to reveal areas where you've slipped into "religious" behavior rather than relationship with Him. Journal what He shows you.
2. **Gospel Clarity:** Write out in your own words how someone is saved (without using Christian jargon). Practice sharing this with another believer, then ask God for an opportunity to share with a non-believer.
3. **Letting Go:** Identify one thing you're holding onto (past achievement, failure, credential, or identity) that competes with Christ. Symbolically release it to God through prayer and confession to a trusted friend.
4. **Scripture Memory:** Memorize Philippians 3:8-9 and meditate on what it means to count everything as loss for the sake of knowing Christ.
5. **Reach Out:** Contact someone you know who is caught in religious works (any faith tradition) and invite them to coffee or lunch. Simply listen to their story and pray for an opportunity to share Christ.

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray together as a group for:

- Hearts that treasure knowing Christ above everything else
- Protection from false teaching and religious legalism in our church and community

- Family members and friends who are trapped in works-based religion
- Boldness to share the true gospel with clarity and love
- A deeper, more intimate relationship with Jesus this week

Individual Prayer Requests: *(Allow time for group members to share and pray for one another)*

CLOSING REFLECTION

Read together Philippians 3:8:

"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."

Closing Question: If you truly believed this verse with your whole heart, what would change about tomorrow?

BEFORE NEXT WEEK

- Read Philippians 3:1-16 daily, asking God to reveal something new each day
- Follow through on your chosen practical application
- Be prepared to share one way you experienced the "surpassing worth of knowing Christ" this week

GROUP LEADER NOTES

- Be sensitive to those in your group who may have come from legalistic backgrounds or other religions
- Emphasize grace throughout—this message is about freedom, not condemnation
- If someone shares that they're unsure of their salvation, take time to clearly present the gospel
- Consider sharing your own testimony of moving from religion to relationship with Christ
- The prayer room is always available for anyone needing personal prayer

NOTES:

Sermon Transcripts:

Once again, for the last several weeks, we're going to try this again at 2 Timothy 3, 16-17.

We're going to share this scripture together.

I'm sure that it will be up there on the screen for you to say aloud as we go together in this.

It's a reminder of what we have in our hands here today, that this is not simply the opinions of man.

We have a lot of men with a lot of opinions in our day and time.

Most of that is really suitable for the File 13 trash can.

But what you have in your hands, dear Christian, is the Word of God.

And so follow along with me, quote this together as we think about what we are getting ready to open together, to study together and learn together.

It is the Word of God.

Here we go.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof,

And that includes ladies as well, right?

Men and women.

And so what we have in our hands here is the Word of God, the inspired Word of God, not the opinions of man.

That's why we know that this is absolutely true.

It's not true because I say it's true.

It's true because God is truth.

And we can stand on the truth of this.

And so this morning as we read this, follow along with me in chapter 3, verses 1 through 16 as we continue our study through the book of Philippians this morning.

The title of our message will be The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ Jesus.

The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ Jesus.

Paul here now is going to be wrapping up his letter to this church, this church of believers, and he writes this, "Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.

To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

Look out for the dogs."

Look out for the evildoers.

Look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

Though I myself, Paul says, have reason for confidence in the flesh also."

If anyone else thinks he has reason for 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, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law,

Blameless.

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as a 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 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.

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection."

And I may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Let those of us who are mature think this way.

And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Thank you guys.

You may be seated this morning.

Now we are continuing on here actually several weeks as we as the church body here have gone through the book of Philippians really verse by verse and chapter by chapter and the reason it's so significant and important that we do that is so that we're able to truly understand what Paul is saying as we go through this.

We're not pulling a verse out of context and making it a pretext or bending it and twisting it to say whatever it is that we might want it to say.

We're actually doing our very best, following along this word as Paul starts making his way through here, not putting our own view of what we think it means, but really our desire is to take out of the

was really trying to say by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

And so that's one reason it's very significant that we go through Scripture, that we are in context and Scripture interprets Scripture.

And people that don't do that get off on these wild trails and have these weird forms of ideas and doctrines that are not true.

And so that's one reason we're doing this.

And we know Paul now has been in jail for nearly four years.

The past four years, these last two have been in Rome.

And Paul is writing this letter from a prison in Rome under house arrest, if you will.

And he is being guarded day and night as he is waiting now trial before Caesar.

And the Apostle Paul had reason to really be somewhat disgruntled.

I know that I would be there.

I probably would not be in the state that Paul is.

But nonetheless, Paul, as he mentions to us here, just in a few verses past in chapter 4, that he had learned something very significant.

And let me say this, you'll notice in this passage, it talks about those that are mature.

There is a process of our growing in Christ.

We don't just arrive, that's not going to happen.

And Paul says he's not already perfect and he will not be until when?

until he is in the presence of God, until heaven.

That we're in a work in process.

And Paul is speaking about this learning that he has now through what God has brought him through in life.

And so this is not something that Paul actually just had figured out because he had studied some history.

He actually learned these things from going through suffering and difficulties and through that he had learned

the secret now of being content in any and every situation, whether he had much or whether he was in want, whether he was clothed or whether he was naked, whether he was free or whether he was imprisoned.

Why?

Because Paul had learned this incredible secret

And that only comes through learning what God is doing through his life and through the suffering of what Paul had experienced.

And he knew, as he said in chapter 1, that no matter what, it was all going to work out for the purpose and the glory of God.

That's what was going to happen.

And so Paul now is beginning to wrap up this letter to this church that he started as he was making his way into Macedonia.

There was no church there under Roman occupation.

And the apostle Paul, there's not even enough people there Jew-wise to even have a synagogue.

So Paul goes down to the river and he now finds a few people there meeting.

And one of those we know was Lydia.

Lydia and her family were meeting there and they were

worshiping and Paul meets them and so Paul's talking to Lydia Paul also was arrested goes to prison there and then he also shares his faith with with the jailer and the jailer and his family come to faith in Christ and so Lydia was a Jew not knowing Christ hears the gospel from Paul becomes a believer her and her whole household and then the jailer and his household that's how this church began and now Paul is writing back this letter after some years and time as this church has grown

And he loves these people and he loves this church as a father loves his own children.

And in that way, Paul loves these people.

And so he's writing these things to them out of his great love and concern for them.

He wants them to make sure that they are

sound in their doctrine and their truth and that they're working together side by side for the gospel that they have one mind and they're not disunified although there were a few in this church that were squabbling among each other and Paul says hey shape it up work together confess your sins to each other let's work these things out we're the body of Christ trying to build the kingdom of God and he addresses some of those things so he's writing this letter and it's a letter from prison but yet this letter is the letter of joy and

And there is only one place you can find true joy.

You cannot find it in the things of the world.

The only place you'll find true joy is in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He alone can give that kind of joy in any circumstance whatsoever.

And Paul had learned that.

For if your joy is only found in the things of the world, when the things of the world are no longer available to you because of circumstances, whether that be financial, whether that be physical, whether that be relational, or whether that be through occupational, whatever means you think the world can provide the joy, when that is no longer present, guess what leaves?

That very thing that you thought would bring you joy and happiness is fleeting.

But in Christ, no matter where Paul was, no matter what the circumstance was, God in Christ Jesus had helped Paul understand and Paul was experiencing in prison

the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And over and over and over in this letter, 13 times references joy, joy, joy.

And right here in the very beginning of chapter three, Paul now wraps this up, finally, my brothers.

We are brothers and sisters in Christ, amen?

"You are my brothers and sisters in the Lord."

And Paul is writing to them and he says, "Rejoice in the Lord."

Why?

Because we have a lot to rejoice in the Lord over.

Our salvation, which is the theme of what Paul's life was about.

It was all about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everything in Paul's life was directed toward the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The defense of the gospel.

The doctrines of the gospel.

Paul was about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And this letter, the central theme, is all about the gospel of Christ.

Because the gospel is the good news unto salvation for all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we've already learned that our salvation, just prior to this we learned, Paul says that we are to not work for our salvation.

Why?

Because Jesus Christ finished all the work that provided salvation for you and me.

You cannot add to the work of Christ.

It is impossible.

Man in religion has been striving to receive the approval of God through their merits, and that's been something in religion since its foundation.

And what you're going to find here in this passage, which is absolutely amazing, the theme verse that I pulled out of this passage in its context is this, that Paul was really getting to this fact.

He's speaking now of the surpassing worth, the value of knowing Christ Jesus.

Did you see that word, know?

That is a very important word because in religion, you cannot know God, right?

It's not about that.

Religion is simply about a set of rules or guidelines or requirements that are put upon people that tell them that by doing all of these things, you are working toward the merit of God's favor.

But the Bible says, Paul says what?

That our righteousness, in other words, the things that we do to somehow attain to right standing with God, Paul says that they're what?

They're filthy rags.

They are absolutely detestable to God.

Why?

Because we are sinful in nature.

All humanity is sinful in nature, and you cannot attain to the absolute holiness of God.

You can't even begin to go there.

But men in religion...

for thousands of years, have all been following along in a different set of rules and regulations on how they might attain the favor of God.

You cannot attain the favor of God.

There's only one way, and that is through faith in the finished work of Christ who atoned for your sins on the cross of Calvary.

And he finished it all, you guys.

And so Paul has already shared, we're not working for our salvation because no man can.
We're simply working it out.

I love the fact that we are in Christ.

We need to focus on our justification.

What does justification mean?

We're in right standing with God.

How is that possible?

Because you and I are not righteous even standing here today in our humanity, are we?

Anybody drop the ball and sin this week?

Did anybody sin this morning?

Yeah.

So the real question here is this.

He is pushing us and pushing these Philippian believers to strive and move toward holy living.

That's how we live this out.

Understanding the grace of God, experiencing the love of God, and knowing this incredible gift of salvation, Paul says we are to strive to live a life worthy of the calling with which we've received.

And that is living out this new life

in the body of the flesh, which is a fight back and forth.

The reason that you and I are called by God righteous is not because of a religious right.

It is simply because of Jesus Christ.

See, when you and I, by faith, believed in Christ alone for salvation, the Bible says that you were placed in Christ, that you literally were clothed with Christ Jesus.

And that's why over and over the Apostle Paul uses the word about being in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ.

we are standing in a position of righteousness before God, not because you are righteous, sir or ma'am, but because the one in whom is the object of our faith, he alone is righteous.

Christ is righteous.

Thank God that we are in Christ.

What really burdened Paul and what burdens you and I today is that there are so many people who are stuck in religion.

And religion is simply about poor mankind, sinful men and women, working some steps and doing some things.

Some of them go to far extremes, even to the point of isolating themselves from humanity and meditating for hours a day.

Because they can't be in the world or think about it.

They've got to keep their mind in a trance.

They somehow got to attain this.

That's so far from what the gospel teaches.

Did you know you are free in Christ Jesus?

You're free in Christ Jesus.

For he who the Son has freed is free indeed.

And so the Apostle Paul here, he's giving a warning first to these believers.

And the warning is this.

Paul came from a religious system.

In fact, Paul says, you want to talk about somebody who was religious?

Paul says, I will put my credentials of my religiousness up against anybody.

And so Paul goes down through really a checklist of who he is.

This is really his pedigree.

He shares this here.

And Paul was consumed with religion.

But you know what Paul did not know?

He did not know God.

The thing that breaks our heart as Christians is that there are literally billions of people who are religious, but they don't know Christ.

They have no idea who Christ is.

They don't know God.

Why?

You can't love a God that you think you have to work to attain His favor, right?

And so for many people, they're taught in religion, this is the key phrase, folks, even in evangelicalism, this is a prominent thing.

Not only in evangelicalism and Protestantism, but in other faiths, you will find this, and it's not the gospel, but what you're going to find is there are those even within the Christian faith, Protestantism or within Christianity that would fall under that umbrella that would say this, yes, I do believe that

Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that man is saved by faith in Him.

Here's the key word, B-U-T, but.

See, my mama might say, guess what?

I'm at the store and I'm really bugging her for something when I was little, right?

She'd say, you know what, son, you can have that, but do you know what that taught me?

Oh, it's going to cost me to have that.

And this is what they do.

And this is why Paul was so passionate about this.

He was so passionate about anyone who would come in and teach these people that he loved anything contrary to the true gospel.

And in fact, when you first hear what Paul says here, he uses a pretty rough word.

Anybody here been called a dog lately?

How many of you said, man, thank you for that compliment?

This is not a compliment.

Paul says, you need, number one, he says, finally, my brothers, rejoice.

And then he says, look out.

He says, you need to be on the lookout.

You need to be beware, some of your translations say.

You need to have your eyes open around you, and there's a reason you need to be beware.

Because we're living in a day and time, dear Christian, please hear me what I'm saying.

We are living in a day and time where the prevalency of men who are in the pulpits, much of what they're teaching is not the word of God, but is simply a self-centered, man-centered, feel-good message for the people who gather there.

That's not what we're here for today, although I pray that being together that you experience and you feel the presence of God in this place.

We've met at 8 o'clock this morning to pray who?

We pray for you this morning.

We pray for God's presence here this morning.

Because I don't want you simply to come here and encounter just a time together.

I want you to experience and know Christ.

And so what Paul is getting at here, that this is the surpassing greatness of what Paul had come to know.

Nothing compares to this word.

Knowing Jesus.

Knowing Jesus.

Can't know that in religion.

You'll never know Jesus in religion.

So Paul says, look out for who?

Starts out with this, the dogs.

Wow, that's a pretty rough word to say, especially about people in church.

Dogs.

The word dog here in a literal sense, and yes, mothers, I'm going to do my best to get you out of here on time.

Because I don't need... Yeah, yeah, here we go.

Okay.

I had a mama.

I know exactly how this works.

Okay.

In a literal sense, Paul says...

That these people he's describing here, look how he terms them.

They are scavenging canines.

Scavenging canines.

That's what the word dog means in a literal sense here that Paul is speaking about.

But here in a spiritual sense, what Paul says here, when you look at this Greek word, he says these are spiritual predators who, like stray dogs, feed off others.

That's a pretty serious offense here.

This was true in Paul's day, and it's very true in our day.

It's very true in our day.

He calls these dogs.

He says also to be aware of the dogs.

Now, no question Paul has already shed some light on this in chapter 1, verse 15.

For he says here, while he was in prison, there were some who preached Christ out of envy...

and out of rivalry in other words their motive for preaching the gospel was self-centered had nothing to do about glorifying God glorifying Christ and you know a lot of that is easy to spot when you see the preaching of those because they don't preach the gospel they won't preach the Word of God they will not talk about tough subjects of our day that we are dealing with and how the Scriptures preach against those things they won't do that

because it's not about glorifying God, it's about glorifying themselves.

And that's what Paul says.

So there were those, while Paul was in prison, out of envy of Paul, or out of strife with Paul, or whatever, they were going to go ahead and preach and say, nah, nah, nah, nah, Paul, you're in prison, so I'm preaching.

I'm going to go into the churches you started, and I'm going to tell them what I want to tell them.

And so these dogs were appearing in

and they were working, and their appearance was this, that they were actually doing it for the gospel's sake, but were also bringing in this very thing, and this is what Paul hated.

He hated religion.

Do you know who the founder of religion is?

Not God.

Satan.

He's the founder of religion because, see, religion always strays away from the truth of the gospel.

Always.

It always strays from the true gospel message.

And therefore, even if it has the picture that looks really close to the church or the gospel, guess what?

Satan comes in, pollutes it, and therefore it's not the true gospel at all.

Paul hated this religion, and these Jewish people who were coming in, these Judaizers is what Paul is really getting at here.

Those of the circumcision, they were coming in, and they were polluting the gospel.

And what were they doing?

As we're going to see here in a minute, they were actually throwing in the word but.

Sure, you are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, but you got to do this.

You've got to A, B, C, D. That's not the gospel.

The gospel is a free gift.

It's a free gift.

Be aware of religion, Paul says, and he's going to get into this in great detail.

So in Galatians 1, 6 through 9, listen to what Paul says to that church there, the church that he also started in Galatia.

In verses 6 through 9 in chapter 1, listen to what Paul says.

You're going to hear the heart of Paul as we make our way through here.

And this should be our heart as well in relation to the gospel.

The gospel is what matters.

Paul says to those Christians in the church in Galatia, he writes this in verses 6 through 9 of chapter 1.

Paul says, I am astonished.

I'm flabbergasted here, man.

That you are so quickly, listen to this, deserting, going away from, straying from him who called you in the grace of Christ.

And are turning, he says, to a different gospel.

Not that there is another one, Paul says, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

But even, he says, listen to how severe Paul says this.

Paul says, but even if we, Paul says, or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be damned.

Those are some strong words.

Paul had no use for those who would come in and pollute the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and put upon those who had been set free the yoke of slavery in works.

Paul had no use for that.

In fact, very strong language.

These dogs who had infiltrated the church like a wolf in sheep's clothing were

had done this and unfortunately we're seeing a pervasive number standing in pulpits and churches today Jesus Christ himself also gave a warning about these dogs in the final chapter of the final book in the book of revelation listen to this stark warning in revelation twenty two twelve through seventeen John by inspiration of the spirit of God these are the words of Christ behold

I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, my judgment with me.

We know when that's going to happen.

Each one for what he has done.

I am the Alpha, the Omega, the beginning and end.

The first and the last, the beginning and end.

Blessed are those who wash their robes.

How do we do that?

By faith in Christ and his righteousness.

Faith in Jesus Christ.

That's how we receive his righteousness.

And we wash our robes.

We're white and pure.

Thank you, God, for that.

So that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

Outside of the city now, we're going to see in contrast, a difference between those who have washed their robes in white, which is telling us of those that are in Christ Jesus by faith, alone in Christ alone, by the grace of God alone.

He says this outside, here Jesus uses these words, are the dogs.

There they are again.

The dogs.

And the dogs are included with a group of people.

The dogs here are included with the sorcerers, those who practice this mystic religion, those who are in the occult, those that are trying to somehow channel the darkness and channel the demons, and those that are involved in sorcery.

And the sexually immoral are also included in this group.

We talked a little bit about that last week.

And the murderers.

and the idolaters, in other words, those that are worshipping these other things, worshipping gods, worshipping images, worshipping relics.

We are to worship no one but God himself, and him alone are we to worship.

That is it.

We don't worship that cross at all.

That cross right there is simply a reminder of the cross of Calvary, but that is not to be worshiped at all.

It's a symbol, and you know what?

That can become a problem.

Because people can worship the cross.

We're not to worship the cross.

The Bible says in the Old Testament, it's cursed is everyone who is killed on a tree.

Who's crucified on a tree.

The early church did not carry a cross around their neck.

I can assure you of that.

It was a cursed thing.

But over time, if we're not careful, I promise you, if I take that down and come in next week, I'm going to catch like you can't imagine.

Where's the cross?

Don't misunderstand me.

We thank God for the cross of Calvary, but that is nothing but two pieces of stick thrown together.

And if you're not careful, you will begin to worship something that God says, do not worship that.

So don't get all muffled if you come in next week and there's no, I'm just kidding.

All right, here we go.

And so he says outside of the city gates, in other words, these are not going to be in the kingdom.

These will not be in the new heaven, new earth.

And he talks about these dogs, the same thing that Paul here is referring to.

And then Paul says, beware of the evildoers.

These literally are the laborers, those that are working here.

He says, properly, they're inwardly foul and rotten.

Now outwardly, they don't look like it, but inwardly they are.

Malice flowing out of a moral rotten character.

In other words, it's kind of like a piece of wood that has rot in the middle of it.

Jesus also used the same word here about the laborers.

When Jesus said this in Matthew 9, 37-38, he says to his disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Same word.

Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers.

into his harvest.

Paul says, listen, look out for the dogs.

Look out for the evildoers.

They're really rotten on the inside.

They appear as they're not, but they really are.

Paul says to this church, you need to be on the lookout.

Be watching out for this.

And then he mentions a third group here.

He says, what?

That these next group are going to be mutilators of the flesh.

Now let's just jump back real quick here before I get ahead on my notes here about these workmen.

In 2 Corinthians 11, 13 through 14, Paul also says this to the church in Corinth.

He says, "...for such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

And no wonder, for Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."

There always has been, there always will be those who are deceitful.

And one thing we as Christians have to be careful of, and I say this tongue-in-cheek but with some truth, sometimes the church has the tendency to be a little on the naive side.

There are those who come into churches that are not of Christ with the purpose of causing problems.

dissension and they're deceitful.

So Paul says to this church that he loves, be on the lookout, man.

And when you notice this, when you recognize this, be careful.

And really Paul is looking at this next group and I think they're all tied together here.

And what Paul is getting at here, he talks about those who mutilate the flesh.

gives us a little bit of an idea who Paul's really speaking about here and who he's really referencing here.

These that are mutilators of the flesh, these are Judaizers who would say things like, we believe that Jesus is the Christ, that one is saved by grace through faith in Christ, but you have to do these things such as, guess what, circumcision.

See, the Jews themselves were radically involved in what God never intended for them to be involved in, and that they were religious.

They began to be involved in this religion.

Paul had turned what God had made for the nation of Israel to set them apart.

All of this was pointing to Jesus.

It was all about this pointing to God.

And what Paul had made this about was not about God whatsoever.

It was about religion.

And Paul's talking about these Judaizers who came into the church and instead of preaching the true gospel, they were adding to the gospel and they were requiring that these individuals who had come to faith in Christ, had they not yet been circumcised, that the men in the church had to be circumcised because that's part of the old law.

Aren't you glad you're not under the law?

Why?

Because there's 613 of them.

There's people that say, well, you know, X, Y, and Z, we got 10.

Yeah, 10's the starting place.

The Jews had made all of this some big mockery.

They had 613 laws that they were to keep, and some of them are so absolutely horrific that, ladies, you have already been breaking the law this morning when you looked into the mirror and you brushed your hair.

That was work on the Sabbath.

Yes, isn't that crazy?

Isn't that crazy?

And so they were bringing in the yoke of religion into freedom.

Why would Satan want this done so badly in the church?

Because it will move people from the true gospel into the works salvation, which is no gospel at all.

It is not the gospel.

And instead of people in Christ truly experiencing freedom in Christ, guess what?

They are introduced here to the yoke of religion, which is basically slavery around one's neck.

And they were adding to the finished work of Christ, which is not the gospel.

It is another gospel, which is completely and utterly false.

And I will, till the day I die, I will preach against anything that is the false gospel, period.

We will stand against the false gospel.

Period.

We must.

Why?

Because anyone that is under the false gospel is someone we need to reach with the true gospel.

That's why.

That's why Paul had such disdain for religion as we're going to understand and we're going to see.

I'm going to finish with this this morning and then next week we're going to get into the real nuts and bolts of what this is all about here.

But let me read this to you.

It's long and it's lengthy.

It'll only take another hour to get through this chapter.

Don't look at your watches.

I've got 35 seconds.

No, just kidding.

In Galatians chapter 4, we're going to start here.

Turn with me to Galatians chapter 4, 5 through 25.

We've got a little reading to do here, but I want to do this as now we're going to basically have our minds set to where Paul is.

This is it.

Now listen to a Muslim.

There are devout Muslim people.

I've been in Muslim countries, and let me say this.

There are radical Muslims out there.

Yes, there are.

But there is also a large group of Muslims that are not radical at all.

In fact, they're very timid.

very hospitable, very loving as far as how they treat you.

They're very open to you coming by.

They will treat you very, very well.

They set you in front of their little old huts.

They're gonna give you their only plastic chair they have to sit on.

They're gonna bring in some tea if they can make it, maybe some fruit out of the tree out back.

And they are literally going to just treat you very, very well.

The problem is with the Muslim.

This is another problem.

Number one, Allah is not God.

Allah is simply a God, like all paganism.

And for the Muslim, if you sat down with a Muslim and you said, you say, well, why would terrorism be such a big deal where men and women are blowing themselves up?

This is the reason.

Because in religion, there's only one way for a Muslim to have a guarantee, and ladies, this isn't going to include you, only a guarantee for them to ever make it to paradise.

You have to be a martyr for Allah.

The rest of them are on a system of works.

And literally the scales are set in their life.

For the average Muslim, it's all about good deeds.

I did this for my neighbor today.

I treated so-and-so right and nice.

I went to the worship today.

I was there.

I'm keeping all of these rules.

When I hear the microphone on an island that there's not hardly anything there, and yet they're calling them to come to prayer.

You got these people all just, they're so wrapped up and just bound with religion.

And yet the average Muslim, if you say, do you know God, you know what they'd say?

You can't know God.

How about heaven?

You're going to make heaven?

I don't know.

Why?

Because Allah has to measure my deeds.

Good or bad.

And a Muslim will not know until then whether they make it or not.

By the way, they won't make it.

Why?

Because there's only one way to God through Jesus Christ.

Why?

So what we do is we preach the gospel to them.

We share the gospel to them.

We get the word in their hands.

Same thing for Hindus.

Except Hindus are all about reincarnation.

And they go through a whole process of reincarnation.

Reincarnation around and around and around and around.

I'm a beetle.

I'm a bug.

I'm a cow.

I'm a... They're constantly going through everything.

Why?

Until they finally reach the state of perfection, nirvana.

That's why they don't kill a cow.

They bite it into their house.

They're not going to kill a rat.

Why?

Because they believe that's an ancestor that's going through the process to reach nirvana.

They're not going to smash that, kill that.

In fact, in India right now, they're having the biggest breakout that we've seen probably period of coronavirus.

As you're going to hear next week from a dear pastor friend of mine who's there right now begging and asking for us as a church to pray for he and the ministry that they're doing there.

500,000 people a day are coming down with coronavirus and see for a Hindu, one of the rituals they go through, it's all about cremation.

They cremate the bodies.

And so when you look on the news about what's going on in India, there are massive areas where these bodies are simply brought in and they can't even keep up with all the cremations and they're going out and gathering wood.

They can't even keep enough wood handy and they stack wood around these bodies.

And what do they do?

The priest is there and he does some sort of end of rights deal and they burn the bodies and then the family will come and gather up the ashes.

And they'll take the ashes and they've got to set these ashes free on water somewhere, whether it's a lake or a river or a body of water.

They have to set them free there.

It's part of this religious system.

You ask a Hindu if they know God, they'll say, which God, number one, because we have a million plus or whoever, a tree or whatever it could be.

They have nothing.

This is the thing about religion.

Religion will never lead you to what Paul says, the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ.

This whole experience of salvation is not simply just a figment of our imagination and us just this whole working.

No, this is about you knowing Christ Jesus.

Did you know that Christ desires that you would know Him?

That's why He gave you the Spirit of God indwelling you.

That we would know Christ.

That's why no matter who they are, get them into the Word of God.

Why?

Because when they start reading the Word of God, they're going to begin to learn some incredible truths that they weren't told.

You can know something about God in Christ Jesus.

That's what Paul says.

Man, this is incredible.

I count everything in the past, all the religion, everything of what I was, who I was, what I did.

Everything, Paul says, is dung compared to the surpassing greatness and value of knowing Christ.

We're going to call this today.

If you're here this morning and you thought Christianity was simply just about

you know, going through the X, Y, Z. If you're here this morning and you say, well, John, I hope at the end of life God will let me in because I'm a pretty good guy or a pretty good gal.

I was a good mom.

I was a good dad.

You know, X, Y, and Z, listen, that's filthy rags, folks.

That's religion.

There's only one way that we will ever stand before God, and that is in righteousness.

and be received, and that is only through Christ.

That's it.

Faith in the gospel, faith alone, in Christ alone, by the grace of God alone that we are saved.

There's a lot of people setting in churches all over this country today and around the world that are simply religious people who are not genuinely converted or regenerated by the Spirit of God.

If you don't know Jesus, you can know him.

Bible makes it very clear.

Call out upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone who calls the name of Christ will be saved.

We turn from our sin, we repent of that, and we cling to Christ.

It is all by grace.

It is all by faith in Christ alone, by the grace of God alone.

That is how one is saved.

You have family members that are stuck in a system of religion.

You got to go here.

You got to do this.

You got to do this at this age.

You got to do this here.

You got to walk those steps.

You got to go to this country.

You got to come.

Listen to me.

They are lost in religion.

And they are blinded to the truth of the incredible gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's why we share this incredible word with them.

One thing to do, it's not beat up what they believe.

It's simply this.

If you can get them to get in here, it will change their life.

It'll change their life.

All right.

Jeff, would you come and close us in prayer?

We could spend a whole lot more time, and we will next week.

Mothers, thank you

for all you do.

And I know your kids don't know what you do.

They don't appreciate what you do because they don't even have the capacity until they get older to even begin to understand what it means and what you did for them.

Some of us are sitting here today because of a mom
who faithfully prayed for them.

And maybe your mama didn't get to see that prayer answered.

She will one day.

There's much power in the prayers of a mama if you study Scripture and read Scripture.

I want to thank you, mothers and grandmothers, for all that you do.

Thank you so much.

Jeff, would you close us in prayer, brother?

If anybody needs to pray, though, by the way, Jeff will probably mention this, but I know it's Mother's Day.

But if you need prayer, we'll be in there, okay?

We'd love to pray with you.

God bless you, mothers, and the rest of us.

Thank you so much for being here.

Thank you, Jeff.

Just a reminder for all guests, this is your first time to be here, or if you've been here multiple times, there's a blue card.

Let us know who you are.

where you are, and if you want to get involved in any way, please fill out this blue card and drop it in the offering bucket.

Like John said, there's a prayer room in there.

Where is your joy today?

That's what I was thinking.

Where is my joy today?

What do I want?

What do I need?

There's a group of people in there right now that are praying for you right now.

They're praying that you come for prayer.

If you've got that little old knot in your belly,

or something's kind of pulling you that way, just go ahead and follow that.

Go let them pray for you.

In Matthew 18, 19, and 20, it says, where two or more gather, your God's going to answer.

Where two or more gather in my name, he is there with them.

You might say, Jeff, my prayer life is good.

Me and God, we got a good prayer life on our own.

There's people in there praying that you come in there and allow them, allow them to pour into you, allow them to pray for you, your family.

That being said, I'll end us in prayer.

Father, we just thank you right now, God.

Lord God, we want to thank you for your presence that is here today.

God, I just pray for everybody in this room, Lord, as they step up and they leave here, Father, that you protect them.

Lord, I just pray that their mind was open today, their heart was open, and they realize it's more than just salvation.

It's about pouring in.

It's about spreading the gospel.

It's about giving to those that will give back what was freely given to us.

God, I just thank you for this opportunity that those that have us that are not mute, that we have a voice, that we can go speak truth and love, Lord, that we can share our gifts.

Father, I just thank you so much for this wonderful day.

Thank you for the mothers, the grandmothers, the aunts, the ones that stepped in to be mothers that never could have children.

God, thank you for them.

Thank you for all those that poured into our lives.

God, thank you for the ones that poured into me.

Lord, thank you for the wives.

We love you and we praise you in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Help me safely through the sinking sand, it is the Christ of Calvary.

This would be my prayer to the Lord each day, to help me do the best I can.