



# SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE

## Philippians: The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ, Pt. 4

Pastor John Riggs

### Summary:

This sermon delivers a powerful exposition on Philippians 3, emphasizing that knowing Jesus Christ is the supreme value that eclipses all other pursuits, achievements, and religious works. The pastor contrasts the freedom found in salvation by grace through faith with the bondage of works-based religion. Drawing heavily from Ephesians 1-2 and Romans, the message unpacks the transformative reality of what believers were before Christ—dead in sin, children of wrath, without hope—and what they have become through Christ's finished work: alive, justified, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and guaranteed an eternal inheritance. The sermon challenges lukewarm Christianity and calls believers to zealous appreciation of their salvation, warning against allowing worldly concerns to diminish the pearl of great price. The central thrust is that Christ alone provides righteousness, and understanding this truth should produce overwhelming joy, worship, and zealous living for God's glory.

### Video Breakdown:

- Chapter 1: Introduction: Remembering Our Freedom and God's Word
  - 0:00 - 4:00
  - We begin by honoring those who sacrificed for our freedoms and acknowledging the truth of God's inspired Word as we prepare to study Philippians chapter 3.
- Chapter 2: Understanding Paul's Transformation: From Religion to Relationship
  - 4:00 - 24:29
  - We explore how Paul considered all his religious achievements as worthless compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ and being found righteous through faith alone.
- Chapter 3: The Problem with Religion: Works versus Grace
  - 24:29 - 43:58
  - We confront the destructive nature of works-based religion and celebrate the liberating truth that salvation comes entirely through God's grace, not human effort.
- Chapter 4: Our Identity in Christ: From Death to Life
  - 43:58 - 59:13
  - We discover the incredible transformation that occurs in salvation, moving from being dead in sin to being made alive, sealed, and guaranteed an eternal inheritance in Christ.
- Chapter 5: A Call to Zeal: Responding to God's Grace
  - 59:13 - 68:15
  - We are challenged to respond to God's amazing grace with passionate zeal for Christ, repenting of lukewarm faith and making Jesus the supreme treasure of our lives.

## Scripture References from the Sermon

### Explicitly Referenced Scriptures:

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is inspired by God
2. Philippians 3:7-21 - Paul's pursuit of knowing Christ (main text)
3. Philippians 1:21 - "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain"
4. Romans 3 - Righteousness of God through faith
5. Ephesians 1:13 - Sealed with the Holy Spirit
6. Ephesians 2:8-9 - Saved by grace through faith
7. Ephesians 2:1-19 - Dead in sin, made alive in Christ
8. Galatians 2:15-21 - Justified by faith, not works of law
9. Galatians 3:10-14 - Curse of the law, righteousness by faith
10. Romans 9:30-33 - Israel pursued righteousness by works
11. Romans 10:1-3 - Zeal without knowledge
12. 1 Corinthians 15 - The gospel (alluded to)
13. Ephesians 1:3-14 - Spiritual blessings in Christ
14. 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 - Christ our righteousness
15. 2 Corinthians 5:17 - New creation in Christ (alluded to)
16. Revelation 4:1-4 - Throne room vision
17. Revelation 5:9 - Worthy is the Lamb
18. Revelation 3:14-19 - Letter to Laodicea (lukewarm church)

### Additional Related Verses (Themes Discussed):

19. John 6:44 - No one can come unless drawn by the Father
20. Hebrews 4:14-16 - Jesus as High Priest
21. 1 Timothy 2:5 - One mediator between God and man
22. Titus 2:11-12 - Grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness
23. Romans 8:18 - Present sufferings vs. future glory
24. Psalm 51:12 - Joy of salvation
25. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 - Ministry of reconciliation
26. Romans 5:8 - God demonstrates His love

**Key Points:**

- Knowing Christ Jesus as Lord is the surpassing worth that makes everything else count as loss or rubbish in comparison
- Righteousness cannot be obtained through law-keeping, religious works, or human effort—only through faith in Christ
- Salvation is entirely by grace through faith, not of works, so no one can boast
- Believers were once dead in sin, following the world and Satan, children of wrath, without hope and without God
- Through Christ's blood, believers are made alive, justified, reconciled to God, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and given an eternal inheritance
- Religion (works-based systems) nullifies grace and keeps people in bondage, making Christ's sacrifice meaningless
- Believers have direct access to God through Christ alone—no human mediator is needed
- Our citizenship is already in heaven, and we await Christ's return when He will transform our bodies to be like His
- The church needs to repent of lukewarm love and return to zealous appreciation for salvation
- Understanding the magnitude of God's grace should produce joy, worship, and zeal for Christ that impacts the world

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**Discussion Questions:**

Paul says he counts everything as loss compared to knowing Christ. What things in your life compete for the place that Christ should have, and how can you practically reorder your priorities?

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The sermon emphasizes that salvation is by grace through faith alone, not works. How does understanding this truth change the way you approach your relationship with God and your daily Christian walk?

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Paul describes being 'dead in trespasses and sins' before Christ. How does remembering what you were saved from impact your gratitude and zeal for Jesus today?

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The message contrasts religion (a system of do's and don'ts) with relationship with Christ. In what ways might you have slipped into religious performance rather than resting in Christ's finished work?

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Ephesians 2:10 says we are God's workmanship created for good works. How does understanding that good works are the result of salvation rather than the cause change your motivation for serving God?

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The sermon mentions that our citizenship is already in heaven. How should this eternal perspective affect the way you respond to current political, social, and cultural challenges?

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## Small Group Guide: The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ Based on Philippians 3:7-21

### Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

**Icebreaker Question:** What is something you once valued highly but now see differently? What changed your perspective?

### Sermon Summary

The Apostle Paul declares that everything he once considered valuable—his religious pedigree, his achievements, his righteousness under the law—he now counts as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ. This sermon explores why knowing Christ should be the ultimate treasure for every believer and how this transforms our daily living.

### Key Scripture Passages

- Philippians 3:7-21
- Ephesians 1:3-14
- Ephesians 2:1-19
- Romans 3:21-24
- Galatians 2:15-21

### Discussion Questions

#### Understanding the Gospel (15-20 minutes)

1. **Paul's dramatic shift:** In Philippians 3:7-8, Paul says he counts everything as "loss" and "rubbish" compared to knowing Christ. What specifically did Paul give up, and why was this so radical for him as a Pharisee?
2. **Religion vs. Relationship:** The sermon strongly contrasts religious works with grace-based salvation. How would you explain the difference between trying to earn God's favor through works versus receiving righteousness through faith in Christ?
3. **Read Ephesians 2:8-9 together.** Why is it so important that salvation is "not of your own doing" and "not a result of works"? What does this protect us from?

#### Our Identity in Christ (15-20 minutes)

4. **Before and After:** Review the "before Christ" and "after Christ" lists from Ephesians 2:1-19. Which aspects of your "before Christ" identity do you most easily forget? Which aspects of your "in Christ" identity do you struggle to believe or live out?
5. **The sermon mentioned being "sealed with the Holy Spirit" as a guarantee of our inheritance.** What does this mean practically for how we face uncertainty, trials, or doubts about our salvation?
6. **Paul says in Philippians 3:12, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on."** How do we balance resting in our complete salvation in Christ while still "pressing on" toward spiritual maturity?

#### Living with Zeal (15-20 minutes)

7. **Lukewarm Christianity:** The sermon referenced Revelation 3:15-16 about the lukewarm church. What are some signs that Christ has become just another item in our "saddlebag" rather than the surpassing treasure of our lives?

8. **The sermon asked: "Is Jesus Christ the surpassing value of your life?"** What competes for that place in your heart? (Examples might include: comfort, financial security, family, career, approval of others, political outcomes, etc.)
9. **Paul's zeal for Christ affected everything he did.** What would it look like for you to have that same zeal in your daily life—at work, at home, in your community?

### Key Takeaways

1. **Salvation is entirely by grace through faith in Christ alone**—not by religious works, traditions, or human effort. Any system that adds requirements to faith in Christ distorts the gospel.
2. **Our identity in Christ includes:** being made alive, saved, raised up, seated with Christ, forgiven, redeemed, adopted, sealed by the Holy Spirit, given an inheritance, made citizens of heaven, and guaranteed glorification.
3. **Knowing Christ experientially should be the surpassing value of our lives**—everything else is loss in comparison. This isn't just intellectual knowledge but a relationship that transforms everything.
4. **The Christian life requires pressing forward**—not to earn salvation, but because Christ has made us His own and we're being transformed into His likeness.
5. **The church needs revival that starts with repentance**—moving from lukewarm religion to zealous love for Jesus and passionate pursuit of knowing Him.

### Practical Applications

#### This Week's Challenge (Choose 1-2)

**Option 1: Gratitude Exercise** Each day this week, write down one specific aspect of your salvation (from the Ephesians 2 passage) and spend time thanking God for it. Share what you learned with the group next week.

**Option 2: Identity Check** Make two lists: "What I was before Christ" and "Who I am in Christ." Keep this somewhere visible and read the "in Christ" list each morning, thanking God for your new identity.

**Option 3: Treasure Inventory** Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what competes with Christ for first place in your heart. Confess this honestly and ask God to restore your first love and zeal for Jesus.

**Option 4: Share Your Story** Think of someone who needs to hear the gospel of grace (perhaps someone trapped in religion or performance-based living). Pray for an opportunity to share what Christ has done for you.

**Option 5: Worship Response** Read Revelation 4:9-11 and 5:9-14. Spend extended time in worship, practicing casting your crowns before Jesus and declaring His worthiness for what He has done in saving you.

**Prayer Time (15-20 minutes)**

**Prayer Focus Areas:**

- 1. Thanksgiving:** Spend significant time thanking God for the specific blessings listed in Ephesians 1 and 2.
- 2. Confession:** Confess areas where we've been lukewarm, where other things have taken Christ's rightful place, or where we've slipped into religious performance rather than resting in grace.
- 3. Requests:**
  - Pray for deeper experiential knowledge of Christ
  - Pray for renewed zeal and passion for Jesus
  - Pray for those trapped in religious systems to discover grace
  - Pray for boldness to share the gospel
- 4. Memorial Day Remembrance:** Thank God for those who sacrificed for our freedom, and especially thank Him for Jesus who paid the ultimate price for our spiritual freedom.

**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."*

**Question:** How would your life look different this week if you truly believed and lived like knowing Christ is the surpassing worth above everything else?

**Preparation for Next Week**

Continue reading through Philippians 3-4 and note what stands out to you about Paul's attitude, priorities, and pursuit of Christ.

**Additional Resources**

- Book recommendation: *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer
- Consider memorizing Philippians 3:7-11 as a group over the next month
- Listen to worship songs that focus on the worthiness of Christ and our identity in Him

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## Sermon Transcript:

So, would you join in standing with me this morning, please, as we prepare as well, but we do want to just remember this morning for these freedoms, amen?

Together again, we reside in one of the reprimands of man, but we're literally reading the very inspired Word of God.

And it's truth, absolute truth.

And it's important to be reminded of that as we do that.

So right along with me, we're going to be in 2 Timothy, just following along.

You might have it memorized by now.

2 Timothy 3, 16 through 17.

Truth, correction, and instruction in righteousness.

that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Amen.

If you have your Bibles, please open them with me this morning.

We'll read together out of Philippians chapter 3.

Philippians chapter 3.

And I know we've been in Philippians for quite some time, and I have to confess to you, I didn't think we would be in Philippians as long as we have been.

But as I have been studying this incredible book that the Apostle Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to these believers in Philippi, the truth is we could spend several more months in chapter 3 alone.

There's so much in here, and this morning we're going to dig out some more truth as we study this passage together.

But in Philippians chapter 3, would you read with me, starting in verse 7, and we're going to read just a little ways down through here, actually all the way to 21, but I want to get this in our mind as we approach this passage of Scripture this morning.

Verse 7, he says, "...but whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ."

Indeed, I count everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For this 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 may share in 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 all 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 the goal for the prize of the upper earth, think this way, and if any one of you think otherwise, God will reveal it also to you.

Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you, even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their end is destruction, their God is their belly, and their glory is their shame.

With minds that are set on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself."

Let's pray.

Father God, we love you today.

We thank you so much for your word.

And God, we know that what we have before us here is the inspired word of God.

It is alive.

It is written through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And God, today we thank you for the word that we have before us.

And I pray, God, that you would help us to understand what the Apostle Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was teaching these early believers in Philippi and how it pertains to us as Christians today and what we are to do with the information that Paul has shared today

And how we apply this to our own lives.

Father we do thank you this morning.

God for this country that we are blessed to live in.

Lord we live in a great land Father.

We know that we are partakers of this incredible freedom Lord.

That we have here in America.

And Lord, we remember those this morning, and we memorialize the men and women who have fought bravely and have worked diligently, Lord, many of them, Father, even having scars for the rest of their life.

Lord, we think of those who paid the ultimate price in sacrifice, in giving their own life in order that we could have the freedoms that we enjoy today.

And Lord, we remember them today, and we are thankful for them, God.

Lord, I thank you, Lord, for the one who paid the greatest price.

We thank you for Jesus Christ, that we could be set in sin.

And Lord, that we could be who was once an enemy of God, brought near to you.

We've been reconciled to you through the sacrifice that you placed so that we could be brought right and be made right with you.

Father, thank you for this in Christ.

And thank you, Lord, for your incredible gift of city.

We give you praise in Jesus' name we ask these things.

Amen.

As I mentioned, we have spent quite a bit with you.

As I read chapter 3, I've been hung up really in this section of Scripture.

One reason I'm stuck here is because I want to understand what Paul was really meaning.

And I'll be honest with you, for many years as I've read through Philippians, I've always had a difficulty coming to an understanding of what Paul was really getting at in chapter 3.

The good news for us is that in chapter 3, verse 12, Paul makes it very clear that he has not obtained all that he had just shared about, that he wasn't already perfect, but that Paul makes it very clear that what he does do is he forgets the past and he presses on towards the goal.

But as we've been studying this, God has been teaching us more and more about what Paul was getting at, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit here in chapter 3.

And as we think about this very verse here, and this is the one that I've really been, I guess, high-centered on, if you will.

It's one that I've not been willing in my own life to move past yet, and I think it's important that we keep doing this.

Paul says in verse 1 of chapter 3, "Write the same things to you is no trouble to me, for it's safe for you."

And it probably seems like the reason is that it's really no trouble for us to do this, and actually it's for our benefit, because I believe it's so critical that we understand what the Apostle Paul is getting at here in this passage of Scripture, and how we live this, how we understand it, and how this... Because when I come to the verse that Paul has said here, just in verse 7, understand Paul...

Speaking of gain, just in the fact that everything for a Jew was God and the law of God and the temple is in the westernized world where Jesus is simply just one article that you tag along with you in your saddlebag as you ride through the life that you live.

For the Jew, God was the center of absolutely everything.

He pursued self-righteousness.

In fact, he gives all the details of his pedigree.

And Paul says that I consider absolutely all of those things that I once held so dear, valuable, important in relation to me pursuing the merits of God in my life as a Jew, understanding now that something significant has happened in his salvation.

Paul's sharing with us what happened internally to him, what was going on in his life from the point of encountering Christ to 25 to third place was this growth aspect of sanctification as Paul

has grown in Christ, and he's learned about Christ, and he's suffered with Christ, and he's pursuing Christ.

Not that the pursuit of Christ brings the salvation that Christ provided for him by faith alone, but that he is trying for.

so valuable, so critical in Paul's life, that the rest of everything else in Paul's life was not able to be compared to this incredible knowledge of knowing Jesus Christ.

He says, I counted it all a loss.

Indeed, he says, I count everything as loss.

And this is the reason, Paul says, and this is our question this morning that we're asking ourselves today.

because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

In fact, Paul says, for his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things, and I count them as dung, horse apples, if you will.

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 upon faith.

And so when we think about this, that for the Apostle Paul, and this really is something that should be true of us as believers, those of us who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, this should be our statement of faith, if you will.

Everything else in comparison to knowing Jesus Christ means absolutely nothing compared to him.

That he really is the pinnacle of my life.

He is my passion.

He is what I'm zealous for.

He is my love.

That should be

what every single believer feels and lives and knows in their life.

But the problem is, as we look at the landscape of the American church, and even to be honest this morning, as we look at our own lives, is this true of you and is this true of me?

That like Paul, I can say, there's one thing that has the most prominent value in my life.

It is Jesus Christ

It is Christ's landscape of the westernized church that Jesus Christ is the surpassing value of the lives of those who fill churches every single day.

In fact, even in our own life, how easy is it for other things to come in and take the place of the lordship of Christ in our life?

That's why Paul is sharing these things.

It's important for him to share them over and over again.

And it's significant for us to answer this question, I think, in our own life today.

And so what we're going to do, by God's grace, is we are going to revisit why knowing Christ is the surpassing value for every single believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's good for us to do this and to remember these things.

We've already learned the surpassing worth of knowing Christ far exceeded Paul's past life in religion, and it was his present pursuit.

Every single aspect of the Apostle Paul's life, every aspect, this love of knowing Christ, that Jesus Christ invaded every aspect of his life, everything.

We know that this is true because earlier in Philippians, we looked at this in chapter 1, verse 21.

Paul writes this statement, Christ.

The Apostle Paul desired that whether by death or by life, Jesus Christ, he's now in Rome. He's waiting to go before Caesar and to plead his case with death through this process. We know he didn't, but he did.

Paul says that whether by his living or by his death was not the legacy that mattered for Paul. was that Jesus.

That's what Paul says.

That's an incredible statement for the Apostle Paul to say.

Now, if you go with me in your Bibles back to Romans, check out salvation today.

You remember the day that you heard Christ call your name?

That you came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Did you know that unless Jesus Christ, by His Spirit, draws someone, they cannot even come to God?

It's impossible.

It's a work of the Holy Spirit.

It's something that God does in our life.

Paul is talking about, he came in 1 of chapter 3, Paul writes, God has been manifest upon the righteousness of God.

It's impossible because why?

In keeping the law, all I did was demonstrate that I was a lawbreaker.

For no one can keep the law of God.

No one can perfectly.

That's why sacrifices were instituted, because they were lawbreakers.

In fact, the law did one thing.

It simply showed us that we were sinners, Paul says.

Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God, Paul says, through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

Paul says this righteousness that he had come to know was not a righteousness in keeping the law and going through the sacrificial system.

God provided righteousness in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

His righteousness, Paul says, was imputed to you.

That's what Paul says took place.

In fact, in Ephesians chapter 1, if you flip over to Ephesians, just go to the right in your Bible there.

In fact, just before Philippians, you're going to come there.

In Ephesians chapter 1, this is what Paul says pertaining to those in Ephesus who had come to know Christ.

And we're going to spend some time here today as we go through some of these passages.

In verse 13 of chapter 1, listen to what Paul says here.

In him, in Christ, you also, when you heard...

The gospel of your salvation.

And believed in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who guarantees our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

Paul says every one of us who were in Christ responded to the gospel by the move of the Spirit of God in our life.

We responded to the gospel, and we who were unrighteous, who were sinners...

who were born in sin, in the depravity of our own hearts, from Adam all the way through, all have died, not only physically, but spiritually.

Born that way, he says, what?

When you heard the gospel, you responded to it in faith, what happened to you?

You were saved.

That's what happened to you.

And then, not much further back, just flip over a page here in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9.

We want to cover this again.

What is the gospel here?

We know that Paul talks about the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 and so on and so forth.

But let me read what Paul says here about this salvation that we've been given.

In chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, For by grace you have been saved through faith.

Most of you have this memorized.

And this is not of your own doing.

It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no man can boast.

For we are, listen, the workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus.

For good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Paul says, listen, righteousness under the law was impossible to the church in Galatia.

In Galatians chapter 2, 15 through 21.

Follow along.

Paul says this, we ourselves are Jews, Paul says, by birth and not Gentile sinners.

He's being sarcastic here.

Yet we know that a person is not justified.

By works.

Peter had come and joined and what did Peter do?

He was acting like a Jew when the Jews were around but he was eating and carrying along with the Gentiles when the Jews were not present.

Paul's mocking this whole thing here.

Paul says right here, we know that a person's not justified.

That means we're not made right before God by the works of the law, but actually through faith in Jesus Christ.

So we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by the works of the law, no one will be justified, Paul says.

But if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin?

Certainly not.

For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God.

I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

I do not lollify the grace of God.

For if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."

Galatians 3, 10 through 14, Paul continues.

He says, for all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

That's why when you share the gospel with somebody who says they're relatively a good person, do you know all you need to do is take them through the 10 commandments to show them that they're really a depraved individual?

Every single one of them.

We're lawbreakers.

That's what the law was to do, to show you that the righteousness of God could not be met in our living, the standard.

Why?

Because we are sinners.

That's why.

It's written in the book of law.

Now, it's evident that no one is justified before God by the law.

Paul's just, he's going on this thing, man.

The righteous shall live by faith.

This is why I absolutely hate religion.

I hate it.

I don't hate the people in religion.

I hate religion because religion nullifies the grace of God.

It stomps on the grace of God.

It says that you, as a man, have to do certain things to fulfill the salvation that you've been given.

In other words, Jesus Christ and his blood and the sacrifice that he made was not enough.  
A works-based system.

Hate works-based salvation with everything within me.

Because I grew up under that.

That's why I have such an aversion.

It is to live this way that is impossible for you to live.

It is to do these elements in order that you might be merited okay with God.

You are good with God by faith in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone are you justified before God.

We have to get this.

If we don't get this, we'll never truly appreciate and value the surpassing knowledge of knowing Jesus.

This is why Jesus Christ to Paul was absolutely the most significant thing in his life.

If you were raised in a system that says you must do A, B, C, and D, if you don't do these things according to what we say as the church, you can't make heaven.

That is hogwash.

Hogwash.

And the reason I'm so detested by it, because it completely makes Jesus Christ and what he did absolutely of no purpose.

It makes men.

They're fearful.

They're very fearful.

Why?

Because they were told, you have no hope of heaven.

I knew nothing of God's love.

I was the mess up, man.

Eradicating, writing it down.

Erasing my name, writing it down.

All based on whether or not I wished to do.

That he wrote my name in the Lamb's book of life and it was his blood that bettered me in the book of life.

Thank God for that.

But if you grew up under a system that says you've got to do these things or you're hell bound, baby.

That is a lie.

We are saved, Paul says, by grace, through faith, in Christ.

That's the good news, man.

Oh, that's good news.

Why?

Because Paul spent his entire adult life striving to earn the merits of God.

And false religions everywhere are telling men and women that you have to earn God's merit or God's, plural, merit.

And even at the end of it all, God's still going to decide whether you did good enough or bad enough.

That's not it, man.

Jesus did it all.

That's the gospel.

It's not up to you to save yourself, for no man can.

We can't even come to God unless the grace of God, through the Spirit of God, He grabs a hold of us and pulls us to Himself.

Can't happen.

This is why we're spending time here.

This is why the gospel is what Paul defended, what Paul was living for, that the gospel would not be perverted.

But dear ma'am and sir, the gospel is perverted every single week from places that call themselves churches.

The gospel is not that you have to earn something to merit the favor of God.

The only way you and I have the favor of God is because we literally have taken and put Christ on us.

We've been clothed in Jesus Christ.

That's why Paul over and over and over again says, guess what?

I'm in Christ.

I'm in Christ.

It's through Christ.

Why?

Because we have the imputed righteousness of Christ.

That when God looks at you and me, what he sees out for your redemption, and his blood was perfect, sin past, present, and future, and the Holy Spirit bears witness to that to guarantee that your salvation is going to happen.

He even goes on and says, listen, you're God's workmanship.

You're God's workmanship.

Isn't that incredible?

The problem is for people who are in religion, do you know, if you ask the true religious person that God in Christ Jesus, is Jesus the server?

You sell it off and grow.

First of all, second of all, you cannot know what Paul's even speaking of if you don't understand the gospel of grace.

Oh, thank God for that.

People say, well, grace causes people to sin.

Oh, no, it doesn't.

When you know what grace is, you know what it causes you to do?

Say no to ungodliness.

That's what the grace of God does.

When you understand that what God does is spit in his face, and I'm going to go live like a wretch the rest of my life.

Oh, no.

I hate that stuff.

It causes us to live godly lives.

But if you're in a religious system, godliness doesn't even matter.

I used to do, say this, do this.

It's all good, baby.

No, no, it's all been covered by the blood of Jesus, dear Christian.

It's not a problem for me to say these things to you again, Paul says.

Oh, it's good for your benefit.

Paul understood Christ and Christ alone as righteous.

It wasn't keeping the law, it wasn't the sacrifice.

He was justified by Christ, by faith in his finished work on the cross of Calvary.

Paul knew this.

He understood it.

And my hope and prayer has been this week that you and I will understand this.

It'll change your life.

Paul knew that until he met Christ, even though he was of the people of Israel, you meet a Jew today that doesn't know Christ, they all think they're okay with God.

They're not.

A Jew that dies today outside of Christ does not go to paradise in heaven.

Not where they go.

They go where every lost sinner goes, awaiting for the day of judgment.

Paul makes it very clear there's no difference between Jew and Gentile.

He is of the tribe of Benjamin.

He's a Hebrew of Hebrews.

As of following the law, he's a Pharisee, although he was so zealous for Judaism and even persecuted the church of Jesus Christ in regards to righteousness under the law.

Paul was blameless, he said, but actually the truth is in his standing before God, Paul was no different or no better off than any unrighteous Gentile.

No better off.

Paul in Romans chapter 9 and Romans 10, listen to what he says about his people.

Romans 9 verse 30 through 33.

We're going to get to where I'm going here.

Just hang on with what Paul says.

In Romans, why the church in Rome was full of these dogs come in and they say, guess what Gentiles?

You got to be a Jew in order to be right with God.

In fact, just get circumcised.

Just do A, B, and C. Just keep the Sabbath laws.

Just keep the food regulations.

You just do these things and then you're all right with God.

Nope, that's not how it works.

What then shall we say?

That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it.

That is, listen, a righteousness that is by faith.

But that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in what?

Reaching that law.

No one can.

why because they did not pursue it by faith it was regulatory nothing but regulations had nothing to do with faith the blood sacrifice of an in an animal covering the sins of their life had nothing to do with that it became a regulation system you ever been a part of a regulatory system it's a prison

Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.

They've stumbled over the stumbling stone, Paul says, which is Jesus Christ.

Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame, Paul says.

Romans 10, one through three.

Brothers, Paul says, my heart's desire and prayer for God, to God for them, who the Jews, Paul says, is that they may be saved.

Is that our desire for our family members, our friends, our coworkers, for those that we know that do not know Christ?

Is that our desire, that they might be saved?

It should be.

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God.

Let me say this real quickly.

Some of you have family members who are in religion.

And they are twice as zealous for that religion than you are for Christ.

The truth is, people who are in this for doing the steps of religion, saying these things, doing these things, coming to these things, they're going to be a part of doing those things in a zealous manner.

Paul says the Jews, they're zealous for God, man.

That's what they are, but listen to what Paul says.

But not according to knowledge.

experiential knowledge, Paul says, for being ignorant of the righteousness of God.

In other words, what's wrong with religion is religion has no concept of how righteous God is.

That if they tell you you can do these things and then you merit the favor of God, they don't have a clue of how righteous God truly is.

Nope, they set their own standards of righteousness.

And then Paul says, and seeking to establish their own.

Establishing their own righteousness.

They did not submit to God's righteousness.

Zeal for God through religious works and tradition.

Hear what I'm saying.

Zeal for God does not merit you favor with God.

Do you understand that?

You talk to a Muslim, they say they have great zeal for God.

The problem is Allah is not the God of the Bible.

Jesus Christ is God.

Did you know that?

Jesus Christ is the Word.

They reject that.

Jesus is simply just a good man and a prophet.

Not near as great as Muhammad, though.

Zeal.

They're so zealous, some of them will strap a bomb on themselves and walk into a busy center and blow themselves up.

That's zeal to go to Jesus.

Zeal will never justify you before God.

In fact, I will say this and you'll agree with me, the hardest people to reach with the gospel are those held captive by the deceptive works of false religion.

It's so hard because why?

They've been told, hold on, we got you chained to this religious system.

Because if you leave this, say goodbye to heaven.

It's a bunch of baloney.

The only thing I'm chained to is Jesus.

And that's a willingness and a desire and a want to be.

He is the one.

The truth is those that are held captive by the traditions of men, the traditions of men, and by religious are told if they stop these things, it's over with them.

They must, here we go, I might have to strike this, I'll probably get kicked off.

Must do, do, do.

You ever been a part of a system that's do, do, do?

Anybody out there?

And that's exactly what Paul called these things.

That's what it is.

Go to someone that's a part of a do, do, do system and say that it's dung.

You don't do that.

What you do, do, do.

Which what we need to, I've got to change this.

This ain't working very well.

Take them to the word of God.

Show them how they're justified before God.

That it's not by works.

It's not by keeping a sister Christ alone.

That's the beauty of the gospel.

How is the gospel beautiful if it requires you work your way to God?

Religion out there.

That's not the gospel though.

Him and all humanity was ultimately going to be to stand before God guilty.

The lake of fire is where they would go for eternity.

But the grace of God in Christ, providing for us justification, redemption, and salvation through his love for us, through his death, for our sin, his burial, and resurrection for us who believe.

That is the grace of God.

This is so good.

It is all for God's glory.

Isn't that incredible?

It's not for my glory.

It's not for your glory.

You run the race in a regular race and you get the gold medal, who gets the glory?

When I cross this finish line of my race of faith, do you know who gets the glory when I receive the crown of righteousness?

Not me.

He does.

Do you see the beauty of this?

That's why you're his workmanship.

That's why he's working in your life through this process.

The Bible calls our life a vapor.

That's all it is.

he's what?

He's growing us to be more like his son.

And if it means that we need to be chastised in order for God to accomplish that, he will.

If it means we need trials in our life in order for God to accomplish that in our life, he will.

If it means that God removes things from our life that need to be removed, he will.

It's all a process of what God will do

That's why you'll cast your crowns before the throne when you get to heaven, the buckle that you get to be rewarded with, but it was won by Jesus Christ.

It was won by Christ.

He's worthy.

He's alone worthy.

Do you have trouble praising God?

Do you struggle with worshipping God?

if you understand this gift of grace and salvation and truly understand it, you won't but be able to stop not worshipping God for how good he is.

Why do we need to be reminded of this?

Well, obviously we live in a world full of sin, brokenness, depravity.

We also struggle and wrestle with our flesh.

That's why it's good to revisit these things.

In Ephesians 2, now we're gonna get into the good stuff.

Y'all ready?

Ephesians 2, 1 through 19.

I'm reading this for a purpose because I want you to hear.

Remember the word of God.

It's inspired.

It's profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness so the man and woman of God can be complete.

What's that word complete?

Mature.

Equipped for every good work.

That's why we need to feast on the bread of life, the word of God.

Listen to what, now this is, I love this book.

The letter to the church in Ephesus is one of my all-time favorite letters because it is so filled full of the goodness and the mercy and the grace of God.

Listen, Christian, after today, you're gonna leave here, I believe, with so much joy and

if you will listen to what God's saying to us through his word.

I want you to see this.

And maybe you're here today and you're just simply a religious tire kicker.

You can leave here today with inexpressibly, unbelievably amazing joy in knowing Christ.

Listen to this.

This is what Paul's reminding the Ephesians of.

This is why.

It's no problem for me to go through this.

In fact, I could preach this section of scripture probably for the next two or three months.

But when we as a church get this, it's going to change your life.

It's going to change your life.

Listen to this.

Paul says this.

Listen to what he's saying.

Follow along in your Bibles, Ephesians chapter 2, 1 through 19.

And we're not leaving early today.

I'm going to finish this thing, all right?

Because I'm going bear hunting.

I may not be back.

Who knows?

I'll be back.

I'll be back.

Oh, my goodness.

Here we go.

This is what Paul says, and you, speaking to the Gentile, the Ephesians, that's us, we're Gentiles, all people, and you were dead.

You hear those words?

Dead.

In the trespasses in sin, of your sin, in which you once walked, lived.

It's good to remember this, guys.

This is who we were.

Following the course or the ways of this world.

Does that describe you at one time in your life?

If that describes you now, you better make sure that you're even in Christ.

You may not be.

Following who?

The prince of the power of the air.

That's Satan.

the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh.

You know what those are.

Carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature, listen to what Paul says, and by nature you were children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

But God...

being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, he made us alive together with Christ.

For by grace you've been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with Christ in heavenly places so that in the coming ages, did you know that eternity awaits every single human that's ever lived?

The coming ages.

Don't miss this, Christian.

Your salvation is for something far greater than just your menial 70 years here.

Paul says, for the coming ages, the millennial kingdoms, a thousand years where we will rule and reign with Christ in Jerusalem.

After the thousand years is over and Satan is thrown into the lake of fire, the great white throne judgment happens and all the wicked go to the lake of fire after their resurrection and their condemnation and they go to the lake of fire.

Guess what God says?

He's going to create a new heaven and a brand new earth and we will be there forever.

This is not just about here, but here is about preparing us for there.

This is so incredible when you understand what God's done for you.

And yes, I get excited.

Man, I used to get excited about other things.

Man, I'll talk pedigrees and cows and all this genetic stuff.

And boy, I mean, but now Jesus is so good to me.

I still like those things, but in comparison, they're nothing but a pile of horse apples, man.

This is it, Christian.

Oh, you've got to get this.

Listen to what he says.

So that in the coming ages, this is what's incredible.

Listen, he might show.

It's going to be forever and ever that God's going to continue to show and reveal something to you.

Listen, the immeasurable, that can't be measured.

Riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

It's going to take forever.

It'll never stop being given to us an understanding of this grace and the kindness of God.

Why?

Because we all deserve what?

Hell!

Hell!

I'm worthy of that.

I deserve that.

I've earned it.

I've merited hell.

I literally have.

But God's grace says, no, I chose you.

Whoa, Christian, this is unreal.

He says, for by grace you've been saved through faith.

This is not of your own doing.

It's a gift of God.

Not a result of works so that no one's going to boast.

For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Not walk in the pattern of the world.

Now we're walking in the works of the Lord.

Difference.

Listen to what it says in verse 11 here through verse 19.

Oh, this is good.

Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, this is what we were.

Why is it good to remember this thing?

We need to know what we were, what God did, and who we are now.

If you don't understand the face of life, you were once by what is called the... Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ.

No, you weren't born again.

You were an object of God's wrath because you were still born in sin.

Give you enough time and you'll prove that you are.

Let him get to be about, I don't know, two years old, probably not even that long, an angel.

If you think so, we've got some two-year-olds back here that you need to go spend a little time with.

They're precious.

Don't get me wrong.

But they're no angels.

Okay, moving on.

Here we go.

All right.

Sidetrack.

Get back on track.

Here we go.

That you were strangers of the commonwealth, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, which was God's chosen people.

You were strangers to the covenants of God.

of the promise, listen to this, you had no hope.

Did you know that's where the world is that doesn't know Jesus?

That's why they put their hope in everything else, because they don't have any.

Not only were you without hope, but you were without God in this world.

But now, you who were brought near by the blood of Christ, not by the works of man, not by keeping the traditions of man, not by A, B, C, D, E, F, G, climbing stairs, isolating on, nope, you were brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ.

You gotta know this.

For he himself is our peace.

I'm not at peace with God any other way, only through the blood of Jesus.

We're at peace with God.

Isn't that good to know that?

Who has made us both one.

What?

Jew, Gentile, made us one, has broken down the flesh, the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of flesh, the dividing wall of, excuse me, by abolishing the law of the commandments expressed in the ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.

and might, listen, reconcile.

That means to be brought back into relationship.

Alienated, reconcile.

That's the opposite of being alienated.

reconciled.

We've been reconciled as both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And he came and he preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near Jew and Gentile.

For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

You don't have to go through anybody else to get to God.

It's only through Jesus.

Read the book of Hebrews.

There is no one you have to go to in order that they can pray for you to get to God.

Jesus is your high priest.

Period.

You don't have to come to me to get to God.

That's a bunch of baloney.

You, through Christ Jesus, who is your mediator, have access to the throne room of Almighty God.

You don't need a man.

The system wants you to rely on the man.

They don't want you to figure out that you can go straight into the throne room of Almighty God based on what Jesus Christ and his shed blood provided for you.

See, religion wants you to rely on them.

You don't need them.

You need him.

You need Jesus.

Sorry, moving on.

For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

So then...

You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are now what?

Fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Now listen, let's run through this real quick.

This is who we were.

You were dead in your sins, just waiting to physically die.

You followed the ways of the world,

We followed Satan ultimately.

We were sons and daughters of disobedience.

That described who we were.

You say, oh no, I was a good child.

You're still disobedient.

Our passions were to gratify the lusts of our flesh.

We were by nature children of God's wrath.

We were separated from Christ.

We were aliens and strangers to the covenants and promises of God.

We had no hope and without God in this world.

But in Christ, by God's gift of mercy and grace, through his sacrifice, the shedding of his blood, his atonement, taking the place of us on the cross, bearing the wrath of God, the sins of the world, Jesus Christ gave his sinless, perfect life, God's demonstration of his love.

We are loved by God.

We have been made alive together in Christ.

We have been saved through the outpouring of God's grace through faith in the work of Christ.

We've been raised up with Jesus Christ.

We have been seated, already seated, as if it already happened, with Jesus Christ in the heavens.

So in the millennium and all eternity, face in his kindness toward us who have believed upon Christ.

And this is not your own doing.

It is the gift of God.

It's not a result of any works.

It's a work that Jesus did so that no one can boast.

We are God's workmanship.

We are created in Christ to do his works now in our living.

Not where we used to live, but we're living for Jesus now.

How can a person who doesn't understand the grace of God and received all the meritorious gifts of God through Jesus Christ not desire to do the works of God?

That's the question.

because they don't know who they are in Christ.

It's eh, take it, leave it, give it, whatever.

That's not the grace of God.

We have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

To the Father, not through man, but through who?

The Holy Spirit.

Only one mediator between God and man.

One.

Can you all say one?

How many mediators are there between God and man?

I'm not your mediator.

No man is.

I don't care what title they give themselves.

It is do, do, do.

It's rubbish.

Jesus Christ is the only mediator and the originator of the covenant.

So good.

Have a new citizenship.

It's in heaven.

Already done.

Did you hear that?

Our citizenship is not possibly maybe, if we do this, going to be in heaven.

Paul says, no, our citizenship is heaven.

Not maybe, not might, not if I do good enough, not if I work hard enough.

No, it's in heaven because of Jesus Christ.

And you're in him, and wherever he is, when you die, you will be with him.

That's why Paul says to be absent from the bodies, be present with the Lord.

No such thing as soul sleep.

Are you kidding me?

No.

We'll be with Jesus when we're more rich.

Are you ready?

You guys got five minutes?

Too bad.

We're going to do it anyway.

You can leave if you need to.

Oh, my goodness.

It's just so good.

Let me read Ephesians chapter 1 to you.

I'm not going to read all of this, but I'm going to read a portion of it.

Listen to what Paul says.

Verse 3.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us

In him, who?

Christ.

Before the foundation of the world that we should be what?

Holy and blameless.

Can I ask you an honest question?

In your flesh, are you holy and blameless?

I'm so glad nobody said yes.

I'm so glad no.

Then how in the world will we ever be holy and blameless?

Because of Jesus.

And then what does Paul say?

I haven't attained it yet.

I haven't already reached perfection.

But guess what I'm doing?

I'm straining toward it.

Why?

Because from heaven, our Savior's coming.

And he's going to do what?

He's going to change this old body.

One day, I will know what this means, Paul says.

To be holy and blameless before God.

That's why the saints are... We'll get ahead of ourselves.

That's...

Even as he chose us and him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love he predestined us for what?

Adoption to himself as sons through who?

Jesus Christ.

According to the purpose of whose will?

Not your will, his will.

His will, through the praise of his glorious, what grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

In him, in Christ, we have redemption through the blood, the forgiveness of all of our sins, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight.

He lavished on us this.

This is incredible.

Making known to us this mystery of his will, according to whose purpose?

His purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works out all things according to the counsel of your will.

No, his will.

I don't see I in this passage at all.

Because it's not I that's done this.

It's Christ that has done this.

Listen to this.

So that we who are the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is a guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it and pray to the praise of his glory.

Let's look at this real quick.

Number one, we've been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Not partially.

Partially.

That's why Paul is pursuing.

He wants to know Christ.

He wants to know his sufferings.

He wants to know all this stuff.

Why?

Because he learns more and more and more of these incredible blessings he has in Christ.

God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

In Christ we are holy and blameless before God.

And one day Christ will return and we will be like him.

Thank God.

We have been adopted in love to God through Christ.

All this is by the will of God, by his grace.

We have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

We have been forgiven of our sins by the blood of Jesus.

All this through God's lavished grace upon us.

We have an inheritance.

Did you know you have an inheritance?

And it's not what your mom and daddy leave you, although that's okay.

The inheritance that matters, that is great, that Paul says is surpassing and knowing Christ is the inheritance that God has for you and I for all eternity.

Oh, that's good stuff.

We have been sealed by the Holy Spirit.

It's a guarantee that the inheritance that we are to receive, we will acquire possession of it.

Is that not good?

Now, as we look at this, and I know I'm losing some of you because your attention spans about as long as mine is, not long.

Listen, do you see why Paul said that the greatest treasure

The pearl of great price.

That everything else is like rubbish or dung compared to the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ.

Five points that Paul summarizes out, and I've got to go through them really fast.

My Lord, that is an experiential kind of knowing.

It's knowing God by experience.

Paul knew Jesus Christ by experience.

Have you come to know Christ by experience or are you just claiming religion?

Number one, it's experiential.

It's absolutely experiential.

It's a relationship that we and I come to know.

You and I come to know through Christ.

And this knowing is surpassing.

That means it's above everything else, superior to everything else.

It excels above everything else.

It is beyond superior.

It is prominent over everything else.

And when you understand your salvation, it will be for you as well.

Number two, the second thing Paul wraps up with this whole thing we just read.

Righteousness of God.

That is our right standing before God.

That is meeting the standard of God's holiness and righteousness.

That is the righteousness of God only can be attained through faith in Christ.

why it says be holy as i am holy i'm sorry you will never be holy like god is holy only in christ do you stand before god righteous before him because jesus christ is what holy first corinthians chapter 1 30 through 31 and because of him you are in christ jesus who became for us wisdom from god righteousness and sanctification and redemption so that as it's written let one who boasts boast in the lord i gotta rush i apologize

I don't even know what time it is, but I can tell.

I'm feeling it.

And not because I'm hungry.

It's just getting there.

Number three, verse 10 is the third thing we can summarize by what Paul said in Ephesians.

Not only the right, the experience, the Holy Spirit living in it, it's the power of God that we could live a life and like Paul, strive towards that, doing the works of God, doing those things.

They can't be done in the flesh.

It's got to be done through the Spirit's power, the dynamite power of God.

Paul came to know this and he also prayed that the Ephesians would what?

That they would know this hope to which God had called them to.

That they would know the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

That they would know the immeasurable greatness of his power.

This is really the prayer for us today.

of us who believe according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised Christ from the dead and seated us at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule, authority, power, dominion, above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come and he put all things under his feet and gave him his head over all things to the church which is the body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

There is power for those of us who live the new life in Christ.

It's there.

Thank God for that.

The fourth thing is partnership.

Fellowship.

In verse 10 of chapter 3, over and over Paul uses this phrase in Christ.

Paul says, I want to know the fellowship of his sufferings.

There is a fellowship that we come to know.

It's a communion, if you will, with God in Christ Jesus through the Spirit of God in us.

Therefore, if anyone be in Christ, he's a new creation.

The old has passed away.

Behold, all things that come new.

And this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

The fifth thing, and we're nearly done.

As we look at what we read here in Ephesians, the fifth thing Paul summarizes here is in verse 11, and that is our glorification one day in the resurrection.

We will one day fully...

That is the completing of our salvation.

And we, God, God planned this from the foundation of the world.

Paul says, not that I have already attained this, but I am already, or that because Jesus Christ has made me his own savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious.

One final thing.

You say, well, John, what does all this mean?

There's really three scenarios, quickly.

Number one,

If Christ is not the surpassing value in your life after you have been gloriously saved by God's grace, there's only three things that can be true.

Two of them for the first.

Number one, you don't really understand what your salvation means.

Number two,

The things of this world have crept in.

And other things have taken the rightful place of this incredible gift of being in our life.

The last one is this.

If you don't have any understanding of this, you haven't come to know Christ yet.

But when you do, listen to this in Revelation chapter 4, 1 through 4.

And I know I'm going long, guys.

I apologize.

But man, I never finish.

Voice which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, come up spirit and behold a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne.

Throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

John's getting to see now, giving us a description of the throne room of God.

He's been taken now from earth.

He's up into heaven.

He's seeing this great throne room.

He's given this vision.

The church has already been addressed in the first seven churches in the first three chapters, chapters two and three primarily for the church.

And this is what he says, this is what he sees now.

Around the throne were 24 thrones, and seated on those thrones were 24 elders.

They were clothed in what?

White garments with golden crowns on their heads.

These are the Stephanos crowns, the victor's crowns.

These 24 crowns, I believe, are not only all of the righteous Jews who by faith believed in what took place in the law and the sacrificial system, but also the church believed.

The bride of Christ is represented right here.

That we are in heaven in chapter 4.

Listen to what they sing in Revelation chapter 9.

And they sang a new song, saying, here it is.

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, that's the title deed to the earth, for you, Jesus, were slain, the lamb, and having redeemed who?

Us, the 24 elders.

You've redeemed us, having redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us...

That's the bride.

That is the redeemed of the Lord.

Speaking of them, us, to be what?

Kings and priests to our God.

And who?

We shall reign on the earth.

When?

During the millennium.

Listen.

Listen.

worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing we will be around the throne and what will we be doing we'll take off our stephanos crowns and we will cast them before the throne and we are going to worship jesus christ the lamb of god who was slain why because of what he did to redeem us

Most of the church looks like they're sucking on dill pickles, man.

You know why?

Because they don't know this truth.

I look, we ought to just be bouncing off the walls, man.

Are you kidding me?

When I look at most Christians in the world, I'd say, I don't know what you've got, but what you've got, you need some kaopectate for, man.

Do you understand this incredible gift of salvation?

Oh, I prayed that God would reveal this to you so that you know this.

It doesn't matter what Washington does.

It doesn't matter what they do in the Congress or the House or our local government when it comes to the things that really matter.

Why?

Because our hope is in Christ.

Do you understand this?

Dear Christian, I don't care how gloomy things is.

Paul says, I've learned to be content in all things.

Why?

That my present sufferings are nothing compared to what?

The coming glory of the Lord.

I can't make a sign.

I am very poor at communicating.

So the whole point I'm trying to make is, what does the church that doesn't live this?

It's the lukewarm.

This is what I'm, days in which we're living in.

Listen to what God says through Christ.

This is Jesus speaking to his church.

People say, oh, this is unbelievers, John.

He held the stars, and he was in the center of what?

The seven candlesticks.

Who are the seven candlesticks?

The church.

The church.

If you're here today and you don't Jesus, we're glad you're here, but you're not part of the body of Christ.

You can be.

Jesus is speaking to his church here.

Listen to what he says.

I know your works.

You are either cold or hot.

So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

In other words, it's tepid.

It tastes terrible to God.

For you say, oh, I'm rich.

I have prospered.

realizing that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, salve to put on your eyes so that you can see.

Those whom I love, I discipline and reprove.

So what?

Here it is.

Be zealous and repent.

This is what we need in the church.

We need a full-hearted repentance of our lukewarm love, appreciation to God.

People keep saying revival, revival, revival, revival.

I'm telling you something, the church is nowhere ready for revival.

Because they don't want revival.

They're content with how things are.

Are you content?

Paul says, I strain to the finish line, man.

No coasting here for me.

So repent and be zealous.

We're going to have to wrap this up today.

I'm sorry if I wasn't able to communicate this in a way that you could understand today.

If not, I just pray God helps you understand this.

Oh, that we would be zealous for Jesus.

Church, Christian brothers and sisters, our world needs that.

We are the only hands and feet of Jesus this world will ever see.

We are doing the works of Christ here on earth.

If we continue in the way in which we're going,

I don't know what to say.

You're not zealous for Christ as I find myself often.

This week I've had to repent and say, oh God, forgive me.

Take me back to the joy.

Did you hear this?

The joy of my salvation.

I'm telling you, Satan is doing all he can do to keep your mind so wrapped up in all this garbage in this world.

that you're not putting the pearl at a great price here.

It's working.

How do I know that we lack zeal?

It's not hard to see.

You can program your way looking like you're really zealous.

That don't mean nothing.

The church is busy, but there's no zeal.

Only God can reveal this truth to you.

Only God can make us truly appreciate and understand what this meant for us to be saved.

You're here and you're in Jesus today.

You're a Christian.

You ought to be leaving here like a calf that's been cooped up in a pen for three months.

The gate's been opened and green grass is just waiting.

Jumping and leaping and praising Jesus.

Let's pray.

The lodge is open.

Anybody needs prayer today?

I know I've been lengthy and long.

I do not apologize for that this morning.

Because there's more important things at hand than the biscuits at Cracker Barrel, folks.

What we're dealing with here is your salvation.

We're dealing with here your zeal for Christ.

And that zeal will impact this world for Jesus.

Not only this world, but your life and people around you.

If you're where I have, find myself often.

That's why Paul keeps bringing these things up.

It's no problem for me to tell you all this again.

Why?

Because we get sidetracked easy.

We can really think that Jesus is there, but everything else we do shows that he's not there.

We can fool ourselves in believing that that's true, but what we do actually shows that to be the case.

So I'm going to open up that lodge as we do every week.

If you'd like to come and just ask for prayer, we want to pray with you.

That's what we're here for.

But let's pray.

Father God, Lord, oh, I thank you for this salvation.

Some of us, God, have come from a system of religion where it was about our works.

We've beat ourselves up for years of our life.

Maybe we've trusted in the traditions of man, the system itself, and yet we were left with nothing in appreciation and knowing this grace, this mercy, this forgiveness, this love.

We had no understanding of any of this, God.

We were rejected.

We were defeated because only in Christ can we know this truth.

Oh God, I pray that for those of us who are here today, that you would help us to understand the magnitude of your grace.

Lord, I know how easy it is for us to get sidetracked.

You know that.

Thank you for bringing this to our mind again today.

Thank you for the Apostle Paul writing these things, Lord.

And here we are 2,000 years later, nearly reading it, being encouraged by it today.

We're not home yet, Father.

One day we will be.

But until then, we await a Savior who is coming as.

And we will know the surpassing who believe in Christ.

Amen.