

Philippians 3:1-14 - How to get right with God

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- [0 : 00] Good evening to you. If you could turn with me to the book of Philippians and Philippians chapter 3. Philippians chapter 3. We're continuing our series in the book of Philippians.
- Your pastor has given me a humdinger of a passage. I'm not sure that's a theological word, humdinger, but there you go. So the basic question that we've got here in Philippians 3 is, how can I be forgiven?
- How can a person be forgiven or how can I get right with God? How does a person get right with God? Step one, getting right with God, is to know that you're wrong with God.
- But that is a possibility. We can sort of get the idea that we're sort of semi-obedient, but God's okay with us. And no, if you've rebelled against God, you've been ignoring God, things are not okay between you and God.
- You need a saviour who's going to save you. So that's step number one. Step number two is found in verses 1 to 14. Now, when I spoke on this passage at my church, I took about 90 minutes.
- [1 : 24] Okay? I've only got about 30 here. So what we're going to do is we're just going to read this verse by verse. I'm going to go through the verses and comment on them. If you could sum up Paul's attitude or his spirit in chapter three, I would say passionate, fiery, direct, confrontational, blunt.
- Okay? Very blunt. So let's follow this through, shall we? Chapter three, verse one. Finally, my brothers, sisters, by implication, rejoice in the Lord.
- It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. So this is going to be one of the great command in Philippians 2, the second part.
- And it is joy in the Lord. Yeah? Not joy in my circumstances. Not joy for things going my way. But joy in the Lord. Who he is.
- What he has done. And what he's promised. That's where my joy. It goes beyond circumstance. And we're told in verse one, it can even act as a spiritual safeguard for you.
- [2 : 45] Which is why we should practice rejoicing in Christ often. It will protect us spiritually. Verse two. Watch out for those dogs.
- Those men who do evil. Those mutilators of the flesh. So this is a reference to Jewish believers.
- Who had a background of the Old Testament law. In that law was confirmed male circumcision. Young boys cut a part of their foreskin off.
- These guys. These men. These teachers. Had a background in the Old Covenant. But now. They're New Covenant people. Yeah?
- They're trusted in the death of Jesus. But here's the thing. They are still asking parents. To circumcise the kids. Yeah?
- [3 : 44] Which is a combination of. The Old Covenant. And the New Covenant. They're doing a bit of both. And therefore. They are adding to the Gospel. So this whole phrase of mutilators of the flesh.

Quite strong stuff is that. Yeah? What he's basically saying is. This is unnecessary. Leave the kids alone. There's a New Covenant in there. You don't have to keep slicing parts of their body off.

And then. It gets even harder. Doesn't it? Well how does he call them? Verse two. Dogs. You people are dogs. Not that they're the sort of manicured.

2020 London sort of dogs. Yeah? The nice friendly dogs that Avena has. See? They're nice. No? These are the sort of 1970s dogs. Do you remember those sort of strays?

Who would be wandering around street corners? Yeah? Often mongrels. And you'd have to watch out for them. Yeah? If you're a younger person. You're trying to understand older people. Say. Why are they so uptight about dogs?

[4 : 45] It's usually if you lived in London in them days. And you had to try and avoid them. And if you saw more than one. You ran for it. Because these dogs. If they get you. They will bite you. And if they come together as a group.

They will rip you to pieces. Therefore. What is he saying? He's saying. False teaching is dangerous. We can have a sort of benign attitude to it.

You know. Live and let live. No. They will bite you. They will harm you. They will hurt you. Keep away from false teaching. And especially. People are going to add to the gospel.

Watch out for people to take away from the gospel. They're just as much a menace. But watch out for people who are going to add. To the gospel as well. Avoid. Avoid. Those people. And if you think that was strong.

There's more to come. Okay. Verse 3. For it is we. Who are of a circumcision. We. Who worship by the spirit of God. Who glory in Christ Jesus.

[5 : 46] Who put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself. Have reasons for such. Confidence. So again. There's no false humility here.

You know. Sometimes in mixed religious circles. Oh. I must humbly be a humble person. And not be too proud. No. Actually he says. We are the people.

Not them. We are the people. If you're a new covenant person. Who is not in. Trying to bring bits of the old covenant in. You are the person. The religious people.

They are a copy. We are the real deal. And he doesn't hesitate to say that. We are the real deal. Because they circumcise. Parts of kids bodies. We have the circumcision of the heart.

Done by the father in heaven. We have a better thing going on. And he's not ashamed to say it. And we should not be ashamed of that as well. Objection.

[6 : 47] Okay. Possible objection. To what Paul has said so far. That is. These men can say. Paul. Is a spiritual lightweight.

He's a spiritual lightweight. He's not a passionate worshipper. He's not full. Full on Judaism. He's one of those sort of nominal guys. Who turns up at feasts a couple of times a year.

And that's about it. And then here he is. Lecturing us. And the answer to this. Is. Paul's spiritual CV. That we see in verse.

From verse five onwards. Or four onwards. He says. If anyone. Verse four. Anyone else thinks. He has reasons to put confidence in the flesh. I have more.

Circumcised on the eighth day. Of the people of Israel. Of the tribe of Benjamin. A Hebrew of Hebrews. In regards to the law. A Pharisee. As for zeal.

[7 : 45] Persecuting the church. As for legalistic righteousness. Absolutely. Without fault. One hundred percent. As far as any human being can do. Yeah. So he says effectively.

When it comes to my background. When it comes to my tribe. When it comes to devotion. When it comes to knowledge. When it comes to passion. When it comes to sorting out those Christians.

Who are messing up our Judaism. I am top draw. I am premier league. Yeah. You. I am Mr. Judaism. AD 50. That's who I am.

So it's not coming from someone. Who's a sort of semi worshiper. Turn up a couple of times a year. That's not him. So we say.

Paul does that make you right with God? And he says no. He says no. Look what he says in. In verse seven. Verse seven. But what was to my prophet.

[8 : 45] I now consider loss. For the sake of Christ. What is more. I consider everything. A loss. Compared to the surpassing. Greatness.

Of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For whom. Whose sake. I have lost. All things. We're getting a sort of insight.

Into. Religion. And how religious people think. Most of us. How we see our good. And our bad. That is.

We often see it in terms of either scales. Okay. So here's my good deeds. And here's my bad deeds. I put them on the scale. My good deeds outweigh my bad deeds. And therefore God is happy.

Or another way. Okay. Which is especially appropriate. Because you've got a couple of people. From an accounting background. I've got my profit and my loss account. Okay. I've got my accounts ledgers. And my good deeds are coming here.

[9 : 42] My bad deeds are going there. If my good deeds. Are really good. I'll put them over here. My bad deeds. I'll try and put over there. And then when I come before God. I'll show him my accounts. And he'll see I'm in credit.

And all will be well. But what if. What if the things I thought were good. God said were bad.

I've gone and put it on the credit side. And I should have put it on the debit. And I come before God. And he says no. Take that off. Take that off. Take that off. You misapplied that. You misapplied that.

And you misapplied that. And what if the good things that remained. In this profit and loss account. What if they actually were contaminated. By the bad things. The bad things I've done.

Which is bad motives. So doing good things with bad motives. And then what if I showed that before God. And God said move that. Move that. Move that. And what if after God had done all his accounting work.

[10 : 41] After I've done mine. I'm left with no credit at all. I'm left with only debit. And I'm standing before God. And this is my works.

I'm going to present to him. And I'm spiritually naked. I'm vulnerable. And I have no leg to stand on. Friends.

That is us. That is us now. If that is our model. Of how we're going to get right with God. What is Paul's view. Of religious devotion.

He says. Verse 8. The surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For whose sake. I have lost all things.

I consider them rubbish. But I may gain Christ and be found in him. So what does he think of his deeds? Rubbish. Rubbish.

[11 : 40] Or I think the Greek word is skubalon. Okay. Skubalon. Which is either the stuff that you avoid in the field where the cows have been.

The brown stuff. Or the stuff that will end up here as the contents of your toilet before you flush it away. That is what he means by skubalon. Is that making the point?

The point there is. That's what he thinks of his good deeds. Now I've got to say. I can in some ways relate to this. Okay.

So. My own background. Religious upbringing. I think I was baptised after three months. Went to church. Went to a. Yeah.

Said my prayers fairly regularly. On and off. Regular attender at church. Six years old. Confirmed in my faith at about 13, 14.

[12 : 36] Sunday school teacher. Read through all my Bible before I was probably 21. One earmarked for church council. Become a. Join a church leadership team at 21.

What were they thinking? When you look back. It was all skubalon. Wasn't it? It's all. It's all skubalon. It is not.

Going to. Sort out. My relationship with God. It can never save me. It is never enough. Step one. Remember that? Before we get right with God.

We need to know that we are not right with God. And religious people are the most vulnerable. Because we can think that we're right with God. Because of our deeds. And that is not enough.

So positively. How do I get right with God? Verse. Verse eight again. Says. I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish.

[13 : 34] For I may gain Christ. And be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own. That comes from the law. But that which is through faith in Christ.

The righteousness that comes from God. And is by faith. So. Here are the key thoughts. I'm abandoning my good works.

Okay. You've got to leave it behind. You can't take any of it into. Into the presence of God. Leave it all behind. Number one. Then number two is. I'm being given a righteousness. It's from God.

I haven't got to work at it. He will give it to me. If I ask him. He will give it to you. If you ask him. And then we're told. It is by faith. I have to trust.

That this righteousness from God. Is going to sort everything out. And I'm not going to sort of. Sneak off. And do a few good works on the side. But I'm going to tuck into my back pocket.

[14 : 31] In case I face God. No. I come with the righteousness. Of Christ. And that's what. We've got to be given. Which means we've got to ask. And again. Have you ever done that?

Have you ever asked God. For his righteousness. The good deeds of Jesus. And have you ever handed over. Your. What you think are your good deeds to God.

If that's what needs to happen. If we're going to have life. But the good news is. It can happen. It happens every day. It just needs to happen. To all of us here.

Doesn't it? And God can do that. So. We trust in God's righteousness. What do we now have?

What does this church have? That. Judaism. That religion. Cannot give them. Well starting from verse 10. We're told. Let me read all of it to you.

[15 : 28] And then we'll go for it slowly. Um. I want you to know Christ. And the power of his resurrection. And the fellowship of sharing in his suffering. Becoming like him in his death.

And so somehow. To attain to the resurrection. Of. The dead. So I've identified. I think five things there. That we have.

As a result of being made right with God. Number one. With. With the life. Of the Lord Jesus. Jesus. Okay. The. Not now knowing about him. But knowing him.

Knowing him personally. Speaking to him. Hearing from him. Experiencing him. Yeah. Religion. Far off. Okay. Distant. Second hand.

The gospel. Straight up. Straight up. Straight in. To the father's presence. That's what you're being offered. Okay.

[16 : 24] And you can say. Well look. I don't want to. I don't want to trade for that. I prefer just to. Be distant from him. But friends. If you're distant from him. If that's your life.

Or your lifestyle. You'll be distant with him forever. You could be. No. This is a beautiful thing. You're being offered. The very. Very access to the Lord Jesus himself. Isn't that great?

Marvelous. Okay. Number two. Is. His presence. In suffering. His presence. In suffering. Being united.

To him. That's what happens. When you receive this righteousness. And so you have a communion. Which even involves suffering. Now. I'll be frank with you. I'm speaking beyond my experience.

And you hearing this. It may be on your experience as well. But people have testified. The children of God have given testimony. That. In times of immense suffering.

[17 : 24] The presence of God was very real. So. Helen Rosevere. Missionary in the Congo. 1960s. Was kidnapped.

Assaulted. Over weeks. And she shares. In one of her books. The most extraordinary experience. She says. This. She says. One word.

Becomes. Unbelievably. Clear. As I think back. And that word is. Privilege. Privilege. He didn't take away my.

Pain. Or cruelty. Or humiliation. No. It was all there. But it was altogether. Different. It was. With him.

For him. In him. He was actually. Offering me. The privilege. Of sharing. In some small. Little way. The edge.

[18 : 20] Of the fellowship. Of suffering. In the weeks. And years. That followed. God. One has tried. To count the cost. But I find. It's swallowed up in.

Privilege. Now that is deep. Isn't it? What it means is. Where God.

Does call us to suffer. We are not alone. Okay. We are not alone. So. Knowing Christ. Personally. Fellowship. With his suffering. Resurrection.

Power. There's 10. Isn't it? I want to know Christ. And the power. Of the resurrection. The one who. Raised Christ. From the dead. Religion.

Is often. A powerless. Experience. If. If you've been. Steeped in religion. You will know. Is a. Is a. Powerless. Frustrating. Experience.

[19 : 14] Because we've got. These magnificent. Commands. But we've got. No strength. To do them. With no energy. To do them. But in Christ. There is a power.

To obey. A power. To grow. A power. To serve. And to serve. Effectively. That's what we have. Okay. Couple more. We become like Christ.

Yeah. It says that we become like Christ. We become like him. In his death. We become like him. That. That is your purpose. If you're a Christian. That's the main reason. Why you're here on earth. That is your purpose.

That is your destiny. To become. Like him. And he will help you to do that. But that's why you're really here. If there are other things you may do in the meantime.

But that's not the main reason. And then finally. He says. Verse 11. And so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead. To actually be resurrected like Jesus.

[20 : 18] In the same way Christ died and was buried and rose again. So you believe. That if you have to die. You will be raised again by him. In a similar way. Okay.

And he says the word is somehow. Well. King James Version. If any means. Yeah. He's effectively saying.

I'm not sure how God will do this. But. God will do this. Because. Some of the resurrections.

That need to take place. Are going to be quite interesting. For instance. What if you died at sea? Where's your body? What has happened to it? How can it be resurrected?

Have the fish had some of it? I don't know. What about the apostle Paul himself? Where's his burial place? I mean. There are probably. Quite a few Italians. And quite a few visitors. Have trod on it.

[21 : 15] Probably trod over some of his body. Probably scraped off their foot. And they've gone somewhere else. How's he going to resurrect all these people? Paul says. I don't know. But I know he's going to. I know he's going to do it.

Leave it to him. Don't worry. But. Do you believe. That you are going to be resurrected? Do you believe. That God is able to resurrect you?

Do you believe. That you have a power. That will enable you. To serve effectively. And become more like Jesus? Do you believe. That your destiny. Is not simply to. Accumulate more and more possessions.

But actually. To become more like Jesus. Do you believe. That you can. You can. Have a relationship. With Jesus. That's what we've been called to believe.

This evening. And that's the good news. So. That's what it means to be right with God. So what do we do? Let's look at this. Verse.

[22 : 16] Verse. 12 to 14. 12 to 14. And we'll finish with this. It says. Verse 12. Not that I have already obtained all this. Or have already been made perfect.

But I press on to take hold of that. Which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers. I do not consider myself. Yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do.

Forgetting what is behind. And straining towards what is ahead. I press on towards the goal. To win the prize. For which God has called me heavenward.

In Christ Jesus. So what do we do with all this righteousness teaching? Well number one. We ask him for righteousness. But when he's given us the righteousness.

What do we do? We start running. Okay. We run the spiritual race. And this is less Olympic games. Okay.

[23 : 13] So don't think. Fraser Price. Don't think Usain Bolt. Forget all that stuff. Think park run. Okay. The London phenomenon of park run.

Whereby everybody. On a Saturday morning. Whether you're young. Old. Rich. Poor. Big. Small. Far. Slow. Everybody sort of running around.

Doing their little two miles together. That's the way to look on it. That's what it looks like. We're going to run. But it's a bit of a park run. Super fit. The fun runner. The older people.

The young kids. Everybody. Yeah. And maturity is measured. I think. In the Christian walk. With your ability. To relate to the fellow runners.

Okay. Your ability to relate to the fellow runners. If you're just sort of like. Oh. I'm Mr. I'm Mr. Athletic. As the gun goes off. Here I go around the track. I'm running around on my own.

[24 : 08] I'm looking at those people. I look at them. They need to get fitter. They're out of puff. No. That's not the way it works. Yes. You run. But then you encourage others. As they're running. And that's not the Olympic Games.

Is it? Yeah. You don't see Mo Farah. As he's running around the track. Say. Speaking to someone. I'll say. How you doing mate? Oh. Come on. Come on. Come on. No. No. No. I'll leave you straight there. I need to run. I need to win the gold.

No. No. No. With this run. You're running with others. Okay. And you have to encourage. God will call on you. To encourage other people.

Verse 12. You're not waiting for perfect conditions. This is. So. It's not a sort of. Until I get fit. Then I cannot start running. No. You need to run the race.

The father will sort it out. Verse 13. Forget what is behind. Stop. Focusing on the past. Stop getting bogged down.

[25 : 04] In your past. Rehearsing failures. That you've made in your life. Again. And again. And again. Confess it. Repent of it. Perhaps apologize for it. And move on.

Move forward. There's a race to be run. Run the race. Let's run the race. Verse 14.

I press on toward the goal. To win the prize. For which God has called me heavenward. In Christ Jesus. The US civil rights.

The US civil rights. 1960s. 1970s. Had this phrase. Keep your eyes. On the prize. Okay. Keep your eyes. On the prize.

They took it from Philippians 3. Didn't they? Keep your eyes. On the prize. Their prize. Equality of treatment. In their country. Our prize. God himself.

[26 : 06] Yeah. It's not just eternal life. It's eternal life. With the father. And the son. And the spirit. That's what we're about. Yeah. And if you enjoy.

Any union with Christ. In this world. Multiply it by thousands. Because that is going to be. Our experience. In glory.

Is going to be magnificent. Yeah. So. Let's summarize this. How do you get right with God? Okay. I'm going to give you. Questions after.

No. I'm joking. No. How do you get right with God? Realize that you're not. That's number one. Realize you're not. Or you might not be. Right with God. And then.

Being right. You've got to dump the religious past. You've got to dump all your sort of. Family. Spiritual heritage. Push that to one side. And pursue him.

[27 : 03] And ask him for righteousness. Ask him for the righteousness. That you need. And as you ask. He will give you. Okay. What have you got?

As a result. Verses 10 to 11. What should you do? You need to run. We need to run. And if we've stopped. Or if our trainers have got a hole in it. Then go put on another pair.

And let's get going. In his strength. Okay. Because I left that one last idea. So if you come to chapter one. And. Verse two.

It says there. Grace and peace. Grace and peace. To you from God our father. And the Lord Jesus Christ. And then if you go to chapter four.

Verse 23. It says. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be with your spirit. Amen. So.

[28 : 01] We were doing a bible study. At a church. And. In the middle of it. One of the ladies. Sharon. She said. This is interesting.

You know. Because. At the start. Of the letter. It speaks about grace. And at the end. Of the letter.

It speaks about grace. Isn't that interesting? And I thought. Yeah. It is interesting. So I looked. At all the letters of Paul.

And almost all of them. Have grace. At the beginning. And at the end. Do you think. There is a significance in that? See.

I have told you to run the race. We have been told to run the race. I will give you the grace. To do it. Come to me. I will give you the grace.

[28 : 57] To do it. I will give you the strength. To do it. Even that. Will be supplied. How great. Our God and father. Is. To him be the glory. For all he has done.

Amen. Amen.