

**"Pressing on with the Mission"
The Right Compass for the Mission
Philippians 3:1-9**

Introduction

- [Slide #1] Are you familiar with the name [Blaise Pascal](#)? Pascal, mathematician, scientist, author, inventor, was one of the leading thinkers of his day. He discovered the existence of vacuums. He invented the calculating machine. Designed the first public bus service. The first syringe. The first wrist watch.
- But more than that Pascal found joy in Jesus. Historian [J.M. Cohen](#) said of Pascal, "The central moment of his life was undoubtedly not that in which he proved the existence of the vacuum, but his vision of two hours' duration on the night of November 23, 1654, the record of which he carried ever afterwards, written on a parchment, around his neck:
 - o The year of grace, 1654
Monday, 23rd November, Feast of St. Clement, Pope and Martyr,
And of others in the Martyrology
Vigil of St. Chrysogonus, Martyr, and others,
From about half past ten in the evening until half past twelve
FIRE
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the
Philosophers and savants
Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace.
God of Jesus Christ.
My God and Thy God
'Thy God shall be my God'
Forgetfulness of the world and of everything except God
He is to be found only in the ways taught in the Gospel
Grandeur of the human soul
Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known
Thee
Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy
I have fallen from Him
'They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters'
'My God, wilt Thou forsake me?'
May I not fall from Him for ever
This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only
True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent
Jesus Christ
Jesus Christ
I have fallen away: I have fled from Him, denied Him, crucified Him
May I not fall from Him for ever.
We hold him only by the ways taught in the Gospel
Renunciation total and sweet
Total submission to Jesus Christ and to my director

Eternally in joy for a day's exercise on earth
I will not forget Thy word. Amen."¹

- For two hours Pascal is literally undone by Jesus. And from the depths of his rent heart spills forth this supreme passion and emotion. Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace. Eternal joy. Tears of joy. And in order to savor the sweetness of coming to know Jesus what does he do? He memorializes the experience, he writes out on parchment a living, enduring testimony to the joy of being undone by Jesus so that he might never forget.
- If you are a Christian believer do you remember this joy? Can you still taste this joy, the joy of being undone by Jesus? Or are you more like what **Joel 1:11-12** says? *Despair, you farmers, wail, you vine growers; grieve for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field is destroyed. 12 The vine is dried up and the fig tree is withered; the pomegranate, the palm and the apple tree--all the trees of the field--are dried up. Surely the joy of mankind is withered away.* Have the cares of life, the pressures of school and work and kids and, dare I say, the even work on the mission stolen your joy? Everything in this world, even good things, everything is bent on stealing away this joy in Jesus.

Transition

God doesn't want that to happen. The call, the command, the challenge set forth in **Philippians 3** is to...[Slide #2]

Big Idea

- **Safeguard your joy in Jesus**
- When Paul wrote the words of **Philippians 3:1-9** he wrote them to a church whose joy hung in the balance. Theft of joy is at stake in these words.

Background

- Let me switch gears for a second and by way of review say a word about circumcision; don't worry, it will help explain what's happening. Under the Old Covenant, pre-Jesus, circumcision was the sign of entrance into the covenant community of faith. Who's a Jew? Who's not a Jew? Circumcision was the marker, the deciding factor.
- In the New Testament things change in the sense that under the terms of the new covenant set up by Jesus, circumcision of the flesh is no longer the sign of entrance into the covenant community. The distinguishing feature of a Christian, of a new-covenant believer, is that he or she has undergone circumcision of the heart, by the spirit, not by the written code."² Jesus made it possible to do away with the outward ritual because through the cross, and by his spirit, he had once and for all turned people's toward God *so that they might love him with all their heart and with all their soul, and live.*³
- Within many of the churches Paul founded, Philippi included, there were devout Jews who were perfectly content to believe Jesus was the promised Messiah but who also thought that Gentiles, non-Jews who accepted this Jewish Messiah, had to become Jews first. They were

¹ www.preachingtoday.com, submitted by Kevin Miller; from J. M. Cohen, introduction to *Pensées*, (Penguin Books, 1961).

² Carson, p. 82.

³ Deuteronomy 30:6

called Judaizers. In their eyes, coming to faith in Christ also meant being circumcised and taking on the responsibility of observing the Law of Moses. In other words, these Jews thought of Christianity as Judaism plus a little extra.⁴

- Back to Philippians. Paul says eh eh. For Paul this idea of Christianity as Judaism plus a little extra was anathema; which is why he says to *watch out for* Judaizers. Derogatorily he calls them *dogs* in [verse 2](#). *Men who do evil*. And the mother of all verbal smack downs *mutilators of the flesh*. In the letter to the Galatians Paul calls the “gospel” of the Judaizers no gospel at all.⁵ It is not good news to tell someone that faith in Christ also means keeping additional rules and religious codes. The Judaizers were joy stealers, joy robbers because they turned people’s attention toward circumcision and away from Jesus. And Paul is deeply, deeply concerned that the Philippians will be sucked in by their teaching and lose their joy in Jesus.
- Which, by the way, is why Paul commands the church in [verse 1](#) to *rejoice in the Lord*. Look at [verse 1](#). In contrast to the Judaizers whose confidence, whose joy was in things other than in Jesus, Paul commands them to rejoice in the Lord, in what Jesus has done for them. *Finally, my brothers, 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.*
- The whole purpose of this section in chapter 3 is so that Paul might safeguard the joy that would be stolen should the Philippians listen to the Judaizers. *Finally, my brothers, 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.* What he has to say to them, stuff he’s said before, *it is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again*, is for the purpose of safeguarding, securing their joy in Jesus. Paul doesn’t want them to lose their joy in Jesus. And God doesn’t want you to lose yours.

Transition

Philippians 3:1-9.

Organizational Sentence

- **Two safeguards to the believers joy in Jesus**
- The **first safeguard** comes from [verses 1-6](#). [[Slide #3](#)] On the one hand, guard against confidence in the flesh. The **second** is from [verses 7-9](#). [[Slide #4](#)] On the other hand, rejoice in where your righteousness comes from. Paul says if you want to keep your joy in Jesus long-term you are going to have to work at it. Guard your joy in Jesus. Guard it with all you got. Protect it. Preserve it. Hold onto it. And you do that by guarding against confidence in the flesh. And by remembering, rejoicing in where righteousness comes from.

Transition

Zero in on [verses 1-6](#). You want to keep your joy? You want to grow your joy? Then **guard against things that put confidence in the flesh instead of confidence in Jesus**. Listen.

Main Points

⁴ Carson, p. 81.

⁵ Galatians 1:7

- *Finally, my brothers, 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. 2 Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh-- 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*
- Author, teacher [Eugene Peterson](#) has said, “We can't save ourselves by pulling on our bootstraps, even when the bootstraps are made of the finest religious leather.”⁶ Paul wrote these words to a group of Christians who were being tempted to put on bootstraps made from the finest religious leather.
- Paul’s argument for joy and against the Judaizers in verses 1-6 hinges on the phrase *confidence in the flesh*. Look at the text. The phrase is repeated twice, once in [verse 3](#) and a second time in [verse 4](#). The phrase *confidence in the flesh* simply means this; when it comes to how you relate to God, placing your trust, your confidence for that relationship in anything outside of Christ is to have *confidence in the flesh*.⁷
- Through circumcision the Judaizers literally had *confidence in the flesh*. They were trusting in circumcision, not Jesus. The whole point of [verses 1-6](#) is for Paul to show the Philippians the idiocy of that. If *confidence in the flesh* was right, was good, then Paul, more than anyone could boast. *If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*
- And if you want to safeguard your joy in Jesus, your confidence has to be in Jesus, you have to as [verse 3](#) says, *glory in Christ Jesus*. The [Nicolas Cage](#) movie *Gone in Sixty Seconds?* That’s about how fast joy is stolen when your confidence is more in things you do for God than in Jesus and the thing he has done. **Guard against things that put confidence in the flesh instead of confidence in Jesus.**
- We don’t have Judaizers nowadays clamoring for Christians to become circumcised—thank God. But don’t for a second think we’ve escaped the Judaizing tendency to put confidence in things other than Jesus. If your joy is lacking, if your joy has withered on the vine it’s because joy is found in Jesus alone. If your confidence, if you feel like you’ve got it together spiritually speaking, because of the version of the bible you read or because of head coverings or because of denominational affiliation or lack thereof, or because of the school you attended or attend, or because of the hymnal you sing from, or the praise choruses you are convinced are better, if that’s where your confidence is, if in your mind it’s Jesus plus something else then you might as well, pardon the crassness, pull out the scalpel and go all the way and adopt the whole Law; Christ is of no value to you.⁸

Transition

⁶ Eugene Peterson, *Leadership*, Vol. 4, no. 3.

⁷ Martin, p. 144.

⁸ Galatians 5:2.

If, on the other hand, you want joy then look to Christ. The source of the Christian's joy and confidence is in Christ—and not any human achievements, qualifications or practices.”⁹ Like using a compass, part of finding joy is reorienting yourself in the right direction; toward the object that produces joy. And that object is Christ. Part of what it means to safeguard joy is to **rejoice in where righteousness comes from.**

- Listen to Paul's words. Joy is not even mentioned here. But you can't tell me that Paul, like Pascal, isn't blazing with joy as he writes these words. *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 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.*
- **John Piper** has said, “The soul expands to encompass the magnitude of its treasure.” If you have no joy or if you've lost your joy or your joy has withered it's because you've chosen to seek a crappy treasure. There is no greater treasure in this world than *knowing Christ Jesus my Lord* as Paul says in **verse 8**. The source of joy for the Christian believer is Christ.
- Every year, multiple times a year, **Wall Street** ramps up for earnings season when companies release their profit and loss statements. **Verse 7** is Paul's P&L statement; the greatest P&L statement the world has ever seen. *But whatever was to my profit*, in other words, whatever was to be gained by a confidence in the flesh, has now been written off as loss, *I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.*
- In light of Paul's experience of Christ, the assets he thought were assets, all the things in his religious pedigree, those things weren't really assets at all. They were liabilities.¹⁰ All those old confidences in the flesh were actually liabilities to joy.¹¹ And so was everything else. **Verse 8**, *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.*
- The reason Paul had so much joy in his experience of knowing Christ, and here's the key o joy, is because of what had come to him through this relationship. He says that righteousness, right standing before God, the legal standing of being not guilty before God, had come to him through faith in Christ. Whatever kind of right standing could've been achieved through his confidence in the flesh wasn't really righteousness. Righteousness only comes from God, as a gift, through faith in Christ.
- It's baseball season; I have baseball on the brain. Let me see if I can illustrate why joy is so closely tied to this experience of knowing Christ. This illustration comes from a guy by the name of **Shaun Brown**; it's not original to me.
- Suppose I have a small collection of baseball cards. The one card in this collection worth the most is valued at \$100. It's a “Future Stars” card; it has three players on it. The first player on the card is **Jeff Schneider**. Schneider played 1 year of professional baseball, pitched in 11 games, and gave up 13 earned runs in those 11 games. Stellar career.

⁹ Marshall, p. 78.

¹⁰ Marshall, p. 86.

¹¹ Marshall, p. 86.

- The second player is [Bobby Bonner](#), who played 4 years of baseball but only appeared in 61 games, with 8 runs batted in, and 0 home runs.
- The third "Future Star" on this card played 21 years for the Baltimore Orioles and appeared in 3,001 games. He came to bat 11,551 times, collected 3,184 hits and 431 home runs, and batted in 1,695 runs. His name is [Cal Ripken, Jr.](#)
- Now imagine if you met [Bobby Bonner](#), and he shook your hand and boasted, "Did you know that my baseball card is worth over \$100?" You would laugh in his face because you know the worth of the card has nothing to do with him.
- [Bobby Bonner](#) and [Jeff Schneider's](#) baseball card is worth \$100, not because of their statistics, but because of what someone else has done.
- The same is true of us. To come to God and plead to him that your stats are good enough is ludicrous. If you want to hold up your stats to God, your religious pedigree, you don't have a chance. The reason you and I are worth anything in God's eyes is because of someone else's stats. And it's by putting faith in Christ and his death and resurrection that God gifts, he transfers Christ's stats, his righteousness, to us.
- The reason Paul has so much joy is because he knows where his righteousness comes from; it comes from Christ. And the reason he says way back in [verse 1](#), *rejoice in the Lord*, is because it is so easy to rejoice in everything but the Lord. Paul is reminding the Philippians, and us, where joy is found. Joy is found in Christ alone. It's found in Christ and an experience of righteousness that comes through faith in him. Remembering and savoring this legal position before God through faith in Christ is the key to joy. To find confidence in anything else apart from Christ is to lose joy.¹² Everything in this life we think worthy of our joy is in reality dirty muck, *rubbish*, Paul says, compared to the joy that is found through faith in Christ.
- In order to keep this joy Paul is willing to lose everything. [Malcolm Muggeridge](#), British journalist, writer, and Christian apologist once said, "I can say that I never knew what joy was like until I gave up pursuing happiness, or cared to live until I chose to die. For these two discoveries I am beholden to Jesus." The invitation to joy is an invitation to die to our religious paraphernalia, the things we are tempted to put our fleshly confidence in, so that we might be beholden to Jesus and put our confidence in him alone. Are you willing to lose all for the sake of finding joy in Jesus?
- *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 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.*

Conclusion

- If your joy is lacking, if your joy has withered on the vine it's because joy is found in Jesus alone. God never intended for anyone, even his chosen people under the Old Covenant, to glory in to find joy in human achievements, qualifications or religious ritual. Even in the Old Testament it is clear from scriptures like [Deuteronomy 10:16](#), [Jeremiah 9:25](#), and [Ezekiel](#)

¹² Marshall, p. 88.

44:9 that God cared more that a person's confidence, their joy, was in Him—not the practice itself. Listen to Deuteronomy 30:6. *The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.*

- **Safeguard your joy in Jesus.** Guard against things that put confidence in the flesh instead of confidence in Jesus. Rejoice in where your righteousness comes from. Don't let anything, no matter how good, steal away that joy. Look to Jesus and find joy and life and peace.
- From about half past ten in the evening until half past twelve
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God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the
Philosophers and savants
Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace.
God of Jesus Christ.
My God and Thy God
'Thy God shall be my God'
- Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy
- This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only
True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent
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Eternally in joy for a day's exercise on earth
I will not forget Thy word. Amen."¹³

¹³ www.preachingtoday.com, submitted by Kevin Miller; from J. M. Cohen, introduction to *Pensées*, (Penguin Books, 1961).