

## Finding Joy in Suffering

### Part 3 of Finding Joy in Life (Philippians)

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Speaker: Ps Ken Young

Philippians 3:1–11, *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

Foundational Understanding:

**1. Suffering is Promised for God’s People** - Acts 14:22; John 15:20; I Peter 4:12

**2. Suffering Draws Us into a Greater Intimacy with Christ**

- Consider Stephen in the Bible
- The angry mob was about to drag him out of town and kill him - and at that moment he saw a glimpse of something: Acts 7:55

**3. Three Major Causes of Suffering**

- a. My own doing
- b. Sin in the world
- c. Suffering for the cause of Christ

Three things to see in our text in Phil. 3:1-11

**1. Paul’s Mindset to Suffering** - vs. 5-6

- Where Paul lived, this gave him a great sense of meaning and significance
- After Jesus came to Paul and he converted, Jesus said,

Acts 9:16 *“For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.”*

So Paul prepared himself for this in his mind:

Phil. 3:7 *“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.”*

That's what it meant for Paul to become a Christian. And lest anyone of us think he was unique or peculiar, notice that in verse 17 he says with his full apostolic authority,

Phil. 3:17 *“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” (Also c.f. Luke 14:33)*

### What This Means Practically

*If I lose any or all the things the world has to offer me, I will not lose my joy, because Christ is all to me.*

*Note:* Suffering is simply the taking away of things the world has given us - reputation, job, money, spouse, children, health, etc. If we have already counted them loss for Christ, we are prepared when suffering comes.

## 2. Paul's Mindset Tested - vs. 8

- He had prepared by turning his values upside down, and now he was being tested.
- Did he value Christ above all?

## 3. Paul's Desire Through Suffering

Why did God allow the suffering of Paul as a Christian? Why did Paul joyfully submit to it and accept it?

- Verse 7: “these I have counted loss for Christ.”
- Verse 8a: “I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”
- Verse 8c: “count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ . . . ”
- Verse 9: “. . . and that I may be found in him [so as to have God's righteousness, not my own] . . . ”
- Verse 10a: “that I may know Him”

### Questions:

1. Where do you think the idea that God's people shouldn't have suffering comes from and why? How is this different from God's Word?
2. How does God use suffering (whether from our own doing, sin in general in the world, or for Christ)? Has there been a time when your suffering caused you to go deeper with Christ?
3. What kinds of things do people cling to (not count as loss) for joy instead of Christ? Are you willing to count all things loss for the excellency of knowing Christ Jesus?

**Prayer:** *“Father, thank you for saving me. In this world, I realise I will face suffering and various ‘fiery trials’ of my own making, because of sin in the world, or even because of Christ. My greatest desire is for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord through any suffering You allow. I therefore count all things as loss and Christ as gain. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

