

Main Idea: As we look at Paul's testimony in Philippians 3:7-11, we discover that believing in the resurrected Christ affects a person in three obvious ways.

- I. Believing in the resurrected Christ affects the way I look at my accomplishments (7).
  - A. Paul used to think he was a good guy because of his performance (4-6).
  - B. Paul's view of himself changed when he met the risen Christ.
- II. Believing in the resurrected Christ affects the way I look at my values (8-9).
  - A. Paul said he lost everything for Christ.
  - B. Paul said he gained everything because he had Christ.
    1. What matters is knowing Christ.
    2. What matters is experiencing Christ's righteousness.
    3. What matters is faith in Christ.
- III. Believing in the resurrected Christ affects the way I look at my goals (10-11).
  - A. Paul's aim was to know Christ.
  - B. Paul's aim was to know Christ's resurrection power.
  - C. Paul's aim was to know the fellowship of Christ's suffering.
  - D. Paul's aim was to experience the resurrection.

Make It Personal: Because of the resurrection, there are two bottom line truths.

1. Because of the resurrection, Christ is alive.
2. Because of the resurrection, nothing matters more than knowing Christ.

Several years ago a man stopped by the church and made me an interesting offer and request. His offer? He said, "Come here. There's something I want to give you." And he took me outside and showed me what he called "a special, supernatural rock" sitting across the parking lot on top of the mail box. "That rock (I think he told me it came from outer space) has supernatural power and I want to give it to you."

And then he proceeded to tell me that he needed help with food and so forth, and wanted to know if I would be interested in an exchange.

I told him we'd be glad to give him some food, but he could keep his rock. I really wasn't interested.

This morning we're gathering to celebrate the event of a person that we say died and then walked out of his tomb alive. We say that we believe that Jesus has resurrection power, that He demonstrated that power personally by defeating death and the grave, and that He will demonstrate that power in the life of anyone who believes in Him, that He will give them eternal life.

When you stop to think about it, that's an incredible claim. So what's the difference between believing in a supernatural rock and believing in a supernatural person? Why did I reject the offer of a life-giving rock, and why did I receive and urge you to receive the offer of the life-giving Son?

The answer, of course, boils down to the validity of the claim. The man with the rock made a claim that lacks validity. It was a hoax, a gimmick, a tactic to manipulate so as to get something he wanted. But when it comes to the claim of Jesus' resurrection, we're not talking about a hoax or gimmick. There's *validity*.

How do we know? I could demonstrate the validity of the claim regarding Jesus' resurrection in several ways this morning, as in fact we have done in previous Easter messages. I could take you to the Old Testament Scriptures and show you prophecies of

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Jesus' resurrection (as in Psalm 16:10; Job 19:25) that were recorded hundreds of years before the event occurred.

Or I could take you to the four gospel accounts and show you eyewitness descriptions of individuals who saw the empty tomb and the risen Christ. Matthew gives us such evidence, so does Mark, and Luke, and John, evidence that first century critics could not deny.

What's more, I could demonstrate the validity of the resurrection by examining with you appearances that the resurrected Christ made, again substantiated by eye-witnesses, more than 500 according to 1 Corinthians 15:6. We could look at the account of two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24 who actually walked and ate with the risen Christ.

I could take you to the locked room where the petrified disciples saw Jesus walk right through the wall into their presence. I could show you the account where Christ told doubting Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe (John 20:27)."

Or we could go to John 21 and see Peter, Thomas, and five other disciples fishing on the Sea of Galilee, and surprised to have their fishing trip result in a catch of 153 fish and breakfast with their risen Savior.

Or I could take you to Jesus' final resurrection appearance, the one He made with His disciples in Acts 1. It's there, having given them His marching orders, "You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth," that He "was taken up before their very eyes" (Acts 1:9).

Or we could go to the New Testament epistles and look at interpretative accounts given to us by eye-witnesses, such as Peter's in 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit."

There are so many ways to approach the subject of Christ's resurrection, so many ways to demonstrate that this is no hocus-pocus supernatural rock in which we believe. There's prophecy. There are biographical accounts. There are eyewitness reports. There are letters which allude to Jesus' resurrection and explain the significance of it.

And there's something else. There are *testimonies*. And there's one testimony in particular that is particularly compelling, and it's this testimony to which we'll turn our attention this morning.

It would be one thing if only mindless, gullible people believed in the resurrection. But the fact of the matter is, there was a man who was so convinced that Jesus was a fraud that he made it his personal mission to get rid of Jesus' followers. He hunted them down like dangerous criminals. He arrested them and threw them into prisons. He authorized their execution. And then *he himself met the resurrected Christ*.

*That man* gave a testimony to the resurrection. I'm talking about the man who eventually wrote half of the New Testament books. He was on his way to Damascus one day, intent on capturing some more of those dangerous Christians, when a brilliant light blinded him and knocked him to his knees. And a voice confronted him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me (Acts 9:4)?" To which Saul replied, "Who are you, Lord?" Only to receive the shock of his life, when the reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting (Acts 9:5)."

*Jesus? Jesus is a dead man. That's why I've been hunting down his deluded followers. How could Jesus be speaking to me now?*

Saul was hardly a candidate for faith. He would as soon believe in a supernatural rock as in the risen Savior...until that risen Savior met him personally.

“Get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do,” said Jesus. And that’s what Saul, later to be known as Paul, did. He, as the result of the amazing gracious work of the Spirit of God, believed in and began to obey the risen Jesus.

This morning, I want us to examine the personal testimony of the man who previously killed Christians. I want us to see what he said about Jesus’ resurrection, and I’ll tell you why. Many people today *say* they believe in Jesus and in His resurrection, and on this day, Easter Sunday, they attend church to give evidence of their belief.

But the question is, does *saying* you believe make it so? Does going to church make it so? How does a person show that he *really* believes in the risen Christ? I think a testimony is the best answer to that question, and none is more vivid than Paul’s testimony.

According to the man who once insisted Jesus was a hoax until Jesus confronted him personally, three things happen when you really believe in the risen Christ. Paul tells us what they are in Philippians 3:7-11.

Let’s turn to Paul’s testimony, and take a moment to set the backdrop. When Paul wrote Philippians, he who had imprisoned Jesus-followers was now himself incarcerated in Rome as a Jesus-follower (1:13). He wrote this letter to say thank you to a church he loved dearly, for he had personally led many of them to faith in Christ (see Acts 16:12ff), and had just received financial support from them (see 4:14ff).

He also wrote because this special church was under attack. Paul says in 3:2, “Watch out for those dogs,” referring to legalistic false teachers who were trying to undermine the saving gospel of Jesus. “Believing in Jesus isn’t enough,” said the Judaizers. “Paul’s message is flat out wrong.”

And how does Paul defend his gospel? With a testimony in chapter 3, *his* testimony. It’s a powerful testimony, and it’s here we discover that if we believe in the resurrected Christ, it’s going to show up in three unmistakable ways.

#### I. Believing in the resurrected Christ affects the way I look at my accomplishments (7).

Listen to Paul in verse 7, “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.” The simple fact is that...

##### **A. Paul used to think he was a good guy because of his performance (4-6).**

That’s the point he just made in verses 4-6, “If 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 regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.”

For the first 30 years or so of his life, Paul was a man convinced he was on his way to heaven. And he had solid reasons, which he rehearses right here.

He was born into a religious family—his parents circumcised him when he was eight days old. He had solid spiritual connections—he belonged to the chosen nation, of the tribe of Benjamin. And he took his faith seriously—as a Hebrew of Hebrews. He was a devout law-keeper—a Pharisee, in fact, a separated one. And he didn’t just talk the talk. He was willing to do unpleasant things—like persecuting the church. And not only did he know his Bible inside and out, he *kept* it—as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

So there was no doubt in Paul’s mind that he was a good man on his way to heaven. Until that day on the road to Damascus. On that day...

**B. Paul's view of himself changed when he met the risen Christ.** "Whatever was to my *profit*," he says in verse 7, referring to his religious background, his connections, his performance, "I now consider *loss* for the sake of Christ."

Loss. Not just deficient, not just inadequate, but *loss*.

Wiersbe said it well, "Like most religious people today, Paul had enough morality to keep him out of trouble, but not enough righteousness to get him into heaven!" And as long as he trusted in his own morality and goodness and religious performance, it did keep him out of heaven.

But then he met the risen Christ, and everything changed. From that day forward, Paul loved to talk about Christ.

"For to me to live is Christ," said Paul in 1:21, "and to die is gain." He loved talking about what his Savior did to rescue sinners like him, as he did earlier in this letter in 2:5-11: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Think about it. It wasn't bad things that kept religious Saul from Jesus, but good things. He literally had to lose his religion in order to experience God's salvation. And that's what happened the day he met the risen Christ.

We're asking the question, how can you tell if a person truly believes in the resurrected Christ? Make it personal, and start here. The Risen Christ changes the way you view your *accomplishments*. So what do *you* think of *your* accomplishments? As sinners, we kid ourselves with the notion that God will accept us on the basis of our performance, but a person who's come to know the risen Christ loves to talk, not about his own accomplishments, but *Christ's*.

Does that describe you? Do you love to talk about Jesus Christ and what He did for you? Let me share another testimony, this one a song by Augustus Toplady...

*Not the labors of my hands  
can fulfill thy law's commands;  
could my zeal no respite know,  
could my tears forever flow,  
all for sin could not atone;  
thou must save, and thou alone.*

*Nothing in my hand I bring,  
simply to the cross I cling;  
naked, come to thee for dress;  
helpless, look to thee for grace;  
foul, I to the fountain fly;  
wash me, Savior, or I die.*

Is your confidence this morning in what you're doing for God, or in what He has done for you in the person of His Son? If I really believe in the resurrected Christ it affects, first of all, the way I look at my accomplishments.

## II. Believing in the resurrected Christ affects the way I look at my values (8-9).

It sure changed the way Paul looked at his values. Listen to what he said in verses 8-9, “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 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.”

Did you catch that?

**A. Paul said he lost everything for Christ. *Everything.*** “For whose sake I have lost all things.” The day he came to know Jesus he lost his family and friends, his job security, his comfort, his reputation, his standard of living, his purpose for living, and much more. He lost it all. The things that used to be so important to him, his religious heritage, his achievements. His view of all those things changed when he came to know Jesus.

In fact, he called *dung*. That’s what the word “rubbish” means. “I consider them *rubbish*.” Rubbish, litter, trash. The Greek word is *skubalon*. Garbage. A word used to describe a horrible thing like a half-eaten corpse. The fact that Paul uses this graphic word indicates he’s experienced a fundamental and radical change in his value set.

He says that he lost everything for Christ. But not really, because in reality...

**B. Paul said he gained everything because he had Christ.** Paul’s values were transformed the day he came to believe in the risen Christ. He tells us that his life became wrapped up in three Christ-centered pursuits, as will ours.

*1. What matters is knowing Christ.* Verse 8 again, “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” Literally, Paul says, “because of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” It could go either way. The “knowledge of Christ” could refer to Christ knowing Paul, or Paul knowing Christ, and both are vital.

“I never knew you,” Jesus will say to many on judgment day, including people who thought they knew Him (Matt 7:23). It’s vital that Christ knows us personally.

And if He does, we’ll certainly want to know Him. Indeed, nothing matters more.

Paul said that nothing mattered more to him than knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. He’s not talking here simply about knowing information. There are a lot of people who can spout off facts and verses about Christ, just like a baseball card collector can tell you all sorts of trivia. But knowing information doesn’t equate with knowing the person.

Paul said he wanted to *know* Christ. At the end of the verse he said he wanted to *gain* Christ. Then he said he wanted to *be found* in Christ. For Paul, life was all about Christ. Life *was* Christ. He says he lost everything for Christ, but gained everything because he had Christ.

Picture a set of scales. If you could take the whole world with its wealth and power and advantages, with its prestige and accolades and rewards, and place it all in one scale-pan of the balance, and then place Christ in the other, Christ all by Himself would overwhelmingly outweigh everything else in terms of worth.

If Christ is still in the grave, that certainly wouldn’t be true. You can’t know a dead man. Oh, you can know *about* him, but to know him in the present, he must be alive. I want to know Him, says Paul, and that’s possible because He is alive!

Do you know Christ personally? Be honest. Is He real to you? Do you spend time with Him in His Word? Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice and they follow Me (John

10:27).” Do you hear His voice when the Bible is opened? And when you hear Him, do you have a desire to follow Him and do what pleases Him?

Value #1—what matters is knowing Christ. *I consider everything a lost compared to knowing Christ.* But it doesn’t stop there. In Paul’s testimony he shares a second value.

2. *What matters is experiencing Christ’s righteousness.* That’s verse 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.”

Dear friends, our biggest need is righteousness. We cannot enter God’s presence, since He is holy and righteous, unless we are righteous. But the question is, how does a sinner become righteous? There are essentially two answers to that question. There’s the answer Paul would have given prior to meeting the risen Jesus, and there’s the answer he gave after he met the risen Jesus.

If there’s anything that Paul *thought* he had, this was it, a *righteousness of my own that comes from the law.* He thought for sure he was okay with God, *righteous* before God, because of what he had done all his life for God. He was a Pharisee. He studied the Book, and lived by the Book, and tried to eliminate those who opposed the Book, and no one could oppose that.

No one, that is, until a person broke into his life on the road to Damascus. The day he met the resurrected Christ was the day he first realized that his so-called righteousness was an empty sham.

He was not righteous before God. He was indeed a sinner trying to do righteous things, but still a righteousness-lacking, condemned sinner.

As he looked into the eyes of the righteous, risen Lord, the brilliance blinded him. And it began to open the eyes of his heart to what he needed, as he says in verse 9, a *righteousness that comes from God.*

It’s not righteousness *for* God, but *from* God. That’s what we need. Righteousness isn’t something we accomplish. It’s something we receive. And we receive it from the only perfect person who’s walked on planet earth.

Someone has said, “The Christian life is not an imitation of, but a reproduction of Christ.” There’s a big difference. People have gone to great extremes to imitate Christ. Saint Francis of Assisi, for instance, was the son of a well to do merchant in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. But he renounced all wealth and reputation as a young man, taking a vow of poverty in order to give himself to the service of the poor and diseased, as did the Lord. So ardent was his desire to imitate Christ that before his death the *stigmata*—the wounds of the crucifixion which marked the hands and feet of Jesus— appeared on his own body.

You will probably never go to such extremes to imitate Christ. But many people try to imitate Christ by living good lives, by giving to charities, by helping the needy. Yet know this. Imitating Christ will never save you. To be saved, you must receive Christ’s righteousness, not imitate it. And how do you receive it? The answer brings us to the third value that governed Paul’s life.

3. *What matters is faith in Christ.* It’s a package deal. What matters is knowing Christ. What matters is experiencing Christ’s righteousness. What matters is faith in Christ. It all goes together.

Notice verse 9 again, “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.**”

There's how a sinner receives righteousness. Through faith in Christ. By faith. He acknowledges that he cannot attain God's righteous standard, and deserves eternal judgment for it. But then he looks to Jesus, the Righteous One. He sees Him hanging on the cross in the place of sinners, and he admits, "For me! He died for me!" And he sees him coming out of that tomb alive, and again cries, "For me! He rose again and offers new life for me!"

I was a young boy of eleven when I heard this amazing news. What I lacked and so desperately needed, Christ obtained for me. He died in my place, and He rose again for my righteousness. And this forgiveness and righteousness could be mine, not by earning it, but simply by receiving it, and that *by faith in Christ*. And by God's grace, I did believe, and He did save.

That's my testimony. Do you have a testimony?

Friends, believing in the resurrected Christ changes everything. It changes the way I look at my accomplishments, first of all. And it changes, secondly, the way I look at my values, for now everything is about Christ. And thirdly...

### III. Believing in the resurrected Christ affects the way I look at my goals (10-11).

In other words, Christ transforms the way I look at my past, my present, and now *my future*. What do I want out of life? What am I living for? Let's listen to Paul as he identifies his goals in verses 10-11, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Did you catch Paul's goals? He identifies four.

**A. Paul's aim was to know Christ.** "I want to know Christ." Christ, this person that Paul once tried to eliminate from other people's lives. Now he says, "I want to know Him!"

If you want to know somebody, you take steps. You do everything you can to be with that person. You study them, their likes and characteristics. Think of a couple that's dating. They love being together. Why? Because they want to get to know each other.

If you want to know Christ, you'll want to spend time in His Word. You'll also want to spend time with His Church, for He makes Himself known to us through His Body, the church.

**B. Paul's aim was to know Christ's resurrection power.** "I want to know Christ *and the power of his resurrection*." So Paul not only believed in Jesus' resurrection, but he also believed that the power that God exerted in raising His Son from the dead was something he could experience. I want to know Christ's resurrection power.

You see, if we're going to honor our Savior as we live in this sinful world, we're going to need power, power to say no to temptation, power to overcome habits that have enslaved us, power to make Him known to others. And what we need, we have.

*Resurrection power.*

You say, "I could never become a Christian because I don't have what it takes." I have good news for you. When you come to know Christ, God *gives* you what it takes.

I love Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church. He says, "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, *and his incomparably great power* for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which

he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms (Eph 1:18-20).” (see also Romans 8:11)

**C. Paul’s aim was to know the fellowship of Christ’s suffering.** “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection *and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.*”

To be honest, I like the power part, but I’m not so keen on the suffering. I like experiencing my Savior’s power, but I’d prefer not to share in His suffering. Why is that? And why did Paul say he *wanted* to know the fellowship of sharing in His Savior’s sufferings?

Paul knew something that I’m prone to miss. He knew that Christ makes Himself known *to us* most vividly and Christ makes Himself known *through us* most vividly *when we suffer*. Just think about your own experience. When has Christ been most real to you? When your kids were healthy, and your job was problem free? That’s not been my experience. Christ becomes most real during seasons of suffering.

Again, it’s not just suffering per se Paul wanted. He was no masochist. He wanted to know the *fellowship of sharing* in Christ’s sufferings.

**D. Paul’s aim was to experience the resurrection.** Verse 11, “And so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Is Paul expressing some doubt here? *And so, somehow?* No, there’s no doubt here, just humility. The kind John Newton expressed when he said he expected to be surprised by three things in heaven. One, to see people there he never expected to see. Two, *not* to see people there he had expected to see. And three, to be seen there himself.

Again, not because there is any doubt about it, for all in Christ are eternally secure. But to be in Christ is all of grace, and a heart gripped by grace is filled with wonder.

This is what we’re after, beloved, our ultimate hope, to experience what our Savior experienced, *the resurrection from the dead*. This corruptible will put on incorruption (1 Cor 15:54). No more sickness and death (Rev 21:4). Transformed into the likeness of our Savior (1 John 3:2).

At the end of the chapter Paul marvels at what’s coming, in verses 20-21, “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

So does the resurrection of Jesus make a difference? It sure does. Paul’s testimony makes that clear. Believing in the resurrected Christ affects, not just what I *say* about Jesus on Easter Sunday, but the way I look at my accomplishments, at my values, and at my goals. In other words, it changes everything.

Make It Personal: Because of the resurrection, there are two bottom line truths.

1. *Because of the resurrection, Christ is alive.* We’re not talking about some man-made religion. We’re talking about a person, the Son of God, who lived on earth, died for sinners, and rose from the dead. He is alive. And if that’s the case, so is this...

2. *Because of the resurrection, nothing matters more than knowing Christ.* Do you know Him? Are you taking steps to know Him better and help others know Him? Nothing in life matters more.