

PHILIPPIANS Part 10: The Great Exchange 08.08.10

Jillian Reads Philipians 3:1-11

Video: “Rules vs. Grace” [1:50]

1. Do I view God as a **RULE-MAKER** or as a **GRACE-GIVER**?
(v. 1-2)

That’s actually a pretty good question that I should be asking myself regularly. How do I view God? Rule-maker? Grace-giver? Doesn’t change who God really is - my opinion of God doesn’t affect God. But it does affect how I think about Him. Impacts how I live out my faith. Impacts how I relate to other people! BIG TIME - impacts my joy!

Sad truth: Saved by grace, come to faith because of grace, but lead a graceLESS life, crippled by critical spirit, angry with a judgmental attitude, tied up in rules, closed in by boundaries, and exhausted in effort. Our lives can be the very opposite of what Jesus died to give us. *The Great Exchange: Christ’s righteousness in exchange for ours.*

Consider Jesus words in **Matt. 11:28-30**: ““Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

What’s grace? - another way of looking at this. Where’s the “NOT”?

GRACE - getting what I do NOT deserve.

MERCY - NOT getting what I do deserve.

RELIGION - getting what I do deserve.

We can be saved by grace, blessed in mercy... but stuck in religion. This is what riled up Paul so much. **READ Phil 3:1-2**. Notice the big break between 1 and 2. Paul thinks of the great rejoicing we should experience in Christ. Then he thinks of the exact opposite - a counter Christianity, false, counterfeit, deceptive. The same Paul who was open to preaching out of rivalry in 1:17 has nothing good to say in 3:2. “Dogs” - not pets, but scavengers in 1st century.

People who force custom and religion upon Christians are dogs, scavengers. Not become like us first, then become Christian. Christ first and Christ only ALWAYS! But we can be guilty of circumcision thinking too! How can we stop ourselves? By pondering these 7 questions. **How do I view God? Second...**

2. Is my confidence in **MYSELF** or in **CHRIST**? (v. 3)

Read Phil. 3:3. Paul in his rhetorical best. Christianity is not a matter of cutting away a little bit of skin. Real Circumcision / Christianity is a matter of what is cut away in the heart of a man or woman. The

bondage to sin, to self. And you will know it not by looking on the outside of someone's flesh. You'll know it 3 ways:

- a. *worship in the Spirit of God*, a union with God that wells up from the inside out that makes everything we do a gift to our Creator.
- b. *glory in Christ Jesus*, an overwhelming sense that what I do and why I do it is because of what Christ has done in me. There's a party going on in my life because of Christ!
- c. *no confidence in the flesh* - NLT "no confidence in human effort," NET - "do not rely on human credentials."

3. Do I really want to play the CREDENTIAL game? (v. 4-6)

Do I want to count on past experiences and accomplishments to indicate the reality of my life in Christ? Born in a Christian family. Raised in a Christian church. Baptized in a certain way. Confirmed. Yes, even MY decision to accept Christ, kneel at an altar, come forward at a crusade. All credentials.

Paul says, you want to compare credentials? Read. Phil. 3:4-6.

The credential game is a *comparison* game. You think you got good creds. Check these out! Not only circumcised, but on the perfect (8th) day. Literally, "an eight-dayer!" Benjamin - youngest of Jacob's favored wife, Rachel. Only Benjamin born in promised land. From Benjamin tribe came first king. Jerusalem and its temple within borders of Ben. Even in battle, tribe of Benjamin held place of honor. Not just a Jewish man, a Pharisee of Pharisees, keeping law PERFECT!

Frank talk: Most of us know that we come to faith NOT because of what we have done, but because of what Christ has done for us. But somehow we go on in our Christian faith, living as if my relationship with Christ depended upon how I live, how well I keep up with expectations. None of us will do it well enough. And there will always be someone else who does it better. **Not only will this hurt my own relationship with Christ, but can also lead me to hurt others...**

4. Could my attitude of self-righteousness actually be PERSECUTING others? (v. 6a)

We can become so convinced that we know what's right, we begin to force our "rightness" on others around us. Paul did this. His "blameless" perfection led him to persecute Christians. Steven died at Paul's feet.

You may not have murdered anyone physically, but you could be killing their spirit with your insistence that they live according to your rules. According to your experiences. According to your theology. According to your liturgy, your worship preferences, your quiet time schedule, your manner of prayers.

An attitude of Christ-righteousness over self-righteousness takes this persecuting, criticizing attitude right out of us. We all are saved AND continue in relationship with Christ BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE and not because of our doing anything in the right way or not.

5. What am I holding onto *in my mind* as **WORTHY**? (v. 7-8)

It really is a “mind game,” a “how I think about things” that leads me to either being filled with grace for myself and towards others OR being filled with self-confidence that leads to others-criticism. **READ 7-8.**

All those credentials, those comparisons, everything that I’ve ever done that was good and worthy in any way, Paul says we should COUNT or CONSIDER as loss - the very opposite of our inclination.

ἡγέομαι **hēgéomai** - to lead, metaphorically to lead out before the mind, to think, to consider, to view, regard, esteem, count, reckon

In other words, this isn’t accidental thoughts that may or may not cross your mind. This is purposeful thinking - led by you to think this way. **To really make sure we get it, Paul says those righteous things are...**

σκύβαλον **skúbalon**; something thrown to the dogs, which is from kusí, dat. pl. of kúōn dog, and bállō to cast. dregs, refuse, what is thrown away as worthless. Spoken of the refuse of a table, of slaughtered animals, of dung, and figuratively of the filth of the mind. meaning refuse, things that are worthless (only in 3:8)

When you begin thinking of your own right living, your own decisions, your own perfection as if it were re-eaten vomit, then you’ll not have any problems with your own self-worth coming from yourself. Good because our worth comes from Christ in us. Should drive us to appreciate the grace in our lives even more. **Yet, we still struggle...**

6. Is my right living more **CHRIST ONLY** or **CHRIST PLUS**? (v. 9)

Read v.9. After we become Christians, it’s easy to begin adding things to the list of how we define ourselves as Christians. We create a Christ PLUS list. Yes it starts off because of Christ, but to that we add our own peculiar and particular list. The result of this may not be that we persecute others as in #4 above, but it does keep us apart from other Christians. Just to be on the safe side. I’m talking about boundaries. If someone wants to be a Christian in our church, then they must become like us first.

Not the way we want to be at Church Requel. Who is a Christian? Someone FOUND IN CHRIST! Not from keeping a list of do’s and don’ts (my list, our list, the denomination’s list - it doesn’t matter). Are they... are we... people having a righteousness from God that depends of faith. A faith itself powered and granted by God!

And just speaking of our personal faith... this is where all the joy comes from in my life. Because when I’m really honest with myself, I can’t even keep my own list of do’s and don’ts. I disappoint myself. And when I do, if my definition of who and what a Christian is, depends on how well I keep up that list of do’s and don’ts, then I fail and lose joy.

Which leads us to our last self-check question. How do I really know if I’m experiencing a joy-filled, grace-drenched Christianity?

7. What is the outflow of my faith in Christ?

READ v. 10-11. Paul describes what real, authentic Christianity is. Breaks this one question down into 4 parts:

- a. my **RELATIONSHIP** with Jesus? (v. 10a)
“That I may know him.” Knowing Christ, the son of God, very God Himself and that he would know me. Relationship, not religion. Hearing the voice of God whispering His love for me and His instructions for my best life. **And then...**
- b. the **POWER** to really live? (v. 10b)
“That I may know the power of his resurrection.” We misunderstand this. This is not our being resurrected someday. This is about the POWER to resurrect. We should KNOW that power NOW! Subtly, Paul is saying that if we know the power of resurrection, then we have the power for all that God calls us to do... the power to really live the life He has in mind for us!
- c. more **GOD-WILLED** than **SELF-WILLED**? (v. 10c)
“That I may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.” Again we have the tendency to misread, to focus on “sufferings.” Christianity is sometimes a “suffering” faith. Laughable that people try to make it a “prosperity - health and wealth” religion. Suffering is part and parcel of what Christianity is. But don’t miss Paul’s real point here. “Becoming like him in his death.” Doesn’t mean that we must be a martyr. How can we be like Jesus in his death. “Not my will but thine.” And that can only come from POWER, which itself comes out of RELATIONSHIP.
- d. **FOCUSED** on my future resurrection? (v. 11)
“That by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” That’s the end game. Not life on this earth. This is how I could do whatever God asks of me in this life. Because I’m so focused on the ultimate end - our resurrection. It’s how we have joy in the midst of such great suffering, when we lose a loved one, when we see someone so sick and ill, when our plans for ourselves and our families go bad.

Conclusion: So where are you at in your Christian walk this evening? Can you say that you are joy filled and grace drenched? Do you recognize just how much Christ NOT ONLY has done for you in the past, BUT ALSO continues doing in and through you every waking moment?

This week I challenge you to take this passage and these 7 questions and work your way through them... one at a time, maybe one each day. Leave the theology and the word studies and the early church history lessons behind and bring these questions and this passage to your daily attention. We have received God’s UNMERITED FAVOR. May God help us to recognize this every single day we live for Him.

Illustration: Every fairy tale has a critical moment when decisive action takes place. The princess is awakened with a kiss. The Beauty sees the real beauty in the Beast. The pigs learn the benefits of brick and mortar construction. And always at the end, “And they lived happily ever after.” Christianity is no fairy tale. It’s real. In Christianity, the decisive moment is the moment Christ died for you and me, rose again, and invites us into a daily, loving, living relationship. The story doesn’t end with happiness, but with joy. Are you living joyfully ever after?