

Church Garbage
Philippians 3: 1-11
November 6, 2016, Steve Karadimas

[1]

When I first got the job here as the youth pastor about 4.5 years ago the first day I worked mainly to get my office ready. I set up my transformer toys, I put some pictures up, and I looked through some filing cabinets that were in the office. As I was doing that I came across this photo.

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these are some kids who used to be in the youth group here back in the day, about 13 or 14 years ago, and I saw that they were wearing SEMP t-shirts. That stuck out to me because I did Semp when I was a kid. Don't worry Semp isn't a drug, it was a student conference, and it stood for "student's equipped to minister to their peers." So I went to this and I saw that obviously the youth group here did it a while ago too, and then I looked at the back of this picture and that's me right there and I am just about to hit this poor girl on the head with that folded up chair I have. Which I think was hilarious, whoever was on the search team for me clearly did a terrible job, you literally had photographic evidence of me trying to smoke some girl on the head with a chair and you still hired me. This photo was in your building, what were you doing? So clearly you had some low standards at the time.

Well, I remember this trip pretty well, I don't actually remember hitting the girl with the chair, but I do have some other memories. I remember we had been getting trained to go out into Vancouver and start conversations with people about Jesus. And we were all very excited about this, we had been getting ready for it for a few days days and when the day came for us to go out it started pouring rain. I remember talking with the other students just thinking this was a disaster, it had been great all week and now when we were going to spend the day outside it was going to rain, this was going to ruin the trip. Well, a few of us before we started for that day decided, let's go walk in the rain, we walked around the UBC campus where we were staying, we were getting soaked, but that wasn't the conversation. We talked about what we were excited about, we talked about what we were expecting God to do, we prayed, and that day ended up being an amazing day, I went to east Van, I had some amazing conversations with some of the homeless population there.

I was just about ready to start complaining, I was just about ready to assume that the day was going to be a wash and that nothing good was going to happen, that God couldn't work through the rain.

I was able to rejoice in the Lord despite the rain and I saw God work because of it. But to be honest, it's not too hard to rejoice in the Lord when it's raining, it's a lot harder to rejoice in the Lord when your debt is overwhelming, and you need to consider bankruptcy. It's a lot harder to rejoice in the Lord when your marriage is falling apart and you see yourself heading towards divorce. It's a lot harder to rejoice in the Lord when you or a loved one's health is failing.

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Philippians 3 starts with this statement from Paul: ***Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith.*** (NLT) To be honest I feel a little guilty sharing this, I haven't had to go through some of the pain that some of you have had to go through, I haven't had a family member die, I haven't gone through terrible sickness, I have obviously had difficult times in life but not like some of you. But I want to help put this in more context. I can't imagine how difficult

it would be to rejoice in the Lord in the midst of some of your struggles in life, but it's not me telling you to. It's God speaking through Paul, and Paul wrote this from jail. He wrote this from behind bars, when he was being persecuted for sharing the name of Jesus. He would have been hungry, he would have been in some of the worst conditions imaginable and he said whatever happens, rejoice in the Lord.

And I know it's tough, so why do we do it? well, he says it's to safeguard our faith. Rejoicing in the Lord safeguards our faith. Rejoicing in the Lord safeguards our faith. Last Sunday was an amazing day. The highlight for me was obviously our three students who wanted to get baptized. I loved seeing them take that step of faith to publicly declare that they are following Jesus for the rest of their life. The day continued and I went for lunch with one of the students who was baptized with her friends and family and we celebrated together her baptism. Then I went to River kids on Rockland where we had a whole bunch of kids show up excited to be a part of River kids. One kid had moved over the summer but he got dropped off just for River kids, when I asked him why he was there he said *"if you're not here for River kids what the heck are you doing?"* Also at River kids I was able to teach a lesson with one of our students kona MacDonald who did a fantastic job sharing the lesson of Joshua with me. after that I went back to the church for a New York meeting and I saw this group of kids come together over the mission to go to New York and learn how to better share the gospel in Campbell River.

I went home and it was probably 10:30 by the time I got home, I had been out doing this stuff all day, had an amazing day but when I got home I lied down on the bed and I started to complain in my head about how tired I was, how much work I have to do and I had a little mini pity party about me in my head. How silly is that. I just saw God work in amazing ways all day and instead of rejoicing I was complaining, I had to slap myself a little bit with how stupid I was being.

We can so easily get caught up in all of the little things that we forget to rejoice in what God is doing. That is so dangerous, if we don't take the time to look and see what God is doing this life is going to be a grind that we're not going to be able to get through.

And there are lot's of things that can stop us from rejoicing, and Paul specifically warns us about one of them.

[4]

2 Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. 3 For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort. (NLT)

Watch out for those dogs, who is he talking about, he's talking about people who do evil. at first glance we can think he's talking about the people outside the church, the sinners. But that's not it, he's talking about the Judaizers, the people who are adding law onto Jesus, throwing a bunch of rules on top of their faith. There the ones saying you need to work really hard to earn your salvation. That is who we need to watch out for. And he's calling them dogs, that's a good name for these people. Especially considering his context.

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I'm a dog person, I love dogs, George is my favorite, I love this guy, and George would never hurt a fly. But dogs in this context aren't like George, they weren't quite so tame.

When I was a kid I went on a missions trip to Mexico. And there were dogs all over the place, and they were sort of domesticated, they would hang out with certain kids and they did it mainly to get food. The dogs at first looked just like dogs here, they were great they were playful, they looked just like pets, but as soon as something didn't go their way, if you didn't give them a bit of your food if you did something they didn't like they could turn on you, they could bite you, and if you get bit by a dog in Mexico it's not good.

Paul's talking about the judaizers the people who put the law above Jesus, at first glance you might think these people got it together, they're great Christians, it seems like they know their theology, but when they don't get what they want, when something happens that they don't like they will bite, and I've been here long enough to feel the pain of that and see the destruction of that. The gossip the slander and the attacks of these dogs has hurt many people in this church.

Watch out. And the thing is part of it has been our fault for years we were feeding these dogs giving them everything they wanted. We were like the kids in the zoo feeding the bears. That's a short term solution if you feed the bear it won't bite you but if you keep feeding it eventually it's gonna walk into your house thinking it owns the place.

We have celebrated as a church over the past couple weeks that we have moved on from this which is great, I feel it, it has been an amazing few weeks, especially last week with the baptisms, but keep an eye out for the dogs, because they'll try to convince you that Jesus isn't enough and you need to have all of these other things and rules on top of that. Watch out.

Paul says watch out for these dogs, and he knows because he was one, he sought out Christians and locked them up, he was a scary guy. And then he says I was just like these dogs:

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though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!

5 I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one!

[7]

I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. 6 I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. (NLT)

Paul was following the judaizers law to a tee, this guy was the man, he did all the things he was supposed to do and that led him to persecute the church. I think it's funny how Paul communicates this, it's almost like he's bragging here, look at all the things I did. But he's not bragging, he's trying to relate to those of us who fall into this trap.

Because everyone here is in danger of being like Paul. If we don't pay attention we can very easily get caught up in the lie that we need to be perfect, we need to follow all of these made up rules to be right with God. He's saying he's been down that path and it didn't work, we can either listen to him or we can try it for ourselves.

Let me tell you a story about when I was a kid, when I was young the internet wasn't really a thing yet, and that made video games interesting because you couldn't just go online to figure out how to play them. Instead you just talked with your friends at school and together you would figure out how to beat the game.

Well, there was a fighting game I played a lot and a rumour started in school that you could unlock sonic the hedgehog in this game as a fighter but you had to go in this one mode and beat 20 people in a row. And beating 20 people in a row was nearly impossible, but I wanted to do it. Well 2 weeks into this my friend told me that he did it, he beat 20 people in a row, but he didn't get sonic. I could have believed him, but I chose not to, I had to see it for myself, so I spent that summer trying to beat 20 people in a row, finally I did it, and to my sadness I found out that I in fact could not play as sonic.

I had someone who had been there and done it and he told me it wasn't going to work out, but I had to try it for myself.

Paul has been down this road, he's been down the road of following all the rules, even the made up ones, and this is what he has to say about it:

[8]

I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ 9

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and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. (NLT)

It's all garbage, all of these measures that we choose to value righteousness on are garbage. Strict obedience to the law is garbage when compared with knowing Christ. And this is tough to hear because for many of us what you might hear is that everything I have worked for my whole life is garbage and that might be too hard to accept. I sympathize with you, we have all been down the road where we have realized that we just wasted a lot of time. Just the other day I was working on some pallet wood and I wanted to make something for my house and I worked really hard to make it good and I realized when I was done I did it the wrong way, I made it too small and it was a waste of time. That was a couple hours of wasted time and that really sucked.

But for many of us we have spent our lives trying to become the best pharisee, trying to follow more rules than everyone else and hearing that it's a waste of time is too much to handle so we reject it. Please, I know this can be tough to hear but it's not too late.

knowing Jesus is infinitely more valuable than the strictest obedience to the law. We need to know Jesus, In Mathew 7 Jesus has this to say to the people who don't know him:

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21 "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. 22 On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' 23 But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.' (NLT)

These aren't people who haven't heard the gospel, these are people performing miracles in Jesus' name, doing great works. But Jesus didn't know them. In the NLT it says "I never knew you, get away from me, you who break God's law. In other translations it says get away from me you evildoers. What it's referring to is people who don't have any fruit, what is fruit? it's the fruit of the spirit, how are you filled with the fruit of the Spirit? by knowing Jesus.

You can do so much work for “God” without knowing Jesus. That must be exhausting, I can’t imagine anything tougher than to work for the church without being filled with the Holy Spirit. Because working for the church is pretty tough even with the Holy Spirit. But doing it without the Spirit, that’s the work of a pharisee. You’re doing the most important, and some of the most difficult work, without being filled with the Spirit and without God’s strength, no wonder pharisees get so bitter. You’re overworked and you’re not being filled with the Spirit and if you were to actually talk with Jesus he would say I never knew you.

I’ve been on that road and very quickly, you end up destroyed, exhausted and bitter. If that is the road that you are on today I want you to know that Jesus’s burden is light, do you believe that. You can give your worries to Christ, he will take them. Get to know Jesus, the church needs you to know Jesus far more than it needs you to volunteer. The church needs you to know Jesus far more than it needs you to volunteer.

I know it can be hard, especially if you’ve been walking down the path as a pharisee for a long time. I can’t imagine how difficult it would have been for Paul as an adult to have come to the conclusion that everything he ever worked for was garbage. Paul was a grown man and he had to realize that all this work that he did for the church was a complete waste of time and energy. But God had a lot more for Paul. God wasn’t done yet with him. And Paul got to know Jesus, and Jesus got to know him and he used him to spread his church. Isn’t that exciting that even if we waste most of our life trying to do things our way, Jesus still wants to get to know you and fill you with his Spirit and use you for good.

And the journey that we go on when that happens can be a little crazy, Paul closes this section with this:

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I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, 11 so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! (NLT)

Why is Paul talking about the death and resurrection of Christ? Well last week when a few of our students got baptized they shared in the death and resurrection of Christ. They were publicly saying that I am dying to myself, my wants my desires, my way of life and I am going to live for Christ.

Paul wants to experience the power that raised Christ from the dead. That’s what knowing Jesus does. When we know Jesus and we die to ourselves and we live for Christ. And we see the power of God raise us up and we live for Christ. Paul got to the point where he said for me to die is gain and to live is to live for Christ.

And that might sound really exciting for you, and I get that. And it is really exciting, but there’s more to it than you might think, because living for Christ also means sharing in suffering and sharing in his death.

This isn’t all rainbows and sunshine here, there is a challenge to take up your cross and follow him. That led Paul to write these very words from jail. That meant for Paul he was facing harsh persecution and he carried on sharing the gospel despite that. We’re not at the point where we face those same challenges.

But we are all faced with challenges in sharing in the suffering of Christ. This means giving up our wants and desires and our idols to God. Maybe that means giving up your finances to God, and saying this money isn’t mine, it’s the Lords and he’s going to do with it what he will.

Maybe it's giving up our desires for earthly pleasures whatever that may be. Maybe it's giving up some of our time for God, I don't know. But I know for sure that when preachers come up and they start preaching health and wealth and with Jesus everything is going to be great, I don't see it. Because Paul understood suffering for Jesus.

But it's important to remember where that suffering comes from. Because many of us our suffering is in vain. For many of us we are suffering because we're trying to achieve greatness, we're trying to be like the pharisees, we're trying to be perfect and earn our way to heaven through all the good things that we do. That is not the suffering that we should have. Jesus suffered on the cross to make up for all of our shortfalls and we don't need to be perfect because Christ already was. Our suffering is giving our lives up to God even though sometimes we may not want to, and going and doing what he has called us to do.

Sold Out for Jesus
Philippians 2:19-20
Week of November 6, 2016

Objective of this study: To see the effect of character on relationships and spreading the Gospel of Jesus.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read Psalm ??? meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

Welcome

Are you a dog person or a cat person? have you ever been attacked by a dog, or other animal?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to your heart.]

Word (30-45 minutes)

1. Read Phil. 3:1-11
2. What stood out from the sermon?
3. Who is Paul referring to when he talks about dogs? why does he describe them this way?
4. Why does Paul go to such great lengths to describe how "good" he was?
5. what two paths of gaining righteousness is Paul comparing in this passage? where do each of these paths lead?

Work (30-45 minutes)

1. Do you struggle to rejoice in whatever happens? how do you think rejoicing in whatever happens safeguards our faith?
2. Read Philippians 3: 2-3, in which ways can we be like the dogs? what rules do we add on to Jesus' teaching? can we get to the point where we put no confidence in human effort? how?
3. Paul got to the point where he saw all his work as garbage compared to knowing Christ. What have we worked hard for in our lives that might be garbage compared to knowing Christ?
4. Is it difficult to consider your work garbage? why? is there any redeeming aspect of this? **(if conversation isn't working, look at what Paul found redeeming in this)**
5. How does knowing Christ change everything?