

**“Found In Christ”**  
**Philippians 3:1-11**  
**Dr. Scott Redd**

Well. Good morning, Briarwood Presbyterian Church. Thank you, Dan, for that kind introduction and endorsement. Thank you for your counsel and your friendship. And thank you for your leadership of this church, along with the leadership team, over the last two years since the loss of your dear Pastor Reeder. You may not know this, but we have been praying for you during this time, and we have been lifting you up in prayer. And it's wonderful. Now, as I come here, to get to hear about how all of those prayers have been answered with the leadership, with the leadership of the staff and the pastoral community and the leadership of this congregation to stay committed to the reformed faith and the teaching of the whole Council of God for the sake of the Great Commission and the equipping of the Saints.

You all have told me since we've been here this week, you've been so warm and welcoming us, and both Jennifer and I have heard over and over again how you've said, we've been praying for you before we even knew who you were. And I just want to let you know that we've been praying for you as well. And we are deeply blessed and grateful for this opportunity.

Now, it is not lost on me the weight of this pulpit and that I'm going to share the word of the Lord from a pulpit that has been served by such Presbyterian and Reformed giants as pastor Frank Barker and Pastor Harry Reeder. I am also fully aware that there is a Bible encased in the foundation beneath my feet, and I can tell you that is a sobering and a humbling thought. But I give thanks to the Lord that while we've been praying for each other over the last two years, that he has brought us to this moment, in this time.

So I'd like to open up with you. Philippians chapter three, verses one through 11. Now, this is a, what I would call a load bearing text of the Bible. All of the Bible is useful for the training up of humanity. for every good work. That is true. But there are some texts that say explicitly what elsewhere in the Bible is said implicitly. And this is one of those explicit load bearing text. You will know it already. Just having been involved in this church ministry, you've heard it preached here. You've heard it taught here because this is one of those load bearing texts. So please join me in the reading of the word of the Lord found in Philippians chapter three, verses one through 11.

*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also,*

*if anyone else thinks he has reason for 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. As to the law of Pharisee, as to zeal, persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever I gain, whatever gain I have, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I might gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. That by any means possible I may attain the resurrection of the dead.* This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Let me open us in a brief prayer before we dive into this text together.

Heavenly father, you have seen fit to reveal yourself in a world where you might be revealed. You have created a world where we can know you. You are infinite, eternal and unchangeable. But we know and we are painfully aware that we are very finite and we are very time bound, and we are very changeable. And yet you have shown us yourself first in your word, and then most perfectly in the logos himself, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. I pray, Lord, as we come to this text, that we would see him and only him through the power of the spirit, and that by seeing him we would see you and glory in you. Oh, father, it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Well, as Doctor Doriani mentioned, I too am a doctor of Old Testament. that's been my paying job for the last 13, actually, 16 years now. I have a friend who's also served an Old Testament Department's Richard Pratt, who's known to this community. And, you know, he told me when I became a professor, when I finished my PhD, he said, you know, we're really just professors of irrelevance. You know that, right? You know, the church, most of the church is the New Testament as the gospel. This is our Bible, the Old Testament. That's the old stuff that's passed away. You know, it reminds me of a story that I heard about a basketball player after a particularly bad game, who's the captain of the team. And he was jogging off the court at the very end of a failed effort, and the coach met him on the side of the court, and the coach just stopped and looked at him. He said, son, you know, are you ignorant or just apathetic? And the player said, coach, I don't know and I don't care.

This is how a lot of Christians think about the Old Testament. We've got Jesus we don't know and we don't care about what came before. And I would like to argue that that part of my job in life and what I love to do, both as a pastor and a preacher, but also as a teacher, is show the continuity to remind people that when Paul says all Scripture is God breathed, the scriptures he has in mind is the Old Testament. That's why I love passages that show the close connection, the organic development from the old to the new passages like in Luke 24. You know, it's following

the resurrection where the apostles, some of the apostles, are on the way to Emmaus. They're broken, they're befuddled, they're depressed. They think, the Messiah is gone. What should we do? And then they meet Jesus along the way. But they don't recognize him. He's just different enough in his resurrected self. They don't recognize him. But then what does he do? And I love the fact that the first thing our risen Lord wants to do, whether it's on the road to Emmaus or in the Upper Room, or whether he's speaking with disciples on the side of the Sea of Galilee, he just wants to open up the scriptures, the Old Testament, the prophets, the Torah, the law, and show how it all points to him.

And you remember what they said? They said later we realized who it was, but we didn't know who it was. But at the time, even though we didn't recognize him, our hearts were burning within us. You see, this passage that we're reading today is a passage like that one. This is a passage that maybe superficially, looks like something else is happening. It might superficially look like Paul is kind of driving a wedge between the old and the new. He's saying, I count all those things rubbish. And yet I would argue that as we read closer, if we give it a closer reading, we actually see that Paul is showing that there's a deep connection between the old and the new. That Paul is showing us that there might be a superficial discord between the old and the new. But if you dig deeply into it, if you hear the words of Jesus, you realize that there's actually a deep concord, a superficial discord, but a deep concord. So let's look at the passage.

Notice Paul begins with the thing that he's been saying It's kind of a recurrent exhortation. Throughout the letter he keeps saying, rejoice, rejoice, everyone, rejoice. Have joy, be of great joy. This is the fifth time he said it. And just these two now just starting the third chapter. Now, this whole book really is a story about rejoicing, but it's rejoicing for a particular reason. It's rejoicing because of the unity that we all have as members of the church, the unity that we all have as being united in Christ. Paul is actually saying, I'm in jail. I'm under house arrest in Rome. And yet I know that you are partaking of my suffering by being in union with me through the power of the Holy Spirit, and I'm partaking of your joy by being united with you in the Holy Spirit. Why? Because we are all united in Christ through the power of the spirit.

The only proper response to such union with Christ for Paul is to rejoice, have joy. And we might say, Paul, how can this be? I mean, your job, your mission, you've said it over and over and again to us is to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. How can you say that? You're rejoicing now you're stuck in house arrest. I mean, sure, you're witnessing to the Pretorian guard who are guarding you. That's great. But you were going to Spain. What about this calling that you had to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. And yet it's here that we find the Paul's mission and the value of his mission, as he saw it, was not measured by the metrics of success that we might normally think. See, the value of Paul's mission to fulfill the Great Commission sprang out of and was deeply undergirded by, his union with Christ through the regenerative work of the Holy

Spirit. It's what we just sang. Breath of God, breathe new life into my willing soul. That's how Paul could stand in the king's court and witness to the greatest officials of his day in his region. He could also be on the hill of Areopagus, debating with the philosophers. Or he could be shipwrecked on an island and getting bitten by snakes. Or he could be under house arrest in Rome and his response was always the same -- rejoice! We have great joy? He could even die, right? I mean, this is this is the conclusion he comes to. It's his mantra in Philippians one to live is Christ. To die is gain. It's all joy, brothers and sisters, it's all joy.

You see, Paul had an incredible radical reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit, unifying him with Christ, uniting him with Christ, one that provides an existential reorientation of every situation that he finds himself in, an existential reorientation. Now, it's at this point in the letter that we see Paul introduce his opponents. Now we know. We know that he has opponents if we read between the lines. So in the first two chapters, we know he has opponents, but now he comes down, he just speaks to them directly and he calls them by three titles. He calls them dogs, which might be. It might be saying dogs like outcasts, though it's possible that he means dogs, as in self-appointed watch dogs, right? Everybody who has a dog knows that whether you want your dog to be a watchdog or not, they're going to be a watchdog, right?

You know, I have a large dog named Bohemoth, literally, we call him Bo. he loves his favorite place is right in front of the front window, looking out onto the street to see people walk by and tell them that they should not come near our house. That's his favorite thing to do in the world. So Paul says these dogs is possibly self-appointed watchdogs who are standing in front of the Church of Philip by saying, whoa, whoa, whoa, not so, not so fast. But then he goes on and says, but they're not doing it on good account. They are evil doers. They are breaking up the church. They're stealing your joy.

And then lastly, we get a glimpse into what they are teaching when he says, mutilate of the flesh. Now, we don't know everything that they taught. We don't know their whole theology, but let's give them the benefit of the doubt for a moment. And it seems as if there was something like this. There was the belief amongst some in the growing early church that in order to become a Christian, in order to receive the benefits of your redemption, you would receive them by faith. But you can't just hopscotch right into faith in Jesus. You have to walk through redemptive history in all of the covenants, stipulations of the Old Testament before you can accept Jesus. So in other words, you need to come and be circumcised. You need to become, as it were, a Jewdain. In following the law of the Torah, the stipulations of Torah. And then you can have faith in Jesus, and then you can be saved. Now that's giving them a benefit of the doubt of the doubt. But notice, according to Paul, whatever their logic was, whatever their theology was, they were in deep error. And their error was because of this, because they hoped to accomplish through observance of the law through the old circumcision sacrament. They

hoped to accomplish through that what we could already or was only accomplished through faith in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, it's at this point that Paul goes to the point that we all know from this passage where he lists his credentials. And so I want to dive into that, but I want to argue before we get into his credentials. I want to show what Paul is doing here. He's responding to this party, the circumcision party, of which he says, no, we're the real circumcision, not them. Notice the way that he responds to them is by pointing out three truths about what Christ has done. And that's what we're going to spend the rest of our time in the sermon.

Here's the three truths Paul points out how Christ has complete the old covenant. Christ has completed the covenant stipulations of the Old Testament. Secondly, Christ cures the crisis of human nature. He cures the crisis of human nature. And thirdly, Christ creates new culture in light of the gospel and his resurrection. So Christ completes the covenant, he cures the crisis and he creates a new culture. So let's dive into it.

Let's look at how Christ completes the old covenant. Paul is clear here and elsewhere that Christ is the fulfillment. It is the fulfillment of all of the mandates of the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, for both Jesus on the road to Emmaus and then later in the upper room, and then later in Galilee, for Jesus himself, but also for Paul and for the other apostles. It's not just that Jesus is obeying these things. He is what these things were always about. As a matter of fact, you start to read the Old Testament with the Apostles. You'll start to find that the Old Testament is kind of like it's kind of like a marker for who Jesus is. You know, if you've ever been in a stage play or you've ever been up on a stage where there has been a stage play, you know that there are certain marks that are important not to miss, important to have, and you want to have the person stand in the right place. You want your primary character, your main character, to be in the right place. And when you want that, you take some duct tape and you or some gaffer's tape and you put it there on the stage, you know, this is where you need to stand, the main character. And if you read the Old Testament kind of reads like that. It's like a profile. It's like a marker on the floor as you're reading it saying, this is where Jesus is going to stand.

Maybe a different analogy. The Old Testament is like an X on a treasure map. Imagine that you're looking for buried treasure and you've got your treasure map, and it goes this way and that, and then it ends at the X, and there's the X. That's where the treasure is going to be. And when you finally get there, you take out your shovel. You dig it up the treasures there, you lay it all out in front of you. Now imagine. Imagine that after you found the treasure, the gold is laying all around on the ground, the rubies and the diamonds, and they're all glimmering in the sunlight. Imagine you just take the map and start staring at the X again, and you just go just marveling about that X, and we'd say, you're crazy. And yet Paul says that's what you're doing when, having been given Christ, you now say, but wait, wait, we need to go back to the

circumcision. We need to go back to the rules of the Old Testament to make us worthy for Christ or something like that.

And that's why I think Paul lists his credentials in the way that he does. He could have just said, you know, I've been, like many of our neighbors would say, right, I've been a generally good person, and I count it all rubbish. He could have said that, but he doesn't notice. He lists very specific credentials. He lists his own claim to righteousness in a very specific way. And I want to argue because he's making a very specific point. You see, Paul is saying all of these things that I did, they're valuable. They're not bad. They're not evil things. There's one in there you might think, well, this kind of sounds evil, and we'll come to that in a second. But they're not evil things. They're good things. But how are they good for Paul? They are only valuable insofar as they point him to Christ. So let's look at them for a minute. Let's just take a little sidebar and go through Paul's credentials.

Notice how he starts off. We probably shouldn't be surprised by it. He's talking to a group of people who say, if you want to become a Christian, you have to get you have to get circumcised first. It means that these are probably dealing mostly with Gentiles. So you have Gentiles who are getting circumcised as adults and saying, you can't really be a member of the church until that happens. And Paul starts off and goes, you want to talk about the law? I was circumcised on the eighth day. I did it the right way, not the way you're doing it. I did it the right way, the way my parents knew to do it because they grew up in the law. Why? Because they're Israelites and I'm an Israelite. I'm one of the covenant people. I'm not a God fear. I'm not a sojourner coming into the land by conversion. I'm a real, real, true-blue Israelite. I'm the one - Remember when Moses was going to Pharaoh and God said, Tell Pharaoh, Israel is my firstborn son. Let him come out into the desert and worship me. Paul says, I'm one of them. I'm one of those covenant people. Not only that, I'm a Benjaminite. This is interesting for two reasons. Paul is saying I can trace my tribal heritage back before the exile, which after the exile was not an easy thing to do. You've heard about the Lost Tribes of Israel. That's a real thing. To be able to trace yourself all the way back to Benjamin shows that Paul had quite a claim as a member of the people of God. But not only that, he could say Benjaminites were some of our best guys and the Old Testament, the Benjaminites were some of our strongest characters. As a matter of fact, the first King of Israel was a Benjamin. I, Saul, and his faithful and loyal son Jonathan, who stuck by David till the end. He was a knight. Remember the story of a hood? Ethan was a Benjaminite, the judge. And after the exile, both Esther and Mordecai Benjaminites say, I come from a really good line.

It goes beyond that, then, to say a Hebrew of Hebrews. Now what does this mean? Because he's already said that he's an Israelite. We might say, you're kind of repeating yourself here, Paul, but let me actually argue that the idea of being a Hebrew or that label Hebrew is not actually a

phrase that Judeans okay, to use another phrase used about themselves a lot. If you go back to the Old Testament when Israelites are talking about themselves, they call themselves Ben Israel. They call themselves sons of Israel. The people who call them Hebrews are usually Gentiles. That's like a Gentile term. You know, we have the same thing today, right? You have there's certain groups you call yourself one thing, but then everybody else calls you something else. Okay. It seems like Paul is saying here is I was known to the Gentile community. I was a Hebrew among Hebrews. I was iconic as a Hebrew to the Gentiles. They knew about me. I represented the people.

He was a Hebrew of Hebrews. He was a Pharisee. As to the law of Pharisee, the Pharisees were, of course, the party that dealt with the exile in a very particular way when the exile happened and you have the Israelites living all over the world, and they couldn't all make it back to Jerusalem for the major festivals, the Pharisees came in and saved the day by saying, it's okay. You can still be present with God by memorizing and meditating and following Torah. So they're the law guys. They're the folks who, when you want to know what is the law, say you go to a Pharisee and he'll kind of roll his eyes back and he'll remember exactly what it says. And he'll tell you what you need to do, Paul says. In other words, if you want to talk about Torah, I'm a Torah guy. I'm not like the Sadducees, who were all about the temple. I was a guy who was about the law. You can't beat the Pharisees when it comes to the law. But then he says this one, and this is the one that's probably the most problematic for us.

He talks about his zeal in persecuting the church. Now, Paul, we know, did not believe that persecuting the church was a good thing that was valuable and pointed him to Christ. He's not saying that. He said, actually, I'm a chief of sinners. I'm the one who has the least right to be here because I'm the only one in the whole group of these Christians who actually killed Christians. So he didn't consider persecuting the church a good thing. But notice what he's saying. He's saying as to zeal, Paul saying I was not a nominal Christian. I wasn't a nominal believer. Okay so not to confuse things on him being a Christian. I wasn't a nominal believer in the Old Testament. I really believe these things. I was zealous, I wasn't just a Saturday morning Hebrew. Okay, I would go on Saturday morning, but then I would live it out over the course of my life. I didn't persecute the church because I was loodthirsty and this is just what I wanted to do. I did it because I believed it was the right thing.

It's important for us to remember this about our own sin. We often think the sin is always a cynical rebellion against God, but often sin can actually be quite principled. You can feel quite good about the sin that you're doing. You feel righteous about the sin that you're committing. And I actually think that's why the psalmist, when he talks about repentance, doesn't say, go and, you know, search your own heart. Be deeply introspective all day long. Try to list out all of your sins. What does the psalmist tell us? He says, search me, O God. Look into my heart. Spirit,

know my innermost parts. If I do it on my own devices, I'm going to deceive myself every time. Just like Paul had been doing. You show me if there's a hurtful way, you show me the destructive ways - you lead me in your everlasting path. That that is the gift of Christian repentance. Come to me, Lord, through the teaching of your word, to the fellowship with other believers, through sitting in worship and hearing the word, of being conformed by it to the power of the spirit Lord, you show me my error. You show me my sin. See, Paul was deeply aware that the heart is deceitful above all things.

Then the last one that he says is this blameless unto the law. Now he's not saying that he's perfect. Let's just be clear about that. He's not saying I was a perfect person. Whenever you see that word blameless in the Bible, I just want you to just remember this, because we'll see this throughout the Old and New Testament - blameless. This really has to do with being like a man of integrity. I was known for my public righteousness. It's a good thing to remember even in Genesis 17, the Lord says to Abraham, you're in covenant with me now walk before me. What? And be blameless? He's not saying be perfect. What he's saying is, be a man of integrity.

See, Paul is saying, I was publicly known as a righteous man, but these are all oddly specific claims, but they are effective in making the purpose or making the point that Paul wants to make. And that is this, that old covenant righteousness that his opponents so value was something that he had excelled and far beyond anything they could ever do, if they thought that they had some kind of claim to salvation because of their Old Testament observance. He says, I have a greater claim. You can't be me. I don't care how close you think you're tied to your nation, how close you're tied to your tribe, how ritually pure you are, how much you're doing circumcision, I don't care. You can't beat me. I've done it all better than you. I have a greater claim.

But then Paul draws our attention to the fact that if you were to do those things and you would be placing your hope on an old standard that has been surpassed and completed and fully fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

Now he makes a specific point elsewhere about circumcision itself. He doesn't actually do it here in Philippians, but he makes this point that Jesus doesn't just, like, perform the right circumcision on the eighth day as a child, or doesn't just receive it on the eighth day. He doesn't say that. He says Christ fulfills the whole activity of circumcision. Now we have to go to Colossians to find this. So I want you to turn in your Bibles to the very next letter after Philippians, which is Colossians. And we're going to look at Colossians 2:11 through 12 just briefly, because it's here that Paul is dealing with a similar group of people, a similar group of circumcision, mutilators of the flesh. And Paul says, I want to be clear about this. It's not that we're not doing circumcision because God has changed his plan, and now we're on plan B, and that was plan A or something like that. He's very clear about the fact circumcision was always to



point us to Christ. Look at Colossians 2, verses 11 and 12. Paul says in Him, *in Christ also were you circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by cutting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

Notice what Paul is saying here again, he's not saying Jesus just did it right or was perfectly circumcised or something. He's saying Jesus being cut off from life, being cut off from the city, cut off from the people by being hung on the tree became for us circumcision. And by having faith in him, we are united with him in His death. Therefore becoming for ourselves perfectly circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, that we might also be united with Him and His life through resurrection as we look at the empty tomb here, what he's saying again, it's not just the Christ did it the right way. Christ was the thing. The Old Testament circumcision was always just about Jesus in the first place. It was always just an X on the map that Jesus was to come and fulfill. So you see, Christ's fulfilled, He completed the old covenant credentials, any old covenant credential that a person can bring to the table. He in fact is the circumcision. He in fact is true Israel. And he says so when he calls himself the true vine in John 15, he in fact is of the tribe of Judah. But in fact Messiah, king of the tribe of Judah. He is the one who is publicly blameless. As to zeal he went to die himself for the sake of others. As to the law, he was the word, the logos incarnate. Paul says, don't put your trust in the old covenant. To do so it's not only retrograde, it's irrational. It shows a certain kind of irrationality. So, Christ completes the old covenant, but he also he also cures the crisis of human nature. But what is that crisis? What's the crisis of human nature? Now, this is what we often talk about when we come to a passage like this. We're talking about now, the more general desire that humans have to give meaning or earn salvation on their own accord. But Paul is saying this if Christ fulfills the Old Testament stipulations, how much more does he improve or better our own personal attempts to for self-righteousness? You see, Paul understood human nature, and he understood the crisis that laid at the heart of human nature. It's something that we all experience, both Christians and non-Christians, even your non-believing neighbors. They may not know it, but they experience this too - there's a crisis that takes place in human nature because of the fall of what happened in the garden. And here's what it is. The crisis is this all humans are made with dignity. We are all made in the image of God. We all have this kind of basic part of our being, that we are a reference point to someone greater and grander and beyond all of us. We all have this in a sense why love feels the way that love feels, and that's why injustice feels, the way that injustice feels and atrocities and the harming of the innocents. There's a reason why our hearts leap at those things. It's not just because of chemical reactions, it's because we are referencing a perfect, loving and just and holy and good God. And yet all of us, all of us, because of the fall, have seen an irrevocable - what feels like an irrevocable break. We've been severed from the God who we are made to image. And so while we see glory itself, glory, and we end with

frustration and anger and boredom, and while we seek self-actualization, we end up with feeling belittled and insecure. You see, we have a great sense and a desire for profundity and meaning, and yet they fall short.

I had the pleasure to be up on Red mountain earlier this week, and to look down on the city of Birmingham as the sun was going down and the lights were coming on in the buildings, and it was just beautiful. It was beautiful. It was. The cities are monuments to human dignity, and yet anyone who lives in a city knows the deeply destructive nature that we all have within us, both in large ways and in small ways.

You see, there's a deep crisis in human nature. But Christ comes, and he not only fulfills the Old Testament becoming the yes and Amen of every law and promise found there in. But he cures that crisis of meaning by reconceive, reconciling, reconnecting the image bearers to the God that they image.

And here's how. How does Christ do these things? How does he cure the crisis? Well, it's done through the cross of Christ, in the cross of Christ, the judgment of the fall is focused on the only one who could bear it on our behalf. But it's not just through the cross of Christ. It's also through the empty tomb. Because in the empty tomb we find now that new life, that wholeness in life, that thing that Moses calls us to in Deuteronomy 6 he says, love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul. And it really means kind of like yourself and with all of your strength out there, with all of your energies in the world. That's how we're supposed to love God, that's finally now available to us in the risen Christ. Exactly what Paul says here, and my hope is in the resurrection of which I am now apart.

So the cross of Christ focuses the judgment. The empty tomb shows us that new life, that wholeness, is now possible for those who are united to Christ. The Ascension shows that we now have an advocate in heaven who is better than any high priest that we could possibly imagine. He is indeed the very God interceding on our behalf. And then finally, what we're celebrating today on Pentecost Sunday, rather, the Pentecost, the coming of the spirit reminds us that we have an advocate here on earth who gives us new life in Christ.

As a result, the momentary satisfaction that comes from self-righteousness, the moment, territory, sense of self that comes when we self-actualize, the momentary accomplishment that we feel when we get a job done, quickly fade away against the backdrop of the divine reconciliation that we've been celebrating all morning here at Brightwood Presbyterian Church, that divine reconciliation that we have by grace, by faith with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's old covenant credentials provided a better claim for him than any of us can show up with, with our modern sensibilities and sophistication. And yet he considered it all rubbish, is all less

than waste before the gift of grace that was found in Christ. So Christ completes the covenant, Christ cures the crisis, and finally Christ creates new culture.

We'll end with this. We are living in a world where our value is based on our contribution to society, to our families, to our businesses, to our tribes, to our online communities. You name it. We have commitments to these things and we feel as if we must contribute, and that's where our value is found. But for Paul, the gospel offers a new mindset. It's a resurrection mindset.

The gospel offers us a new picture of the dignity of others and the dignity of ourselves. And it reminds us that humanity's hope is only in its reconciliation with God. Through the power of Christ's work on the cross and his resurrection. And that's what Paul can say. If you are reconciled to God in Christ, there is nothing left that you need to do to make that reconciliation complete. Brothers and sisters, it is done. And that's why he can say, rejoice, be of great joy. But you might ask, okay, so what about the righteousness though? Is the church? Is Briarwood Church just a gathering of scoundrels? Okay, trying to find a get out of jail free card? Or are we just a bunch of self-loathing individuals? We're looking for some kind of talisman to ward off our own self-loathing. Paul would say, may it never be. May it never be, because Paul knows the faith is not the end of the story. Paul recognizes that faith actually is a transformative instrument. Look at what he says in verses eight and nine, he says after saying, I count all of that stuff. It was good but appointed me to Christ. If I try to replace Christ with it, it's just rubbish. It's just waste. Look good, he says. Why do I do that? In order that I might gain Christ and be found in him. I love that phrase. Let me be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. You see, Paul knew that faith was a transformative instrument, that it changed you. The righteousness of the law couldn't win him what he desires, but it only confirms for him his need for Christ, because he feels over and over and over again. And yet now that he has received the greater reward, now that he's been united with Christ in His death and his resurrection, now in is Ascension, he is united with the risen Christ who sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, the lamb who was slain but now reigns in heaven. He knows that he can approach the Old Testament in a totally different way, because what used to condemn him now encourages him unto Christ.

The stories of the old covenant change when you follow Christ. They become now, not stories of failure of Israel. They become a grand saga pointing us to the Savior who was to come. The law and the wisdom teachings which used to condemn us because you just could never live up to all of them. Now they become a beautiful profile of our Savior, and they become guides for how we might follow him, not out of a desire to prove ourselves as worthy, but out of just oceans and oceans and oceans of grace. When you become a Christian, the law stops being a test that

you take, and it now becomes a wonderful journey that you get to participate in because you've been saved.

You see, the law does not have the power to condemn you. Brothers and sisters, it used to. When God was your enemy, trust me, the law was your enemy. But now that God is your friend in Christ want you to hear this, the law is your friend. You have nothing to fear.

Remember speaking with a woman in our church who had been reading, actually Luke 24, and she's reading about that Road to Emmaus experience, and it just kind of clicked. And she came into my office and she said I was reading it. You remember what they said? They said our hearts were burning within us. She said, that's how it feels. That's how it feels to see Christ in all of Scripture as we come and meet our Savior in Scripture. May through the power of the spirit may our hearts burn within us as well. Because he completes the covenant, there's nothing left to do. He cures the crisis. The divorce has come to an end if you are in Christ and he creates new culture and the gospel of Jesus Christ, let's pray.

Heavenly father, we do lift up this time to you. We thank you that your son ,not only perfectly images you, but that he has reconciled us to you. I pray that as we come to him by faith, Lord, that we would find our hearts breathing the fresh air of the new heavens and new earth. Even as we still live in this life, we still deal with these bodies of death, as Paul calls them. We are now breathing and citizens of the New Kingdom. Bless us in that we pray, Lord, draw us to you in Christ's name.

Amen.