

I. Introduction

- A. By the time we're finished today, I'm hoping that you make two big discoveries: one, that God is better than you ever thought, and two, there is a life waiting for you better than you ever dreamed possible. This is the promise we believe.
- B. Last weekend, this room was filled with proof of that promise... new life received, through salvation... and new life declared, through baptism.
 1. Every single person saved and baptized is a big WIN in the spiritual battle.
 2. A week ago, Wednesday, we were given a brutal reminder of the cost of that victory. Our brother in Christ, Charlie Kirk, joined the great cloud of witnesses who have sealed their testimony with their own blood.
 3. I can tell you that since that day, the total number of professions of salvation we have seen is 146, and the total number of baptisms since that day is 66.
 - a) No man, no woman, no bullet, no demon, no hatred can ever silence the Gospel of the love of God in Jesus Christ.
- C. But the spiritual battle is real. You can run, but nobody can hide. Part of that battle is a steady stream of messaging from the dark side's mouth to your ears.
 1. That's what I want to talk about today.
- D. Welcome to part 12 in a series of talks I have been giving. The series is based on a book in the Bible called Philippians. It's called that because there was a band of Christians in a city called Philippi. This was a colony in the Roman Empire. A man named Paul, St. Paul, wrote them a letter, and Philippians is that letter.
 1. The series is called: **"Quit Telling Yourself I Can't."**
- E. My talk today is based on Philippians 3:1-3. I'm going to read this. I promise you it will sound weird. But I also promise to do my best to explain it, and even more to uncover a powerful and motivational secret in these words, hiding in plain sight.
 1. *"Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,"* (Philippians 3:1-3)
- F. I'm calling my talk today:
 1. **Quit Listening to Trash Talk**
- G. This is not a pep talk. This is me, inviting you to victory.
 1. This is me, also inviting you to Jesus. Jesus said, Come to me and I will give you rest. And today, I am hoping you will have your own come to Jesus moment... I'll show you how. I won't embarrass you, or single you out. Just an open invitation and a silent prayer. That's coming.

II. The Setup

- A. These are words written to people under attack. The attack is spiritual; in this case religious... specifically a bunch of religious people.
 - B. Imagine a group of people showing up at our church. They believe in Jesus, they talk like Christians, and they seem incredibly faithful. They're not outsiders trying to attack our faith; they're insiders trying to "upgrade" it to standards that are simply not biblically defensible.
 - C. That's what made them so dangerous.
 - D. Their core message was this:
 1. "It's great that you believe in Jesus. He gets you in the door. But if you want to be a complete Christian, a first-class member of God's family, you have to live like we do. For men, that means you must be circumcised. For women and men, it means you need to follow our dietary laws and observe our sacred festivals and a thousand other picky rules."
 - a) This group is called Judaizers, because they want to put Christians under the umbrella of Judaism, so sacrifices, priesthoods, rituals and all that.
 - b) They're also called legalists, because they want to put Christians under the practices of the Laws of Moses... which were powerful to teach us about Christ, but now that Christ has come, they retain their teaching powers, but not their requirement powers.
 - E. Everywhere in the Bible, salvation with God is a free gift. The formula is faith alone in Jesus alone. Faith in Jesus plus nothing, equals salvation.
 1. But their message was not Jesus plus nothing. It was not Jesus Alone.
 2. Their message was Jesus plus. Jesus + Your Religious Performance = Salvation.
 - F. The very nano-second that Paul hears "Jesus-plus" his blood boils, and he goes on high alert.
 1. He knows that IF the devil can't get you to deny Jesus, he'll get you to undervalue Jesus. Because when you undervalue Jesus, you start thinking he didn't do enough to save you so you have to add stuff to make it work.
 - G. And that is why Paul doesn't just play defense; he goes on offense. He trash-talks the trash-talkers. He takes every single one of their attacks... the Jesus-plus people and their attacks—and he turns it into a weapon against them.
 1. TRASH TALK #1: You're dogs.
 2. The Jesus-plus leaders called everybody who wasn't in their super-holy club "dogs." Unclean. Outsiders. Unworthy.
 - a) So Paul looks them dead in the eye and says, 'Let's talk about dogs. He says to Christians... Beware of dogs... and he points to the very people who are calling the Christians dogs.
 - b) You. You're the dogs. You're the ones to watch out for. You who say you have to work your way to heaven. You who say you have to become religious and hyper religious. You're the dogs. You're the ones outside of a real relationship with God. You're the ones disrespecting Jesus.
- (1) BEWARE OF DOGS: To deny Jesus—the only one who can cleanse you from your sins—is to lock yourself into a permanent state of uncleanness before God.**

- c) Hey Christians, beware of those low-down, mangy, self-righteous, hypocritical, sanctimonious, dirty, hyper-religious, judgmental, dogs. Don't let anybody steal your confidence in Jesus.
- 3. TRASH TALK #2: Works are part of salvation. Be a worker for God.
- 4. So Paul picks up their works, and says, You're worker's all right. Evil workers. Legalists are all about works. Good works. Religious works. Spiritual works. Self-sacrificial works. Their whole identity is wrapped up in being workers for God. And it sounds so reasonable and so very holy.
 - a) But it's so deadly to the message of Christianity.
 - b) Because any work you do to try and earn what Jesus gives as a free gift is another way of denying the Cross. It's Jesus plus.
 - c) **BEWARE OF EVIL WORKERS: There is exactly one Good Work needed to get any person to heaven. That good work was Jesus, dying on the cross for your sins and rising again.** When he did that, he said, "It is Finished."
 - d) So there's a term that Christians use: **We believe in the finished work of Christ.** It is finished. You don't add to it. It's perfect. Keep your fingerprints off of it.
 - (1) Ephesians 2:8: salvation is not from the source of works.
 - (2) Titus 3:5 says: not by works of righteousness we have done
 - (3) Galatians 3:10 says all who rely on works are under the curse of God.
 - e) So Paul says, "beware of evil workers" because he knows that any good works that you offer as substitute for the finished work that Christ offered is an attempt to negate the Cross of Christ, and is therefore evil. And even demonic.
 - f) Never let anybody talk you down from your confidence in the once for all sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.
- 5. TRASH TALK#3: Gotta get circumcised... and all there rest.
- 6. The third beware is my favorite and the one most likely to get me into trouble. Beware of the mutilators!
 - a) This is trash-talk taken to an epic level.
 - b) But I have to do some Bible study to make it make sense. It's worth it.
 - c) The next sentence says: For we are of the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit...
 - (1) If you take apart the English word circumcision, it almost explains itself.
 - (a) *Circum*, Latin for around. -*cision*... like an incision from a surgeon, Latin for cut. To cut around.
 - (b) Well, this was written in Greek, not Latin, but it's basically the same thing.
 - (c) *Peri-tomé* in Greek. *Peri*, is Greek for "around." And *tomé* is Greek for to cut. To cut around. Same deal.
 - d) For the religious Jesus, circumcision was the supreme proof of their special status with God. Circumcision was their convenient sign. It was their badge of membership. It was their membership card.
 - e) So these legalists come into the church, and they say unless you obey all the laws of Moses, and all you men get circumcised, you're not really saved.
 - f) So Paul trash talks them... Beware of the mutilators... but instead of the word "peritomé" for cutting around, he uses a play on words and says "katatomé" which means you're not cutting around, you're cutting it off. So look out.
 - (1) Look out for the Loppers!
 - (2) **BEWARE OF THE CHOPPERS:**
 - (a) **It's not any scars on you that tell you who you are; it is the scars on Jesus from being nailed to that old rugged cross.**
- 7. Today, I'm not inviting you to some kind of insider club based on behavior, on good works, on ritual, or even on circumcision or baptism or anything like that.
- 8. I'm not inviting you to a religion or a church
- 9. I'm inviting you to Jesus, That's coming... you don't have to be ready; just willing.

III. *"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," (Philippians 3:3)*

- A. So Paul says, We are of the circumcision... The spiritual circumcision, the spiritual act gives a person insider status with God... not a physical act. Not a religious ritual. But three phrases that all say the same thing, and each one conveniently answers, the three trash talks from the legalists.
- B. To the voice that calls you a 'dog,' because you're not physically circumcised, Paul says... we worship God in the Spirit.
 - 1. This is spiritual, not physical.
 - 2. This is invisible, not ritual.
 - 3. IF you got saved last week, Jesus didn't just open the door to heaven for you... which he did.
 - 4. He also came through that door to be with you. The Spirit of God moved into you and he will never leave you or forsake you.
 - 5. This means...
 - a) Your search for belonging is over.
 - b) The loneliness you feel in a crowded room is a lie.
 - c) If you feel like an outsider, if you feel disconnected, if you feel less than, if you feel abandoned, or forgotten, or lost... God brought you here today to discover that your God is closer to you than your own breath.
 - (1) You are no longer unclean; you have been washed clean by the blood of the Lamb.
 - (2) You are no longer defined by your worst day; you are defined by His best day when Jesus rose from the grave.
 - (3) You are no longer a project to be fixed; you are a masterpiece being revealed.
- C. To the voices that says your works are not enough, Paul says, Right. They never could be enough.
 - 1. Not all the good works piled on all the best works of all the best people who have ever lived could ever be enough.

2. Imagine a scientist gives you a mission: to change the color of the Pacific Ocean to red. He hands you a small bottle of potent, industrial-strength red dye. You take a boat out to the middle of the ocean and pour the entire bottle in. For a brief moment, you see a swirl of crimson in the vast blue, but it vanishes almost instantly, swallowed by the sheer volume of water.
 3. Our good works are like that bottle of red dye. Before the infinite, holy, and pure nature of God, even our most righteous acts are like a momentary swirl of color in an endless ocean. They are finite, often tinged with imperfect motives, and utterly incapable of changing our fundamental nature or satisfying God's perfect standard.
 4. By comparison to the perfection of God, even the best human can produce all added together can only amount to evil works... so we can never make a big deal out of our works... we make a big deal out of Jesus, and his 1 solitary finished work for our salvation.
- D. The the voices that say you must mark your flesh, Paul says we have no confidence in the flesh.
1. It's not about a mark on your body; it's a seal of approval on your spirit.
 - a) It's not human performance, effort, sweat, or works... it's divine effort, blood, and tears, and it's a gift from God to you.
 - (1) Have no confidence in the flesh.
 - b) It's not how much you earn, but how freely he gives.
 - c) It's not what's on your resume, because it's not about God giving you a job.
- E. My dear brother, my dear sister, my dear friend... never let anybody trash talk you out of your confidence in your blood-bought, heaven-sent birthright that became yours on the first day you first trusted in Christ.
- F. Now I want to go backwards because we jumped right to verse 2 and didn't cover verse 1, and there's some magic here.
- IV. *"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe."* (Philippians 3:1)
- A. Let me introduce you to your three selves:
1. Your Past Self.
 2. Your Present Self.
 3. Your Future Self... I'm not talking about heaven... I'm talking about you 3 years from now.
- B. Your Past Self is where all the trash talk lives.
1. It's your resume.
 2. It's your history of failures and successes.
 3. It's the voice of the 'dogs,' the 'workers,' the 'mutilators.'
 - a) And its only goal is to keep you chained to who you were, so you can never become who you were created to be.
- C. Your Present Self is where you live right now.
1. It's the place of your power, your choice, your dominion.
 2. It's where you get to decide which voice you will listen to.
 3. It's where you choose whether you listen to trash talk from the world or truth talk from the Word.
- D. But it's your Future Self that changes everything.
1. Your Future Self is the finished, glorified, victorious you that is already a reality in heaven.
 2. And this is this person God invites you to bring forward into time.
 - a) So that you know who you are, and believe who you are, and what you have and what you can do because you know you have high calling in Christ.
- E. Let's go phrase by phrase...
1. **Finally...** that pulling it all together... Pulling what together? That you have free will agency. That God is working in you to heal your damaged emotions, restore your damaged thinking, and most importantly empower your damaged free will.
 - a) He is giving you an internal locus of control. You're not controlled by your past. You're not controlled by the legalists. You're not controlled by anyone or anything... you are captain of your life under the mighty Lordship of Jesus Christ. You get to choose. You get to pursue the desires of your heart.
 2. **Finally... my brothers and sisters...**
 - a) members of the royal family of God...
 3. **Rejoice in the Lord...**
 - a) Joy is a psychological state. It is not a choice. It is not a switch you can flip on.
 - (1) He's not telling you to be happy about your past performance.
 - (2) He's not even telling you to be happy about what's going on right now.
 - (3) He is inviting your Present Self to feel the joy of your future victory, right now.
 - (4) It's the joy of your Future Self reaching back through time to tell you, "Hold on. It's going to be okay. The battle is already won, and the victory is more glorious than you can imagine."
 - b) The most psychologically healthy thing you can do as a Christian is to have such a positive and hopeful view of Future You that you tell Present You to send blessings to Future You today.
 4. **For me to write the same things to you is not tedious/lazy...**
 - a) Use the word "lazy."
 - (1) And that brings us to that strange word Paul uses: "tedious."
 - (2) The Greek word is ὀκνήρῳν (oknēron), and it doesn't just mean tedious. It means lazy, reluctant, sluggish.
 - (3) Paul is saying, "I am not lazy or reluctant to repeat this truth to you." And here's the profound reason why, when you look at your three selves:
 - b) Because the trash talk from your Past Self is never lazy. It is a relentless, 24/7 broadcast of your failures and your weakness, incompetence, and shame. It never gets tired. It never hesitates.

- (1) So Paul, your coach in this battle, says, "If the voice of your past is relentless in its trash talk, then I will be relentless in my defense of you."
 - (a) If you are tempted to be lazy in the fight, I will not be lazy in handing you your weapon."
- (2) His repetition isn't tedious; it's tactical.
- c) He's about to tell you that the highest use of your free will, personal agency and dominion is to love Future You so much that you instruct present you to forget the failures of your past self so you can choose today to choices that will bless you, your family, and your world tomorrow.

5. **But for you it is safe...**

- a) And that brings us to the final word in that verse: "safe."
- b) And I have to be honest with you, that might be the worst, most bland translation in the entire Bible. The Greek word Paul uses here is *asphalēs*. It doesn't mean 'cozy' or 'comfortable.'
 - (1) It doesn't mean that you play it safe, or avoid all risk or danger.
 - (2) It means unshakeable. Un-stumble-able. Rock-solid.
- c) It's an architectural term. It's the word you would use for the foundation of a skyscraper. Paul is saying, "This truth I am relentlessly repeating to you is the very blueprint for your mental and spiritual stability."
- d) And here is why.
- e) Will you stand on the shifting sand of your past self, wounded and messed up.
- f) Or will you stand on the solid rock of your future self, victorious and living out your high calling in Christ Jesus.
- g) You become unshakeable.
- h) That is the victory. That is the freedom. And that is the life that is waiting for you.

V. Conclusion

- A. So I have a question for you. Who are you going to be when you walk out of this room?
- B. Are you going to be the ghost of who you were? Haunted by your past, defined by your mistakes, listening to the same old trash talk on a loop?
- C. Or are you going to be the preview of the the powerful future God is calling you to.
 - 1. **I would rather fail attempting to be my future self than succeed trying to shut up my past self.**
- D. Because here is the grand finale. Here is the secret to it all. When you stop listening to the trash talk of your past, you don't just find peace. You unleash power. You stop being a victim of your history and you become a warrior for your destiny. You become a source of stability in a world of chaos. You become the calm in the storm for your family, for your friends, for this broken world.
- E. And that starts right now.
- F. The enemy's number one strategy is to get you alone with your thoughts. To isolate you in the echo chamber of your own trash talk. We are going to break that strategy in this room, right now. We are going to go on offense, together.
- G. Let's just declare something today over our lives...

1. **My future self is amazing in Christ.**

VI. Gospel:

- A. Admit, believe, choose.

VII. Prayer

- A. Father, thank you for the victory we have in Jesus.
- B. I pray for every person listening right now, that in this moment, you would silence the trash talk of their past and amplify the glorious promise of their future.
- C. May they walk out of here choosing to live in the power of Your Spirit, finding all their worth in Jesus, and placing zero confidence in their own efforts. Anchor their souls to the secure future you have purchased for them. Make them unshakeable. Free them from the prison of who they were, and unleash them to live as the victorious, world-changing warriors you have called them to be.
- D. In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.