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PHILIPPIANS 3:7-10

Series: Choosing Joy in a Post-Traumatic World

A couple of weeks ago I was looking at my credit card balance, and it was much higher than I expected it to be. So I knew I needed to do a little audit there myself. I checked it out and realized that some of these charges aren't even mine. So I called the credit card company and we together realized that these aren't my charges. They canceled my card, sent me another one, and got rid of the charges. I'm sure you've had that experience before. But the point is, there's a point where we need to do an audit like that in our lives of our credit card or bank account. I think also we're going to see today in our passage there's some times when we need to do a spiritual audit of our lives. And that spiritual audit will help us understand what's going on, if things are out of balance, they're not in the right place. Now I use that terminology today because it's accounting terminology that Paul's going to use in Philippians 3 to help us know how to do a spiritual audit in our lives.

So if you would, open your Bibles to Philippians 3, starting in verse 7. We're going to pick up this teaching. But let me bring you back to verse 1. Because if you remember in Philippians 3:1 Paul starts with this. He says – *Finally, brethren, rejoice in the Lord*. So all of this that we're going to talk about now ties back into that command that Paul gave to rejoice in the Lord. Rejoicing in the Lord is going to be that key idea.

Then you remember right after that in verse 1, and you see it in the text there, it says – *For this is safe for you*. For this is safe for you. What does that mean, for this is safe for you? We talked about that. In fact, I really liked what Joan Yi said in the small group that we had this week. She said that we guard our joy so that it can guard us. That's the idea here. It's safe for you. We also talked last week about how we have this confidence in Christ instead of in ourselves. And then Paul goes on to list a number of things that he could have confidence in. That's in verse 6.

Now we come to verse 7 because he's taking off on that idea of all these things he knows he's good at. You know, he has a good history, he's done a lot of good things. He says I could put my confidence in these things, but I don't. Now he says in verse 7 – *But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ*. So do you see that accounting terminology there? Gains are like profits. Losses. And he says – *I reckoned it or I counted it as loss*. Gains and losses. Today what we're going to do is we're going to take a spiritual audit of our own hearts and lives. We're going to learn how to do that, but why it's so important to do it on a regular basis.

The first word there, *gain*, is an important word. It has to do with something that is valuable, something that's important. Paul has just listed a number of things that were important to him,

that he was persecuting the church, and that he was a Pharisee, all those things in verse 6. He lists those things. Those were very important. They were his values.

We have to think for a moment what is important to us. This is how you do a spiritual audit. You start looking at what are the profits that I have because I need to make sure they go in the right column here. Paul is saying that I valued all these things and I'm putting them in the loss column. That's what he's doing. Compared to knowing Jesus Christ is his point.

Now think about the things that we value. Because here's what happens in life. When you value something... and those values are not necessarily bad things. Sometimes they're good things. But the things that we value, sometimes we invest our emotions into them and when we do and something happens, then we get upset. So we get angry, or we get depressed, or we get anxious, because the things that we value are being threatened, or somebody's taking them from us, or we lose them. When that happens, then we start to feel something. We start to feel bad, we feel distressed, we feel discouraged, we feel anxious, we feel upset in one way or another. Often it's because we look at our spiritual audit. We say, you know, I'm upset. I think I'm upset because I probably value this thing too much. Now, sometimes the values are tangible. They're things like a car or a house or a bank account or investments. And so our investments start to go down if the stock market goes down, and we start feeling bad. Maybe we need to say to ourselves, maybe I'm investing a little too much of my emotion into this investment. Maybe I need to do a spiritual audit here and find out what's really important to me. But sometimes the things aren't tangible like that. Sometimes they're intangible or they're more conceptual. Things like my reputation, or things like safety, or things like pleasure.

You can imagine that the people we talked about earlier, the people in Ukraine, are trying to measure what's most important. Your safety? You know, one of the pastors says, "No, we're staying here. We're not fleeing. We're going to be here and minister with our people. Because when this is all over, people are going to have impressions about Christianity and we want to show them that we're here to minister and care." What's most important in that case? Is it safety? Well, maybe not. I'm not saying safety is unimportant. But I'm saying when we're starting to value things, what is the most important thing? It's Jesus Christ. That's what Paul is saying. Let's do a spiritual audit and evaluate that.

I think this is the overall truth we're going to take away here. When we see ourselves being overcome by our emotions, then we need to do a spiritual audit to see if things are out of balance in our hearts. I think that's the real point here that Paul is trying to make. He's talking about rejoicing in the Lord. And now he's going to talk about the gains and losses. Sometimes there are things we really need to reduce our emotional investment in our values. We need to evaluate them and we need to test them out.

So he says here that there's gains and there's losses, but he reckons them or he counts them in the columns. So if you understand accounting, you're going to take an asset and you're going to put it somewhere. And he says, I take these assets that I have, all these things about me, and I put them in the loss column, not because they're not important. See a couple values that I have, I really value family and I really value our church. But if my emotions get too tied into family and church, good things, and then something starts to happen bad, then I can get all upset. I need to

go back and say Christ is the most important thing here. So Paul was saying I am investing, I'm putting my all the things I used to value so highly, I'm putting them in the loss column in comparison for Christ. So it says – *for the sake of Christ*. That's going to be our key here. It's not that they're not important. It's that when you're trying to compare them, then you're really understanding that Christ is the most important thing.

There are some people who are just starting to get married and they value marriage so much. They have a dream about what marriage should be, until they get married and they find out they're living with a real human being. And then their dream about marriage isn't exactly what they thought it would be. At that moment, they have to make a decision about what's important here. The most important thing is Jesus Christ and serving Him, even in a marriage relationship.

I think this affects so many practical things. This isn't just a Sunday school class. This is a Monday morning, go to work class. Where we're starting to value things. And you'll know when values are out of place when emotions are out of control. So we need to be able to evaluate these things in the way that he's talking about here. Gains are things that we value.

Well let's go to the next verse, which is verse 8. In a different way he says the same thing. He says – *I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*. But I don't know if you caught this in the first verse, verse 7. He says – *I counted*. I made a decision in my life at a point in my life that I was going to value Christ more than anything else. I made that decision in the past. We're told about that decision in the book of Acts. So we know that Paul became a Christian. He decided I'm going to put all of those old values aside and now I'm going to make Christ the value in my life. I am becoming a Christian. So when you make that decision in the past, you are choosing to follow Christ 100%. That's a decision you make in the past. But now he's saying it in the present. I continue to count everything. Because I believe this is something we don't just do once. I think we do this all the time. I think every day we get up and we count again, that I'm going to count everything a loss. Because somehow these values creep up on us. Somehow we started investing our emotions and things that may not be the best. And so we need to make Christ the most important thing on a daily basis. This is probably why the psalmist says he meditates on the word day and night. That he does a spiritual audit in the morning and at night. Because we regularly need to be measuring our progress in the gospel to make sure that Christ is the most important thing.

So these words are really interesting. He says – *I count everything as loss because of the...* Underline the word *surpassing worth*. I'm going to show you that it's used four times in the Bible, this word (it's one word) *surpassing worth*. Value. In other words it's very, very valuable. It's surpassing value. It's used four times in the Bible. I'm just going to show you three of them because they're all in the book of Philippians.

We're going to talk about anxiety when we get to Philippians 4. You know in that verse it says – *And the peace of God, which greatly surpasses (that's the word there) understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus*. It's the peace of God that's much more valuable. It's much worth so much more, surpassing worth, than human understanding, is what he's going to say in Philippians 4. But that leaves us with this verse where he says, what's surpassing? It's knowing Christ is surpassing worth.

But I want to take you into this verse in the last chapter in Philippians 2:3. In that verse he uses this word as well. Because he says – *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility* (so that's in this lowliness of mind) *count* (or consider – that's the same word used in Philippians 3 – consider or reckon) *others more significant than yourself*, as worth more than yourself. That's the same word being used here. That others are worth more.

Now if you've looked at the book of Philippians, sometimes you'll see that some people will summarize the whole book of Philippians in one word, and that word is joy. They'll say, “J.O.Y. Jesus, others, and you.” Maybe you've seen that before, it comes from this word being used here, surpassing worth. In other words, what we need to do is put ourselves at the bottom in humility, like here, count others (now others is the next step up, more significant than yourselves), and then we go back to the verse there, the surpassing worth of Christ. So Jesus, others and you. That's the model being laid out here by Paul if we're going to have a sense of values that are going to contribute to emotional health.

When we do the spiritual audit, we need to ask the question, what's the most important thing? Because some people put themselves, they honor themselves. I'm the most important thing. And so the solution here that Paul is saying is that we need to make it J.O.Y. Jesus, others, and you, that's the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I underlined the word *knowing*. We'll come back to that in a little bit as we understand it. This idea of making Christ the most important thing is important because it's different than saying, “I'm just going to put Jesus in my back pocket, I'm going to add Him to the rest of my stuff that I'm doing.” Really Jesus takes over our lives. We give ourselves 100% to Him, and everything else comes in balance.

He's going to make a real strong statement. In the next phrase he says – *For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish*. The word *rubbish* is a word describing garbage. It's a very strong word that he's using there. And he takes all the things he thought were really important and he counts them or he considers them as not important at all. They're like trash compared to knowing Jesus. *In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him*.

And now we're going to come to this idea of righteousness. Because sometimes even when we come to our spiritual lives... So far we haven't really talked about our spiritual lives. We've just talked about the things we value. But if we talk about our spiritual lives, what do we start thinking about in terms of value? Do we value the good deeds that we do, the righteousness that we have? If you ask some people like the man on the street, you say to him, “Hey, are you going to heaven when you die?” “Oh yeah. Probably. I've done more good than bad in my life.” Well what that person is saying is I'm relying on my righteousness, and I think I've done a pretty good job of life. Or another person might say, “No way. Things I've done, they're never going to let me into heaven.” That person's got the same error, just on the other side. They're thinking God's going to somehow measure whether they've done more good or bad, and that's going to determine whether they get into heaven or not.

Well here's what Paul says. He says – *In order to gain Christ* (verse 9) *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*. He used the word *faith* twice there. So

we put this idea back into the context of the passage. We're seeing look, rejoice in the Lord, don't put confidence in yourself, consider all the things you value, set them aside for knowing Christ, and it's going to help you to rejoice in the Lord. It's going to put a more stable picture inside of your heart so you can rejoice every day. Because your relationship with Christ doesn't change. It's there continually. You're not relying on your own righteousness. You're not relying on the values that you have. It's all about Christ and your relationship with Him. Really a powerful statement that Paul is making here.

It's interesting to me that at tax time all the accounting changes. Have you noticed that? If you've given money to the church and you go, "Wow, I'm sure giving a lot of money to the church, that's taking a lot of money away from my expendable income." But tax time you go, "Wow, look how much money I gave to the church! That's a big deduction on my account." Same thing with your medical bills. You know, "Man, I had to put a lot of money in medical bills." But then when it comes to tax time, "Whoa, look at all those assets I now have on my taxes to reduce my taxes." Or if you had a capital loss, those of you who have invested in some stock or something and you lost that you go, "Oh so terrible I lost that." At tax time you go, "Oh good. Get all those losses out because they're going to reduce my taxes." So everything switches at tax time.

I think a lot of things switch when we do a spiritual audit because we start to recognize that God's accounting system is different than ours. That if we really want to have this sense of joy in life, we want to have emotional balance then we're going to have to consider the losses and gains differently in our lives. The things we think are so great and important in our lives often aren't as big and important as we think they are. We need to value Christ in our lives.

Well that takes us to verse 9. And that really describes the spiritual audit idea. But then we get to verse 10, because I think you're wondering, as I am, okay, how do you do this? What does it look like in practical terms? That's what happens in verse 10. Paul is going to tell us, this is what you do, in essence, as you're doing your spiritual audit. That's why I used the words *that* or *so that*. You see that's the transition word in verse 10. In other words, all the things I've told you so far are so that you can do this. If you understand what a spiritual audit is, you'll be able to do these things. That's the point that he's making.

In verse 10 he says – *so that I may know him*. Let's just pause there. Let me read the rest, then we'll come back to it. *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 from the dead.*

So in this last section, he starts by saying *that I may know him*. Circle the word *know* and also circle up there in verse 8 where it says the *worth of knowing Christ*. It's the same Greek word. That's why I want you to circle it. It's the word *ginosko*. Write that down somewhere. *Ginosko*. However you want to spell it is fine. You're just transliterating it from Greek anyway, so you can spell it any way you want. Okay. *Ginosko*. It's the word that means experiential knowledge. You learn by experience. In other words, you experience Christ. You know Him by experience. And we're going to contrast that with a different word that's not found here. But a Greek word that's used in the Bible is the word *oida*. It's not found here. I want to make that clear. But it is a contrast. *Oida* is to understand by observation. To understand by observation. In other

words, to look or someone teaches you or lectures you on something, then then you are learning that way. That's an understanding you get through *oida*. But *ginosko* is a learning from experience. Like when you do driver's training. You can learn all about, you can have the *oida* experience, and you can learn all the laws of the land, and how the car works and all those things. But what you really need is the behind-the-wheel experience. That's the *ginosko*. The knowledge by experience. And that's the word that's used here. It's the word *to know him*. It's this personal relationship that you have with Christ.

Do you know Christ? I mean I just talked to Him this morning and I was telling Him about some things in my life. When I read the scriptures and He talks back to me, and I understand I have this personal relationship with Christ that I enjoy. If you don't know Him and you want to know Him personally, come and talk to me. I'll introduce you to Him because He's a real person, and God wants to have a relationship with you. He wants to talk to you. And He wants you to talk to Him. It's this relational component. That is what Paul is saying here. *That I may know him and the power of his resurrection.*

Now there's this understanding by observation, or it's the kind of teaching and there's knowledge by experience. Both are really important in life. And so if you're doing spiritual training with children, I say you need both of those. The *oida* is teaching kids 200 Bible stories. But you know, every time we learn a Bible story, we have to ask the question, why is that Bible story there?

The reason we study Adam and Eve isn't just because we're learning about the creation of the first man and woman. We're asking the question, why is it there? It's because even though you can have the best in the world, everything you want, there's always temptation that exists that can get you sidetracked. Be careful. That's why we tell kids the story of Adam and Eve.

If you're learning the story of the Good Samaritan, you're learning the story not because it's Jesus telling the story about this man who got hurt by robbers and so on. But you're learning the story why? Because you want to look out and see who is my neighbor. That's the point Jesus is making. Who is my neighbor? I want to know that every person I come in contact with, I have an obligation to think of them, not just myself.

Every Bible story has a meaning, has a purpose. So on the *oida* side, we want children to know 200 Bible stories. We want them to memorize scripture. We want them to understand theology. Theology. How all the Bible texts fit together in certain areas. That's the *oida* part. Very important in spiritual training.

But then there comes the experiential part, where we're talking about prayer, and we're learning how God speaks to us right out of His Word and teaches us, gives us a verse for the day or a word that we can put into our lives and practice today. There's that experiential side of serving the Lord and watching Him work in people's lives. We need to know Christ and we need to know about Him. But the emphasis here for dealing with our spiritual audit is that we get to know Christ personally. That's what Paul is saying. I want to know Him. Verse 8 says – *the surpassing worth of knowing Christ*. Notice it doesn't say the surpassing worth of Christ. It says surpassing

worth of *knowing* Christ Jesus my Lord. That's so valuable when it comes to the spiritual audit we're going to do.

So he comes down here and he says – *that I may know him*. That's what that's what our goal is – to know Jesus, have that personal relationship. And then *the power of his resurrection, and may share in the sufferings*. In the good and in the bad we're going to know God. When you go through suffering and challenges in your life, there tends to be a confusion in our thinking about God. Is God here? Am I all alone in all of this? And so there's some times when we go through difficult experiences our faith is enriched because we realize, yes, he's in the valleys, not just on the mountains. That He's working in our lives in deeper ways. I think in many ways when we suffer our theology becomes more real, it becomes deeper in our lives. And so Paul continues to describe – *become like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead*. There's this whole commitment, total commitment that Paul is saying.

So let's just go back and review before I tell you a final story, that there's a spiritual audit that we must take in our lives in order to have emotional health and emotional balance. Rejoice in the Lord. That is where he's starting. Rejoicing really comes from understanding this idea of making sure your gains are in the right place and you're really valuing crisis. That's number one.

So as I was looking at this this week with the small group, Harold said, “I think that in verse 1 where it says *rejoice in the Lord*, that's about rejoicing in this relationship in the Lord.” And I said, “You know what? That's right. I like that better than what I said last week.” If you were here last week, you heard me say that rejoice in the Lord, what does that mean? That means take all of your theology, all the information you know about God, and that's what you're rejoicing in. But now I see, as Harold pointed out, this probably is more rejoicing in your relationship, your personal, intimate relationship with Jesus. That's what he's talking about. That's how we can rejoice even in the midst of struggles.

We need to be on the lookout for times when we think things are out of balance in our lives. When things are out of balance, we need to do that spiritual audit. It would be better if we do it on a regular basis. I would ask how many of you balance your checkbooks, but I would be embarrassed with the answer, I'm sure. Because a lot of people today don't balance their checkbooks anymore; they just have a balance and they just go with whatever they have in the bank. But we need to do this spiritual audit on a regular basis in order to keep the books balanced inside of our hearts.

Now I'm going to tell you a story. This is a true story that happened to me and my daughter, Elizabeth. I called Elizabeth this week to ask her permission to share this story. We laughed together about it. We didn't laugh at the time, believe me, but we laugh now about it. She agreed to allow me to share this story with you.

As a parent, you want your kids to learn how to manage their own money. So my wife and I set up a checking account for Elizabeth that was all hers. She could manage it totally on her own. We don't want anything to do with it. You put your check in there, you spend your money. It's all yours. Because we wanted her to have that experience of living and managing her own money.

Everything was fine for a few months. Until one day as I was getting the mail, I saw that there was a letter from the bank for Elizabeth and it was pink on the inside. Now I know what a pink slip is from the bank. She's probably never seen one. So I'm just delivering the mail. I said, "Hey, you got some mail from the bank," and went on didn't say anything about it. Because I want her to experience this herself. She didn't say anything about it. And so a couple days later, I get some more mail and there's two more in the in the mail. So I put those on her desk. Well the clincher for me was two days later, she gets five more in the mail. So I put them there and now she's got about ten of them sitting there on her desk. I go in and I say, "Hey, it looks like you're getting a lot of mail from the bank. What's going on?"

She says, "I don't know. They made some mistake in my account. I don't know what they're doing."

I said, "Well, I tell you what. Why don't we do this? I know the bank manager. Let's take all the mail there and ask him what their problem is over there. Okay?"

And so she says, "Okay."

So we go into the bank and I say to the bank manager, "Hi, how you doing?" He knows me, I know him. I said, "Hey look, we're getting all this mail from the bank, my daughter is, and she doesn't understand why. Could you please help her kind of sort this out, figure out what your problem is here at the bank?"

And he says, "Sure." So now imagine the scene. He goes and sits behind his desk. My daughter, I have her sit right there with the bank manager. I'm behind her in a chair because this is her problem. I don't want to deal with it. I just want to facilitate what's about to happen.

So he says to her, "Well, it looks like you've made a lot of charges here and written some checks." She said, "I didn't make any charges and I didn't write any checks."

"Oh, okay," he says. "Well let me turn the screen around. Did you write this check for \$35? Is that your signature?"

She says, "Oh yeah, I wrote that check."

He says, "Okay. I got a charge here to McDonald's for \$5.87. Did you make that charge?"

"Oh yeah, I made that charge."

"I've got another charge here to a pet company for \$12.17. Is that your charge?"

"Oh yeah, I made that charge."

He goes down this list of charges and she's admitting all of these charges are hers. And then he says, "Okay well, let me just calculate this for a minute." Pauses, does a little work. And he says,

"Do you know how much money you owe us in fees?"

She says, "No."

He says, "\$735."

Now I'm the dad who doesn't want to get involved, but at this point I can't take it anymore. My compassion side of the dad is now erupting because I'm about to get myself up off the floor and do something here. \$735 in fees! You've got to be kidding me! So I said, "Oh wow, that's a lot of money. Is there any way... You know, I've been a customer here for a long time at the bank. Is there any way you could do something about this for us?"

He says, "Oh sure. Let me look at this." He looks at it. And he says, "I can take \$100 off of that."

I said, "Okay, thank you very much." And my daughter and I walked out of that bank today, having learned a lesson. Don't ignore the warning signs.

I've just got to say, folks, there's a lot of people today who are ignoring the warning signs of emotional turbulence in their lives. They're getting anxious more than they should. They're getting more angry than they know is helpful. They're getting depressed about all kinds of things. Don't ignore the warning signs. Those are the warning signs that say spiritual audit needed. And when we have that spiritual audit, it helps us to be able to sort things out and get ourselves right with God because, really, Jesus Christ is the most important thing in our lives. Amen? Amen.

Would you stand with me and let's pray together.