



Thank You Notes Series:
Rules: What makes you a good person?

Philippians 3:1-14
July 2nd, 2023

DAILY DEVOTION

Find a rhythm in God's word this week! Follow this 5 day plan on your own or with your group!

<https://my.bible.com/reading-plans/22186>

INSPIRATION

"The rules of capitalization are so unfair to words in the middle of a sentence."
— John Green

"It is the beginning of wisdom when you recognize that
the best you can do is choose which rules you want to live by,
and it's persistent and aggravated imbecility to pretend you can live without any."
— Wallace Stegner

ICE BREAKER

- a) Have you found that you tend to be a rule keeper, or a rule breaker? Have you been happy with that approach or has it left you somewhat frustrated?

DEEP DIVE

Read this out loud

An excerpt from the message this week:

"From where do I gather my confidence? Not necessarily my confidence like self-esteem, but my confidence in God. In the quiet of the night, when I lay my head on my pillow, how can I be confident—that in the uncertainty of the world, God is certain. I want to be confident and truly



believe that He is near, that He is not surprised, that His plan is good, and that I can trust Him. How can I be confident that "God's got a hold on me?".

Wss..”

Read Philippians 3:1-4 and then answer the following questions:

Philippians 3: 1 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.

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, 4 though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could.

The Jewish people had come to believe from the Old Testament and from their teachers that certain things you do (and don't do made you spiritual) – and God's opinion of you was based on this. For the Jews a primary requirement was for males to be circumcised.

- 1) What do you recall were some of those things that Jewish people in the Bible believed they had to do to be righteous people.

- 2) Give me today's list, of the things people commonly think you must do or not do to be spiritual – for God to be pleased with you.

- 3) Could God be pleased with you if you didn't follow those rules? Explain.

Read this out loud

An excerpt from the message this week:

This rules based religion is no more. He's asking (Paul)– Why would you get circumcised when what Christ wants is a changed heart? Don't put your confidence in a surgical procedure, don't put your confidence in following this arbitrary rule– put your confidence in Jesus. I've been thinking about what kinds of rules are still litmus tests in the church today– things we might be tempted to use to determine if someone is a 'real Christian' or 'really saved', or not. I've thought about this over and over and here's the conclusion I've come to: I don't know. I don't know what your litmus test is because I think this is highly personal to your brain and your family and your



history. But some people might say: I know I have confidence in Christ because I come to church every Sunday. Rule Kept. Or because I study my Bible for 10 minutes every day. Or because I volunteer at church. Or because I lift my hands up when I sing or eloquently pray or because I adopted two Compassion kids. I'm keeping the rules.. Sometimes other rules get thrown– like because I educate my kids a certain way or feed my family a certain way... the list goes on and on. A lot of things are considered 'Christian Litmus Tests' anymore– and we need to be wary.

Friends, let us never add our litmus tests to the Gospel of Grace. The Bible tells us that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Read Philippians 3:5-9 and answer the following questions:

Philippians 3

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! 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.

7 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 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."

- 4) Paul had thrown himself fully into the pursuit of being a great Pharisee. What are things you've fully committed yourself to at times in your life but looking back it didn't turn out how you had expected and wasn't worth all the effort? (Sports, hobbies, degrees, work, business?) Tell us about that.

- 5) No amount of good works would ever make Paul (or anyone) good enough to deserve or earn salvation from their sins. Instead Paul realized salvation and righteousness only come through faith.

So what does this "faith" concept actually mean?

Please explain as clearly as you can this idea of faith in Jesus and what he has done. Also how is this "faith" different from the demons belief who also know all this is true, but clearly are not saved.



Read this out loud

An excerpt from the message this week:

God gave us a gift that we did not deserve, and that we could never earn when he sent Jesus to die on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. This is freely given— not because we keep all the rules perfectly, and not because we have all the right credentials— but because He loved us with a never ending grace..

Read Philippians 3:1-3 and answer the following questions:

Philippians 3:

7 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 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.

10 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!

12 I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.

13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

- 6) Garbage: Paul thought of his old good works as “worthless garbage” because of the arrogant futility of ever thinking those acts would ever make him “deserve” God’s salvation. Most religious people today still believe you earn salvation by your good works rather than by faith in Christ. So how should we view the good works we do and have done in our lives? Explain your thinking here.

- 7) Resurrection: Paul looks forward to sharing with Christ the experience of having his body resurrected eternally from the dead. What are reasons we rarely if ever think about that promise we have to look forward to?



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- 8) The Goal: Paul concedes he is still far from having “arrived” at his goal of being like Christ. What do you see in verses 12-14 that can help us stay on track in our pursuit of Christlike maturity?

NEXT STEPS

- 9) Think of one specific thing you can do this week to take another step in following Christ to be more like him. It might be something new, or perhaps something you haven't done in a while.

PRAYER

They say the ground is level at the foot of the cross. We are all equally unworthy of the salvation he offers, and yet profoundly loved by him as he adopts us as children into his family. Spend some time in prayer expressing gratitude for his salvation and appreciation for his love for us.

SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

Establish a regular rhythm of serving together! Below are some service opportunities.

- BENSON - Serve with us at ABIDE every 2nd Saturday.
- MILLARD - Serve with us at Heartland Hope every 4th Saturday.
- FREMONT - Serve with us at LifeHouse every 3rd Saturday.
- OMAHA - Serve with us at Open Door Mission every 4th Saturday.
- Or get to know your community, are there any needs/volunteer opportunities?