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Sermon Notes

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Paul's Spiritual Resumé Rejected

Philippians 3:1-11

Introduction: The Spiritual Resumé

A. The Building of a Resumé

The American Dream... becoming a "Self-Made Man" or woman

Illus. Horatio Alger, Jr.

Horatio Alger, Jr. was an American author (1832-1899). Alger produced the one of the first boys' adventure series. Alger published over 118 novels in book form. Another 280 novels were produced in magazines along with more than five hundred short stories. His young heroes succeed through a mixture of pluck and good circumstances. A given hero may appear in several books, e.g., "Ragged Dick," but the books do not have a common set of characters. Regardless of their names, the heroes are remarkably similar.

Horatio Alger, Jr. was the oldest of five children of a debt-ridden New England, Unitarian minister.

Examples of his stories:

Struggling Upward

The Cash Boy

Joe the Hotel Boy

The Errand Boy: or, How Phil Brent Won Success

Paul the Peddler, or, Fortunes of a Young Street Merchant

Alger scholar Bill Roach cites Alger's formula:

An adolescent boy with a rural back ground sets off to earn his livelihood in an urban setting. He triumphs over circumstances and temptation and starts advancing in his career. At some point, he will be betrayed or falsely accused by one of his peers. Ultimately, the hero will be vindicated. While pluck and hard work play a role in the success of an Alger hero, there is always an older male who takes on the hero as his protégé. That mentor plays a critical role in the success

of the Alger hero. The Alger hero never takes revenge on those who mistreated him. He secures what is rightfully his, but he is never vindictive.

This is the American dream... the self-made man who achieves great things by looking inward and finding the greatness within

An nation of entrepreneurs, of enterprising people whose relentless vision for personal greatness propelled them to great heights of achievement

America: a place where you can make something of yourself; a meritocracy, based solely on what he can achieve, not who his parents were

The key issue: building a resume, achievement by achievement

Good grades in high school, accolades and awards; acceptance at a good college; good grades in college; accolades and awards; strategic use of your summers—landing a key internship on Capitol Hill or Wall Street; graduate school at the best institution; accolades and awards; landing your first job

B. The Interview: Selling Yourself

Advice from the Internet: An interview is best approached as a sales meeting, in which you have to communicate your benefits to the interviewer. At the same time you should avoid, or dilute, any negative aspects of your employment history. Your aim is to make as strong a case as you can for them offering you the position. In effect you are there to sell - yourself! If you have some career skeletons in your closet, decide ahead of the interview how you can avoid giving too much information about these areas. Is it possible to avoid talking about these issues at the interview? You almost certainly wont have published negative information in your CV. Alternatively can you put a more positive interpretation on events? Stressing the lessons you learned and how you have put these to practical effect since?

C. Building a Spiritual Resume

Good works: a list of spiritual achievements by some standard... rules followed, regulations met, boxes checked...

of money given to the poor; of time spent in religious duties; of achievements in religious learning; of character traits attained by self-effort

This is HUMAN RELIGION

The consummation of it:

D. Selling Yourself to God on Judgment Day

Luke 18:10-12 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

The Apostle Paul was a spiritual ladder climber... self-righteous and self-satisfied

One commentator said that the man who began the journey to Damascus was not searching for righteousness in any way... he'd already found it within himself through his achievements in Judaism

The writer of Philippians here gives us his assessment of his spiritual resume... how he built it, and why he eventually rejected it as worthless

This is ultimately a question of true or false religion in God's sight:

The world is full of religions... but,

I. In the End, Only Two Religions

A. Most Popular Religion in the World: Righteousness Through Self-Effort

Some kind of religious laws are accepted and the adherents try to live by those standards through self-effort

Religions that claim we have all the resources in ourselves for attaining salvation naturally stress personal effort, materialized as good deeds, devotional rituals, meditation techniques, physical asceticism, accumulating wisdom, etc. This is the case with most religions in the world.

1. Muslims follow it: Five pillars of Islam

The hope is that, on Judgment Day the Muslims good deeds (based on these five pillars) will outweigh his bad... the whole issue is his own self-effort

2. Buddhists follow it: morality, concentration, full knowledge... seeking enlightenment through self-denial and meditation
3. Hindus follow it: righteousness through a system of *puja*... of prayers, religious rituals and observances
4. Modern Jews follow it: artificial system of religious achievements, following prayer and a moral law, studying the Laws of Moses, obeying rules and regulations given by rabbis
5. Ancient pagan idolatrous systems: all followed the same approach... animal and human sacrifices, religious accomplishments to make oneself righteous in the eyes of God

6. Even irreligious, atheistic people: derive self-esteem from a system of rules, of values...
“I’m a good person because I help people, give money to charities, don’t hurt anybody.”
7. Medieval Roman Catholicism: salvation by human effort in keeping the sacraments, in buying the right indulgences, in praying the proper prayers the proper amount of time

B. True Christianity: Salvation by Grace Alone

The situation in Christianity is again opposite, stating that we cannot do anything to deserve salvation and eternal communion with God, but only to accept His grace revealed in Jesus Christ. By no means can man have God indebted to him. Only God can save man, at His initiative. Therefore the course of action in salvation has an opposite sense in Christianity vs. most other religions. It is God who takes the initiative and descends into His own creation in order to save man, not man accumulating merits and working out his way toward God, by his own strength.

Philippians 3:8-9 that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

1. A Perfect God, Creator, King, Lawgiver and Judge
2. A Sinful Man... under the death penalty for sin
3. A Substitute by Grace: Christ... transfer of guilt and gift of righteousness
4. Reception of this gift by simple faith apart from any works
5. The gift on internal transformation by God... A lifestyle of holiness coming as a result of a new nature

II. Paul’s Command and Warning: Both Given to Protect Their Joy

A. Command: Rejoice... Given as a Safeguard

3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

1. Theological point of the letter: constant joy in suffering the sake of the gospel
2. Danger here: false gospel from false teachers
3. Needs to safeguard their joy by opposing false teachers
4. Repetition in teaching is necessary because we are so prone to forget

Illus. Deuteronomy 6:7 **Impress** them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Hebrew word means “sharpen” like you would do to a sword... that is done by constant repetition

B. Watch Out!!! A Severe Warning

vs. 2 *Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh.*

1. Paul was a good pastor... not just positive, but also negative... a need for warnings

Three Great Attacks on the Church:

- 1) Persecution
- 2) Worldliness
- 3) False teaching

Of the three, the third is the most serious, because it ruins the actual gospel we preach

2. Danger: The circumcision group

- a. Paul dealt with them again and again
- b. they followed Paul around from town to town
- c. here he calls them “dogs”

Illus. Like a pack of roaring dogs that prowled around the street, snarling and looking for some meat in an alley or in a trash pile, diseased and dangerous

- d. he also calls them “men who do evil”

They prided themselves on their good works... they were so proud of their accomplishments

BUT they were actually evil doers

Two reasons:

- 1) There can be no good works without faith... without a desire to glorify Christ

Romans 14:23 everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Thus Luther said that, before you are a Christian, all your good works are actually sins

- 2) They are also called evildoers because they are opposing what God is doing... they are fighting against God... they are preaching a false gospel that will only lead to hell

John 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.

Imagine the shock of these religious zealots when they come to Judgment Day expecting to be rewarded for all their good works, and they find out that they are really “men who do evil”

Matthew 7:22-23 *Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*

- e. Paul finally calls them “mutilators of the flesh”

By this he refers to their desire that all Gentile men who are converted be circumcised according to the Law of Moses

- 3. Circumcision: Symbol of a system of religion based on self-reliance in keeping the law

Galatians 5:3 *Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.*

James 2:10 *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*

- 4. Bitter enemy of the true gospel

- a. false gospel: righteousness from obeying the Law by your own efforts

Romans 3:20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

- b. true gospel: righteousness a gift from Christ by faith alone

Romans 3:21-24 *But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

- 5. Paul fought them in Acts 15

Acts 15:1-2 *Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them.*

- 6. Paul also fought them in the whole book of Galatians

Galatians 1:6-9 *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*

Galatians 6:15 *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*

7. Salvation by works saps your present joy
8. Salvation by works robs God of His glory
9. Worst of all... salvation by works always fails and leads to hell

C. Definition of a True Christian (vs. 3)

Perhaps the greatest single-verse definition of Christian you will find in all the Bible

vs. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh--

1. True believers worship by the Spirit of Christ
2. True believers glory (boast) in Christ Jesus
3. True believers put no confidence in the flesh

D. Putting No Confidence in the Flesh

1. Self-reliance the enemy of saving faith
2. Paul's own sufferings given in large part to strip him of self-reliance
3. Two equal and opposite ways to look inward
 - a. look inward and find all the resources you need: arrogance
 - b. look inward and do not find all the resources you need: despair
4. A Christian has learned to look UPWARD to Christ alone for salvation... all our righteousness comes from Christ... He alone is our only hope

III. Paul's False Treasure: Self-Righteousness Through Religious Achievement

vs. 3-4 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh-- 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more

A. Accounting Language: Ledger Sheet of Assets and Debits

1. Paul uses accounting language in this section
2. Greek for "gain" (**ke,rdoj**) and "loss" (**zhmi,a**) are business terms: profit and loss, debit and credit

3. Paul also uses a key term: “I consider” (**hgeomai**)... it is also accounting language... reckoning

vs. 7-8 *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

4. This is the same concept used of our imputed righteousness from Christ:

Romans 4:3 *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

It is an accounting term: Christ's righteousness is accounted as our... it is credited to our account

Illus. Numbered bank account, deposit made from anonymous source

5. It is also the word Paul uses many places in this epistle... it's all about attitude, perspective, a way of thinking

- a. how the Philippians should

Philippians 2:3 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*

- b. Christ's consideration of equality with God

Philippians 2:6 *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped*

6. And it's a word important in the very root of our saving faith

- a. Abraham's consideration of God's faithfulness

Hebrews 11:11 *By faith Abraham, even though he was past age-- and Sarah herself was barren-- was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.*

- b. Moses's consideration of heaven as of better value than all the riches of Egypt

Hebrews 11:26 *[Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.*

Paul looked at the ledger sheet of his fleshly accomplishments and reckoned them entirely reversed from what he had thought before... he considered all of his advancements in Judaism to be worthless compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ

B. Previous: All His Assets Brought Him Confidence

1. Paul's spiritual resume listed here

vs. 5-6 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

2. Like a treasure box with rare and beautiful gems... that's how he looked at each of these things
3. Whenever he would be discouraged, he would take out these gems of self-accomplishment and fondle them
4. This was a BIG issue for Paul... not a minor part of who he was

Galatians 1:14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

The word in Galatians "advancing" is exactly the same that we saw in Philippians 1:

1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

1:25 I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith

Paul was living for constant advance... but not the advance of the Kingdom of Christ, or the advance of others in their faith in Christ... Paul's advance in Judaism was totally selfish, self-focused—attaining rewards from His mentors through exceptional zeal for the traditions of his fathers:

When an enraged crowd of Jews wanted to kill him in Jerusalem, Paul defended himself this way:

Acts 22:3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.

5. What comprised Paul's resume? On what was he basing his confidence before God?

- a. salvation by religious ritual

circumcised on the eighth day

- b. salvation by race

of the people of Israel

- c. salvation by rank

of the tribe of Benjamin

d. salvation by tradition

a Hebrew of Hebrews

e. salvation by religious schools

in regard to the law, a Pharisee

f. salvation by zealous sincerity

as for zeal, persecuting the church

g. salvation by legalistic righteousness

as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

IV. Paul's Conversion: Trash Becomes Treasure, and Treasure Becomes Trash

Paul derived much of his self-image and his sense of his righteousness from the way of Judaism... until one day Jesus Christ knocked him to the ground with a clear display of His resurrection glory:

Acts 9:3-6 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Paul's physical eyes were blinded by that glory for three days... but his souls was suddenly full of a new light that he'd never experienced before. This is the radical power of true conversion... so powerful and so much a sovereign act of God, it was exactly like what God did at creation:

Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

So Paul said God spoke light into his previously dark soul:

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

This new radiant light was shining brilliantly in his heart, even though his eyes were blind. For three days Paul did not eat or drink anything, but merely prayed... a new thirst had awakened in his heart, and he would yearn for it every day of his life until he was finally martyred for Christ:

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

The value of this knowledge of God in the face of Christ was infinite... all of a sudden, all of the treasures he'd clung to before seemed like trash... like nothings. Actually they were worse than nothing... they were positively evil, because they had prevented him from knowing Christ as His Savior

So... he made a decision: everything which stood opposed to Christ had to go—it was a loss, all of it!!

Illus. Treasure hidden in the field, Pearl of great price

Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

Paul had found something of such infinite worth, all of his filthy little treasures back home seemed worthless... at that moment an indescribable JOY came over his soul: I am SAVED... I am FORGIVEN by God Almighty!!! What I had been striving for all my life, to earn through my own efforts, I have just been given as a free gift!! I am going to HEAVEN when I die... and heaven means being with that glorious Christ whose person blinded me for three days

Oh what a fool I've been, what a fool!! I will GLADLY sell everything I have to own the treasure hidden in the field

This is conversion, dear friends! Christ becomes one worth selling everything you have to obtain

A. What Was Gain Becomes Loss

1. Paul's previous treasures were actually blocking his way to Christ... they were not neutral, they were enemies... He had to hate them in order to be saved
2. Paul used to feel he had reasons to boast in the flesh... typical of self-righteousness is thinking that your credentials for righteousness are better than anyone else's
3. Paul made a conscious decision to lose everything for the sake of Christ

B. Completely new understanding of personal righteousness

vs. 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;

1. Salvation is NOT by religious ritual

circumcised on the eighth day

2. Salvation is NOT by race

of the people of Israel

3. Salvation NOT by rank

of the tribe of Benjamin

4. Salvation NOT by tradition

a Hebrew of Hebrews

5. Salvation NOT by religious schools

in regard to the law, a Pharisee

6. Salvation NOT by zealous sincerity

as for zeal, persecuting the church

7. Salvation NOT by legalistic righteousness

as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

None of these things could save Paul

None of these things could pay for Paul's sins... and Paul confesses quite plainly in Romans 7 that the law was only stirring up sin in him, not killing it

If Paul had presented this resume to God on Judgment Day, God would have thrown him to hell

These things were actually OPPOSING Christ's righteousness in him... they were, each one of them, the enemies of his soul

V. Paul's New Treasure: Knowing Christ and Being Found In Him

vs. 7-9 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

In place of Paul's previous treasure is something far greater... Christ Himself... a diamond with five facets

- A. Personal Knowledge of Christ
- B. Gift of Righteousness Through Faith in Christ
- C. Power of Christ's Resurrected Life Inside Him
- D. Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings

E. Glory Through Christ's Resurrection

VI. Some Questions

1. What are you trusting in to save you through judgment day?

Like Paul before his conversion, are you trusting in your own righteousness, your own works?

Or are you trusting in Christ's righteousness alone?

2. What do you want most in life? What is your treasure, what are you living for, striving for?
3. Does your lifestyle show that you want Christ more than the world, or the world more than Christ?