

The Christian Mother

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[0:00] And we see our Lord Jesus spoken of in this passage, Philippians 3, and I'm going to read the first 16 verses.

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, though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more. For it is more, circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law of Pharisee.

And as for zeal, persecuting the church. As for legalistic righteousness, faultless. 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.

[1:30] 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. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

[2:51] Only let us live up to what we have already attained. What does it mean to be a Christian mom?

Does that mean that you homeschool? That you teach your children Bible verses? That you spank them? That you teach them the Ten Commandments?

While all of those things may have a part, most of those things probably should have some part in a Christian mom's life, that really isn't at the heart of what it means to be a Christian mom.

We want to see that instead, being a Christian mom has everything to do with your life in Christ. Your union with Jesus.

Being a Christian mom is connecting your mothering with Jesus Christ. So sometimes we divide our life up into different sections.

[3:55] But really, being a Christian means that Jesus Christ has found the center place in all of our activities, in our identity, in all of the tasks that God has given us.

So being a mom isn't over here. And being in Jesus, being a believer of Jesus, and having faith in Him are over here. No, the work of mothering, the identity of as a mother, as a Christian mother, grows out of who you are in Jesus Christ.

And that's the happy ground that I want to take us through tonight, this evening. And so let me lay out the map for you to show you where we are going.

And I have four statements that we're going to make from Philippians chapter 3. So four statements about Christian mothering. The first three are from the text, and the fourth is an application from the text.

And so here they are. First, Christian moms need to remember something they already know.

Second, Christian mothering is resting.

[5:05] Third, Christian mothering is laboring. And fourth, your children need you to live in Christ. Now, those four statements could easily be adapted to any Christian. And we could say them pretty much about any Christian, any task that God calls His people to. So we could say the four similar things about pastors, about businessmen, about fathers, about students, about children. And so if you aren't a mother, and I imagine, actually, that's probably the majority of you here, do the hard work of adapting God's Word to your situation. These are just principles that I am applying to mothering, but they are principles that equally apply to you in your situation. Now, before we get into the text of Philippians 3 and looking at our four statements, I want to provide you with a bit of the context, understand the background of why Paul is writing this. He is writing in this section of the Philippians against the false teachers who he calls in other places the Judaizers. And these were men who would call themselves Christians, who had some variety of faith.

[6:30] But they said, yes, you need to believe in Christ. But you Gentiles, you also need, if you're going to be really right with God, if you're going to have a full and complete acceptance before Him, if you're going to have a good standing before God, you need to obey the ceremonial law, at least to some degree.

You need to do what God's people have always done. You need to be circumcised if you're a male. You need to keep the Jewish Sabbath. You need to eat ceremonially clean foods. In other words, it's Jesus and something else. In this case, it's Jesus and you need to become like us. You need to keep the ceremonial law. You need to become Jewish, at least in some way. So Paul is writing to the Philippians to protect his sheep, his people, against these false teachers, these wolves. And he's upholding the doctrine, the teaching of justification, being right with God by faith alone. And so Paul everywhere, everywhere, says Christ Jesus has done everything we need to be right with God.

[7:50] It's never Jesus and. It's always just Jesus, period. Now, with that as the background, we want to meditate on what it means to be a mom who trusts in Jesus Christ alone for her righteousness before God.

And so here then are our four statements. The first one, again, is Christian moms need to remember something that they already know. That's verse one. Look at it with me. 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. So moms, here's the thing that you already know that you need to remember. That your life is about exalting, reveling, believing, rejoicing in the Lord and his righteousness. That's what it means to be a Christian. That's at the heart of our Christian life. And so that's at the heart of what it means to be a Christian mom as well.

[9:00] Paul says, I've written to you these things before. So apparently at some point he had written another letter to the Philistines. And at long last now, we don't know everything that was in that letter.

We hardly know anything. But we do know that he, in that letter, wrote about this. He said, you need to rejoice in the Lord. He wrote about that once before. Because he says, it's no trouble for me to write the same things to you again. So yes, this is old ground. This is old ground, but this is good ground in Paul's mind. This is the ground I love, Paul is saying. It's no trouble for me to write to you about these things. Every and any good pastor never gets tired of preaching Jesus Christ. Preaching Jesus and him crucified. It's where he finds his joy. It's where he finds his meat. It's what excites him. And that's what excited Paul.

[9:58] And so it's no trouble. But then he also says, it's a safeguard to you. It's a safeguard for you. So this is old ground. This is good ground. And this is safe ground.

God's people always need to be brought back to this. Jesus Christ is the Savior. He's the only Savior you have. He's the only Savior you need.

And rejoicing and exalting and believing in him is the place of safety. It's the place of safety for mothers. Now that word safeguard, it means firm, certain, true.

It's security. So remembering Christ and all of his sufficient righteousness, everything of what Paul is going to write about, this is the firm ground, the true ground, the certain ground.

So picture a rock, a big rock. Now picture yourself on that rock. Rock. Trusting and rejoicing in Jesus Christ is what it means to stand firm, to find security on solid ground, to stand on that rock.

[11:13] But all around that rock is sinking sand, is quicksand. So Christian mothers, Jesus Christ is that rock.

Everything else is quicksand. Every good thing. Your husband, your children, your work inside and outside the home, your church can become quicksand.

The moment you start trusting in them to supply a part of your standing before God, your acceptance before God, your rightness, your blessing, you're on quicksand.

The moment it becomes Jesus and something else is the moment that you are going down, that you're sinking, that you've lost security and safety.

And that's what our natural hearts do. We quickly leave Jesus and turn to other things. We quickly add things to Jesus, other good things, and we turn them into our glory.

[12:19] And when we do, what starts out as good, then swallows us up. We slip down into the dirt. And then only God can rescue us and bring us back to our senses.

And so Paul is saying, you need to remember again what you already know. I need to remind you. And so it's no trouble and it's safe for you. The only righteous, you are only righteous because of Jesus and him alone.

He's enough. Martin Luther writes, Christians never completely understand this themselves and thus do not take advantage of it when they are troubled and tempted.

So we have to constantly teach it and repeat it and work it out in practice. Everyone who does not understand this righteousness or cherish it in their heart and conscience will continually be buffeted by fears and depression.

So you need to remember what you already know. You need to rejoice in Christ. That's what your life is about. The second statement is this. Christian mothering is resting.

[13:31] It's resting in Jesus Christ and what he has done. It's resting in his righteousness. And so the Bible teaches, and this is what justification by faith alone is, is that our legal, our relational standing before God is all because of what Jesus has done.

His life, his death, his resurrection. And so I don't have a good standing before God because of something that I have done. Or who I am.

No, when you become a Christian, you put all of those things down. You rest from those things. You rest from those works. And you trust in him.

And so all my hope, all my faith is found in what Jesus has done and who he is. Now, that's true of every Christian in all of their work, in all of their relationships.

And so it's true of Christian mothers as well. Christian mothering is resting from the things that you are tempted to make your righteousness. It's resting from the things, especially in your mothering, that you are tempted to glory in.

[14:45] Now, there are two extremes out in the world today. The one extreme is found in a lot of parenting magazines. And so in these parenting magazines, what does it mean to be a good mom?

Well, it means to be always doing. Doing crafts, Girl Scouts, sports, piano lessons. You make them cute little school lunches with ketchup smiley faces on their sandwiches.

And you send them to school. And so you're doing these things for your children. And so the magazine tells you that this is what it means to be a good mom. I'm a good mother because my children are good students.

I take good care of them. They're good athletes. They do all this extracurricular activities. I take them around all the time. I live for them. Therefore, I'm a good person.

I'm a good mother. Well, can Christian moms fall into the same mindset? Where they feel like their righteousness, their goodness, their upstanding nature comes from what they do with their children.

[15:51] Can Christian moms fall into that? I think definitely. I think that goes on a lot with Christian homeschooling.

And if you read a lot of the literature that's being put into the Christian market or on the Internet, there is definitely the sense of this is the definition of being a good parent.

If you don't homeschool, then you are disobeying God. And so the hope for the future lies in our children. And this is what it means to disciple children.

And then along with that, a lot of times, not all the time, a lot of times, there comes a sense of pride and a sense of righteousness.

It's not said in so many words, but I think many Christian moms and dads think at least a part of their good standing before God and their righteousness before him is because of their homeschooling.

[16:54] And so they feel confident and they look down their noses at others. And I'm not speaking as someone who doesn't homeschool. I'm speaking as someone who does. But that.

That's just an example. That's not the defining example or anything like that. That's just an example. Our hearts aren't picky, are they, parents? Our hearts aren't picky.

We find a hundred different things to be proud of, to glory in, to think, oh, I'm a good person because I do this or I am that. And in those hundred things, none of them are Jesus.

It's always Jesus and something else. But Christian mothering is resting from all of that. Of putting it all down. And Paul learned to lay it all down.

And walk away from it. Look at what he says in the second half of verse four. If anyone thinks he has a reason to put confidence in the flesh, I have more.

[17:56] So whatever credentials that we bring to the table, Paul is going to now outdo us. And he says, if you have confidence in the flesh, I have, if you have a reason to be putting confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Unseen. 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 as for zeal, persecuting the church as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. Paul says, here's here's the inventory. Here are my credentials.

Here's what I used to glory in. It was who I was, what I did. I was a Hebrew of Hebrews. Hebrews.

Not very many Israelites could even know what tribe they were from. It probably took a very particularly religious family and group to be able to hold that lineage together. And Paul is able to say, no, I'm of the tribe of Benjamin. My family goes all the way back and I can tell you all about it. I'm a Hebrew of Hebrews and I was a Pharisee. Pharisees, we do give them a bad rap because they were Jesus sworn enemies. But I don't think we understand that these were the people that were completely serious about obeying God's word. They misunderstood it, but you couldn't doubt their sincerity and wanting to at least outwardly obey it. And Jesus wasn't saying nothing when he said your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees. He wasn't saying that as something small. He was saying that as something amazing to the people. So Paul's legal obedience, it was faultless to the external eye, not to God's eye, but to the external eye. Paul's obedience to the ins and outs of the external law, the law, it was blameless. No one could put a finger on him for that. He had credentials. He had things to boast in, but he found a place to put all of that stuff, to put all of those credentials, that whole inventory. You know where it was. Where was it?

It was the garbage dump. It was the sewer. I consider them rubbish. Well, why did he consider all those things rubbish? And a lot of those things were perfectly fine in and of themselves. Some of them obviously weren't. Why was he able to lay down everything that was so valuable to him that he held on to that he was hoping to show to God? Well, because at long last he saw Jesus Christ and he saw the glory of Christ and his perfect righteousness. And then what was so important and what was such a treasure, he looked down in it in comparison to Christ. It had become filth, had become excrement, had become rubbish, and he threw it away. And he was saying, and from now on, none of that is going to have anything to do with my acceptance, my righteousness before God. Now, that's what it means to be a Christian. To take all of our good things and our credentials and take all of that, all the stuff that we are hoping in, and losing it all. And then not even counting at loss for the sake of

[21:28] Christ. And that is what it means to be a Christian. And that's what it means to be a Christian mother. It's not trusting in your mothering and who you are and what you've done. It's not trusting in your spanking or your homeschooling or your constant activity. It's not resting in what you have done and what you have accomplished for your standing before God. And you can know that you are resting in those things when you're able to look down your nose at other people who aren't doing them.

But being a Christian mom is saying loud and clear for all to hear and for all to see that all that, that might be good. It might be good in and of itself. And I'm not arguing with any of that. But Christ and

Christ alone is my righteousness. I'm not bringing any of that before God. I'm not hoping in any of that as I pray, as I trust God for his promises. All my hope is in Christ. And I glory in Christ. And I put no confidence, no weight in the flesh. So Christian moms, that's the glory of the gospel for you. You have a righteousness before God that has nothing to do with how well you mother, how well you do at teaching, or even how badly you do those things, how much you fall short, how much you fail, how much you could look back at your life and say, I could have done better.

And I know we all can look at those things. This is the glory of God's gift to you in Christ, that you're saved and you're accepted, you're loved, you're forgiven, you're counted righteous in God's sight because of Jesus and him alone. It's not Jesus and, it's just Jesus. And in God's sight, that is enough. So Christian mothering is resting in the Lord and in his righteousness as you do the work, the hard work of mothering. Now the third statement, Christian mothering is laboring. It's laboring. It's not just resting, it's laboring. And so here's this glorious paradox of the Christian life. So it's rest, but it's labor. And as we rest, we never, we never stop working.

And as we work, we never stop resting. So look at some of these key words in verses 10 through 16. And you get to feel the energy of Paul. This is what his Christian life is like. It's, it's real, it's powerful, it's sincere, it's, it's eager, he's moving forward. Look at verse 10 through 16, some of these key words. I want to know Christ. I want to know Christ. That's not head knowledge.

That's experiencing him. Adam knew Eve. He had intimate experiential relationship with her. Paul says, I want to know Christ. I know him. I've come to know him. I want to know him more. I want to know the power of his resurrection. How do you come to know power? How do you come to know power? You walk into a tornado, you step outside your house, you go into the tornado and you get to know the power of a tornado, or you walk outside in a hurricane and you know the power of a hurricane. Paul says, I want to know the power of his resurrection. Not just in the future. Yes, in the future, but now, even now, as that comes back and it lives in me, I want to know that now. I want his resurrection life to tear through my life, to powerfully change me, tear through my life like a hurricane.

[25 : 27] I want his resurrection life to move me. Like the hallelujah chorus where everyone stands up and you sing as loudly as you can.

The power of the music moves you. I want his resurrection life to be effective, powerful in me, not just in the future, but now. And he says, I want to know Christ and his life.

And I want that to move me. I want to know that power. So I want to be a ship with my sail. And that is the wind. And it's blowing me to new obedience, new repentance. So Christ is this fruitful vine. And I want his fruitfulness, his powerful life to bear fruit in my life. The Christian life is more than resting. Christian mothering is more than resting.

It's producing the fruit of obedience that comes through Jesus Christ. Paul looked, maybe you can turn back to Philippians chapter one, verse 11. And he's praying there and he's praying for the Philippians. And he says, I pray that you'd be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

[26 : 49] So often we want to do our works in our own strength. But Paul is saying, this is where fruitfulness in the Christian life comes from. It comes through Jesus Christ. And when it comes through Jesus Christ, it's to the praise and the glory of God. When we do it in our own strength, it ends up being in the praise and the glory of me. But when we find that Jesus and his life is powerfully at work, his power, his spirit is at work, then God gets the glory.

The Christian life is more than resting. It's becoming. Look at what he says in 3.11 or 3.10. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. So Christian mothering is resting, but it's more than that.

It's crucified mothering. It's nailing yourself more and more to the cross. It's going lower. It's humbly serving. That's what it means to share in the sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

So Paul can say each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being very nature, God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing. What does it mean to have fellowship and sharing in his sufferings and becoming like him in his death? It means humbling yourself and dying to yourself in order to serve others. So you look at them and you say, their interests are more important than what I want. So I said one extreme in the world today is the mom on the go. She lives for her children.

And then she sees her righteousness and her goodness, her identity in her children and their success, whatever and however that looks like. But the other extreme in the world, and probably the more prevalent extreme, is the mother that never says no to herself. The minute she can, she sends them to daycare.

[29 : 15] Or the minute she can, she puts them in front of the electronic babysitter, the electronic mom. And she she has a career. And children are an obstacle, a problem of in her way because she wants what she wants.

Now, does that happen in a Christian home? Where kids are seen as obstacle, where children are seen as obstacles and bothers, as someone getting in the way of what I want. They're inconvenient to me, and I get quickly fed up with them.

That happens in my heart. And I can't imagine that I'm alone. That's a temptation to every parent, but Christian mothering fights against that. Moms, you, you are joined eternally, forever at the deepest levels to Jesus Christ. The dying one, the one who saw your interest and took them to his heart, and he lost his life. It cost him his life.

And God calls you to become like him in his death. To say no to yourself for the good of the others. And if you're a mom with children there, then aren't they the ones that you need to die in order to love?

There's another word here. Pressing. Pressing. We've seen becoming. We've seen knowing. Pressing. Verse 12, I press on to take a hold of that which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Or verse 13, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on. So Christian life, it's labor. It's pressing. It's straining. And it's just unceasing labor. More conformity to Christ. More pressing into Jesus. More. I want more of that life. I'm pressing on.

[31 : 26] I'm forgetting. I'm not living on yesterday's power. I'm moving forward. Doing more. Saying no to myself more. Living for others more. Paul says that's how mature people think. Mature people think this way. Immature Christians might move from, I'm justified by faith alone. Jesus is all my righteousness. They might move from that to laziness. They might move from that from grace to license. I won't do anything. I don't need to do anything. I'll just sit here. Paul says no one mature does that. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. Not that I've arrived, but I have further to go. There's more to be done.

So how do Christian mature Christians think? They see themselves as not having yet arrived. We need to go further up, further in, into Christ. Experiencing more of his power. Experiencing more of his resurrection life. Becoming closer and closer. Walking with him in death. Living in his power. Dying to self as he died to self. And do you see how this is so beautifully and comprehensively connected to Jesus Christ. The context, the environment of a Christian mothering, of being a Christian mom, Christian living in general, is Christ himself.

You are in Christ. You are new creatures in Christ. You're a workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works that he planned for you. God doesn't call you to go in your own strength.

He calls you to deeper union, more fellowship, more knowledge, deeper conformity to Christ. And so Christian moms, this is the context in which you do your work. This is the context in which God calls you to die to yourself and live for him. And so whenever you're in the throes of it, whenever you're in the, it's hard and you're working and you feel like you have the world on your back and you're plowing this field and it's hard, you can look over and Jesus Christ is in the yoke with you. He's gone before and now he's beside you. This is his strength that is at work in you. And as his mind is in you, as his spirit lives in you, you will do greater acts of humility, of sacrifice, of obedience, of compassion, of love.

[34 : 14] Because you're going to start taking on his glory as you walk further with him. And so moms, I say, forget what's behind. Christ is ahead. Press on.

You haven't arrived. And yet God is merciful. So obey, die, win the prize. Yes, it's labor, but Paul has his eye on glory here. It's before him. Resurrection is in his view.

And he knows this world isn't going to last forever. So I'm going to work and I'm going to strain. I'm going to press on until then. So that's the third thing. Christian mothering is it's laboring.

Now fourth, finally, application. Your children need you to live in Christ. We're talking about mothering. And so let's apply it that way, that your children need you to live in Christ.

They need you to have a vital, living, real fellowship with him.

[35 : 22] So moms, I'm talking about your private devotional life. You need that. You know you need that. Your children also need that.

So how are you going to have this Christ's resurrection life? How are you going to come to know that power more? How are you going to become more like him in his sufferings and sharing in that? If you aren't living with Christ experientially, relationally. And I know you're busy. I know you are busy.

You have so much to do. And you only have so much strength. You only have so much time. But I would just encourage you, don't sacrifice the most important thing for lesser things.

Martha, Martha, only one thing is needed. And Mary has chosen what is better. Don't sacrifice the quality of your relationship with Christ for lesser things.

[36 : 32] Your children don't need to be involved in every single sport. They don't need a full-time chauffeur.

They do need you to be walking with Jesus. Because you need Christ's love. You need to know his compassion. You need to know his comfort.

You need to know these things through his spirit and by his word. And so find ways. You know your life.

But be creative. Find ways to stop and renew your mind. To renew your faith. Find ways in the middle of your day. Start early if you can. Jesus rose up early.

He sets us an example. What does it mean for a busy person to have a good relationship with God? Oftentimes it means starting early. But then using the rest of your time wisely.

[37 : 32] Live on Jesus throughout the day. So that might be in the car. It might be in the bathroom. It might be grabbing those moments of being alone.

And using them to talk to Jesus. Not great lengths of time. But just short enough to say thank you. Help me. To read a verse. To trust again.

Susanna Wesley. The mother of John and Charles Wesley. Had 19 children. And nine of them died in infancy. But that still leaves ten.

And so there were children everywhere. And when she couldn't get a quiet place. And you know. She was as poor. As poor can be. So quiet places and space.

Were. Few and far between. She would sit down. And throw her apron over her head. And she would grab a moment.

[38 : 33] My point is. She did what she needed to do. And the result was. She was fruitful in her home. Her husband was often gone.

For one reason or another. Often gone. And so there she was. She was a very busy.

Homeschooling. Christian. Mom. And.

She was fruitful in her home. Her children were serious about the gospel. Yes. They weren't saved until. God came powerfully. And opened their eyes.

They didn't believe until then. But they knew the way of salvation. And God did honor. Her. Her labors. And so. Mom. Your children need you. To live in fellowship with Jesus.

They need it because that's one way. That they're going to see. The glory of Christ. Christ.

Remember Moses went up on the mountain. He spent time with God. And when he came down.

[39 : 34] His face shined. The glory of God. As you meet Jesus. Hour by hour. Day by day. He's going to change you. And you are going to begin shining out.

With the glory of Christ. And you're going to begin acting like him. Your kindness. Your humility. The glory of Christ. Will shine.

So your children need instruction. They need wisdom. They need discipline. All of those things. But more than anything. Know. The glory of Christ.

Because without that. They'll be lost. And so. Your own personal walk with Jesus. Will shine into their lives. You'll see the glory of Christ living in you.

And even without words. Your life will speak. So. This is the glory of Christian mothering. It's always. It's forever. It's completely.

[40 : 35] About Jesus Christ. Every spoke is attached to him. And so Christian moms. Here's your safety. Where are you safe? Standing on Jesus.

Here's your rest. Where can you lay down and rest your soul? It's in Jesus. And here's your labor. What are you pressing on to? Conformity to Jesus Christ.

And so. Will you believe the gospel this week for yourself? As you mother this week. And will you live this week out of it?

We saw this morning that Moses' mother lived out her faith. So will you do the same? That's what Susanna Wesley pressed on to do. Strained to do. She said this.
There are two things to do. About the gospel. Believe it. And behave it. So may you mothers. Do the same.
[41:31] Amen.