

PAUL'S STORY

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Grace Kelly was born to a prestigious Pennsylvania family. After graduating from an elite High School she moved to Hollywood to pursue her dream of acting.

She began her career in 1951 with a small part in the movie “[Fourteen Hours](#).” Gary Cooper spotted her talent, and starred her in a role in his next movie, “[High Noon](#).”

Grace would go on to star in eleven films. She played roles next to some of Hollywood's most famous leading men: *Jimmy Stewart*, *Clark Gable*, and *Bing Crosby*.

Over the next few years, Kelly teamed up with Alfred Hitchcock for three films: [Rear Window](#), [Dial M For Murder](#), and [To Catch A Thief](#). In 1954 she starred in “[Country Girl](#)” for which she won the Academy Award for Best Actress. In just four years, Grace Kelly became the highest paid and most sought after starlet in the industry.

But by her own admission Grace hated Hollywood.

She was once quoted, “[It's a town without pity. I know of no other place in the world where so many people suffer from nervous breakdowns, where there are so many alcoholics, neurotics, and so much unhappiness... I have many acquaintances there, but few friends.](#)”

In 1954 Kelly was asked to attend the Cannes Film Festival in France. One of her films was being shown.

There she met Prince Rainier, ruler of the island-nation of Monaco. Rainier needed a princess, and Grace Kelly thought it was time for her to settle on a husband.

The two fell in love, and in 1956 they were married in a high profile wedding on the French Riviera. And their romance wasn't the typical Hollywood fling, Kelly's family had to pay a \$2 million dowry. Then at the request of her husband, the Prince, Grace never acted in a film again.

Additionally, in marrying Rainier, Grace was required to give up her American citizenship. After the wedding the Prince banned all Grace Kelly films in Monaco. He wanted her to be the *nation's princess*, not its *movie star*.

Grace Kelly found a love for which she gave up most everything that had previously been important to her.

And not just the glitz and glamor of movie stardom, she sacrificed ties to own country, her wealth, her career, her personal success. In an interview Grace once stated, “[When I married Prince Rainier, I married the man and not what he represented or what he was. I fell in love with him without giving a thought to anything else.](#)”

At the time, this astonished the world, that a person could find a love for which he they would give up their identity, status, and stardom... This is why Grace Kelly's storybook marriage still intrigues us - that you can be captured by a love that makes everything else obsolete.

Yet in our passage we discover this was also Paul's experience. He too found a passion, worth sacrificing all that his *privileged upbringing* and *passionate service* had afforded him. Paul laid it all aside for something greater.

Realize, in his early days - *Paul* previously known as *Saul*, was one of Judaism's leading rabbis - a rising star.

Like Grace Kelly, he was born to a upper-crust family; then through his own work, talent, and zeal achieved a distinguished career. But quite unexpectedly, Paul too found a love for which he would throw it all away.

He shares his story in this morning's verses...

But first, we discover what triggered Paul's need to share his story... He eases into it in verse 1, **"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."** Paul knows the letter is about to shift gears, and this verse serves as a kind of summary statement for all that he's written to this point.

Remember, the book of Philippians is about **"finding joy at half mast."** As we've noted, you know the Queen of England is in residence when her flag is flying from atop her palace - and like the Queen's flag, joy is the evidence that Jesus is residing in our hearts.

And the joy of Jesus flaps even when the flag flies at half-mast - *even in times of suffering, and loss, and grief.*

Notice, here Paul introduces a phrase. He's talked about rejoicing and joy, throughout this letter, but here for the first time he couples it with the phrase, **"in the Lord."**

"Rejoice in the Lord!" He doesn't say rejoice in the *cut in pay*, or rejoice in the *doctor's prognosis*, or rejoice in a *child's failing grade*, or rejoice in your *traffic citation*...

Paul doesn't say **"rejoice in your circumstances..."** for often we can't! Life gets rough. Bad things do happen to good people, even God's people. At times, there's nothing in our circumstances that warrants any rejoicing.

Remember what Paul told us at the end of Chapter 1 (29), **"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake..."** The two go together - *believing and suffering*. Our faith gets tried and tested in the furnace of suffering.

Though there might not be anything in my situation that merits my rejoicing, I can always find comfort and encouragement *“in the Lord.”* This is why Paul doesn’t say *“rejoice in the IRS audit,”* but, *“rejoice in the Lord.”*

There’s some humor here that’s often pointed out...

Paul seems to be acting like your typical long-winded preacher. He’s teasing his readers, *“finally, my brethren,”* as if he’s wrapping up - yet in reality he’s only half-way through the letter. *He’s still got two chapters to go...*

You’ve probably heard the question, *“What does it mean when the pastor takes off his watch and lays it on the pulpit?”* The answer, *“Absolutely nothing.”*

After Paul’s summary, he apologizes in verse 2 for what readers will see as repetition, *“For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.”*

What Paul is about to teach the Philippians he knows they’ve heard before. Perhaps it was the subject of sermon he’d taught while with them. *Wherever they had heard it,* Paul knows they need to hear it again.

It’s been said, *“Repetition is one of life’s best teachers.”* In a football practice, the team runs the same plays over and over... In baseball, players field grounders every day... A basketball player shoots free throws after each and every warm-up... The point is athletes repeat the skills that are important to their sport until those skills become second nature to them.

This is why I’ve been known to repeat a Bible study.

Some truths just bear a second hearing - you need to revisit them over and over. In fact, survey the Gospels and you'll notice that Jesus was a repeater. Our Lord also knew that repetition is a good teacher.

It reminds of the pastor who preached the same sermon four weeks in a row. When the congregation complained, he told him, "I'm going to keep preaching it until you start practicing it." Seems fair enough. Well, Paul has truths he wants to teach the Philippians - that he knows they've heard before, but need to hear again.

This is what ultimately prompts Paul's testimony. But before he shares it, he first issues a warning, verse 2...

"Beware of dogs..." Some Bible scholars believe this was actually a future prophecy intended for the 2017 College football season. Paul is warning the Auburns, and Floridas, and Techs to "beware of them dawgs!"

I think the Greek spelling here is "d-a-w-g-s."

I'm kidding... Actually when Paul uses the term "dogs" he's not referring to college football players, or even the cute, cuddly canines we keep as pets...

In ancient times dogs were wild, vicious predators. They were a threat to humans, and carriers of disease.

Here Paul uses the term as a metaphor for the false teachers who had followed him to Philippi. They were a pack of *wild dogs* - carriers of contaminated doctrine.

These were the guys Paul first met in Galatia. They were false teachers called, "Judaizers." They believed you're made

right with God through faith in Christ, **plus** a smorgasbord of rules, and rituals, and good deeds.

The Judaizers taught a “tag team salvation.” You needed faith in Jesus, *AND* obedience to the Mosaic Law, to be right with God. Faith alone was not enough. It needed to be supplemented with elbow grease.

Once a legalistic lady told her pastor, “I believe the Christian life is like rowing a boat. One oar is the Law. The other oar is faith in Christ. If you drop either oar you row in circles. You need both oars.” The wise pastor replied, “*That’s a fine illustration, but there’s only one problem - you don’t get to heaven in a rowboat.*”

The Judaizers advocated a mixture of *faith and works - Christ and Law - grace and grunt - flesh and Spirit*. But Paul was adamant. Righteousness is the result of **Christ plus nothing**. Add anything to faith in Jesus and you’ve turned *the good news* into *bad news*.

Paul continues in verse 2, “**Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh...**”

One of the derogatory names the Jews used for the Gentiles was the term “*dogs.*” Here Paul calls the Jewish false teachers by the same denigrating title.

The Judaizers taught that to be a Christian you first had to become a Jew. Faith in Christ was not enough, you also had to follow the Jewish code and custom.

And chief on their list was **the rite of circumcision**. Circumcision was the identifying mark, or symbol, that God gave to identify the Jews as belonging to Him.

Yet here, Paul refers to the Jew's greatest source of pride as physical **"mutilation"** - *a carnage of the flesh*.

As he puts it, **"beware of the mutilation"** - of folks who teach that a physical snip makes you right with God. *How does clipping a fold of flesh add virtue to a life?*

The Jews mistook the symbol for the substance.

Circumcision was intended by God as an object lesson for His people. It was an **outward illustration** of an **inward alteration**. Ultimately, the procedure pointed to *a cutting away of our pride* - that leads to salvation.

Real righteousness is transmitted by God to us spiritually, not physically. As in the rite of circumcision, God humbles a person. He cuts us down to size. He exposes our weaknesses, so we'll put our trust in Him.

God wants *transformation*, not just an *operation*.

Rather than a *work of the flesh*, salvation is a *gift of the Spirit*. It's received through *faith in Christ*, not as a *reward for human achievement*. It's all about grace!

The true child of God is not the man who mutilates his body, but who by God's Spirit seeks a pure heart.

Thus, the Philippians should, **"have no confidence in the flesh..."** Think of the term **flesh** as **"what we are apart from God."** On occasion the NT uses the term to refer to the lustful,

sensual, greedy appetites of selfish humans. The word “*fleeshh*” sounds sketchy and sinful.

But “*flesh*” isn’t always synonymous with overt evil.

Paul says in verse 4, “*though I also might have confidence in the flesh...*” At times *Paul’s flesh* dressed up in its moral and Sunday best, and went to church. The flesh has a religious side. It can behave according to strict religious decorum in an effort to please God. It can build up quite a resume’ of self-righteousness.

The “*flesh*” often refers to man’s highest and noblest efforts - but the problem is they’re still *man’s effort* - and human effort can never make us right with God.

Which brings us to Paul’s testimony... his recounting of the lofty heights he had achieved *in the flesh* - and how in an instant he gave it all up for something better.

Even Grace Kelly’s fairytale pales in comparison to the love and sacrifice that occurred in Paul’s life...

He begins his amazing story in verse 4, “*If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so...*” In other words, if there had been a man who could’ve earned his way to God it would’ve been Paul.

And to prove that boast in the next two verses Paul takes us on a tour of his **religious** trophy room...

He was “*circumcised the eighth day...*”

Today, circumcision is done for lots of reasons, but among the Jews this was what God’s Law required. Leviticus 12:3 commanded it for every infant boy.

And not just circumcision, but on “**the eighth day.**” I’ve read that a baby boy’s blood doesn’t begin to clot until eight days after he’s born. Doctors, today, give the infant a shot of Vitamin K to speed along the process.

But God was aware of that detail from the beginning. That’s why He required circumcision after eight days.

In the Greek, Paul’s excerpt here reads, “**in respect to circumcision an eight day one.**” In other words, Paul was an “**eighth-dayer**” - a member of an elite club.

This meant he wasn’t a pagan who had converted. Instead, he’d been an observant Hebrew from birth.

He was also “**of the stock of Israel...**” Of all the branches of the human family, Israel’s twelve sons were chosen by God to be His own special people.

Paul was from that tree - *of the right stock*. If he had logged onto ancestry.com it would’ve rated him 5 star.

He was also “**of the tribe of Benjamin...**” Of Israel’s sons Benjamin was the only one born in the land God promised... The first king, Saul, was from this tribe...

During the Civil War that followed Solomon’s reign, Benjamin was the only tribe to stay loyal to Judah and Jerusalem. He was a faithful tribe, honored among all the twelve tribes of Israel. And Paul was a Benjaminite.

Paul summarizes his birth certificate, “**a Hebrew of the Hebrews.**” He had *a star-studded, pure-blooded*, religious pedigree. No one could produce a more impeccable

bloodline. For a people who trusted in their racial purity, Paul had every reason to feel righteous.

When it came to pleasing God, Paul had been born with all the advantages - but he didn't stop there. He didn't rest on his godly genes, he was determined to add to his birthright some hard-earned righteousness.

He writes, **“Concerning the law, a Pharisee...”**

The word **“Pharisee”** means **“separated ones.”** The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that in the first century there were about 6000 men committed to this sect of Judaism. They were strict adherents to the Law.

Think of the Pharisees as *a religious gang* with their own code of rules and rituals. They were **“The lords of legalism.”** They viewed Jewish tradition as their turf.

And if you crossed their interpretation of God's Law, or refused to toe the line they set, *be ready to rumble.*

Yet Paul wasn't just a rank-and-file Pharisee - even in the midst of this strict sect, he was the most zealous. He pens, **“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church..”**

Because Jesus, and His disciples, condemned the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, this angered them. They took pride in being righteous, they didn't like someone exposing their *self-righteousness and unrighteousness.*

This made Jesus and the early Christians a target for the Pharisees. Paul, who at the time was called Saul, oversaw Stephen's stoning - the first Christian martyr.

He conducted a terrorist campaign against the early Church. In fact, Paul was on his way to Damascus, with a hit squad, when the Lord Jesus intercepted him.

Paul sums up his ecclesiastical credentials with the boldest exclamation point the man could muster...

“Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” *Surgery, pedigree, Pharisee, zealotry* - according to religion Paul had flawless credentials.

Yet here’s his amazing conclusion, verse 7, **“What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.”** In a flash of light on the Road to Damascus, the moment Paul met Jesus, everything changed.

He saw the Savior, and the glory that surrounded Him. I’m sure he noticed the nail holes in His hands and feet - *the puncture proofs of love*. Then Paul heard Him say, **“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”**

And he had no answer. Suddenly, Paul realized he’d been fighting God, in the name of God. It was the ultimate hypocrisy. He’d dared to resist God’s own Son.

Paul had been a fool. All his *proper breeding*, and *religious training*, and *self-righteous zeal* caused Him to miss the Lord of glory and trample on His purposes.

How could he have been so blind... so wrong?

Paul worked a quick equation. He added up what had been **“gain”** to Him - *the life he’d dedicated himself too and had valued so highly* - and he compared it to the *forgiveness*, and

acceptance, and peace, and joy, and grace, and purpose, and power Jesus now offered.

And there was no comparison. What he'd considered of immense value seconds before, in light of Christ was now worthless. He says, *"I counted (it) loss for Christ."*

The word *"counted"* means *"to assess or evaluate."*

The Greek philosopher Socrates had said, *"The unexamined life is not worth living."* Well, Paul carefully calculated. He added up His righteousness, and put it on a scale, and balanced it with what God required. And suddenly, he realized how inadequate he was.

It reminds me of the drill sergeant in charge of the new troops. Their first inspection was a disaster. One of the soldiers was particularly sloppy and disheveled.

The sergeant was so angry he didn't know what to say to the soldier. Finally, he shouted an impossible command, *"Step out here and take a look at yourself!"*

Of course, you can't look at yourself without a mirror, but the glory of God had acted like Paul's mirror. In light of Jesus' grace and glory, all Paul had valued and worked for appeared trite, and worthless, and wasted.

All his religious achievements - all the pursuits that had driven him in the past - nothing he'd valued came close to the joy of Jesus he had received in an instant, *for no other reason than God's amazing grace.*

In fact, Paul's religious ambitions had gotten in God's way. As long as he'd depended on his own goodness to be pleasing to God, he could never be good enough.

Paul had been proud of his accomplishments. They proved he was more righteous than his peers, *but then Christ came along*, and up against Jesus, all his good works and religious deeds were nothing but *“rubbish.”*

That’s his confession in verse 8, *“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ...”* Paul came to see his religious credentials - his moral medals of honor - the badges of self-righteousness he wore - as *“rubbish.”*

The word *“rubbish”* literally means *“dung or manure.”*

When Paul tried to earn a right standing with God it was all about what he could do. It was *“do do do...”* but all it amounted to was *do-do*. It’s when He stopped *trying* and *trusted*, then He received Christ’s goodness.

It reminds me of my kids when they were tots. Zach and Natalie were close in age and size, so Kathy would dress them up in these cute, little sailor suits. They were adorable from a distance - but if you’d got up close to them at the right time - *boy, could they smell.*

Atrocious! They messed in their diapers. You’d think *“how could anything that cute smell so rotten.”* Yet that was Paul. He looked so adorable on the outside, but underneath he stunk with pride and self-righteousness.

Hey, it’s not *what you’ve done*, but *who you know* that makes a person right with God. Jesus is our ticket to heaven. Verse 9 informs us, *“And be(ing) found in Him (in Christ), not*

having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith...”

What makes a person pleasing to God is not a *self-made* righteousness earned by our own good works.

It's *His gift of righteousness* that we receive by faith.

That means are you trusting in your performance - in what you *do*? Or are you resting in what Jesus *did*? Corrie Ten Boon use to say, "**Nestle don't wrestle.**" Your best efforts are *manure*, it's by faith we *mature*.

And why is this idea of righteousness so vital?

The answer is **access** - **access to God!** Relationship and fellowship with the God who created you are given only to people who are in a right standing with Him.

Thus, the person who tries to earn God's favor never knows God. It's when you humble yourself, and receive His goodness by faith, then you'll know His presence.

This was Paul's ultimate goal. This was behind his desire for righteousness. As he states in verse 10, "**that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...**"

Everybody needs a goal - an driving passion in life.

I like a poster I once saw of a teenage soccer player. He's on the ground. He's dirty, exhausted. His face wears a painful expression. The caption reads, "**No pain, no gain; no gain, no goals; no goals, no scouts; no scouts, no scholarship; no scholarship, no college; no college, no girls - *no girls?* Get up man, get up!**"

My point is, we all need an end game - and I can think of none higher, or more fulfilling an ambition than to know Christ. *A personal relationship with the King of the universe...* now that's the ultimate experience!

Realize, Paul is writing to the Philippians after being a Christian for over thirty years. He's an old man now

He's shared numerous miracle moments with God.

Paul was used by God to heal the sick, even raise the dead. Signs and wonders were commonplace.

Yet despite it all, **he still wanted to know Christ!**

Paul's utmost desire was to *understand His heart, behold His glory, feel His spiritual embrace, rest in His peace, learn of His nature, lean on His faithfulness, taste of His mercies...* even for the most seasoned saint there is **more of Jesus** than you've experienced.

As Charles Wesley wrote in one of his hymns, "**Thou O Christ, art all I want; more than all in Thee I find.**"

Paul addressed kings and emperors, he ascended to the third heaven, he spoke in the tongues of men and angels - yet his greatest privilege was to know Christ.

Like Grace Kelly, Paul's heart was captured by an unexpected passion. It locked him in a gravitational pull he never escaped. He wanted more of Jesus. In fact, the *deeper his experience, the greater his desire.*

Paul wanted to ***"know Him and the power of His resurrection."*** Don't you want to experience this power?

Imagine, Jesus' cold, clammy corpse under pounds of spices, trapped in a shroud. A body lies breathless. His limbs hang limp. Eyes, heart, liver have ceased to function. The little blood that was left, lies like sludge in His veins. The fingers of death hold Jesus in its grip.

When suddenly, the power of God comes upon Him.

An eye blinks. A heartbeat stirs the blood. A leg twitches; then wiggles. Muscles flex. The shroud peels away and a body bounds from the grave with new life.

Now don't you want to experience this resurrection power in your life? *What holds you in its grip today?*

Is there a sin that keeps you in its vice-grip? Do you battle an unrelenting attraction that's eating you up?

Here's my suggestion, try substituting that negative addiction for a positive one. Make it your goal to know Jesus in all His fullness and in His resurrection power.

Paul was **a Jesus junkie**. He was addicted to Jesus. He kept going back... **For Jesus is the one positive addiction in this life**. The more you know Jesus - and His resurrection power - the freer your life becomes.

But Paul doesn't end there. He desires to know "**Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings...**" Paul knows that the presence of Jesus - even His resurrection power - isn't the only way to know the Savior. Perhaps, it's not even the best way.

This is why Paul also desires to know "**the fellowship of His sufferings...**" *If you and I only went to parties together how well would you know me?* If the only times we mingled we

were joking and laughing, how deeply would you know my soul, my truest thoughts?

They say the tightest relationships are bonded in battle. Soldiers who share the same fox hole create ties that decades and distance can't unravel. If you want to know someone it takes more than cheers and chuckles. **It's *hardship that creates deep fellowship.***

Don't misunderstand, bring on the parties - the thrill of knowing Jesus. Let me walk in resurrection power. I'll ride the back of a miracle for as long as I'm allowed.

But when my Lord sees there's a closeness I can't share - a part of His plan I can't touch - *without a little suffering in my life; then I want to embrace the pain.*

When I married Kathy I didn't just commit to date nights and vacations. I love her so much I want to walk through valleys with her - go through the fire with her.

I want to be by her side through all of life - *the good and the bad.* This is how I feel about Jesus. I not only want to ***know Him, and the power of His resurrection*** - I even want to know ***"the fellowship of His sufferings."***

Isaiah 53 (3) tells us Jesus was ***"A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."*** While on earth Jesus didn't live a carefree - nonchalant life. *He carried burdens.*

At times He wept. He shed tears at Lazarus' tomb. He wept over Jerusalem's rejection of Him as Messiah.

He cared about people. He taught His disciples, ***"Blessed are those who mourn... Blessed are the merciful... Blessed***

are the peacemakers... Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake..." In Jesus' estimation a meaningful life was one that cared about people, and risked getting involved.

And Paul was determined to follow His Lord Jesus even into *His caring, and His sorrows, and His weeping...* He would be **Jesus' fellow burden-bearer.**

And here is why most Christians have such a shallow relationship with Jesus. *We follow only so far...*

We're among the masses that cheer for Him when He multiplies the loaves and fish - we admire power...

We'll sit on the hill above the lake and marvel at His teachings and peculiar parables - we admire wisdom...

But we stop short of following Him into a Garden like Gethsemane - the garden of the olive press - where He was squeezed. His suffering scares us. *What if Jesus asks something painful, or taxing, or sacrificial of us?*

I love the poem by Robert Browning Hamilton...

"I walked a mile with Pleasure, she chatted all the way, but left me none the wiser for all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow and ne'er a word said she, but oh, the things I learned from her when Sorrow walked with me!" There's a deep fellowship we experience with the Savior when we carry His sorrows.

We learn much of Jesus by carrying a bit of the burden He carries - by suffering twinges of His pain.

Paul ends verse 11, “being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” This is what happens in a Christian’s life.

We are saved by the work of Jesus. His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead, make us righteous. *And to make sure we never forget it, God calls us to live it out over and over in our experience.*

We’re always dying to something. God deals with us. He calls on us to give up a sin or an impediment that’s hindering our relationship with Him - only to see Jesus resurrect in our lives something that is far better.

Author Kent Hughes suggests, “The cycle of Christ’s experience becomes the pattern for Paul and all serious Christians: suffering - death - resurrection.”

To hammer home the message of the Gospel, God repeats it's principles over and over in our lives... *We **suffer** a loss... Our loss results in a kind of **death**... Then out of that death God works a **resurrection**...*

Maybe that suffering has to do with a business. Your company closes - a dream dies. Yet through it, God charts a new direction. He resurrects new opportunity.

Perhaps your suffering is a troubled relationship. It doesn't work out - *a love dies*. Yet from the ashes, God resurrects a wiser you, who's ready for a new start.

CS Lewis once said, "**Nothing that has not died will be resurrected.**" Often to know His resurrection power, you have to experience *the fellowship of His sufferings*.

What a story Paul could tell! When he met Jesus he counted his *star-studded righteousness* as rubbish. He swapped it for a *grace-gifted righteousness* in Christ.

And that righteousness enabled Paul to know Jesus, and His power, even the fellowship of His sufferings...

Like Paul, have you been captured by a passion that has overwhelmed your former life? A love that's turned everything else to rubbish? *Do you have a story?*