

Please turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 3. We will be continuing where we left off last week as we saw in verses 4 through 7 that everything that Paul had once counted as gain in regards to his standing before Jehovah, his pedigree, his self-righteousness, his zeal, that it is all counted loss. He left off last week in verse 7 with Paul stating, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” Our text this morning continues this thought. Hear now the Word of our Lord from Philippians chapter 3 beginning at verse 8.

Read Philippians 3:8-11

Pray

Here in our text today the Apostle reminds us of the great cost of following Christ. Many of us have been blessed greatly in this life, whether that be with material possessions, godly families, stable jobs, bright minds, or whatever it may be. But as we looked at last week, our confidence cannot be found in these things. Possessions may be stripped away. Families may crumble. Jobs may be lost. Intellect may fade due to illness or the passing of time. None of these things are sure, none are secure, none are lasting. But most importantly none of these things can justify you before your Father in heaven. It is the vanity of vanities to place your trust in these things, and doing so will lead to only misery and death for eternity in hell. And so, as we saw last week, our confidence is to be found only in Christ Jesus, for He is the only one who satisfies the justice of God and grants eternal life for those who put their trust in Him. It is not easy to give up the things of the world, to see them as the vanity they are concerning our justification, and to put our trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, but that is exactly what we are called to do. The Gospel is not simply to pray and prayer and you're good. The Gospel comes at a great cost to the one who embraces it. Paul understood this perhaps more than we do. And as we will see, he recognized that in losing the things of the world, those things in which he once placed his confidence vainly, the reward for doing so was immeasurable. As we consider this passage we must consider

what it means for us to do as Paul did, to give up the things of the world, and to fully follow Christ. So the exhortation to you this morning is to consider all things loss for the sake of Christ Jesus. We will consider this exhortation by looking at two simple aspects: first, what is lost; and lastly, what is gained.

First, let us consider what is lost. Look with me at verse 8, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” When we consider the words of the Apostle we see what is lost is truly everything. If you recall the sermon from last week Paul listed all the great things that he once considered gain. He gave up all his honors and advantages, as a Jew and a Pharisee, and submitted to all the disgrace and suffering which comes with the profession and preaching of the Gospel. Matthew Henry remarks, “When he embarked in the bottom of the Christian religion, he ventured all in it, and suffered the loss of all for the privileges of a Christian.” Paul realized that the very things which he once thought gained him favor before the Lord were being heaped up as judgement against him in the last day. The things of this world that he put his confidence in were like a credit card, which when used gives the appearance of providing great benefit and credit, but in reality is piling on mound and mounds of debt. Those things which he once boasted in as gaining him merit before the Father were only condemning him. And so they were a hinderance to him believing the Gospel. The Lord had to strip all those things away, making him naked and poor and blind, in order to then bring him to a place of humble reliance upon Christ.

It is like sailors, who, when urged on by danger of shipwreck, throw everything overboard, that, the ship being lightened, they may reach the harbor in safety. Paul, was prepared to lose everything that he had, to throw everything overboard if you will, rather than be deprived of Christ. He was like a man, who, “having found the pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and

bought it;” and never regretted for an instant the sacrifice he had made. And consider the language that Paul now uses to speak of these things which he once considered gain. He counts them all but dung. A stronger expression he could not have used. He not only willingly sacrificed, but held in perfect abhorrence, every thing that should stand in competition with an interest in the Redeemer’s righteousness. Consider this expression for a moment. Is there anything more repulsive, more vile, more disgusting than dung? It sickens us; it harbors dangerous bacteria which can cause grave illness; it is good for nothing but being flushed down the toilet. Paul is saying that is how we too must view the things of this world, those things we once took vain confidence in, those things which we once considered gain.

Friends, you must be prepared to renounce the things of this world, to count them all as loss. You must be will to part with everything you, everything you treasure, whenever the Lord will require this from you. It is not expressly necessary that you be a poor man, in order that you may be Christian; but if it pleases the Lord that it should be so, you ought to be prepared to endure the loss of absolutely everything. It must all be counted loss, for nothing in this world, nothing you possess, nothing about your life means anything when it comes to eternity. Put your whole life on one side of the scales — everything that you think is of value and lasting worth. Put your best boasts on one sides of the scales, and put only Jesus Christ on the other side. The scales will always tip in His favor. He is more valuable, more precious. He outweighs your very best boast. Paul has come to know what the Judaizers infecting the Philippian church have not understood, and what we so often forget: you can’t boast in yourself and have Jesus Christ. You can’t put your confidence in the flesh and claim the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. It is one or the other. You can’t get rich while plunging deeper into debt. So what do you make your boast in? Where do you root your confidence? Do you really rest, day by day, in your pedigree — your heritage and family name, your parents, or your rich history in the church? Do you rest in your

performance? Perhaps you are proud you never miss church on a Sunday, or that you read your Bible. Do you rest in your purity or your efforts to live a scrupulously moral life? if this is you, cast those things overboard, count them all as loss, consider them but dung, for this is what is required of you. If you do not lose everything, you will gain nothing.

But if you do lose everything, if you count it all loss, the friends, you will gain so much more than you what you have thrown overboard. Let us now turn our attention to consider what is gained. Look with me again at our passage, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” I want us now to focus on four things which are gained when we lose everything and come to Christ. The first great gain that Paul speaks of is union with Christ. Paul says that he counted these things as loss so that he may win Christ and be found in Him. Gaining Christ is no abstract intellectual thing, but is a profound spiritual reality. We are united to Christ, as members of his body and as branches in the vine. This is one of the key focuses of Paul theology of salvation, something which he speaks to over and over, and that is because it is foundational. There are no spiritual blessings outside of Christ. You do not get blessings, you get Christ, and in having Christ all you ever need becomes yours. Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Union with Christ becomes the new sphere and context of your lives and your desires. God does not look at you and merely see a sinful man standing before Him, but instead looks at you and sees you as one in Christ. It is in Christ that you live and move and have

your being. Do you see how great a gain you have if you would but lose everything for the sake of Christ Jesus? He is your all-encompassing Savior, and He unites you to Himself. How amazing is that. So the first great gain you receive when you lose all and come to Christ is the most profound reality of all; you are united to Him in irreversible and indissoluble union.

The second great gain you receive because you are united to Christ and will be found in Him is the imputed righteousness of Christ. “Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Paul excludes all his own righteousness from bearing any part in his salvation, and declares his reliance to be only and exclusively on that righteousness which is of God through faith in Christ. Instead of your own feeble attempts at righteousness, the self-righteousness which Paul has already condemned and which is to be cast away, that false semblance of righteousness which amounts to nothing but filthy rags in the sight of Jehovah, you gain the righteousness which is from God, the righteousness of Christ. You get it not by doing, but by trusting. Henry says, “There is a righteousness provided for us in Jesus Christ, and it is a complete and perfect righteousness. None can have interest or benefit by it but those who come off from confidence in themselves, and are brought heartily to believe in him.” Your own righteousness through the law is worthless in the sight of God. There is not merit in it. Yes, you are called unto good works, but those works in no way contribute to your right standing before God, but instead flow forth from your union with Christ. Let me take a second and correct an error which is permeating throughout Reformed churches. There are false teachers today who say that we are justified by faith alone, but that the faith by which we are justified is a living faith that is accompanied by works. Friends, this is a doctrine more akin to papists than anything Scriptural or Reformed, and yet it is poisoning our churches. If you believe your works in any way contribute to your right standing before God, you are deceived. If you believe that your own righteousness is needed to accompany

your faith in order for it to be saving faith, you have embraced another Gospel. Shed it off, count it as loss, cast it away, flush it down the toilet like the dung that it is, and come to Christ and be clothed in His righteousness.

The third great gain seen in our text when one loses everything and gains Christ is sanctification. “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” Paul knows Christ, but he wants to know Him more and more. He wants his fellowship and friendship with Christ to be sweeter and deeper. Brothers and sisters, your union with Christ develops into a living communion with Him in His death and resurrection. If you have been united to Christ then you have been united with Him in His death and resurrection. But the central thing that Paul is focusing on here in verse 10 of our passage is that in Christ you have the fellowship of His sufferings. Paul is saying that those who are united to Christ will have the power of resurrection life infusing them, but that they will also become sharers in the reality of suffering along with Christ. But this suffering is not aimless. It has a goal. This having the fellowship of His sufferings has as its goal our becoming like Him in His death. It has as its goal the death of self and sin, the mortification of sin. Paul was as ambitious of being sanctified as he was of being justified. He was as desirous to know the power of Christ’s death and resurrection killing sin in him, and raising him up to newness of life, as he was to receive the benefit of Christ’s death and resurrection in his justification. Suffering in the Christian life is part of God’s design for the death of sin in your heart and the sanctification of your soul. David Strain puts it this way, “It is surgical in nature. He is dealing with the disease of your heart by wielding the scalpel of suffering in your life.” We ought to praise God that He uses whatever means necessary, even the sufferings of this life, to conform us more and more into the image of Christ. Praise God when we come to Christ we gain sanctification in Him.

The fourth great gain that Paul speaks of here in our text is that when you lose everything for the sake of Christ you gain the sure hope of glorification in Him. Look at verse 11, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” This is the happiness of heaven that can only be had if you are in Christ, because, though the souls of the faithful, when they depart, are immediately with Christ, yet their happiness will not be complete till the general resurrection of the dead at the last day, when soul and body shall be glorified together. This is your great hope. It is the triumph over the grave and bodily life with Christ in glory forever. Calvin calls this a ‘choice consolation’ “that in all our miseries we are partakers of Christ’s Cross, if we are his members; so that through afflictions the way is opened up for us to everlasting blessedness, as we read elsewhere, ‘If we die with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.’ (2 Tim. 2:11)” Friends, if you are outside of Christ, this is not your hope; it is not your choice consolation. There is reserved for you a resurrection as well, but it will be unlike that of those who are in Christ. Your soul will one day too be reunited with its body, but that which was sown corruptible will be raised as still corruptible. There will be no glorification for you in that last great day, but instead your resurrected body will be cast into the lake of fire with Satan and his demons, where you will spend eternity in that place where the fire never ends, where the thirst is never quenched, and where there is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth. Repent of your sins this day and come unto Christ. Cast off all the vain things in which you have placed your confidence and find true confidence in Him. Be united with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit bringing to life your cold dead soul, and you too can have the blessed hope of glorification which is only gained in Christ.

Brothers and sisters, the Christian life is not one which can be taken up lightly. You cannot have one foot in this world and one foot planted in Christ. Either forsake the world or forsake Christ, there is no other option. And if you forsake Christ, He will forsake you when you try to enter into His presence on that great day of

judgement. “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36) Throw overboard whatever it is that you are clinging to which is threatening to make shipwreck of your faith. Count the things of this world, those things which you once considered gain, as but dung; see them as disgusting and vile compared to the beauty and glory of the Lord. And count all things as loss for the sake of Christ Jesus.