

Philippians 3:7–11 (NKJV)

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. **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 **9** 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; **10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, **11** if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul's accounting correction.

We are revisiting Paul's method of accounting this morning. It is Paul's way of finding where he stands by looking at his spiritual finances.

In accounting you have debits on the left side of the ledger and credits on the right side. When you have cash in an account you have that cash in the left hand column. It is a debit. It is also an asset. The more in that column, the more cash you have. When you write a check, you put that amount in the credit column. That decreases your cash amount.

Paul is doing his **life** accounting. He is accounting for that which **has worth**, and that which is **worthless**. And he reveals that he was doing wrong accounting all of his life until the Damascus road.

In verse 7 he tells us about his wrong accounting.

He used to think there were some things that were going to **earn favor** with God. He thought they were **assets**. He thought they were **debits**. But then He met Christ, and he realized they were actually **credits**. They were **not** assets. They were liabilities. They were doing **nothing** to get him out of the debt He owed God.

Then in verse 8 Paul talks about gaining Christ. That is now Paul's **ultimate** asset, his **ultimate** debit.

We spoke last week about the amazing things that people will do in the **power of their flesh** in an effort **to earn their salvation**. And it is not only Paul who thought that we can somehow earn God's love, earn our salvation. Oh, I don't think we realize we are doing it sometimes. It just creeps in. We know when we have crossed that line by a litmus test. Anytime we think that because I have **done** a certain thing, that God **owes me** a certain thing, we have crossed the line.

We never earn relationship. We only earn rewards.

Is there any area in your life where you think God owes you something? Ask yourself why you think that thing.

If you think God owes it simply because God promised it, that is good. All the saints in the Bible did that. And we are to think that too. It is not that we have earned it. But God has **promised** it so He will deliver it. We can expect it. Deserve would be the wrong word technically. God **owing** it is not really the right way to think of it. But God will deliver on His promises and we are right to expect it. God wants us to expect that. That is what faith does.

But I am talking about thinking of an **economy** with God where I **give** this thing and I am **earning** relationship from God. I am **earning** love from God. That is where we get in trouble. That is where we start putting stuff in the wrong column. We are prone to thinking that the thing we are giving has **great** value when it really has **no** value. We think it is an asset when it is really a liability. That is what was going on with Paul until he began to account correctly.

Paul starts in verse 7 by saying this:

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

Now we need to be careful here. We must see this in the proper context. Paul tells us other places what an **advantage** it was to be raised Jewish. He was around the word of God all his life. He was taught not to commit some of the **notorious sins** that have a myriad of negative consequences in this life. He would have been raised in a household that **cared about** eternal things. He would have learned important things about God. Paul is not lumping every single thing in His past life as loss. We gain a greater understanding of what he is talking about by jumping down to verse 9 where Paul says, "Not having **my own righteousness** which is from the law".

There is the great problem. Paul is talking about methods of **attaining righteousness**, or right standing with God. Ways of becoming morally more pure, more perfect, more sinless. And there is the issue. Our own righteousness is the issue. Every effort that Paul had poured into attaining his own righteousness, he now accounts as being a loss, as being lost cash. It was a waste of time. Well, even worse than a waste of time. One can see that as being neutral. These efforts were **worse** than useless.

We skip down to verse 8 and Paul calls them rubbish. That word in Greek is very vulgar. Some read it as dung. But in light of how Paul used it, and in the context that he uses it, he is regarding it as the food scraps that are so bad you would not considering eating it. But you feed it to your dogs and they eat it right up. Essentially it is likely that, just like he called the Judiazers **dogs**, he is calling self righteous efforts their **dog food**. It is fit for them. But it is not fit for a believer in Christ.

Next we have a typical Paul sentence that runs on for 4 verses.

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

Here Paul grants perfect clarity to which column something falls on. There is loss that comes from efforts to make **one's self righteous**. That is one column.

The other column?

for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord

It is interesting that verse 8 in the NKJV says "Yet Indeed". It is evidently a difficult phrase in Greek but it probably means more like- "not only so, but what is more". Paul is building emphasis. To simply say that he counts these things loss is not good enough. It is not emphatic enough. So he turns it up. He strengthens the contrast. It is not just the contrast of self righteous acts that count for **nothing** versus faithful acts that count for **something**. No. He is saying the things in his loss column are shown for **how pitiful they are** when compared to what is **not** in the gain column.

What is in **the gain** column?

The excellence, the most important thing, the most stellar thing we could imagine. When something is excellent, it is the best it can be. And what is this excellent thing?

Knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord.

The word for knowing here is an experiential knowledge. It is more than knowing **about** a person or thing. It is having an **intimate knowledge** of that person or thing. It is the same word used to refer to a man knowing a woman in marital relations.

This knowing is personal. Carla and I have taken some personality tests over the years. I find them helpful. She finds them irritating. And I see her point. The test **may** or **may not** reveal helpful truths about you, depending on how accurately you are able to answer the questions. And even if you do it perfectly, and it tells you something about yourself that is accurate, those reading the test results still do not **know you**. It takes a person living with you and loving you to know you.

An observer might know a few things about you. But they do not **know you**.

What Paul is talking about here is **that kind** of knowing Christ. It is more than doctrinal. It is not less. Many make that mistake. They attempt to know Christ **experientially** without becoming an expert about what **God tells us about Himself**. That would be like a girl receiving a love letter from her boyfriend but refusing to read it because she only wants to learn something by being with him.

Of course we must know what **God tells us about Himself**. A believer is driven to that. But a believer wants more than that. We want to know our Lord so well that we can tell another person experientially what He is like. We will want to brag on just how lovingly he treats us. We will want to tell others how He **responds to us** when we call out to Him. We will want them to know just how impressed we are with His ability to deliver exactly what we need. We want to know Him well enough that we are drawn to **run to Him** with all situations in life. F. B. Meyer wrote this,

We may know Him personally intimately face to face. Christ does not live back in the centuries, nor amid the clouds of heaven: He is near us, with us, compassing our path in our lying down, and acquainted with all our ways. But we cannot know Him in this mortal life except through the illumination and teaching of the Holy Spirit.... And we must surely know Christ, not as a stranger who turns in to visit for the night, or as the exalted king of men—there must be the inner knowledge as of those whom He counts His own familiar friends, whom He trusts with His secrets, who eat with Him of His own bread.

To know Christ in the storm of battle; to know Him in the valley of shadow; to know Him when the solar light irradiates our faces, or when they are darkened with disappointment and sorrow; to know the sweetness of His dealing with bruised reeds and smoking flax; to know the tenderness of His sympathy and the strength of His right hand—all this involves many varieties of experience on our part, but each of them like the facets of a diamond will reflect the prismatic beauty of His glory from a new angle.

(The Epistle to the Philippians [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952], 162–63)

This is the thing in the gain column that makes everything in the loss column look all that more pitiful.

This is what you and I are called to. It is far more than living up to Bible standards. It is far more than a list of dos and don'ts. It is relationship with Christ.

And look how Paul says this:

the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord

The word **Christ** is more of a title than a name. That refers to Jesus's Messiahship, His Kingship, His authority over our lives. He is the Exalted one. He is the Lion of Judah, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The name **Jesus** has more to do with His Savior role. He is the suffering servant who took upon Himself all of our sin so we could be regarded as the righteousness of Christ. He is the lamb of God. The ultimate sacrifice.

Our Lord's attributes are captured in His name. But there is a danger we could get all of that **factually correct** but still miss the relationship. That is where the final two words come in. It takes goes beyond the limit of a **sheer cognitive understanding**. We know instantly that Paul is talking **intimate relationship**. He says Christ Jesus **MY LORD**. Paul is not just teaching about Jesus Christ **THE** Lord. He certainly does refer to Christ like that at times in His teaching. But His point here is **very very** personal. This is what makes all self righteous acts look utterly like **dog food**. It is knowing **the person of Christ**. And more than just knowing Him. It is knowing and regarding Him as the Lord and Master of His life. It is a complete trust in Christ to the point that Paul **surrenders his will to Christ's will**, knowing His Lord enough to know that it is the very wisest choice he could ever make with His life. The best position we can walk in is to be in this state where **THE** Lord is **MY** Lord.

That is where the righteous walk comes from that **does** count for something. It does not **EARN** relationship. It is the **FRUIT** of relationship. It comes not **in order to impress**, but in a **response to being loved**. It does not earn the **right** to be adopted by Christ. It comes because we know that we have **ALREADY been** adopted by Christ.

Then Paul continues.

for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

At one time I was thinking about purchasing a business **selling and supporting pagers**. I am sure there are some of you here who have never seen a pager.

Which is further proof that not buying that business was a good decision.

Pagers were devices that were around prior to **cell phones** becoming popular. If you wanted someone to contact you, you would call their pager number. That would buzz or ring a little device and give you the phone number of who you needed to call. Then you would find a pay phone, which again some of you have never seen, to call the person who paged you.

Well anyway, had I purchased that business I would have found that in a few short years pagers were obsolete. Cell phones replaced them in a way that was a hundred times more useful.

Had I purchased that business, I would have suffered that loss. It would have cost me to put all my eggs in that basket. My decision for that thing that I hoped would **bring me a profit** would have only **brought me pain**. And I would have had to rid myself of that business.

I think that is what Paul describes here. Paul had sunk his whole life in trying to earn his salvation by external obedience. He had paid every prior year of his life to this pursuit. What a price to pay to realize they were all **unprofitable**. None of them gave him anything of value. What an ultimate bummer.

But fortunately Paul was not only **left** with a loss.

He goes on to say that he counted them **rubbish**. He counted them as **dog food** fit for the dogs, and he is actually describing what Paul **once was** here. I guess when Paul talked about the Judiazers he could say, it takes one to know one. He knew the pursuit of legalistic righteousness up close and personal.

Now what was all that old stuff considered loss **to**?

that I may gain Christ

Paul is saying if I can just have Christ, I have a gazillion times more than any of that dog slop, garbage, dung would have given me.

Paul saw having Christ as **the ultimate** in life. There was nothing more valuable. And there was nothing really with **any value** in **comparison** to the surpassing value of Christ.

Have you ever considered what **clarity** that view of Christ gives to **all of life**? I don't think any of us will ever keep that view of Christ **perfectly clear** through all of our experiences. But as we gravitate to it **more and more often** and **more and more closely**, it grants us the ability to see all of life as we should see it. All the distractions to our spirituality seem absurd and meaningless. Everything appears to be loss in comparison to living in a relationship with Christ under the Lordship of Christ.

Paul is never going to go back to any efforts of self righteousness. Those old efforts will never grasp Christ by faith. They will never gain Christ. Only the method that **Christ will provide** will ever **gain** Christ. And there is nothing of self in it.

9 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;

Sinclair Ferguson taught us a lot in Sunday School about being in Christ. If anyone wants to see that series I can give you free access to it. Being found **IN CHRIST** is really what we need. And it is not based on anything that originates **in us**. When Christ calls us to Himself and we respond to His call, scripture tells us we are placed **in Christ**. And being **found in Christ** determines EVERYTHING that is important in our lives.

When Mike died he was still processing the importance of this concept. It appeared to be the truth he clung to at the end. What **we do** in Christ is evidence that our lives have been changed, proof that we are **truly In CHRIST**. But being **IN CHRIST** is the thing that determines whether we will live with Christ in glory or not.

Paul was decidedly NOT in Christ prior to the Damascus encounter. He was persecuting Christ by persecuting the Christians.

We see in this text the two options.

Not in Christ

Having to work up ones own righteousness

Method- earn by my effort

Using some method where we lower God's expectations to the place that we can meet them.

Then congratulating ourselves for having attained that righteousness whereby God must accept us.

Credit- human effort

The problem with that was that while Paul could meet the **external standard** that the religious leaders had created from the words of the Bible, He could not meet the **internal standard** that the law was intended to address as well. Paul may have been able to keep the letter of the law on the first 9 commands, he could not meet the spirit of the law on the 10th command. No person is free of coveting.

So all the slapping on the back Paul may have done to himself for his noble efforts, when the light turned on in the Law, Paul was utterly condemned. That is the effect of the law when it is presented accurately. It is designed to lead us to Christ.

The other option, the other condition is this:

In Him

that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

Method- receive it through faith

We are in Christ by hearing the Gospel, that which Christ did for us. We have peace with God through the work of Christ, not the works of flesh. Even faith is not a work. It is a gift. It was something given to us.

So this righteousness that Paul **worked so hard for** and **was so pretentious of** was never attained by Paul's method. Nor could it ever be. The righteousness that God requires is only met in His perfect Son. It **HAD TO BE** given to us. God had to

give us the righteousness of Christ through the means of us exercising the faith that God supernaturally gifted us to respond with.

Now in that method, where does the credit go?

Credit- The grace of Christ God gets all the credit in this salvation.

Now Paul's goal is to gain Christ. But to what end? What is Paul's expectation? Again- the goal is to know Christ. Not just know about Him. But to live in that relationship with Christ with all the benefits of being a child of God.

Now Paul notes two things that will accompany that relationship. And he gives the framework in which those two things will be experienced. Then he notes the goal of the process.

2 aspects of knowing Christ will be

The power of His resurrection

The fellowship of His sufferings

That happens while Paul is conforming to His death in day to day life And the Destination Paul fully believes that will result in will be eternal life through His resurrection, just like Christ's resurrection.

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death

and the power of His resurrection

When a person is living for themselves apart from Christ, how much spiritual energy do they need?

The answer is none. They are not attempting anything spiritual. So they do not need any help. They can do it by themselves, thank you very much.

But when they draw close to Christ what happens? The closer you get to Christ, how much does **your sin** bother you? How much do the **enemies attacks** on those you love bother you? As you appreciate the goodness of Christ, what happens? You take on the spiritual obstacles in your life and in the lives of others. You can no longer sit back in fear as Goliath taunts your God. As your relationship with Christ grows, you start to pick up stones. You start taking positions that, if God does not back you, you are going to fail miserably. And what happens? At that point you get the **"In Jesus Name"** power. Because you are **living** in Jesus's name. And as you step out in faith to do the will of Christ, the power of Christ is supplied to meet your need.

So as we know Christ, and Christ becomes our reason for living and dying, we experience this **resurrection power**. It the power that rose Christ from the dead and it is the same power that empowers sanctified living in a believer.

and the fellowship of His sufferings

If you fellowship with Brad for very long you will find yourself fellowshiping in the Pirates and the Steelers. If you fellowship with Mark you will fellowship in a love for hunting. If you fellowship with Jeremiah you will fellowship in a card game of which he is the only one who could possibly understand the rules. It is only natural that when we fellowship with someone, we take on something of them that is important to them.

When we fellowship with Christ, we take upon ourselves a love for Christ and for the Father. And when we do that, **we represent His character** in this world. And when we do that, those who hate Christ will hate us. And you know what? At that point we share something in common with our Savior. He has suffered. We have suffered for the same reasons. And now we have fellowship. He shares with us **His strength** as we share with Him **our stories**. We have this mutual thing between us. And it is precious and special.

Paul wanted that. He was saying, bring it on. He wanted what identifying with Christ would bring to Him. He wanted that shared bond with Christ.

being conformed to His death

I think this is referring to a lifelong goal that a believer has. It is to die to one's self to live for Christ. It is a life of putting to death everything the flesh holds up as the best way to live. It is submitting every decision to the Lordship of Christ. It is only doing those things that are Spirit led. It is having the same mind in us that Christ had in Him. It is loving others the way we love ourselves. It is loving God with all our heart, soul and strength. It is living in a way that onlookers might think we really don't value ourselves all that heavily.

Paul wanted to live conformed to the death of Christ so the resurrection power of Christ would show itself mightily.

11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

This cannot mean what it first appears to mean. We know this is true from both the immediate context and from the rest of scripture. Paul has not gone this far talking about the salvation that is promised **by faith in Christ** to end giving the impression it must be **earned** somehow. I think this is more the point.

If there is a way to have this relationship with Christ, I will take whatever method there is. I would take any means required to have a relationship with Christ because He is that desirable.

I know my old way did not work. I know now it could never work. I disdain that garbage now. Now I want Christ any way I can have Him so I can be in that group

that is raised from the dead. I will do anything to live forever in relationship with Christ. And dying to myself while experiencing the resurrection power of Christ and the fellowship of suffering with Christ is a small price to pay in attaining the glorious eternity that God has prepared for us in the end.

Remember the theme of joy that runs through this letter to the Philippians? Here we see another example of how joy is maintained. It is maintained by continually reorienting to the proper perspective in this life. Our seemers tell us to measure our lives by all kinds of standards. Am I comfortable? Do I have enough money to buy food and shelter? Are the relationships I am in going smoothly? Do those around me love me like I wish they would? And as we fixate on those things, our joy becomes more and more dependent on our circumstances. In our text this morning Paul shows us the perspective that maintains joy through all circumstances. Because what it focuses on is ultimate and it cannot be taken away.

**that I may gain Christ and be found in Him,
having a right standing which is given to us by God through faith in Christ,
that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of
His sufferings, being conformed to His death,**

This is the remedy to all the side roads that lead to despair and discouragement. It is the pursuit **of knowing Christ** that provides the perspective that frees us from all of the off ramps that our life circumstances will tempt us to go on.

We would do well this week to ask, what steps can I take to direct my life more in this direction? What things can I do to assure I foster and maintain this perspective?