

# *Philippians 3:8*

*Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 8/27/2007*

## **Marks of a True Believer: A look at Paul's Testimony Part 2**

### **Prayer**

Father, again, what a privilege it is to come before You and to proclaim Your excellencies. To do what You have saved us to do; You made us a people. You showed Your mercy through Christ, that we would proclaim the excellencies of You who called us out of darkness into Your marvelous light. Father, we praise You for that. And I pray as we look into Your Word today that You would work in our hearts, that You would grow us in respect to salvation, that we would grow closer to Christ. And Father, I pray if there is anyone in here who is not saved- You know who is saved and You know who is not- that You would be convicting their hearts, that they might fall before You and repent of their sins and trust in Christ alone for salvation. And Father, You know I cannot share Your Word without Your help completely, Lord God. And we are inadequate to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but as Your Word says, our adequacy is from You. So I pray You would give me the words to boldly and faithfully and accurately proclaim Your Word today so that You would be glorified. We pray this now in Jesus' Name. Amen.

### **Sermon**

Well, as you know this last week I got in a car wreck. I was hit at a stop by a guy going about 45 miles an hour. And I should have been really hurt, and God protected me. And I had no idea that it was coming. All of a sudden, I was just slammed into the seat. Thinking about that- I had no idea it was coming- I was thinking about what we are going to talk about today.

The apostle Paul, as we saw last week, he had no idea what was going to happen to him on the road to Damascus, and the Lord came to him at that moment and saved him. And so often we think of salvation as a work in process that we are kind of involved in. No, we are not involved in it at all. We have the fact that with man, salvation is impossible. But with God all things are possible.

Now we are going to see today as we look in this passage the marks of a true believer as we look at the testimony of the apostle Paul. And speaking of testimonies, I read, unfortunately, in a news article this last week part of some of the testimony that is coming forth concerning Mother Theresa. She wrote after she began her work in the slums of Calcutta, "Where is my faith? Even deep down, there is nothing but emptiness and darkness. If there be a God, please forgive me." Later on, she wrote that she expressed longing for God but was repulsed and empty, no faith, no love, no zeal. She also spoke and said her smile to the world was a cloak or a mask, and she said, "What do I labor for if there be no God? There could be no soul. There is no soul, then Jesus You are not true," she said. She also said, "I am told God lives in me, and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great nothing touches my soul. I want God with the power of all my soul, yet between us there is a terrible separation."

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You know, I have shared often that I believe absolutely from Scripture that anybody who believes in the Catholic dogma brought down is not saved. Now, there may be Catholics who are saved who don't believe in it completely but if you believe that grace comes through the sacraments rather than through the finished work of Jesus Christ you are not saved. And I have shared before my opinion that if what Mother Theresa said from her mouth was true in her heart, then she was not saved because she fully believed in the sacramental system, and here we see an evidence of an emptiness, a darkness and a separation cloaked by a mask of good works.

The apostle Paul was like that also. The apostle Paul, as we saw, had everything. He had a great righteousness on the outside. If you would have looked at him, you might have said, "Wow! What a tremendous fearer of God." As you might say concerning Mother Theresa.

But as we saw last week, and we will see today, that Paul considered everything- everything, all of his religious accomplishments, everything- as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus. And today we are going to be looking at Philippians chapter 3, verses 8 through 11.

So would you turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians 3. And actually, we are just going to get to verse 8 today. Now, I want to remind you of the context of Philippians. The apostle Paul is writing to a church, a church that loves him. A church that they have dear fellowship and contact. The apostle Paul was there in the beginning of the church. And they were very concerned about him because he was in chains under house arrest in Rome. And they sent Epaphroditus to help him, to bring a gift to him. And the apostle Paul writes back a letter to this church, to share the fact that his circumstances which they might have thought were for the worst, have turned out for the further progress of the gospel. And he is so thankful to God for them. He is thankful because of what God has done in them in Christ. And he is confident that "He who began a good work would complete it in Christ Jesus." And we know also that the apostle Paul shared that he was in prison, but the gospel was not imprisoned.

And we saw his attitude- to live, to continue on living if God would allow it, would be for Christ. And it would be beneficial for this body at Philippi. But to die, if he was to die, would be gain. And then he addressed the Philippians' attitudes, that they were to be united in spirit, humble; they were to be like Jesus Christ. They were to consider others as more important than themselves. They were to do nothing out of selfishness or empty conceit. Nothing out of self-centered motives. But everything, ultimately, having the mind of Christ which was revealed; as Paul would say, "Have this attitude (or mind) in you which was in Christ Jesus." And we saw the mindset of humility and obedience as Jesus Christ voluntarily took on human flesh, and He was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God highly exalted Him and gave Him back (ultimately, for everyone to see) the name which is above all names, that "Jesus Christ is Lord," to the glory of the Father.

And then we saw some of the first commands after that, that we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Why? Because God is at work in us. Obey the Lord because God is at work in you, and then he says, "Do not complain and argue." All things without complaining and arguing. Complaining and arguing is an example of the fact that you do not believe Jesus is Lord, that He is sovereign over your

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life. It is a terrible sin, and that is the first real direct command after working out your salvation. All things without complaining and arguing.

And then we saw three selfless examples of humility. We saw Paul's example of Timothy, and the example of Epaphroditus. And then Paul continues, and he says, "As for the rest (Or finally)." And he gives the warning which Robert shared, to beware of the false brethren, to beware of the dogs, the evil workers, the false brethren.

And we saw when we looked at the first three verses of chapter 3 how not to be ensnared by false teachers. We saw that we need to be rejoicing in the Lord, and we are vulnerable to false teaching when we are complaining and grumbling, and not rejoicing in what Christ has done. We need to heed the warnings. Paul says, "It is no trouble for me, but it is a safeguard for you." And we need to be on guard, we need to beware for those dogs, those evil workers, the false brethren.

And then Paul contrasted to help us understand what they look like, what a true believer looks like. Those who worship in the Spirit of God in contrast to those who are in the flesh. Those who glory in Christ Jesus, versus those who (in contrast) glory in other things. And those who put no confidence in the flesh, in contrast to false brethren who put confidence in their own abilities. And it is at this point Paul gives his testimony. If anyone could put confidence in the flesh, it would be the apostle Paul. And he gives his testimony. Let's review Paul's mindset before Christ. We will see that as we saw last week. We will see his mindset at salvation. And then today we will begin a picture of looking at his current mindset. And so we have,

***<sup>1</sup>Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. <sup>2</sup>Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; <sup>3</sup>for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, (and he says in verse 4) <sup>4</sup>although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: [Philippians 3:1-4]***

In comparison to these false guys, Paul's credentials to trust in the flesh were incredible. He talked about the fact that he was circumcised the eighth day. He was a true Jew. The nation of Israel, he was of that race. He was an Israelite. Tribe of Benjamin, one of the most honored tribes. A Hebrew of Hebrews. As to the Law, he was a Pharisee. He had attained the highest position you could have as to the Law. As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. As to righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

Paul relied on his heritage. In his own mind, he was born into salvation as we saw last week. He relied on his own righteousness. He was a Pharisee, zealous for God. And I am sure Mother Theresa was very zealous for God. Paul relied on the result of his own heritage and religiousness, which the result was his own personal righteousness in which he was found blameless. Paul had a lot to brag about, probably

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much more to brag about than those false teachers coming alongside the Philippians. And I believe that is his point that he is making.

But yet we see that he recognized after coming to Christ that he was a dirty, wretched sinner. But his sins were a different type of sin than we often think of as dirty and wretched. None of his good works could save, nothing he could do could save him. And it was not until the apostle Paul met Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus that he recognized that all his religious works were filth and dung, as we will see today. Acts 26, verse 12. If you want to hold your hand in Philippians, we will read this account again where he is relaying it to the king. Acts 26, verse 12. He is before king Agrippa here. He says,

***<sup>12</sup> "While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, <sup>13</sup> at midday, O King, (And that is King Agrippa.) I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. <sup>14</sup> "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' <sup>15</sup> "And I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' (You see, Paul did not know Christ. "Who art Thou?" He did not know Him.) And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. <sup>16</sup> 'But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; <sup>17</sup> delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' [Acts 26:12-18]***

Paul did not know Christ until that day. "Who art Thou, Lord?" And then he knew Christ that day. And later on, we see that he did not prove disobedient to the vision. He believed it. And he called out for others to repent likewise. But we see Paul's mindset before Christ. He considered all the things on his spiritual slate his gain. All those things he could do for God. Even things, Bible things- he considered them as gain. But now we take a look at verse 7 of our passage back in Philippians, and we see Paul's mindset at conversion.

***But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [Philippians 3:7]***

We saw that last week those things that were gain, perfect tense, those things that we continually advantageous to me in relationship to God in the past, he says, "I have counted, I have considered, I have reckoned as loss." Or total loss, we saw last week. For the sake of Christ. Why? Because of Christ. He says, "I have counted, or reckoned." That is in a perfect tense. In the past he decided they were loss, and he still believes that to this day. That is Paul's mindset ultimately at conversion, we will see.

Paul used to continually see his religious heritage, religious sincerity resulting external righteousness as gain in terms with his relationship with God. He continually thought of those things as being on the plus

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side. But after he came to Christ, or Christ came to him, on the Damascus road, a Christ that Paul did not know, he then recognized that all his gain was actually loss. And folks, there are many people who need to lose their religion because all that religious gain is actually loss. And I believe when you truly come to faith, that is how you will see it. He has counted, and they are to him now, loss. Why? Because of, for the sake of, or literally “because of Christ”. Because of Christ. And I tell you today, if you put your confidence in anything other than Jesus Christ alone, you have not met Jesus. You do not know Him, though you may think you know Him. And what did Jesus say to those who thought they knew Him in Matthew 7?

***<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' [Matthew 7:21-23]***

There are some of you here today that believe that what you do is what brings you into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul felt that way, at least to a relationship with God. And when he came into contact with the living Christ, he saw all of his former religiousness and righteousness, as we will see today, as dung. It is worthless waste. Worthless waste. And I want to ask you, what does your spiritual ledger sheet look like? There are times you ask people, “When did you come to faith in Jesus Christ?” And they say, “Well, I was baptized.” That’s the type of gain that Paul had before he was saved. Or they might say, “Well, I was confirmed at this time. Well, I started going to church at this time.” All those things you have to reckon as loss, as we will see, to gain Christ. What things are on the plus side? What things are on the minus side? And that brings us to our passage today concerning his current mindset. And let’s look at verse 7 again, and then verse 8.

***<sup>7</sup> But whatever things were gain to me, (And that’s gain continually in the past) those things I have counted (in the past with results continuing into the present) as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, [Philippians 3:7-8]***

We are going to see first of all that Paul relays the truth that nothing compares to knowing Christ. Paul counts all as loss in view of knowing Christ Jesus, his Lord. Again, verse 8. “More than that.” More than those things that I had in my religious resume. I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Now, Paul begins this phrase in the Greek with a very interesting combination of Greek particles. Well, what do I mean? He uses five Greek particles here. He uses *alla menounge kai*. What is he talking about? He basically says, “Indeed, more than that, I therefore affirm it, even this.” He is making a point. He is

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being very emphatic. We have translated it here “More than that.” But it is extremely emphatic. The contrast, even more than having counted my former religiousness as loss, more than that I now (present tense) continually count all things to be loss. All things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ.

Now what does he mean by “all things” here? What does he mean by the term “all things”? We are going to get into that more in depth when we get to the latter part of verse 8. But first of all, we need to see there is a contrast here. He says, “I count (present tense) all things to be loss, total loss, in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus. Nothing compares to knowing Christ. Nothing, not one single thing, compares to (as we will see) the true, intimate relational knowledge of the living God. Nothing compares.

What does he mean now, “concerning the surpassing value of knowing Christ”? This term “surpassing value”. *Huperecho* means “to hold above.” It speaks of supremacy in rank or authority in power. He talked about it earlier, and I shared this in chapter 2, verse 3. We are to see others as *huperecho* than ourselves. Supreme over ourselves. And here we see the surpassing value of knowing Christ. Same word used in chapter 4, verse 7 in Philippians. The peace of God which *huperecho*, surpasses, far beyond all comprehension.

What is the point? Everything goes in the loss column in view of the overwhelming, surpassing, supreme value of knowing Christ. Do you value knowing Christ? Our lives exhibit what we value. Our time exhibits what we value. And we know from Scripture that we know Him through the Word of God. We are sanctified and set apart. We are conformed to His image through the Word. He is revealed in the Word. Do you see it that way? So often we do not. Some people do not even know Him at all. So what is the point? Everything goes in the loss column in view of the overwhelming, surpassing, supreme value of knowing Christ.

Now, what does he mean here by the phrase “knowing Christ Jesus”? And he says, “my Lord.” He says, “Lord.” Not “Christ Jesus, my buddy.” Not “Christ Jesus, the Big Man Upstairs.” Christ Jesus, my Lord, Yahweh, the LORD. The One in which every knee, he has said earlier, will bow and every tongue will confess. “Christ Jesus, my Lord.”

What does that word “knowing” mean? Now, often I prefer the NASB translation because it is a more word-for-word translation of the Greek. And I like the New King James translation for the same reason. And here I believe the New King James translates this phrase more accurately because this in the NASB “knowing” is really not a verb or a participle there. It is actually a noun in the Greek. It really is “of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.” That is literally how it is written.

So what is he talking about, this surpassing greatness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus? What does he mean by “knowledge”? In Greek, there are three basic words we translate “knowledge.” There is *oida*, there is *gnosis* and there is *epignosis*. And all of those words actually kind of cross over at times, and sometimes they are used synonymously so we need to be careful not to so isolate them in their meanings. But there are some differences in their shades of meaning. First, the Greek word “*oida*”

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speaks of intellectual or knowledge gained through experience. Kind of “you know something about that.” The word “*gnosis*” speaks of a more intimate, relational knowledge. And “*epignosis*” is an “upon-gnosis”. It is an intense or true knowledge.

Now, the word in our passage here is “*gnosis*”, and I believe he is speaking of intimate, relational knowledge of Jesus Christ. That is what he is talking about. Now, it is not that Paul did not know of Jesus before this, right? He was a persecutor of the Way. He knew a lot about Jesus and His followers. Paul persecuted Christians, and he knew about Christ. But folks, Paul did not *know* Christ. Remember that? “Who art Thou, Lord?” He did not know Him. And although Paul knew about Christ, he did not know him intimately. He did not have a relationship with Him. And there are people who know about Christ. They can spout off the gospel. They know about Him but they do not know the gospel because their sin is still in the way. It has caused a separation. As Mother Theresa said, there is a great separation she felt. And we know from Scripture that sin has caused a separation between us and God. I can know about President Bush, but I do not know him personally. Saul knew about Christ, but he did not know Him because of his sin.

And folks, again, there are many people that think that they know Christ. They know about Him, and they will even say, “Lord, Lord.” And He will say, “Depart from Me, I did not know you.” There was no true relationship between God and His creation because of sin. “Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.” If Mother Theresa continued with her mindset that came from her writings concerning her view of the sacraments to the point of her death, then Jesus would say to her, “Depart from Me, I do not know you.” I truly hope on her deathbed she believed in the Truth.

So then in our passage, Paul says, “Everything is loss in view of the surpassing, supreme, incredibly great value of knowing Christ.” Eternal life consists of an intimate relationship with the living God. Jesus, praying to His Father, “This is eternal life, that they might know Thee, the One and only true God, and Your Son whom Thou hast sent.” It is a true relationship with the living God, and nothing else compares. All is loss in view of knowing Christ Jesus. It is Christ Jesus the Lord that Paul intimately knew. It is Christ the Messiah, the Anointed One, the King of kings. It is Jesus, the God who became human flesh (that is His human name) and dwelt among us. It is the Lord. Jesus, the Lord of All. Yaweh, the Sovereign, the great I AM. It is Christ Jesus the Lord that Paul knows. Not just a Jesus. He knows the right Jesus, the true Jesus as revealed in Scripture, Christ Jesus the Lord, and nothing compares to that. Nothing is greater than knowing Christ.

And folks, let me say this clearly: salvation is about knowing Christ. Man is separated from God because of sin. Man is not in a relationship with his Creator because of sin. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” When we repent of our sin, placing our faith in Jesus Christ, trusting in Him alone, we come into an intimate relationship with the living God through Christ, and we can now know Him. And that is what Paul is talking about. And he says, “There is nothing more important than that.”

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I want to ask you, some of you know about Christ but do you know Him? Do you know Him personally through the Word of God, as the Spirit of God has changed your heart? You have been born again? Do you know Him personally? Paul, present tense, continually counted everything as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ.

Now, folks, it is one thing to say, "I give up everything for Christ" and it is another thing to actually lose everything for Christ. Many will say, "I would give up everything for Christ." And yet, functionally they keep everything. Paul was not that way. Paul said he considered it as loss, and we will see here he lost it. Again, verse 8.

***More than that, I count (present tense, continually) all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, (it actually happened. I count it as loss, and I lost it. I count it as loss, and I lost it. And we are going to see his attitude towards that. It is a good thing. It is a great thing, it is a glorious thing to have this attitude.)... [Philippians 3:8a]***

Folks, we see Paul actually suffered loss when he came to Christ. Paul lost everything his life consisted of before Christ. In context, everything he valued before Christ, everything he had confidence in before Christ.

Now, this phrase "suffered the loss" comes from the Greek word *zemioo* which speaks of suffering loss or speaking of forfeiture. And it is also in an aorist passive. Well, what does that mean? Aorist is that "in a point in the past, I lost it." Passive means "the loss was enacted upon me." Why do I say that? Paul does not say, "I am giving it all up, I gave it all up, I gave this up or that up." He passively suffered loss for Christ. It happened. He counts it all loss, and he lost it. He forfeited it.

And now you say, "Well, what was it that Paul forfeited? What did he give up?" And there is still this language of loss and gain and forfeiture and banking language. What did he forfeit? Obviously we saw, first of all, he forfeited all of his religious accomplishments, right? Everything he considered gain there, that list, all those things, right? And obviously that has to happen for us to truly be saved.

But what does he mean here by the term "All things?" I believe from Scripture we can deduce that certainly Paul lost his wealth, his position, his prestige and his family. Paul was called Saul of Tarsus. And only those in Tarsus who were wealthy could keep their Tarsian citizenship, so most likely Saul came from a very wealthy family. We know that Saul, from Galatians, was educated under Gamaliel and we know he was probably, most likely, in a very wealthy, influential family and that he was a Pharisee. And he had arisen in the ranks; he was exceeding beyond his contemporaries. Religiously, he was on the track to the top. Most certainly he was married because Pharisees were married. But from 1 Corinthians he says that he has the right to take a wife. But we know, ultimately, that either his former wife left him or she was dead. We do not know that. So quite possibly he lost his wife in this too. We do not know. Galatians 1:13. Paul says,

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**3 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; 14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. [Galatians 1:13-14]**

Obviously Saul, who became Paul, was a man of wealth, power and privilege. And these are the things that the world elevates, right? The world trusts in: Wealth, privilege, power. The world relies on those things, in simple terms. And I believe here the things that the world elevates, Paul forfeited. You know, we see that Paul most likely also forfeited his health and safety, obviously. We read that list of things that happened to him, the dangers that he was in in 2 Corinthians 11. Paul went from being the aggressor, the persecutor (it's very safe in that position) to the one being chased and persecuted. He lost his safety. Certainly his health would be affected by being under Roman house arrest. And we know he suffered greatly (again, 2 Corinthians 11).

Now, Paul didn't say, "You know, folks, I'll give up everything for Christ." He actually lost it. He lost everything the world values. But the amazing thing about this is Paul did not look back. He did not have a longing heart towards those things, like so many so-called Christians and deceived brethren. He fully understood that this temporal loss was actually eternal gain in the context of Christ. And he never looked back in Scripture with endearment towards his life before Christ. I press forward, not looking back, forgetting what lies behind.

Gill Rugh writes concerning this passage,

*We try today to measure our Christianity with the world. We want to be enough of a representative of Christ to make some impact, but not enough to suffer loss... In other countries where Christians are called upon to lose their reputation, wealth, family, friends and health, those believers understand what Paul is talking about after he gave up everything for Christ.*

You know, Paul could have shrunk back from proclaiming Christ when he went from town to town and had an easy stay at those towns. But instead, he proclaimed Christ. He did not shrink back, and he was driven out and persecuted by the Jews everywhere he went. And Scripture is clear that the world hates Christ. And if Christ is truly living in us and being manifested, the world will hate us.

Hold your place in Philippians and skip back to the gospel of John in chapter 15. Verse 18 of chapter 15, Jesus says,

**<sup>18</sup> "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. <sup>21</sup>**

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***But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me." [John 15:18-21]***

There is a cost to coming to Christ. There is a cost. It is not "try Jesus and see how it works." You must lose your life to gain it, as we will see. But remember, folks, the loss of everything the world values is nothing compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ. And that is the point. And you will not see this until you place your faith in Jesus Christ.

How could Paul have such a peace in the midst of suffering the loss of everything he relied on? Everything that his life was centered around? Because he gained Christ, as we will see.

Do you look back on the things that you have forfeited for Christ, the security that you used to have when you did not follow Christ, in finances, or whatever it might be? The façade of security? Do you look back at the security of the ignorance of thinking you will always be well and healthy? Do you look back at the things that you had before Christ, that you forfeited, with endearment? Do you remember Lot's wife? She was told not to look back upon Sodom. But what happened when she looked back? She was unwilling to leave her old life. She looked back, and she lost her life, right? This is exactly what Jesus speaks of in Luke 17 concerning His second coming. But the point is clear. Luke 17:28.

***<sup>28</sup> "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: (this is speaking of judgment coming- His coming quickly) they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; <sup>29</sup> but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. <sup>30</sup> "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. <sup>31</sup> "On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back. (He's says "Be aware. When this day comes, get out of there and do not look back to your possessions." And then He says,) <sup>32</sup> "Remember Lot's wife. (Jesus says) <sup>33</sup> "Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it. [Luke 17:28-33]***

Folks, you want to keep your life? You want to keep trusting in yourself? You want to trust in the things other than Christ? You are going to lose it. You are going to lose it. Matthew 10:27.

***<sup>27</sup> "What I tell you in the darkness, (Jesus says) speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. <sup>28</sup> "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup> "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> "Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows. <sup>32</sup> "Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. <sup>33</sup> "But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. <sup>34</sup> "Do not think that I came to***

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**bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; <sup>36</sup> and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. <sup>37</sup> "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>38</sup> "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup> "He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it. [Matthew 10:27-39]**

He is speaking of the illustration of when you come to faith and your family is not saved, and they turn against you; if you love them more than Him then you are really not saved. You will lose your life if you try to keep your life. And Paul lost everything. He lost everything.

Folks, there is a cost to coming to Christ but there is gain far beyond what we can imagine. The cost is a temporal cost. Remember Lot's wife. Folks, Paul lost all for the church, for Christ. He lost his position, his status. He lost, most likely, his family. Certainly relating to this passage here. Certainly there were relationships that were changed. Paul went from the persecutor to the being persecuted. Paul was not a lip-service Christian. He actually lost his life for Christ. And after coming to Christ, he continued to reckon that and all the things he trusted in and focused on as loss in light of knowing Christ. He did not love the world. 1 John 2:15

**<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. (that is the stuff that Paul lost, right?) If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (You are not saved, he's saying.) <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever. [1 John 2:15-17]**

The things that Paul gave up are passing away. The things that Lot's wife was to give up were going to be destroyed. Folks, Paul was not sharing a felt-need Gospel, "Come to Jesus and all will be great." Count the cost. Come to Jesus and life will be terrible at times. "But if Jesus is for this life only, we are of all men to be pitied," Paul would say. You must lose your life, your desires, your plans, your hopes, your dreams. Paul lost it all. And if you do, you gain everything. You gain everything. You gain the Living God. You gain Christ.

Now, Paul was not like Lot's wife who looked back with endearment towards her old life which was about to be destroyed. Do you look back with endearment towards your old life? It is going to be destroyed. The world is passing. The dawn is coming upon us; the night is almost gone. Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

Folks, if you are a believer, your old life is being done away with. Why do we look back at those things that Jesus died to save us from? Folks, I need to warn you- if you love your life, your own desires, your own pleasures, those things. If you try to hold on to it, it is an evidence that you are not saved and you

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will lose everything. But if you are willing to give it up, I am not saying you give it up and then get saved, I am saying you have a heart, the Lord has convicted you. It is all trash. "I want to give it up, Lord God, please save me!" It is not doing to get saved; it is believing in Christ to get saved. But in believing there is a repentance, there is a turning from those desires that you loved and had before to a trust in Christ alone. If you are willing to give it up, Christ ultimately (as we see here in Paul's life) allows it to be taken. Lose your life now, gain it all. Or hold onto it and lose everything.

Now, folks, as further evidence that apart from the knowledge of Christ Paul considered everything else as loss, we see that he continually counted those things as dung. Let's keep going here. Verse 8.

***More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, (it has really happened) and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, [Philippians 3:8]***

Here we see the evidence that Paul truly counted all things as loss. I'm not saying we won't be, as believers, tempted to go back and be endeared towards those things. We are being exhorted not to, ultimately. The Word should convict our heart of the dangers of that. But ultimately, if you live that way you are not saved. And here we see Paul counted them but rubbish.

And, folks, this word "rubbish" is a powerfully descriptive word in Greek. It spoke of any type of refuse including excrement of humans and animals. It spoke of worthless and detestable things. It spoke of half-eaten corpses. It is literally translated "dung". It was used to describe the worthless things the body would eliminate, those things that were rejected. And Paul says here that he counts them all, all, as dung. Present tense. That is the way he thinks. And he says, "In order that I may gain Christ."

Folks, Paul is saying everything he valued, everything he focused on, everything he trusted in before knowing Christ he considers as dung. Useless, smelly, detestable waste and refuse. And, folks, you need to have that attitude. If you believe your traditions and your religiousness are good and not dung, you are in trouble. Paul considered it all as dung in light of knowing Christ. All the world had to offer Saul of Tarsus had; finances, security, prestige, religion, self-determination. Paul saw it all as dung. Smelly, detestable waste or refuse.

Folks, we should not be coddling smelly, detestable waste or refuse, right? Some of us do that as we look back for the security we had, maybe, before we were saved. We look back at things before we were saved. It is dung. It is detestable refuse in light of Christ. Isaiah says it this way, "All of our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment." A menstrual rag, literally.

Folks, it is only when we encounter the Son of God through the grace of God through the Word of God that we recognize the filth of our self-righteousness, self-determination and focus. John MacArthur writes, "Every person faces that choice when they confront Christ. Here is Jesus Christ and He says I will save your eternal soul if you will give up everything else you're putting your trust in. Some people say yes, some people say no. Their eternal destiny is determined by what they say. One man who said who

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said a resounding yes was Paul. And we just heard that yes in this text. Paul is saying here, "I looked at everything I had, I said it's loss, I'll exchange it for Christ."

Paul rightly continued to (present-tense) recognize in light of knowing Christ the living God who came in human flesh that everything else is worthless waste, detestable refuse. How about you? How do you view the things the world has to offer? Finances, security, prestige, power, self-determination, make a life for yourself? How do you view it? Do you have an endearment towards it? Well, if it has always been your way, then that means you are not saved but sometimes believers are tempted to look back upon those things. Jesus says, "Remember Lot's wife." Just confess it. Tell Him you haven't been focused on Christ and you want to know Him better.

And how is it we know Jesus better? We know Him through the Word of God. The knowledge of Christ comes through the Word of Christ. We will see as we go into it next week that we gain Christ as a result. Again, verse 8.

***More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but (dung or) rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, [Philippians 3:8]***

This is an interesting statement because it implies the process has begun but it is not completed. "In order that I might." Subjunctive; I *might* gain Christ.

Now, Paul is not saying that he is not going to gain Him. He is just making a point that he has not really gained this full knowledge of a relationship with Christ yet. And as we will see next week, Lordwilling, it has to do with the process of God making us more like Christ in an intimate relationship with the Son of God, gaining Christ. It is pressing on towards that goal, the upward call of Christ Jesus. Gaining Christ in a practical, real relationship day to day as He sanctifies us and sets us apart into the image of His Son. Gaining Christ is the core of our salvation. It is the ongoing, sanctifying relationship with the living God. He says, "In order that I may gain Christ." He is clearly implying that our sanctification is hindered if we do not consider all of those things as loss. "In order that I may gain Christ." And your sanctification may be hindered, your being made like Christ, because you still are endeared towards the things of your old life. And I tell you today to go before the Lord and confess it, and be restored, and rejoice in the forgiveness that is in Christ.

The apostle Paul truly revealed that nothing compares to knowing Christ, truly. Like Mother Theresa, Paul had a list of impressive religious qualifications. But in life also, he did not know Christ. He was in darkness. But God was gracious upon the apostle Paul. And Paul responded. He said he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. And all his former religiousness is all loss. And he saw everything concerning his old way of life apart from God as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ. He saw that old life and those old things, all things as dung. Detestable waste.

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And folks, we need to see it that way. When we are tempted to look back towards those things or to rely on those things. Or even to have relationships that may have been strained because of coming to Christ. You need to recognize what Paul says about it.

Folks, some of you need to lose your religion today. You need to see it as dung. You need to see your works before God as dung, as filthy rags. All of our righteousness. You need to recognize that the only works that please God were the works of Christ in terms of bringing eternal redemption through His sacrifice on the cross for us. That it is the only thing that pleases God. And that when you confess your sin and place your faith in Jesus Christ, His work is applied to you and God sees you as righteous because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Luke 9:23

***<sup>23</sup> And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. <sup>24</sup> "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. <sup>25</sup> "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? [Luke 9:23-25]***

Paul did not lose himself. Forfeit himself. He forfeited his life, the worldliness. He forfeited all of that to gain Christ.

Have you truly been willing to give up your life? Did you truly come to God and recognize the wretchedness of your life and repented of that?

Now, there are some of you here who have been truly willing, who have truly been saved. But somewhere along the way, maybe you have been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and you are endeared towards the comfort of your old life. Remember Lot's wife. Do not love the world. Nothing compares to the surpassing value of knowing Christ.

## Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the truth. And, Father, to some of us believers this can be a rebuke to us. For we truly do not see (at times) Christ and knowing Him in light of its true value. And we truly do not see those things apart from Him as rubbish. Convict us, Lord God, the next time we are tempted to see it that way. Remind us of Lot's wife. And, Father, for those in here who do not know You, who have trusted in something other than Christ for salvation or whatever it might be, that they would see it as filthy in Your sight. Wretched, filthy rags to bring before You. They would confess that sin and trust in Christ Your Son who died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And was buried and raised according to the Scriptures. And He appeared, Lord God. Father, help us to have a desire to know Your Son Jesus better through Your Word. Help us to see nothing compares to truly walking with Him, knowing Him. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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