

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Paul’s Spiritual Accounting Practices Philippians 3:4-11 Part 3

In Philippians 3:1-3 we considered Paul’s warning concerning the Judaizers. The Judaizers were individuals who were saying that in order for gentiles to be saved, they, in addition to believing in Jesus, needed to be circumcised and adhere to Jewish law.

In order to focus attention on the danger and futility of that message Paul compares the Judaizers’ willingness to place confidence in the fleshly rite of circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic Law with his own past personal experience. This is described for us in **Philippians 3:4-11**.

He begins by speaking of his own so-called spiritual advantages that he valued so highly prior to his conversion. He lists those assets for us in **Philippians 3:4-6**. Let us read this passage, **“Although I myself might have confidence in the flesh, I far more; (5) circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; (6) as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”** His fleshly advantages or so-called spiritual assets can be broken down into 2 groups; those that had to do with his birth and those that had to do with his own personal accomplishments or in other words, his works.

In both cases he excelled. What were the advantages that he had because of his birth? Let us read **Philippians 3:5** **“circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin”** Paul had been circumcised on the eighth day. In other words, he was not a proselyte to Judaism. Paul was also of the **“nation of Israel.”** He was not only, not a proselyte he was not a descendant of a proselyte. Then he says, **“of the tribe of Benjamin.”** He was not a member of just any tribe, he was a member of one of the most prestigious tribes in Israel.

These were the advantages he enjoyed because of his birth. In terms of family heritage he was a Jewish blue blood which was very highly valued in the religious community. But he also viewed himself as enjoying the advantages of his own personal accomplishments. We see this at the end of **Philippians 3:5** through **Philippians 3:6**. Let us read this section of Scripture, **“.... a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; (6) as to zeal a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law found blameless.”**

The first thing that he mentions in his list of personal accomplishments is that **“He was a Hebrew of Hebrews.”** Paul was a strict traditionalist. He had not abandoned what had been passed down from generation to generation in respect to his Jewish heritage. This strict adherence to the traditions is seen in Paul’s excellent knowledge of the ancient languages of Hebrew and Aramaic which were associated with the promised land though he was living in what we now call Turkey.

The next thing he mentions is **“as to the Law a Pharisee.”** Paul was not a typical religious Jew. He had embraced the strictest and most demanding interpretation of the Law. Paul was a Pharisee. He was not only just a Pharisee. He was a zealous Pharisee.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Look at his next descriptive phrase, **“as to zeal a persecutor of the church.”** Paul’s zeal for God was demonstrated in his persecution of God’s enemies or in other words, for Paul this meant that he was a persecutor of the church.

And finally, his most impressive personal spiritual accomplishment of all, he says, **“as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”** Paul in this statement certainly is not telling us that he was in any sense of the word “perfect” in the sight of God, but he is saying that as people were interpreting and applying the Mosaic Law during the time period he was living he would have been viewed by men as blameless.

The Judaizers were saying that in addition to believing in Jesus, gentiles needed to be circumcised and seek to adhere to the Mosaic Law. In order to focus attention on the danger and futility of that message, Paul wants people to consider his own personal experience. And he begins by giving us a list of what he once had considered his spiritual advantages which he felt would certainly secure for him salvation.

But then we come to **Philippians 3:7-8** which is the heart of the larger passage that we have been considering. These two verses speak of a very dramatic reversal in the way Paul had been thinking. And in describing this reversal he chooses to use accounting terms. Let us read **Philippians 3:7-8**, **“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (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 rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.....”** Paul describes his dramatic reversal in thinking as an adjustment in his spiritual ledger where he transfers what he had considered gain to the loss column.

And what specifically had he considered gain that he transferred to the loss column? First of all he considered all the spiritual assets that he listed in **Philippians 3:4-6** as loss. Look at **Philippians 3:7**, **“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”** Certainly this is a reference to all the assets that he had just listed. But we also learned last week that the adjustment to his spiritual ledger was not limited to simply these specific spiritual assets that are listed in **Philippians 3:4-6** but to anything in his life that he had placed value. Let us read **Philippians 3:8**, **“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 rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.”** This dramatic reversal in Paul’s thinking that he describes for us in these two verses resulted in all his spiritual and earthly assets being transferred from the gain column to the loss column.

We now know what he transferred to the loss column but why did he transfer those things? What motivated him to change his thinking about all that he had once in his life considered so important? It was Christ. Christ was the motivation for his new way of thinking. Go back again to **Philippians 3:7-8**. In **Philippians 3:7-8** there are three phrases that are all linked together by the same Greek preposition DIA. These three phrases are translated **“for the sake of Christ,” “in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ”** and **“in order that I may gain Christ.”**

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

These three phrases very powerfully communicate to us that Paul's stated motivation for making this very dramatic adjustment to his spiritual ledger was Christ.

Paul was motivated to change the way he viewed his assets because he understood that apart from embracing Christ exclusively as His Lord and Savior there was no salvation. In other words, he knew that he could not embrace Jesus by faith as his Savior while continuing to put confidence in any of his so-called credentials or accomplishments to secure salvation. He also knew that he could not embrace Jesus by faith as Lord if his loyalty to Christ was not fully and completely undivided. Speaking in accounting terms, in order to have our spiritual books in order, Christ alone must appear in our profit or gain column and everything else that we may or ever could value needs to be in the loss column

When did Paul come to this realization? He came to this realization when he encountered the living resurrected Christ and was lying prostrated and blinded before Him on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians.

Was it a difficult thing for him to actually jettison everything that he once thought to be so valuable? And the answer is, No! How did he describe all those assets he transferred from the profit to the loss column. He describes them as "rubbish" in **Philippians 3:8**. The term actually most likely refers to human excrement.

Nothing has changed for us. If we want to be saved and enjoy a right standing before God, we must come to the place where we choose, like the Apostle Paul, to make an adjustment in our spiritual ledger. We must come to a point where we choose to count all our spiritual and earthly assets as loss so that we might be in a position to embrace Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord by faith and be saved.

Is it easy for people to humble themselves in this way? And the answer obviously is no. People are extremely proud, and typically want to be the center of their universe and will resist giving Christ His rightful place. But the practical benefits of humbling ourselves before Christ far outweigh what we might think we are giving up.

The question that we will be asking this weekend is: WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE RAMIFICATIONS OF GAINING CHRIST? I would like to answer this question by looking at **Philippians 3:8-11**.

The first positive ramification of gaining Christ is knowledge. Let us look again at **Philippians 3:8**, "**More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**" Not only does the phrase "in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" communicate to us Paul's desire to be saved or in other words to have right standing before God, but it also communicates to us a positive practical ramification of that reality. When we come to Christ for salvation we enter into a personal relationship with Christ. Hopefully each of you understand that salvation is not an impersonal transaction but a very personal transaction between ourselves and the Lord of glory who loves us supremely, not as an object, but as a person made in His image.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The word for “knowing” (GNOSIS) when it is used with a personal object as it is used here refers to knowing in terms of a relationship or experience. It is this relational experience that Christ alludes to in **John 17:3 “And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”**

We may know a lot about a lot of people but we really only know experientially a few people well. But we should know Christ in an experiential or relational sense more than anyone else in our lives by far. We should know Him in every aspect of our lives. We should know Him in our health, we should know Him in our sickness, we should know Him in our victories, we should know Him in our defeats, we should know Christ in any and every situation of life. We should know Him in this service weekend. We should know Him when we leave this service tonight; we should know Him when we get home in our quiet moments; we should know Him in the midst our conversations with our husband or wife. His constant, abiding companionship in every circumstance of life should be a source of strength, comfort, encouragement and hope.

Most of us enjoy reading the Psalms. Why is it that the Psalms are so uplifting? One of the reasons why the Book of Psalms is so uplifting is because the Psalms reveal a close and intimate relationship between the Lord and King David (Psalms 23).

Let me read for you **Psalms 23** and as we read this very familiar Psalm try to appreciate the value that David places on his personal relationship with God. **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. (3) He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. (4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. (5) Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. (6) Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”** People reading this Psalm typically are encouraged. For many of those people, they are simply taking encouragement from David’s relationship with God rather than from their own personal experience with God. Though this may be true for many people, this certainly was not true of David. He truly knew the Lord relationally, in other words, experientially.

Was this the kind of relationship that Paul had with God prior to his conversion? The answer would have to be no! How do we know this? Let us again read **Philippians 3:7-8, “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) More than that I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”** In spite of all of Paul’s personal credentials and accomplishments; in spite of all his so-called spiritual assets, he did not enjoy a personal relationship with the Lord. Paul certainly was familiar with Psalm 23 and perhaps had been vicariously encouraged by Psalm 23 but it was not his experience. He might have wished it was his experience. He might have even tried to imagine that it was in fact his experience, but the truth was that it was not his experience.

But suddenly, during a brief encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, he realized what he needed.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Therefore, Paul, realizing the surpassing value of knowing Christ in a personal and experiential way, counted everything he had ever considered important as loss in order to obtain it. Why? He did not do this simply **“for the sake of Christ,”** nor simply **“in order to gain Christ”** but **“in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”**

Paul had known a lot about God. He even knew a lot about Christ. But Paul did not know God. Paul did not know Christ. Not in a personal way. There are people in our churches that know a lot about God and a lot about Christ but they don't know Christ. Their faith is very academic but not personal. We need to understand that salvation is not having an academic degree bestowed on us. We need to understand that salvation is not performing certain rituals. We need to understand that salvation is not successfully completing a particular course or performing certain works. Salvation could be described in many ways but there is no better way of describing salvation than by saying that “Salvation is entering into a personal relationship with Christ.”

Have you personally entered into a relationship with Christ? This is an extremely important question. How could we possibly know if we have done this? There are many marks of the believer given to us in the scriptures. Some more well known than others. But there is a mark I believe that Paul gives us in this passage that you might not have thought of.

Let me ask you this question. If you have transferred all your spiritual and earthly assets to the loss column in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus the Lord and have in fact entered into a personal relationship with Him, what might you expect would be the fallout of such an experience?

I believe that you would want to know Him better. When I first met Lynn at a church college group I was immediately attracted to her and asked her to go with me on a date. I did this on the very first day I met her. And as I got to know her and liked what I saw, I continued to pursue her. My pursuit became so focused that after I had known her only two weeks I told my parents that I thought I had met the girl that I wanted to marry. And after about four months, I had asked her to marry me and we were married in less than a year.

What is my point? My point is this: when we enter into a relationship with someone that somehow touches on the most significant and important needs of our lives, we do not neglect that relationship, we pursue it. Those who come to know Christ will want to know Him better (Philippians 3:10). Do we actually see this in the passage?

Let us start reading in **verse 7** and read down to **Philippians 3:10**. He says, **“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, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,** and now listen to **Philippians 3:10 “that I may know Him”** Paul transferred all of his spiritual and earthly assets to the loss column in order to know Christ on the Road to Damascus, and came to know Christ in a personal and experiential way. And this personal encounter with the living resurrected Lord simply wetted his appetite.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

And this appetite as we will see in this passage will not be satisfied until he was conformed to Christ.

Do you see this ambition in your life? Do you see this desire to know Christ better? Not necessarily so much knowing about Him but coming to know Him better in an experiential way. Knowing His love, His patience, His kindness, His endurance, His mercy, His grace, His power etc. etc. etc. Hopefully you do. If you don't you need to examine yourself to see if you know Him at all.

CONCLUSION

What are you going to do with this message this weekend? Hopefully you will consider the importance of getting your spiritual ledger in order by making sure that every spiritual and earthly asset has been transferred to the loss column and the only thing that hopefully would appear in your gain column is Christ. Why would you do such a thing? Because of the various positive ramifications for your life and the life of others.

What is the first positive ramification that we have considered of gaining Christ? The first positive ramification of gaining Christ is a personal experiential knowledge of Christ's life. What did the Psalmist say, **“The Lord is my shepherd and I am so very frustrated..... / The Lord is my shepherd I am so very disillusioned..... / The Lord is my shepherd and I am so very depressed/ The Lord is my shepherd and I am so needy/**

This is not what he said, **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”.....** Because when the Lord is our shepherd He meets all of our needs.