

The Surpassing Value of Knowing Christ

Scripture: Philippians 3:8-11

Code: 50-32

Let's open our Bibles to Philippians chapter 3. I call your attention to our text this morning which is in verses 8 through 11...Philippians chapter 3 verses 8 through 11. Here Paul writes:

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, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

That's a very personal passage, by the way. The word "I" appears a number of times, the word "my" appears in it as well. He is speaking very personally from the viewpoint of a first- person testimony. This, in fact, is Paul's testimony of what was going on in his heart at the time of his conversion. But before we look specifically at it, let me remind you of one of the greatest statements that ever fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is recorded for us in a number of places in the gospels, it was a significant enough statement that the Holy Spirit recorded it in several different gospels. But for us we'll look at Matthew 16 verses 25 and 26. Here is a familiar saying of Jesus, listen to it, "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it, for what will a man be profited if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Now Jesus was talking about an exchange. He was talking about losing something to gain something. What He said was that in order for you to gain you would have to lose your life. If you want to gain your soul it will cost you your life. If you desire to save your life, it will cost you your soul. In other words, if you hold on to the things that to you are precious and reject the things that to God are precious, it will cost you your eternal soul. That's the exchange. And Jesus said, "What good is it if you have gained everything the world has to offer and lost your eternal soul?" You would be much better off to make some exchange of what you have in this life for what God offers you in the life to come. Whatever exchange you need to make to gain your eternal soul, you ought to do that. That's a very significant spiritual principle.

There is an exchange in salvation. There is an exchange of all that I am for all that Christ is. There is an exchange of all my religious activities, ceremonies, righteous works for the person of Jesus Christ.

There's a sense in which I may have spent all my life in religious achievement, but I have to lose it all in order to gain Christ. Whatever it is that I have spent my life accumulating, even if I gain the world, it would mean nothing if I lost Christ. So I will exchange it all for Him. That's what Jesus is saying. The wise person looks at everything in life, measures it against the value of the loss of his eternal soul and says it isn't worth it, I will give this up to gain my eternal soul.

You see, the person who comes to God is the person who is willing to pay whatever God requires, whatever the price, whatever the cost, the person willing to abandon everything for Christ. You see, we're right back to Matthew 13, aren't we, the man who found the treasure and sold everything he had to buy it, the man who found the pearl and sold everything he had to buy it and the treasure is salvation and the pearl is salvation. The treasure is Christ, the pearl is Christ and salvation comes with Him. And the man who found the treasure said, "This is worth more than anything I possess, I'll get rid of all of this to take that." And the man who found the pearl said, "This is worth more than anything I've ever possessed, I'll get rid of everything I have and I'll take that." That's essentially the same principle. What are you going to give in exchange for your soul? That's the issue.

The rich young ruler was faced with the same dilemma. Jesus came to him and said, "This is what you have, this is what you possess, are you willing to give it all up for Christ?" And you remember, he was not. The price was too high. And so he kept his possessions and lost his eternal soul. He made a foolish decision, an eternally costly decision which he even this moment in hell is paying for.

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 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." That's exactly what he said. And if you ask Paul, what will a man give in exchange for his soul, Paul? Paul says, "I'll give everything in exchange for my soul. My soul is that valuable." He was willing to give up everything and that is what he expresses here. The heart of the text is verse 7, "Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." I will exchange everything for the pearl. I will exchange everything for the treasure. I will give up everything for Christ. I will make any transaction to save my eternal soul. And so, you have the great record of the conversion of Paul.

If you want the historic record, look with me for a moment at Acts chapter 9. In Acts chapter 9, Luke records the observable record of Paul's conversion. That is to say what actually happened.

"Saul...verse 1 of Acts 9...was breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. So he went to the high priest and asked for letters, that is authority, from him to the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the Way...that's what they called Christianity, cause Jesus said He was the Way...both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." So Paul went and got authority to go and kill Christians. "It came about...verse 3...as he journeyed he

was approaching Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him, he fell to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? He said, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."

Now, here you have on the Damascus Road, the Apostle Paul is confronted with Christ...Christ. Up to this point he has counted all of his religion as profit and Christ as loss, that's why he's killing Christians. All of his religious achievements assets-- Christ liability. We've got to get rid of Christ. We've got to get rid of Christianity. We've got to get rid of Christians. But now he meets Christ. Luke in recording this particular incident does not tell us anything about what was going on inside of Paul. Luke simply records what was heard, what was seen, what took place. But in the process of reading down through chapter 9 it is obvious that Paul was converted. It is obvious because by the time you get to verse 11 Saul is praying, he's praying. By the time you get to verse 15 he is called to be an Apostle. By the time you get to verse 20 he is proclaiming Jesus everywhere saying He's the Son of God.

So we know he was converted but it doesn't ever say anything about what he was thinking or what was going on in his mind. And so you might conclude...well, conversion is sort of this supernatural event, you know, you're just going along in life and whamo! you're saved, all of a sudden you pick yourself up, spit the dirt out of your mouth, you're blind, God saves you and you carry on as an Apostle. And you might therefore conclude that somehow in the sovereign act of salvation, human faculties are obliterated, annihilated or bypassed and that you have nothing to do with it, and I have nothing to do with it. That's not true.

The corollary to Acts 9 is Philippians 3. What you don't have in Acts 9 you do have in Philippians 3. You have the external observable incident in Acts 9, you have the internal response of Paul in Philippians 3. This is what was going on in his heart when he ran into Christ.

You say, "Well, did he understand who Christ claimed to be?" Yes, that's why he was killing Christians. He understood clearly who He claimed to be, He claimed to be the Messiah, He claimed to die as a sacrifice for sin, He claimed to rise from the dead. He knew the facts. He also knew what Christians preached. He knew they preached a gospel of grace, not a gospel of law, and that was something he thought was heresy also. Factually he understood who Christ was, he understood the facts of His life, he also understood the facts of the gospel that were being preached by Christians, that's why he persecuted them because he thought it was heresy and he wouldn't have persecuted a heresy that he didn't understand. So he understood it. So he knew about Christ and he knew the gospel. But that's different than being confronted with Christ, isn't it?

And when on the Damascus Road Jesus stopped him in his tracks and he was confronted by Christ, and the Holy Spirit began to illuminate his hard heart and take the shield off of his understanding, he began to consider Christ for the first time. Please note this. Salvation is a sovereign act of God by

which He invades the sinner's darkness, gives him light and saves him. But salvation does not annihilate obliterate destroy or bypass human faculties. It stimulates human faculties. And so what you have in Philippians 3 is the record of what was going on in Paul's mind, and emotion, and will on the inside as these days in Damascus were passing.

What was he experiencing? What was he feeling? Well he had always put all his confidence in his flesh, that phrase back in verses 3 and 4. He had always put all his confidence in his own human ability, his religion, his sincerity, his race, his tribe, his rank, his self-righteousness. And he had it all in the profit column, all in the asset column. And that's where all his confidence was for salvation. He believed that he was saved because of his religious privilege and his religious achievement. And now all of a sudden he confronts Christ, the Spirit of God gives him understanding and he sees Christ for the first time as the true value, the real pearl, the treasure. And then he sees the loss that is in this column he once identified as assets and he's willing to throw the whole thing into one bag and trash it all and take Christ because Christ is of surpassing value. He made the right exchange.

What will a man give in exchange for his soul? Paul gave everything. Paul sold all to buy the treasure, sold all to buy the pearl. So this is the personal internal description of what Paul did when he gave his life to Christ. This is a tremendously significant portion of Scripture. As I said earlier, the key is in verse 7. He said, "I counted as loss everything that I once counted as gain when I saw Christ. Because God showed me so clearly the glories of Jesus Christ, because God showed me so clearly that only Christ could save and only Christ could provide the way into God's Kingdom and only Christ could provide eternal life and because God showed me that I could receive that by faith only, not by works, I am willing to trash everything else for Christ." And, beloved, that's the message here. If you're counting on anything for your salvation other than Christ, you're deceived. Salvation isn't in anything else but Christ. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved than the name Jesus Christ...says Acts 4:12. No other name...no other Savior.

Now remember, Paul says..."Look, I've accumulated a lot of things..." Go back to verse 4, he said, "If anybody should be confident in the flesh, I could...verse 5...I was circumcised the eighth day, I'm of the nation Israel, I'm of the tribe of Benjamin, the esteemed tribe, I am a Hebrew child of Hebrew parents, I've kept the tradition, as to the law I am a Pharisee, I've gone to the limit, the ultimate commitment to law keeping. As to zeal or sincerity, I have persecuted the church that's how sincere I am and as to righteousness which is in the law, no one has ever found me externally blame-worthy." And he says, "For all these years my salvation has been built on my ritual, my race, my rank, my tradition, my religion, my sincerity, and my works. And then I met Christ and I saw that it was all liability. It was all loss and I gladly gave it up for the sake of Christ...for the sake of Christ."

That's so basic. That day on the Damascus Road the living Christ broke through the incredible blindness of Saul of Tarsus who was a Pharisee, who was a legalist, who was a works- righteousness worker and shattered his confidence in all his religious accomplishments. And the root of self-

confidence was forever plucked from his heart and he made Jesus Christ his own, he sold all to gain Christ.

May I note one other thing? He didn't say..."I had something good, this is better." He said, "This is loss, this is not asset, this is liability, that's not neutral, that's not good, that's negative, that's bad." Liabilities are bad. That's a loss not a profit. What do you mean by that? I mean to say that all of that stuff isn't good and Christ is better, all of that stuff is bad. You say, "Now wait a minute, is it bad to be circumcised the eighth day? Bad to be a Jew? Bad to be of the tribe of Benjamin? Bad to be a Hebrew of the Hebrews? Bad to be religious? Bad to be zealous?" Yes in this sense, if you count on that to save you...then it's bad. Why? Because it is so self-deceiving. You know the hardest person to reach in the world for Christ is the person who is religious. And the more religious they are and the more sincere they are and the more stuck in tradition they are and the more ceremonial they are, the harder they are to reach. Why? Because all their confidence is in that stuff and consequently they count on that for their salvation. Paul says that is not just good and this is better, that is bad. Why? Because religion damns the soul. False religion deceives the mind and damns the soul.

So he said...When I saw the truth that all of that wasn't good, it was bad, it was damning my soul, it was a false assurance, a false hope, a false salvation, I trashed it all and I took Christ.

Now, what did he gain? Last week we saw what he lost. Five things he gained. These are profound, all encompassing truths, five things that you gain when you come to Christ, when you jettison all the other garbage and come to Christ. These five: knowledge, righteousness, power, fellowship, glory. Stay with me, we're going to fly through these. Oh are they rich. In fact, they're so rich that they fill the New Testament. We could spend a life time on these five.

Number one, salvation begins with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. That's the first thing he gained, he gained the knowledge of Jesus Christ. He gained the knowledge of Jesus Christ. By the way, God is impressed with these things, He's not impressed with verses 5 and 6. But God is impressed with this, He's not impressed with our rank, our race, our tradition, our sincerity, He's impressed with this. First of all, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, look at 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 rubbish in order that I may gain Christ." Right in the middle he says the surpassing value of knowing Christ. That's the point here. Knowing Christ so far surpasses those other things. I'll gladly get rid of those to know Him.

In fact, he wants to make the point so strongly that he starts out in verse 8, your Bible and the NAS may say "more than that," every edition says something different, the reason is it's untranslatable. What you have there is a strange sequence of five little particles and if you read them actually in Greek they would go like this...But rather therefore at least even. Just a pile of particles, looks like

they were thrown together at random. And what he is trying to do with those particles is to make a strong point stronger. In verse 7 he said, "I have counted everything that was gain to me as loss for the sake of Christ. But rather therefore at least even..." You know, what he's trying to say summing it up is..."But way beyond that I count all things to be loss...not only those things." He uses the phrase "those things" in verse 7 and he refers back to what he said in 5 and 6. It's not only those things that I see as loss, but I see everything as loss compared to Christ. You can't trust in anything, not just those things, but your own wisdom, your own intellect, your own mind, your own religious instincts. You can't trust anything. I count it all liability.

You say, "What does he mean by these 'all things'?" He means any kind of allegiance, or any kind of act that one would think is meritorious before God by which we can earn God's favor in our own strength. It's all loss, it's all liability. Whenever a religious man thinks he can boast about anything, that's a liability in his life because he's claiming something that doesn't belong to him, right? It could happen to a Christian, get proud about your prayer life, or proud about your Bible study, or proud about your witnessing, or thinking God's pleased because of your human effort. Do you know that if you pray and if you study effectively the Word of God and if you witness effectively, all the credit goes to whom? God who did it through you by His Spirit.

Paul says..."Look, anything I achieved in the past, anything I can do in the present is loss, liability, if it is to be considered as a ground for meritorious assumption...thinking God then owes me for what I have done. It's detriment." So he says, "Look, not only I have counted," that's a perfect tense verb in the past, but verse 8, "I am counting," present tense in the present. I have counted everything loss that I mentioned in 5 and 6, I now continually count everything else in my life as loss. It's an ongoing thing. It's all loss. It just can't compare with Christ. There's nothing in life that can. No achievements, no religious activities. So he's really saying I continue to resist the recurring temptation to rely on my works rather than God's grace for my standing.

You say, "Well, Paul, how can you make such a total statement? This is selling all." It is, it is selling all. I have counted it all loss, and I continue to count it all loss. I continue to sell everything for the pearl, sell everything for the treasure. "Why do you do that, Paul? How can you make such a total wholesale break with everything?" I'll tell you why, because, verse 8, "Of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Because of the fact that knowing Christ surpasses everything else. I give it all up to know Christ.

You see, that's what overwhelmed him on the Damascus Road. When the Lord stopped him and talked with him and the Spirit of God began to illuminate his heart about the gospel, he began to see in his heart under the Spirit's illumination the surpassing value of knowing Christ and he realized that all his religious credentials were manure and knowing Christ was everything.

Now the word here, "the surpassing value," just means that. Some Bibles translate it "excellency." Some translate it "all surpassing greatness." That's what it means. The word for "knowing Christ" is actually a substantive, not a verb, it is the knowledge of Christ...the knowledge. And the word is gnosis...gnosis. Very important word, let me tell you what it means because it implies very very strong things in this text. Paul says..."Look, I would count everything trash compared to knowing Christ." What do you mean knowing Christ? We've got to find out. The surpassing value of knowing Christ....do you mean knowing intellectually about Christ? No, that is not the verb that means to know intellectually. It is from ginoskō which means to know experimentally, or to know experientially, or to know personally or to know by personal involvement with. That's what he's saying.

Now it's very basic to Christianity that being a Christian is called "knowing Christ." Right? Those who are Christians know Christ. John 10 is the great chapter on the Good Shepherd, Jesus says, "I know My sheep and they know Me." Knowing Christ. When Jesus prayed in the high priestly prayer of John 17 and verse 3, his prayer for the believers, those who were alive and those who were yet to be born and redeemed is very simply summed up in that concept. It says this, "This is eternal life that they may know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Eternal life is connected with knowing God by knowing Christ.

In 1 John there is a tremendous statement made in 1 John chapter 5 right at the end of the epistle, verse 20, "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding in order that we might know Him who is true, even Jesus Christ." Salvation is knowing Christ. It's not knowing about Him intellectually, it's knowing Him experientially.

In 2 Corinthians 4 verse 6 Paul says, "God is the one who has shown in our hearts...that's illumination...to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." In other words, Paul is defining the gospel and the work of the Spirit, he says God comes into the heart, shines the light that reveals the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Again knowing Christ is synonymous with salvation. Ephesians 1:17, Paul prays that we might have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Second Timothy 1:12, you know what it says, "I know whom I have...what?...believed."

Now we could go through a myriad of other Scriptures but to suffice it to say salvation is a relationship in which I know Christ. Not I know about Him, I know the facts about Him, I know when He lived, when He died, I know a few other facts about what He taught...not that, but I know Him...very different than knowing about someone. There are a lot of people I know about that I don't know and you can know about Christ and not know him at all.

Now let me give you some...some filler for the word gnosis to pack it in a little bit so you'll understand it. Among the pagans, they referred to this gnosis or this knowledge as the elevated secretive cultic mystical apprehension of communion with a deity. They would have a drunken feast, a bacchanalian

feast and they would drink and drink and drink and drink. Paul refers to that in Ephesians 5, their drunkenness. And they believed that in their inebriation they ascended to a height by which they perceived their deities in intimacy. Timothy Leary used to say that if you take drugs you will ascend to a higher plain and commune with God. That's not new, that's what the pagans have done for centuries and centuries and centuries. So paganism said there is an ascended knowledge, there is a transcendent knowledge, there is an initiatory knowledge that those few enter into by which they have ascended beyond the mundane to apprehend the truth of their deity. That's still true today in pagan religions. That's what gurus claim. That's what Buddhist monks claim. That's what the strange cultic and occultic religionists of the world claim as they sit and go through the strange bizarre activities that their religions prescribe in order that they might ascend out of the mundane into the divine realm to perceive the gods. That's the gnosis, the deep mystical transcendent knowledge of a god.

Even in Christianity the Gnostics developed from the same word. You've heard that, haven't you? They were people who claimed to know the true God through an ascended transcendent kind of elevation they alone had experienced. Everyone else was on the low plain, the low level, but they had found God accessible to them because of their elevated knowledge. By the way, Paul writes against the Gnostics. John directs his attacks against the Gnostics in the New Testament. At least what later became Gnosticism. Colossians is a good illustration of a letter that deals with this kind of Gnostic assumption. First John would be another one where it is even alluded to.

But you have then this concept of gnosis which means a mystical elevated transcendent knowledge of the deity in intimacy that most people will never experience. When Paul then says to these Philippians who come out of that pagan culture, he says, "I give up everything for the surpassing knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," they understand what he means by the word gnosis. That he's not talking about some facts, but he's talking about a transcendent experience of communing with Christ the Lord. And in that sense it's accurate.

But there's more. There is an Old Testament context for that word, too. The word gnosis is a word from ginosko, it is used to translate the Old Testament word yadah(?), that word in the Old Testament speaks of a union of love. When you see yadah in the Hebrew Old Testament it can be ginosko that's translated in the Greek, it means to know. But it expresses a bond of love. For example, it says, "Adam knew his wife and she bore a son." It doesn't mean he knew who she was. He knew who she was all right, but he had an intimate love relationship with her. It says in Amos 3:2, "Israel only have I known." And what God means is they're the only people I know about? No. I have an intimate love bond with them, there's an intimacy there. The word know implies the union of love. In the case of Israel it had to do with election and grace. It was a bonding together in intimate love. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice and I know them. I have a bond of love." Jesus said, "Depart from Me, I never knew you...I had no bond of love with you." So there's a Jewish intent with the word as well as a sort of Gentile one. The Gentile intent is to speak of a deep surpassing mystical intimate communing love with Christ. And the Hebrew one expresses that union of love, that bond of love that extricably ties

people together. And all of that is in the word.

So when Paul says I would give up everything for the surpassing knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, he is filling up that word knowledge with all of that rich meaning. He is saying it is a knowledge of love, it is a union of love that is intimate, that is supernatural, that is transcendent, that is mystical. It is something way beyond you can experience...anything you can experience in this life...in this world. And then to add warmth to it he adds the personal pronoun "my Lord." He sees his Lord as Lord, that's sovereign, that's kingship. He sees Jesus as Jesus, that's the Savior, that's the priestly role. He sees Christ the prophet, the messenger of God, he sees Him as prophet, priest and King, Christ being prophet, Jesus being priest, Lord being King. All three names emphasizing all three offices. And as he sees Him in that fullness he yet sees Him in intimacy, he's my Lord...personal. That's what Christianity brings. That's gain, see. Your race won't bring you that, your rank, your tradition, your ceremonies, your sort of sincerity. The only way you'll ever come in to deep knowledge and intimate love bond with Jesus Christ is through salvation by grace through faith. So he says I count all that loss to gain the knowledge of Christ, the deep knowledge of love.

F.B. Meyer wrote, "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 can 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 an 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 radiates 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," end quote. That's to know Christ. Salvation begins with the knowledge of Christ for which Paul says I'll exchange anything for that privilege.

What does he mean by that? How deep is the knowledge? How deep is it? Follow his thought, look at what he says, verse 9, "And may be found in Him." That's how deep it is. You are so intertwined in a bond of intimate love and knowledge with Christ that you are in Him. Paul loves that concept. He refers to it at least 164 times in his epistles. We are in Christ. "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." In other words, it's not I but Christ. I don't know where I end and He begins and where He ends and I begin. We are inextricably intertwined, that's how intimate the bond is, that's how deep the knowledge is. He moves through me. I have the mind of Christ. That's deep knowledge. So he says I count everything in my life trash. I count all my religious achievements rubbish for that deep intimate love relationship with the living Christ.

So, for Him I have suffered the loss of the all things. Puts in a definite article. And count them but dung, manure, excrement, garbage, rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. I've suffered the loss of all things, he says. And I don't mind one bit, it's all skubalon. Like Isaiah 64:6, filthy rags which is an Old Testament term for menstrual cloths. I count it as something that is to be trashed like human excrement. I'll exchange any of that for Christ...the knowledge of Christ, in order that I may gain Christ. Gain means win. The verb means personal appropriation, make Him my own. You see, knowing Christ, making Christ my own outstrips everything, absolutely everything.

Second, salvation involves the knowledge of Christ, secondly, the righteousness of Jesus Christ...the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Verse 9, "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." You know what he had spent his whole life doing? Whole adult life? Doing what he says in the first half of verse 9, trying to gain a righteousness of his own derived from the law. That's what he spent his whole life doing, that's why he was a Pharisee. He was one of the elite 6,000 Pharisees, small number, who believed they could attain salvation by perfect adherence to the law of God. What a burden, what an unbelievable burden, what a guilt trip, what a deception. And he said, "I give it all up, I'll give all that stuff of having a righteousness of my own derived from the law up gladly." What kind of righteousness is that? It's the righteousness of self-control...the righteousness of external morality, the righteousness of religious ritual and ceremony, the righteousness of good works, it's self-righteousness. It's the righteousness produced by the flesh. Righteousness simply means doing right. It's doing the best you can do. Like the Army commercial says, "Be the best you can be," well from God's viewpoint it's not good enough. You see, Romans 3:19 and 20 says, "By the deeds of the flesh or the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified, or made righteous. You'll never be righteous by what you do. But he spent his whole life trying, his whole life.

And he wasn't alone. In Romans 10 his heart breaks for Israel. It breaks for they are not knowing about God's righteousness and they're seeking to establish their own. That's their whole problem....life-long effort to establish their own righteousness by works, tradition, sincerity, ceremony, ritual, going to worship. He says, "Look, I'll gladly exchange all that hassle of law keeping Pharisaical righteousness which I've tried to keep up all these years for Christ." Why? Because, verse 9, "From Him through faith in Christ comes the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." I'll take the righteousness which is through faith in Christ, not works. "For by grace are you saved through...what?...faith, not of works lest any man should boast." See, it's a matter of faith. You say, "What is faith?" Believing...but more than believing it's not just intellectual assent, it's personal trust and complete surrender. That's what it is. It...someone said it's the yes of the soul to God. It's placing all complete confidence and trust in Christ. That's how you're saved. And when you put your faith in Christ, God gives you His righteousness, that's verse 9. I want the righteousness which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith. Not human

righteousness on the basis of works that doesn't please God. God's not impressed. Because the best you can do is filthy rags, the best you can do is dung. The best you can do is to come short of the glory of God.

How you going to gain righteousness? What is righteousness? It's right standing with God. It means God accepts you. How are you going to be accepted by God? By your own effort? No. You're going to be accepted by God when you take by faith the righteousness He gives you because Christ paid the penalty for your sin. When you take Christ, God gives you in Christ righteousness. In other words, He accepts Christ in your place and since Christ perfectly satisfies God and you are in Christ, God is satisfied with you. See, Paul is willing to lose the thin fading robe of reputation for the heavy glorious robe of righteousness which comes in Christ.

A right relationship to God is not by works, it's by faith. Boy, that's the key to this whole passage. You say, "What is this faith?" Let me give you a definition, listen very carefully. Faith is best described this way, faith is the confident continuous confession of total dependence on and trust in Jesus Christ for the necessary requirements to enter God's Kingdom. Did you get that? Faith is the confident continuous confession of total dependence on and trust in Jesus Christ to provide the necessary requirements for entrance into God's eternal Kingdom. It's not just believing that Jesus lived and died. It's trusting in Him and depending on Him to meet the requirements in your behalf to give you entrance into God's Kingdom. It's the surrender of your life in trust to Him...to do what you can't do. It's saying I can't do it.

Paul had a life of trying. And for a while it was all in the asset side, now he says it's liability, trash, garbage. I don't want a righteousness of my own derived from the law, I'll fall short of God's standard that will damn me. Self-righteousness is so damning because it's so deceptive. It meets man's standard and exceeds it but it falls infinitely short of God's standard. That's the deception. So he says Christ is gain to me for two reasons, because in Christ I have the knowledge of Him, deep mystical rich union of love with the living Christ in which our lives are intertwined. Secondly, I have the righteousness of Christ, O bless God, He became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He took on my sin at the cross that I might take on His righteousness.

Thirdly, salvation provides the power of Jesus Christ. What else is gain to me, Paul says, the power of Christ, verse 10, "That I may know Him...this is an ongoing knowledge now, he already started in that direction already with the deep knowledge of Christ from verse 8, but there's a longing to know more and that's how it is in a deep and intimate love relationship...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection." That's what he means by this deeper knowledge. Paul says, "I give up everything so that I can know His power." What do you mean, Paul? "The power of of His resurrection." You see, because I know Christ intimately, because I have the righteousness of Christ, I have available the dynamic spiritual energy that comes from Him. Like in Daniel 11:32 where the prophet says the people who know their God will display strength and take action. Paul says I take

Christ because of the power. You know something? There's no power in the law. There's no power to overcome sin in my flesh. There's no real power for spiritual service in my flesh. There's no power for victory in my flesh. There's no power for witnessing in my flesh. He says I've been operating without power and now I see all the power in Christ. You say, "How do you see it?" In His resurrection.

Why does he say the power of His resurrection? Because it was in His resurrection that He most graphically demonstrated the extent of His power. What other work of Christ is as powerful as that? None. Raising Himself out of the dead showed that He had power over the physical world and also over the spiritual world. He had power over the human realm and death and He had power over the demonic realm and all the demons who wanted to hold Him captive. You see the greatest display of power Jesus ever accomplished was His resurrection from the dead and Paul says that's the kind of power I want to experience. That's what he's saying. Why did I trash this stuff and take Christ? Because of His power...His power.

He knew His resurrection power in two ways...the first way it was resurrection power that saved him. When he was saved according to Romans 6 he was buried with Christ in His death and he rose with Christ to walk in newness of life. So he's already experienced resurrection power in his salvation. Everyone who comes to Christ in a spiritual sense, we die with Christ, we rise again. So resurrection power is in us. But more than that, he wanted resurrection power to continue to be his resource. He wanted that power that he talks about many times in the epistles, the power, for example, to conquer temptation, the power for service to Christ, the power to overcome trials that makes you strong when you're weak, the power for witnessing and boldness. He wanted to be strengthened by the spirit in the inner man, he wanted to know Colossians 1:11, the great might of Christ. He wanted the expression of that power of which he spoke of in Ephesians 3:20 when he said, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think according to the power that works in us." He said why did I take Christ and say no to this? Because in Christ there's power, there's power over sin, there's power over temptation, there's power for service, power for witness, power over trials. There's power in my otherwise impotent life. That's why I count it all loss for the power that's in Christ.

To the believing soul, the power of the life of Christ pours into us, rises out of us to give us victory in this life. Paul says what am I going to...what am I going to exchange for that? That's the only way I can conquer sin. That's the only way I can have an effective life. What did he gain in Christ? The knowledge of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the power of Christ.

Fourth, salvation also brought him fellowship with Jesus Christ...fellowship with Jesus Christ. He says in verse 10 there's something else that I consider gain, the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death. He had already been conformed to His death in the saving sense that when he believed in Christ he was buried with Him in baptism and rose to walk in newness of life as we saw

in Romans 6, or noted a moment ago. He had already fellowshiped in the sufferings of Christ in a saving way. And I don't want you to misunderstand that. When you're saved somehow supernaturally God puts you in Christ and you die in Christ and you rise with Him. He had already experienced that kind of suffering, that kind of suffering.

But what he has in mind here is something more. Not a saving union with Christ in His death and resurrection, but a fellowship, a partnership, a deep communion of suffering. What do you mean, Paul? What are you talking about? I'm talking about this, I'm talking about the fact that one of the things I gain in Christ is somebody to fellowship with when I suffer. Did you get that? Somebody to fellowship with when I suffer, somebody who has suffered far beyond any suffering I will ever know, far beyond any suffering I will ever feel or experience and I need a companion in my suffering. Any Christian on the face of the earth will tell you that the deepest moments of spiritual fellowship with the living Christ are the direct result of intense suffering. No question about it. Suffering always drives us to Christ. Why? Because we find there the succoring sympathetic merciful high priest who cares...the friend who feels our pain who is in all points tempted like as we are, who knows our weakness and our infirmities. And he is saying how blessed I am to be persecuted and to know that I am simply following the one who was persecuted before me and in whose fellowship I find comfort.

Christ was rejected. Christ was mocked and despised and hated and killed and Paul went through that too. And he said, "I tell you, the greatest thing about suffering is that I have a companion in my suffering." Paul says, "You know, when I'm very weak I go to Christ," 2 Corinthians 12, "and I find in Him my strength." And that's what he means.

Hey, it's a sad world we live in, isn't it? It's only a question of when your pain is going to come and how intense it's going to be. We all suffer it. And where do you go? Well most of the world goes to the bottle or goes to the psychiatrist or goes to the mall, I guess. Where do you go when you want real comfort? When you want partnership in suffering? Where do you go to have somebody feel what you feel? You go to Christ, don't you? That's the fellowship of sufferings.

One last thing. Salvation results in the glory of Jesus Christ...in the glory of Jesus Christ. Verse 11, "In order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." You know what else I count gain? The attaining of resurrection. And by the way, the way he phrases this in the Greek, "in order that I may attain," it almost sounds like he feels a little insecure about it. That's not insecurity, that's humility...that's humility. It never left him that he was unworthy. It never left him that he didn't deserve it. But he says I long for the glory of Christ, the resurrection from the dead. He uses a word for resurrection never used anywhere else in the Bible. It's the out resurrection, it adds the preposition ek, it's the out resurrection, it's graphic. Then the phrase "from the dead," it means from the corpses, from among the corpses. This is the way it reads literally, "I want to attain the out resurrection from among the corpses." What's that? It's the Rapture. That's the time when he goes to be with the Lord and he gets a new body, that's what he's talking. He's talking about that moment, that twinkling of an

eye when the dead in Christ shall rise and be changed in to incorruptibility. He's talking about that moment when the dead in Christ rise and those that are alive caught up together to meet them in the air, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, he's talking about resurrection day, the out resurrection from among the corpses, when believers are taken from among the rest of the dead corpses who aren't raised until the end of the millennial kingdom. But believers are taken out and transformed into the image of Christ. He talks about it in verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven from which we also eagerly await for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory. That's what he wanted.

He hated the flesh as weakness, he groaned with those in Romans 8 who groaned waiting for the glorious manifestation of the children of God which meant the resurrection, the out resurrection from among the corpses. That's what he wanted. He wanted the end of the conflict of the flesh and the spirit that he wrote about in Galatians 5. He wanted the end of the groaning of Romans 8, the redemption of his body. That's what he wanted. And he said I get that in Christ. I gain that in Christ.

Ask yourself a question, what will you give in exchange for your soul? You see, Christ offers you union with Him, righteousness, power, fellowship, glory. What are you going to hold on to that's equal to that? And what good is it going to do if you gain the whole world and lose your soul? That's the question. What do we gain in Christ? The knowledge of Christ. Theologians call that identification...identification. We gain the righteousness of Christ. Theologians call that justification. We gain the power of Christ. Theologians call that sanctification. We gain the suffering with Christ. Theologians call that participation. And we gain the glory of Christ. And we all call that glorification. That's the pearl, that's the treasure. The wise people sell all to make it theirs. Let's pray together.

Thank You, Father, again for the great richness of truth which has come to our hearts. Thank You for the dear precious saints who love You and whom You love, who know you, who have Your righteousness, who are the possessors of Your power, who fellowship with You in the deep things of life and who will one day be glorified with You on Your very throne. Thank You for them. Thank You, Lord, for all that they mean to all of us as we share the richness of their life in the fellowship of this church. We thank You, Lord, for saving us. We thank You for the day when we too had our Damascus Road, maybe not as dramatic historically but equally dramatic internally for we too had to turn from all the rest of the stuff that we had accumulated in securities thinking that this would make us right with You and we said it's trash and we took Christ. Thank You for that day. We pray that this might be that day for those who have never come to Christ, for those who are still trusting in their profit column, their assets, their human achievements, their sincerity, their morality, their religion. O God, may they see it for what it is, liability, dangerous damning deception and may they give themselves to Christ who is to us knowledge, righteousness, power, fellowship and glory. We pray in His dear name. Amen.

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