

Treasuring Christ

Philippians 3:7 ESV But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— **10** that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, **11** that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

- I. We are in our 2nd week of streaming because of Corona Virus. Our world has been turned upside-down. What was unthinkable has become (temporarily) normal.
 - A. I have thought about things that I could say to you. I considered many topics. How do I place everything we are enduring in a gospel-centered context?
 1. Last week I tried to remind you COVID-19 was (at least partially) judgement on the world and correction for the church, and that God was giving both the world and the church a gracious opportunity to repent.
 2. I said it was a time to experience the joy of depending on Jesus alone, seeing God provide in ways we normally don't enjoy, because of the abundant blessings we have all taken for granted.
 3. Corona Virus also gives the church an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate sacrificial service to those around us. We aren't captive to common fears, but are walking in faith, hope and love.
 4. Lastly, I pointed out how a worldwide pandemic gives us ample reason to consider our own mortality - whether we are young, and can expect another 70-80 years, or whether we are closer to the finish line, the Bible says **Psalms 144:4 ESV** *Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.*
 - B. Today I continue that theme, reminding you there's only one treasure: Jesus.
 1. That may sound too trite; and your response may be "Of course Christ is my treasure!" But an opportunity is forced upon you to examine your soul. Do your hasty words regarding Christ match the true integrity of your heart!
 2. George Beverly Shea was the soloist for Billy Graham from 1947 until his death in 2013 at 104 years old. He famously sang "I'd Rather Have Jesus".
 - a) "I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold / I'd rather be his than have riches untold / I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land / I'd rather be led by his nail-pierced hand
 - b) I'd rather have Jesus than vain applause / I'd rather be faithful to his dear cause / I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame / I'd rather be true to his holy name / Than to be the king of a vast domain and be held in sin's dread sway / I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today"
 - C. Nothing surpasses the worth of Jesus Christ. My earnest prayer is that you and I will re-discover that truth during this difficult time, and that when we discover it, and embrace it, it will be our life-long, sacred, guiding reality.
- II. Just before our text, Paul began Philippians 3 by listing how perfect his religion was before he met Jesus Christ. He even says if anyone has right to brag, it's him!

- A. He says something I don't think any of us would dare to honestly say: "as to righteousness under the law", he says he was "blameless"!
1. That means that he actually kept the law! Now I know he confirms elsewhere that he was a sinner, and even confesses to having a covetous heart.
 2. But his point is that no outside observer could have sniffed it out! You and I would have thought Paul was the model of perfection because he played strictly by the rules, and, by doing so, impressed a lot of his Jewish peers.
- B. But after reflecting on the reputation he'd acquired in religion, Paul makes a declaration: **7** *"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ."*
1. What everyone thought of him, his flawless reputation, the rank of an elite Jew and a respected teacher -all of this meant nothing to him a single instant after meeting the risen Christ on the road to Damascus in Acts 9.
 2. All his assets became as liabilities to him - his "gain" became "loss"- for the sake of Christ. Whatever distracted others from Christ's beauty didn't matter anymore. Whatever derailed his fellowship with Christ was worthless.
- C. He's not just reminiscing about the "good ol' days"! His **present posture** is to evaluate everything with Jesus as the measuring stick of comparative value. Now, everything else seems to him as mere vanity. **8** *"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."*
1. People tell me they had great love for Jesus at the beginning of their Christian walk. They wish they could go back. What's keeping you from it?
 - a) Has Christ become somehow less powerful? Less beautiful? Less forgiving and gracious? Less valuable? Less holy or worthy of praise?
 - b) He has not changed! Your heart has grown hard, your love has grown cold, your desires have become worldly, your Christianity merely plastic.
 2. The cure for this is not wistful longing for days gone by, but to shake yourself awake and repent! **Revelation 2:4 ESV** *But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.*
- D. **8b** *For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.* In modern Christianity, we boast of our willingness.
1. But what we are willing to do, Paul made a statement of his status. "I **have** suffered the loss of all things". We **imagine** that Christ is better than everything else **in theory**, but the Apostle Paul says "everything else is garbage to me". The Greek word for rubbish, "*skybalon*", *really* means dung!
 2. He isn't saying that other things are valueless in themselves, but that what he desires is so much greater! "*that I may gain Christ*" -his only treasure!
 - a) **Matthew 13:44 ESV** "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and **sells all that he has** and buys that field. **45** "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, **46** who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and **sold all that he had** and bought it.

- b) Both the first and second man sell all they have to gain the better treasure. They do this not because they are unwise; but supremely wise.
 - 3. Will many of us tumble into hell, separated from Jesus and the eternal life he offers, because of what we weren't willing to relinquish? Have we clutched to the lesser things at the expense of knowing Christ, the Greatest Thing?
- III. Paul is not vague about what he hopes to obtain in Christ Jesus. **8b - 9** *"that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith."* Paul wants to gain Christ, and be clothed in his righteousness, which cannot be gained from the law, but only by faith in Jesus.
 - A. After essentially asserting that if anyone could have achieved righteousness through observance of the Law, Paul come to the conclusion it's not enough.
 - 1. We always say that no one can satisfy the demands of the Law, but what this text tells us is that no person ever satisfies his soul by observing the law.
 - a) What we need is the fellowship, the love, the comfort, and assurance of our forgiveness that comes from **knowing** Christ Jesus intimately.
 - b) This can never be accomplished by by even the most rigorous moral perfection. We can never be moral enough. Satisfaction comes form acknowledging the sufficiency of Jesus' death for our sins, of his resurrection for our recreation, and his reign for our perpetual hope.
 - 2. What Paul is saying is that the genuine faith of the worst of sinners is of far greater value than the perfect law-keeping by the very best of the saints.
 - B. **10** *"that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death..."* When we leave all of this world behind us to know Christ, God will manifest the same power he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead in our lives.
 - 1. **Romans 8:11 ESV** *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* The Greek word for "give life" doesn't just mean physical resurrection (as glorious as that is). It means giving "spiritual power to invigorate" and the "quickening of the spirit, so it is endued with new and greater powers of life". It is a holistic view of life!
 - 2. But though Jesus resurrection life was preceded by death on the cross, our walking in resurrection power is attended with sufferings that call to mind our Savior's death. Paul says suffering is the basis for our fellowship with Christ.
 - C. **11** *"that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."* Even though the meaning of "life" in the previous verse speaks of something more than brain waves and heart beats, Paul now points to his hope of an actual, physical resurrection as his hope in coming days as a payoff for a life of treasuring Christ above all the folly and enticements of the world around him.
 - 1. **John 17:24 ESV** *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

2. Our physical resurrection was what Christ prayed to the Father for on the night before his crucifixion. It would be a guarantee of unbroken relationship with him. Seeing his glory is the reward for all our earthly sufferings.
- IV. When did you last lay something down because you treasured Christ? When have you chosen the treasure of Christ more than pursuing the rewards of this life? **1 John 2:17 ESV** *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.* Corrie Ten Boom suffered and lost much for Christ, hiding Jews from Nazi butchers during the holocaust. She was eventually arrested, imprisoned and saw many in her family die. She said “Hold everything in your hands lightly, otherwise it hurts when God pries your fingers open.”
- A. The “dirty little secret” of a message like this is that it has to burn through me before it can singe you. I have wrestled greatly this week with the seducing voices of all my other desires as I have pondered a crashing economy, separation from those I love, and the uncertainty of the future with the possibility of further spread of the virus. But I have stirred myself to treasure Christ alone.
 - B. Thomas Brooks was a pastor in Great Britain at a time when it was illegal to preach the biblical gospel, or gather to hear it. I want to close with his words...
 1. “Why do you tell me of this and that outward comfort, when I cannot see his face whom my soul loves? Why, my honor is not Christ, nor (is) the favor of (others) Christ! Let me have him, and let the men of the world take the world, and divide it among themselves; I prize my Christ above all, I would enjoy my Christ above all other things in the world; his presence will make up the absence of all other comforts, and his absence will darken and embitter my comforts; so that my comforts will neither taste like comforts, nor look like comforts, nor warm like comforts, when he that should comfort my soul stands afar off. Christ is all in all to souls truly (changed by grace). We have all things in Christ, and Christ is all things to a Christian. If we be sick, he is a physician; if we thirst, he is a fountain; if our sins trouble us, he is righteousness; if we stand in need of help, he is mighty to save; if we fear death, he is life; if we be in darkness, he is light; if we be weak, he is strength; if we be in poverty, he is plenty; if we desire heaven, he is the way. The soul cannot say, “this would I have, and that would I have”; but Christ saith, it is in me, it is in me eminently, perfectly, eternally.”
 2. Is that how you feel? Can you say those things with Brooks? Good times and easy going will never prove Christ’s worth to you or to anyone who is watching. Only times like this are like digging up a buried treasure, long covered with earth, in order that we might recognize the true worth of Christ.
- V. **Benediction: 1 Timothy 6:15b ESV** (To God), who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, **16** who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.