



Losing What Is Worthless to Gain What Is Priceless

Series: *Philippians – To Live Is Christ*

Philippians 3:4-11

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This text that we are looking at this morning is unique in the NT. Paul gives to us his testimony of his salvation and life in Christ – not the external story of the circumstances by which Christ confronted him on the road to Damascus and broke him and saved him – not the facts of his conversion. Instead, he takes us into his heart, into his mind, into his soul, in order to explain the incredible transformation that God wrought in him by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is intensely personal and intimate. This is Paul real, raw and unrehearsed.

Remember how Paul had spent the first few verses of chapter 3 calling the Philippians to a true and vibrant joy in Christ. He warned them to be on guard against the deadly influences and mindset of the dogs – the godless idolaters who live without any sense of God at all, like many in our own culture. He warned them about the evildoers, those who used the grace of God as offered in Jesus Christ as an excuse for ungodliness – cheap grace people – or those who have made an “acknowledgment” of Christ without Him having any real weight in their lives. And then he warned them against the mutilators, the legalists, the Judaizers who wrongly believed that you could make yourself acceptable to God through your own good works, through rituals, through some human means. He reminds them that the way to resist those influences is for them to remember who they, saying: **“For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—”** (Philippians 3:3, ESV)

And then, having done all of this, Paul bares his soul to the Philippians and says in essence – “I was worth than them. Let me tell you about how I used to live. Let me tell you about what I used to believe about myself, everything that I once held dear. I was once a willing captive of my own self-importance.” He gives to the Philippians...

A Humble Confession of His Arrogant Foolishness (4-6) After reminding the Philippians that Christians put no confidence for acceptance with God in the flesh, he confesses to them that this is exactly what he once did. He says: **“though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”** (Philippians 3:4–6, ESV) On the surface, this may seem like Paul is boasting, but he isn’t. He’s confessing the empty foolishness of the things in which he once placed his hope. It’s quite a list. Let’s just take this phrase by phrase and understand what Paul is saying.

I was **circumcised on the eighth day...** Paul was not a proselyte to the Jewish faith, he was the real deal, born an Israelite, circumcised by his father on the eighth day. He came from a family that kept the right religious ceremonies, but ceremony is not the way of salvation – not christening or baptism to put it in our terms.

I am **of the people of Israel...** he was of pure racial stock. He was of the pure line of Israel and could track his lineage back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But pure bloodlines are not the way of salvation.

I’m a member **of the tribe of Benjamin...** He was a patriot, a member of the tribe of Benjamin from whom came the first king in Israel, Saul. A member of the tribe, along with Judah, that remained faithful to David when his son rebelled against him. The Benjaminites were patriotic and conservative but that is not the way of salvation.

I’m **a Hebrew of Hebrews...** He was steeped in the culture and heritage of historic Israel. When many Israelites no longer spoke Aramaic and blended in with the culture, he was faithful to the old ways. But culture and heritage are not the way of salvation.

As to the law, I was a Pharisee... The Pharisees were a body of Jews with a reputation of excelling the rest of the nation in their observance of their form of the law. They had developed a commentary on the five books of Moses in which there were over 600 commandments governing every day of your life from sun-up to sun-down, everything you did. The Pharisees considered themselves the custodians of the true faith and Paul was climbing the ladder to head up that group. He was the most strict and religious of them all. If anyone could have been saved by his religion it was this man but religion is not the way of salvation.

As to zeal, I was a persecutor of the church... Paul was zealous to set up a machinery of inquisition, arresting and throwing Christians into prison, pressing for their execution. He was a religious zealot, but zeal is not the way of salvation.

As to righteousness under the law, I was blameless... Paul did all that the Pharisees interpretation of the law told him to do. No one could point at him and accuse him of breaking any of the outward requirements of the law. He was righteous and moral in the eyes of man, but morality is not the way of salvation.

Paul was about as perfect of an unsaved man who has ever lived! And yet he was also profoundly blind. He had a terribly defective view of what he thought made a man good and pleasing to God, but, then, everybody does who isn't a Christian. Nothing can be presented to God as currency with Him – not ritual, race, patriotism, tradition, zeal or religiosity. None of our works can be satisfactory to God, none of our attempts at keeping the Law or being good can make us right with God we are not good. Everything we do is hopelessly stained with sin and we cannot keep the Law which requires not only exacting obedience, but also a pure, unmixed, irreproachable heart motive which we do not have. Paul came to understand that.

“I Traded What is Worthless for What is Priceless.” (7-9) Paul writes: “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 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 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—” (Philippians 3:7–9, ESV)

Paul gladly gave up everything that he once thought was gain, once thought was worth something before God. He saw them as rubbish, literally dung. Geoff Thomas says of this realization: **“God is light and in him is no darkness at all. The seraphim who have never sinned hide their eyes in the presence of uncreated holiness. Paul once gathered all those achievements together and he would hold his head high, but he now saw them (as they were), and sin was mixed through them all. There was pride and vanity and ego in everything Paul had done. They were loathsome activities. Before he met Christ he thought**

a lot of himself, that all his life had been very profitable existence. When he met Christ he saw himself, as he really was – an utter loser. The great Divine Accountant came and scrutinized everything, and added everything up, and he put at the bottom of a whole life – ‘LOSS’. Paul had nothing to commend him to God. After the Savior met him on the Damascus Road Paul would have sooner brought before God the contents of the septic tank, and the waste disposal unit, and the vomit bag, and black plastic bags of rubbish and say to the Almighty, “This is what I am giving to you as the reason you let me into heaven” than present to God his own works. That is how he felt about all his religion. It had not brought him to God. It was a substitute for God. He had constructed a terrible idol of his life; Paul had been worshipping Paul.”

Seeing this and seeing Christ in all of His glory, Paul gladly gave up the false, the fictitious, the fabricated, the imaginary righteousness that he labored so hard to obtain and to convince himself that he had attained in order to lay hold of the true righteousness that is found by faith in the crucified and risen Savior.

He gave it up for **surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**. That is an incredibly intimate phrase, and it is utterly unique in all of Paul's writings. This is the only place where he calls Christ “my Lord.” Paul is saying: “He is Lord, and more than that He is my Lord! I have Him! He is mine and I am His and because I do I have found something of infinite value. He is precious, like nothing else.” Knowing Christ far exceeded everything else that Paul once stacked up as being in his favor and why? Because knowing Christ as Savior and Lord answered every need of his soul and ours before God. Jesus, alone, had perfectly and thoroughly – in every respect – kept the Law. He had both demonstrated perfect righteousness and earned the reward of perfect righteousness in human flesh. He has tasted death and the suffering sin deserves on the cross and extinguished the wrath of against sin on behalf of everyone who trusts in Him as his or her personal substitute and deliverer. He had paid for our sins on the tree and given to us credit for his perfect righteousness. God treated Him as a sinner that He, in Himself was not, and declared the believing sinner righteous with Christ’s righteousness, which in ourselves, we are not. **“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV)** And after dying the death that we deserve, He rose from the dead because death could not hold His sinless perfection. It’s this total package – our sins laid on Jesus and His righteousness accounted to us – that we accept by simple faith. He has done it all and we receive all the benefits.

You can understand why Paul would speak of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. What is possibly better? Knowing Christ in a saving way, truly knowing Christ is greater than anything else because knowing Him in eternal life. **“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3, ESV)** For the Apostle Paul, Jesus was not just his ticket to get something else; for the Apostle Paul Jesus was his treasure — the thing that meant more to Paul than everything that he had lost; the thing which was more valuable than everything in this world was Christ himself. Jesus isn't just a ticket to get him somewhere where he can have other desires fulfilled; Jesus is God's way by which we experience the ultimate blessing: that is, to be in face to face communion with the living God through Jesus Christ, our sins forgiven and put away forever.

You know, in our modern age, so often the surpassing worth of Christ eludes us because the reality of God, the seriousness of His holy demands, our own sinfulness, and our desperate need for forgiveness and life in Christ rests so lightly on our minds and hearts. Our need escapes us and so Christ's worth does too. Our culture doesn't think much about eternal realities. Ours is not a God-conscious society and in truth, neither is much of the modern, so-called church. Most people today don't believe that they can only be made right with God by the gift of someone else's righteousness. They are quite confident of their own goodness. They don't imagine that they are the comprehensive failures – even in their efforts to be good and pious – that Paul says that they are. Reductionism dulls the spiritual senses. The reduction of sin and God's holiness makes people dull to their deepest need and so they can be satisfied with self made religion that is empty of Christ or no religion at all. But not Paul. In verse 9 he expresses his desire that he would 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—” (Philippians 3:9, ESV)**

Do you see what Paul is saying? There was a great trade that demanded to be made – the loss of all of the thoughts of merit with God that had been racked up either by standing or by lineage, or by religious effort to keep the Law, in order to gain, by faith, a true righteousness and all that is real life in Christ. Salvation cannot be had in any other way. It is the exchange, the trade that we all must make. You either get what you have earned or you get what Christ offers. You can either live and die according to what seems best to you or you can have Christ as Lord. You can either trust in yourself, worship yourself, and rule

over yourself, or you can trust Christ, worship Christ and be ruled by Christ but you cannot have it both ways.

For Paul it happened on the road to Damascus. For you, if you are saved, it was the day that Christ by His gospel confronted you, and the Holy Spirit burned in your heart and in brokenness you turned away from your sin, and confessed Jesus Christ as Lord. It happened on the day that the Risen Christ revealed Himself as real to you and you repented of your sins and believed the gospel. From that day forward, all of your past, however good or bad from a human perspective, doesn't matter anymore. What matters is that I am found in Christ. What matters is that I have Christ – that I am His and He is mine. Everything that once defined me, everything I banked on as my hope, everything I once thought was valuable and to be grasped at all costs is really rubbish – dung, refuse, excrement – and Christ, above all, is my treasure. And all of this leads Paul, as a saved man, to say what he says next.

“This is What I Live For.” (10-11) Paul says, this is what I now live for, ***“that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”*** (Philippians 3:10–11, ESV) Paul says. “I want to know Christ.” Now this is the guy who knew Christ well, who spent 3 years in Arabia being trained by Him and his desire is to know Christ. How little he knew Christ when he first met Him on the Damascus Road. Paul knew He was Savior and Lord, but little else. So Paul began to learn about him from the Scripture and from months spent in the presence of Christ by himself in a lonely place in Arabia and Jesus Christ revealed himself to Paul.

It is like that for everyone when he is converted. We come just as we are without one plea. We don't know the full meaning of atonement, and reconciliation, and propitiation, and justification, and adoption, and sanctification. We are only aware of this, that Christ died for me, for my sin, to save me and He demands my faith. And then we find a hunger to know him better – what Paul describes as the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

The knowledge of Christ that Paul pursued was both intimate and personal. He wanted to know the One who had delivered him from eternal torment, ruin, and destruction. Having been delivered from death by Christ, Paul could not satisfy himself with doctrines about

Christ – though he taught much of what we know, nor could he satisfy himself with second hand knowledge of Christ. Nor can we if we realize all that He has done for us.

Knowing Christ is not the same as knowing about Christ. To know Christ in a saving, sanctifying way means that you do not simply know things about Him, but you know Him in your trusting Him, in your loving Him, in your treasuring Him, and in your worshipping Him. To know Christ is to know Him in all His benefits and in all His work. It is to know Him as a real person in the reality of your everyday life. I cannot emphasize this enough. In our culture we are losing the concept of what it means to really know someone. With all of our social media superficiality and social awkwardness, our entertainments and distractions and self-absorption we are losing the concept of really knowing someone in an intimate way and yet that is exactly what Paul is talking about here – knowing Christ intimately as a person not as a religious abstraction or figure from history. Spurgeon says that his desire is this: **He will not be to me a myth, a vision, a spirit, but a person, a real solid person, as much real as I am myself, or as my dearest friend can be to me. My soul, never be satisfied within a shadowy Christ. My heart, be thou never content until he hath embraced thy soul, and proved to thee that he is the lover of his people. This knowledge, then, must be a knowledge of him in his personality. Then, beloved, it must be a personal knowledge on our part. I cannot know Christ through another person's brains. I cannot love him with another man's heart, and I cannot see him with another man's eyes. Heaven's delight is, "Mine eyes shall see him and not another." These eyes shall behold the King in his beauty. Well, beloved, if this be heaven, we certainly cannot do without a personal sight of Christ here. I am so afraid of living in a second-hand religion. God forbid that I should get a biographical experience. Lord save us from having borrowed communion.**

Beloved, Christ gives Himself to us to be known. He gives Himself to be known. We can know Him. We can know Him through His Word, through worship, through meditation on His truth, through prayer we get to know Christ. He is our Creator, Redeemer, Savior, Sustainer and we are His people, and He wants us to know Him. This is at the heart of a real, true, saving and satisfying faith. It changes everything. When we really want to know Christ we read His Word not in some disaffected way or as some utilitarian necessity; we read because we are seeking to know His heart, to comprehend His will and His ways. When we pray we are not trying to sound spiritual or going through the motions of saying our prayers, we calling upon our Lord, our Master, calling upon the One whom we delight in and desire and we are pursuing a deeper relationship with Him. When we obey Him, it is not out of duty or obligation but from a heart that desires to please the one whom we know and love.

When we serve him, it is not simply some task or chore that we must accomplish, but an opportunity to express our affection to Christ. When we give we are not paying our dues but investing in His Kingdom. When our paramount desire is to know Christ, He becomes the central hub of our lives, the central reality, and the central relationship above all others.

Paul wanted to know Him and he wanted to know the power of His resurrection -- the same resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead, that broke the power of sin and the sting of death, is the very same power that is at work in us now as the children of God. Paul wanted to know Christ personally and the power of his resurrection -- not only what it accomplished but how it affects him and every believer now, personally.

Paul wanted to know that sense of victory, the sense of freedom, the sense of boldness that comes when the fear of death is removed. He wants to know the power to conquer temptation -- the indwelling power of Christ's Spirit to reject temptation and instead to live a life that is pleasing to Christ. He wants to know the resurrection power that is available, the life of the Spirit, the unction of Christ that gives the power for service to Christ -- for preaching, teaching, encouraging, working hard for His glory, serving tables. He wants to know the reality of the resurrection power as the power to overcome trials and which makes you strong when you're weak, the power for witnessing and boldness. He wants to be strengthened by the spirit in the inner man, to know the glorious might of Christ in His life. He wants to know the freedom, the joy, the sense of confidence anchored in Christ's resurrection. He didn't want to wait till heaven... He wants that power to impact and change Him now.

I get that desire. We understand that, don't we? We know that Christ redeemed us that we so that we would be holy; eager to do what is pleasing in his sight. We know that He gives us, by his Spirit, power to resist the lusts of this world and to live according to the will of God. We know that we ought to have as our aim the desire to follow Christ wherever he leads, to honor Christ in all that we do, and to give loving obedience to our Master all the days of our lives. We know that when we stand before the Lord we are going to very much want, want more than we have wanted anything in all our lives, to have lived in a manner worthy of our calling, pleasing to God, having made full use of His grace, fully living and enjoying the grace and salvation we have received. We will want to have lived our lives adorning the doctrines of God our Savior with authenticity, holiness, and love for God and

the power of the resurrection guarantees that we can. This is not some wishful thinking that can never be – this is the power of the resurrection in that is available to us right now.

We really are people who have the privilege of living a new resurrection life with Christ. Christ was raised from the dead, and we have been brought from death to life by the exact same power. How do we walk in resurrection power? It's no great secret beloved. It is simple really. We know the fullness of the power of Christ's resurrection by faith. By faith -- by simple trust in who Christ is, what He has done, and the promises that He has made. We try to make it so complicated sometimes but it isn't. We must believe the words of Galatians 2:20: ***"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*** (Galatians 2:20, ESV) That has got to be our reality. We must believe this to be true. Life is Christ in me, living through me by faith. But we need to live in it, by faith trusting God to manifest His power in our lives as we trust in Him and call upon Him to strengthen us, to deliver us from temptation, to make us persevere in faithfulness and loving obedience, to give us strength to abide in Him and in His love, to reflect His image in this world and to be sanctified and strengthened by His grace.

We lay hold of this resurrection power through faith in Christ, drawing on His resurrection power ministered to us by His indwelling Spirit. Jesus said, ***"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."*** (Joh 15:4-5 ESV) Jesus tells us clearly what is required if we would bear spiritual fruit, if we would be obedient to the commands of God. We cannot do it on our own. How could we resist temptation, and take up our own cross and deny ourselves? How can we love their neighbors as ourselves without the new life of Christ enabling us? How can we love our enemies without the life of the One who prayed for his enemies filling our own hearts? How can we turn the other cheek without Christ's resurrection life? How can we serve the church and the world without that strength? How can we preach without the power of Christ's resurrection but we do not have to. Christ has obeyed all of the commands of God for us and if we walk with Him, abiding in Him, He will do the same in us as we walk in union with Him drawing our life from Him. That is the wonder of resurrection power. In ourselves, we have no life, or strength, or spiritual power. Joined to the Lord by faith, and united with Him by the Spirit, we have life, and strength and power to run the Christian race.

Beloved, when Paul says he wants to know the power of the resurrection, he is aiming at a life -- already his but capable of far more development -- that is conformed to the life won for him and for all believers by the risen Christ -- a life of peace with God, freedom from the fear of death, a life marked by the truth of justification, of redemption, of adoption, a life filled with righteousness rooted in Christ who died and rose again, a life of service and worship, a life of holiness and faithfulness, a life marked by the grace of God and he doesn't care what it costs.

That is what Paul means when he says at end of verse 10 and verse 11 that he desires to ***(become) like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*** (Philippians 3:10-11, ESV) Paul knows that knowing Christ and walking in the power of the resurrection is going to bring Him suffering and we know it to be true as well, don't we? Knowing Christ, loving Christ supremely, standing uncompromisingly on His truth, preaching the gospel as it truly is, seeking to live righteously in this present evil age -- it brings with it suffering. It brings with it the hatred of the world, the hatred of the merely religious, the persecution of the ungodly, the pain of living in a world that increasingly blasphemes the glory of our Savior, mocking, scorn, the loss of reputation, sometimes physical violence, the loss of relationships we once treasured, the suffering even of God's discipline. But listen; when you encounter Christ as He is, as the only Savior and the only Lord, and the Holy Son of God and Redeemer of sinners from hell and death, when He captivates your heart and your soul, you are willing to endure whatever suffering that righteousness requires, longing to remain faithful to Him. Jesus was obedient unto death, he was faithful in His death to redeem a people for His own possession and Paul is longing for that same thing -- to die to Himself, to be alive to Jesus, to die to sin and be alive to righteousness. I want to be faithful, to be obedient, to be whole hearted in my pursuit of Christ no matter the cost -- that is what Paul is saying. It was worth it all as long as he attained the resurrection life now and in the age to come. Paul is not doubting the resurrection but he doesn't know how things will end out for him. He may be released from jail or his head may be released from his shoulders, but he's all in no matter the cost.

These are very personal words that Paul shares for this purpose: so that for those who know Christ, that afresh and anew, our hearts would be flooded with joy in the confidence that you are accepted, beloved, and delighted in by the Lord Jesus Christ -- that He has given Himself to you to be known and that He has given to you the very power to live by which He

was raised from the dead. You are not who you once were – you are a new creature in Christ. Christ has radically redefined who you are. You have been saved and recreated to know Christ more and more, to know personally the fullness of the power of His resurrection right now. You have been saved by Christ so that You would treasure Him above all else and be willing to suffer for his sake staying faithful to Him. You have been spiritually raised from the dead through union with Him to pursue Christ for a lifetime. Do it. Make it the business of your life to pursue Christ with all that is on you. Graham Kendrick has a song, **Knowing You** that sums it all up perfectly. In it, he says,

All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

Knowing you, Jesus
Knowing you, there is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness and I love you, Lord

Now my heart's desire is to know you more
To be found in you and known as yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All-surpassing gift of righteousness

Oh, to know the power of your risen life
And to know You in Your sufferings
To become like you in your death, my Lord

So with you to live and never die

For those who are here today who do not know Christ -- Believe! Stop trusting in yourself...

Believe in Jesus. Repent of your sin, turn away from your sin and believe who He is and what He has done. Cast your hope on him alone. Confess your sins to God and call on the name of the Lord Jesus for your salvation.

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