

Philippians 3:4-10

This passage has two parts. In **verses 4-9** Paul detailed his **past** and then evaluated it as far as it being effective in gaining righteousness. He employed the imagery of an **accountant** and talked in terms of profit and loss. In **verse 10** Paul set forth his goal for living the Christian life on a day by day basis.

In verses **4-6** Paul listed things he did as a Jew to gain favor with God. His statement that he had more to boast in summarized his life prior to meeting Jesus. For Paul it was all about living right so as to gain favor with God. His idea was the more “bad” stuff you avoid and the more “good” stuff you do the more God loves you. Paul discovered that was not the case. He was not saying we should not avoid the “bad” or stop doing the “good” but we need to understand we do that not to gain God’s love but because He loves us already.

Picking up his testimony, read **verse 7**. Paul was talking about all of the things he had just listed. Paul used the language of accounting to describe the way he looked at what he previously compared to what he had in Jesus. Profit was whatever could have been seen as a benefit toward righteousness. Loss is because it actually hindered him from seeing that righteousness comes only via faith. The loss or rejection was not of his heritage but of what he sought to gain via that heritage.

Paul said the loss was “**For the sake of Christ,**” a phrase he used three times. All his efforts were good for lots of things but not for a right relationship with God that enables both fellowship with Him as well as His peace within. That comes only through Jesus.

Paul clarified his primary point by declaring in verse 8, “**What is more.**” All that follows is the change of commitment in Paul’s life as a result of having met the living Jesus on the Road to Damascus and discovering that it was only the righteousness of Jesus that could make him righteous. That same discovery needs to also be made by everyone as they learn that Jesus alone is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Him. Paul said “**I consider.**” That is a term that implies serious evaluation of a subject.

Paul called, “**Everything a loss.**” He wanted to delete that side of his ledger that he had previously placed in the plus column because he realized that none of it counted toward being declared righteous by God. It may have made him feel good and caused others to look up to him but that was nothing “**compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.**”

Paul’s choice of the word for **knowing** is important for two reasons. First, there are several words in Greek for “**knowing,**” but the one Paul used here refers to intimate, personal, by experience knowledge. Paul was not talking about intellectual knowledge but intimate knowledge. Paul wanted a growing kind of knowledge that grows out of a personal relationship with Jesus. Second, Paul made use of an Old Testament teaching on knowing God that said any

true knowledge of God in a personal way also included obedience to Him. Over and over God talked of knowing Him so that we might obey Him.

Paul wanted to know **Christ Jesus my Lord.** Notice that Paul talked of Jesus as “MY” Lord. The awesome God of Scripture was his Lord and should be ours. If our relationship with God is personal, as it must be, then He must be Lord of our lives. The title Paul used reflects his belief in who Jesus really was. Jesus is the “**Christ**” or the promised one of the Old Testament. He is also “**Jesus**” or the Savior of the world. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He is also “**Lord**” of life.

Paul restated his understanding that none of the things he once thought counted toward righteousness really mattered. He declared “**For whose sake I have lost all things.**” Paul added, “**I consider them rubbish.**” Literally all those things done to merit righteousness no longer had value on the ledger sheet of one’s relationship to God.

Paul said that he had to consider his own efforts at righteousness as rubbish so, “**I may gain Christ.**” It is not until we realize that we are never good enough to deserve salvation that we are willing to accept it on God’s term, which is faith alone in Jesus. We need to remember, as Paul did, that all our self-efforts are rubbish and we must trust in Jesus and Jesus alone for salvation.

Not having any righteousness of my own that comes by the law but that which is by faith in Christ. Right in the middle of that phrase is the little word “**but**” which sets up the strong contrast which Paul was seeking to communicate. Paul’s contrast is between the ways men approach God. One way is when we think it should be earned. God’s way is to accept what Jesus already did for us on the Cross. Faith is the alternative to law and self. **By faith** is through faith or based on faith as opposed to works. Paul was not against the Mosaic Law. He never spoke against that, but he did oppose any attempt to use Law as a means of righteousness. Paul tried that and it didn’t work but when he tried grace, that worked. Read Galatians 3:10-13.)

The righteousness that comes from God and is by faith: Christ is the righteous one. Paul developed elsewhere the truth that we not only are not righteous, we will never be in this life because of our sinful nature. What God does when we accept Jesus as our Savior is to cover us with the righteousness of Jesus. Faith is a key and faith is more than simply believing something to be true, it is acting upon what we believe. Saving faith is acting on the belief that Jesus is God’s only way and actually asking Him to be your Savior. Read Hebrews 11:6.

In those verses Paul offered 3 critical insights into salvation:

- 1, The righteousness that God gives is different than what Paul sought on his own through obedience to the law. The righteousness from God is adequate to allow man to have fellowship with God.
2. It comes from God as His gift to us made possible because of the shed blood of Jesus on the Cross.

3. It is by faith alone. Salvation is not applied on the basis of our works but on faith and in acceptance of what Jesus did for us.

In verse **10** Paul spelled out 4 personal goals that were his because He had been made righteous or right with God. These goals are not possible for anyone outside of Jesus. First, **“I want to know Christ.”** The word for **“know”** is the same word used in verse 8 and means to know by experience, intimately, personally. This is not salvation. Paul settled that 30 years earlier on the Road to Damascus. Here it is growing in fellowship with God. His desire, as ours should be, was to know Jesus in a deeper life changing way. He desired to have a more personal, intimate daily fellowship with Jesus.

Second, **“the power of his resurrection.”** Paul saw the power displayed in the resurrection of Jesus as demonstrating the power that was essential to our living the Christian life. The power that overcame death is a power that can operate in the life of a believer to transform him into the likeness of Jesus. Paul’s goal was to live his life empowered by God. If we try to live the Christian life in our own strength we will fail, but if we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us we can win, even as Jesus won over death. His power is available to us.

Third, **“the fellowship of sharing in his suffering.”** Read John 15:18-19. When Jesus confronted Paul on the Road to Damascus. Paul had been persecuting the church and Jesus asked Paul (Acts 9:4) **“Why are you persecuting me?”** The implication is that when a believer is persecuted, Jesus is persecuted. Paul understood that living for Jesus meant persecution yet he wanted to be so alive and so active for Jesus that the world would not know what to do with him.

Finally, **“Becoming like him in death.”** The concept is that of an ongoing transformation being accomplished not by our works but by God working in us. His desire was to continually say, as Jesus did in the Garden before His death, **“Not my will but yours.”** That should be the commitment of each of us.

Paul began this passage by spelling out the truth that one is saved by grace through faith. Then he set goals that should be the goals we all have. His primary goal was to know Jesus in a deeper and more personal way. As Paul declared that his goals at well into his experience with Jesus, so too we should make that our goal, no matter where we currently are in our walk with Him.