

"True Treasure in Christ"
Philippians 3.2-7

INTRO:

What really matters to you? To the Apostle Paul, his relationship with God always mattered the most. Even before the Lord called Paul to salvation on the road to Damascus, the Apostle Paul cared about a real and a right relationship with God. However, his relationship was built on false premises.

As Paul opened the third chapter in his letter to the Philippians, he wrote about what mattered most to him. He then told his readers, how they could find it also. He wanted them and us to learn how to acquire an authentic, growing relationship with the living Christ.

I. Watch Out for Those Who Are Counterfeits (v. 2-3)

II. Where an Authentic Relationship Begins (v. 4-9)

I. Watch Out for Those Who Are Counterfeits (v. 2-3)

A. If Paul's readers were to find real joy they needed first to have bond with the Lord Jesus Christ in which to rejoice. The first hurdle they had to avoid to have this relationship was to avoid the Judaizers who would undermine their relationship.

1. Almost as soon as Paul left some city, a band of Jewish opponents moved in. They taught that Gentiles had to become Jews and be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul warned his Philippian brethren about these folks. **(Philippians 3:2)**

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation."

2. The three phrases show how these people work. They called the Gentile "dogs," but Paul called them "dogs." They asserted that people who did not keep the Law of Moses were evil. Yet, Paul underlines that they themselves are evil. Finally, they demanded circumcision, but Paul said their circumcision was mutilation and not of value to God.

B. In view of the attacks of these folks, Paul underlines the truth. **(Philippians 3:3)**

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Being in a right relationship with God does not depend on an external operation but an internal action of the Holy Spirit of God. Those who bear the mark as God's new covenant Children are those who worship God in the spirit, rest and rejoice in the salvation that is in Christ, and are not relying on the flesh.

II. Where an Authentic Relationship Begins (v. 4-9)

A. What does it look like to not rely on the flesh but on the Lord? **(Philippians 3:4-6)**

“Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

1. These are the very things that at one time the Apostle Paul counted on to get to heaven.

2. When I was in eighth grade, I played Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. I was supposed to be a miser. I had a pile of pennies as a prop that I dumped out of a box. I held each one up and admired it before I put it back in the box. In my mind’s eye, I see the Apostle Paul doing this with his supposed spiritual riches.

B. Then something happened. **(Philippians 3:7-9)**

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”

Paul was happy contemplating his spiritual riches until Jesus came by in His life. Then he saw them as they really were, worthless trinkets.

C. Paul’s desire for Christ alone provokes a vigorous response in him. He took his box of spiritual treasures which he now knows are nothing and dumps them. The word translated “rubbish” is a very strong word. The word speaks specifically of human excrement. Kittle wrote concerning Paul’s use of the word here, *“The intensification lies in the element of resolute turning aside from something worthless and abhorrent, with which one will have nothing more to do. The choice of the vulgar term stresses the force and totality of this renunciation.”* Paul’s spiritual treasures turn from being the center of his existence into that which he hates. If these things kept him from Christ, the things had to go.

D. Why was this so important to the Apostle Paul? Salvation must be all of grace and all of God or it is not salvation at all. Charles Spurgeon said this so well. *“It is the Lord who has begun the good work within us; it is He who has carried it on; and if He does not finish it, it never will be complete. If there be one stitch in the celestial garment of our righteousness which we are to insert ourselves, then we are lost; but this is our confidence, the Lord who*

began will perfect. He has done it all, must do it all, and will do it all.” Loved one of mine, what about you and I? What is the basis of our hope of heaven? Is it in Jesus and Jesus only or is it in some work that we do?

E. Paul threw away his spiritual trinkets for one reason; **(Philippians 3:8-9)**

“[In order] that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”

How about us? How important is our “knowing the Lord Jesus Christ” to us? Are we willing to give up everything for Him? Do we love the Lord or ourselves supremely? There is no other choice. Which choice will we make?