

Paul's New Accounting

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- [0 : 00] Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers.
- Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.
- 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, the people of Israel, 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.
- 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, 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.
- [1 : 32] So friends, at the heart of this passage this morning is an accounting error, and a very serious one. The key verses are verses 7 and 8.
- Everything is built around them. Actually, let me just read those verses again then. So verses 7 and 8, 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. Now it's accounting language, you see, talking about gains and losses, and counting things, or calculating things.
- If you can imagine, Paul has two columns. He has his gains and his losses. And at first, once upon a time, all of these things that he then lists in verses 5 and 6, he'd put them in the profit column.
- All these things he thought were his assets. And then all of a sudden, upon meeting Christ, he'd realized that actually he'd been adding everything up incorrectly. He'd been miscalculating.
- [2 : 37] All these things, you see, should actually all have been in the losses column. They were all his liabilities. Circumcised on the eighth day, that actually put him in the red. Of the people of Israel, that was actually another big loss.
- Of the tribe of Benjamin, another loss. All his zeal for God, all his righteousness under the law, loss, loss, loss. And then so having gotten to the bottom of his tally, he realized that in the end, he's actually made a huge loss on everything.
- And friends, just think about how earth-shattering that must have been for Paul. What a devastating thing to realize about your life. that everything you'd been building, everything you'd been working towards, all the assets you thought you'd accumulated, your sense of your net worth, your self-worth, that it was all a big mistake.

And I think it hammers home for us the main kind of point this morning. That when we think about our own lives, the obvious question, I think, is the possibility that, have we been making the same mistake as Paul?

Have you? Is it possible that, like Paul, you've actually been miscalculating the value of your life this whole time?

[4 : 02] And perhaps you've got all these things in your life that you think are your assets, that you think are your gains. Is it possible that, in fact, they're all not just worth nothing, but they're liabilities.

They put you at a loss. Now, friends, I presume that for most of us, the kinds of things Paul lists here would not be that important to us.

It's circumcised on the eighth day. I mean, maybe that doesn't mean that much to you. So I think we'll have to do a little bit of translating here. Maybe for you, you're really proud of your kind of waspy heritage.

You know what I mean? White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant. You were born at St. Such-and-such Cathedral. You were baptized on the eighth day, perhaps. You sang in the choir. Perhaps you're a very charitable person.

This is meant to be a caricature. You know, on the other hand, if it really describes you, then welcome. But anyway, on the other hand, you know, maybe you are proud that you were born to a couple of hippies.

[5 : 07] You know, two mums, Marxists, vegans, they used to work for Greenpeace. Something like that, right? Again, just a caricature. Okay.

But I want you to think about yourself and I guess the tribe that you belong to and what matters in that tribe. You know, what it would look like to be a par excellence of whatever tribe you belong to.

You know, the most extreme version, I suppose. Because Paul is saying that about himself. And he belonged to a certain tribe and he ticked all the boxes. He was just the most unbelievable Jewish man.

I think there are three things, actually, that he sort of highlights. So first, Paul mentions his racial or his cultural pedigree and his racial pedigree. Perhaps there might be things about your racial pedigree, your family or your culture that you come from that you're proud of.

Secondly, there are things about his religious performance. Right? Or his moral performance. There might be things about your religious performance like church going or being baptized or something like that.

[6 : 18] Are you a good person? Are you a moral person? And then finally, there might be things to do with zeal and activism. Right? So these three things, your racial or cultural pedigree, your religious or moral performance and your zeal or activism, these are the things that Paul focuses on.

And as I say, I'm not sure what that might mean for you. Are you proud of being Asian or Aboriginal? Are you proud of your academic accomplishments? Dr. such and such, PhD or whatever it is, all the letters after your name.

Are you proud of who you know, where you went to school, what grades you achieved, the hours and hours of sort of volunteer work you've done, perhaps your sporting prowess?

I mean, do you know what I mean? There might be a range of things, I guess. Any number of things that we think make up our identity, things that we're proud of, things that we use to evaluate ourselves and one another and keep score on who's winning to determine, I guess, whether we feel like we're doing well in life or we're failing.

Now, these are all things that Paul would call of the flesh. Of the flesh. That's his kind of catch-all summary of them. They're the things that give us self-confidence and social standing in our earthly communities.

[7 : 48] Or, alternatively, sometimes they're the things that make us miserable because we don't feel like we lived up to the expectations of people around us or our own expectations. You know, we're not that special for whatever reason.

Now, at its heart, then, that's what this passage is all about. It's about how Paul made a monumental accounting error in calculating the significance of all these things of the flesh and then how he came to understand their true value when he met the Lord Jesus.

Or their true lack of value. All right. So, we'll work our way through the passage then from top to bottom, roughly. We'll come back to those key verses in due course. Notice how Paul begins this chapter in verse 3 with the word, finally.

The word, the NIV actually translates this word further, which I think is probably more accurate since we're halfway through the letter here. But, it sort of indicates that there's a new section.

A big new section of the letter is starting. By my calculations, we're up to sort of section 3. of Philippians. So, just to give you a little bit of context, remember we've covered two major sections of the letter so far.

[9 : 00] In chapter 1, verses 1 to 26, Paul was focused mostly on himself. He was trying to hold himself out as an example. The key verse is verse 21. He says, for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

And he's trying to set forth that as an example for the Philippians to copy. That kind of sums up the first section of the book. Then in chapter 1, verse 27, he sort of turns in the second section of the book to focus on the Philippians directly, as it were.

How he expects them to behave in his absence, to imitate him, mostly to imitate Christ, to share the mind of Christ. So, you remember the key verses, chapter 1, verse 27. Only let your, literally, sort of citizenly conduct, only let your citizenly conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

That kind of kicks off the second section. So, now we're up to the third major section of the book, and Paul kicks off this section with an imperative, right, a key command.

See verse 1? Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord. Let me just make three initial comments here then.

[10 : 25] Number one, this might sound very obvious, but the word rejoice is an emotional word. It's an emotional word. This word has to do with taking pleasure in something, being delighted, happy, ecstatic, elated.

Joy in your heart is what puts a smile on your face. Joy in your heart is what makes you dance and sing and laugh. Now, that might sound very obvious, but the second thing then to notice is that God commands us to have certain emotions, and God is commanding us to rejoice.

Elsewhere, God commands us to love, to fear, to be angry. These are all emotional words as well. They have emotional aspects to them.

So I think it's really important to get a hold of this, that someone might say, well, I'm just not a very emotional person. Or perhaps in the opposite direction, you might say, well, I'm such an emotional person, my emotions are kind of take me, drag me anywhere.

I'm just grumpy, or I'm angry, or I'm sulky, or miserable, or whatever it is. That's just the way I am, I can't change it. Now, that's clearly not the way the Bible sees our emotions, is it?

[11 : 42] And specifically here, I think it's profound that Paul frames this whole letter, sorry, this whole section of the letter in terms of your emotional life.

This is the headline. He's about to get into some pretty kind of deep theology, but the headline, this key command that introduces everything else is, rejoice in the Lord.

What he's about to say here should affect your emotional life. And just in case I don't explain this well later, but go back to the confidence in the flesh stuff.

You know, it's all about reshaping that if you feel wonderful because of all your, the boxes you tick in the flesh, or if you feel miserable because you don't meet any of them.

This is exactly what he's trying to confront and turn around and challenge by saying rejoice in the Lord. Okay. So it's not as if God just expects you to control your body or God has commands about what you think, but he doesn't care about how you feel.

[12 : 44] No, he does. And of course that's because to some degree we can control our feelings. We can cultivate and stoke our feelings or we can contain and suppress them.

We can sort of train them if you like. I think it's probably worth saying that we don't control our feelings in exactly the same way as we control our thoughts or actions. I think it might be a little bit like the difference between riding a horse and driving a car.

You know, you've sort of got to know that you're on a different vehicle, work out how to manage these things, but in both cases you are sort of expected to be in charge. There are sort of reins to take hold of.

We can't just relinquish responsibility for our emotions and say, they just take me wherever they go. Now God cares even about your gut reactions to things. They can be moral or immoral.

We are responsible for them. And we're supposed to keep a firm grip on the reins of our emotions, to use the horseman imagery. So thirdly, notice how Paul says in the Lord here.

[13 : 55] Our emotions are important because, you see, they're an important part of how we honour the Lord Jesus. Because the Lord Jesus is delightful.

He's worth rejoicing in. He's worth getting excited about. And so if we're not delighted by him, because he's objectively delightful, because he's objectively beautiful and true and good and so on, because he's objectively worth getting excited about, if we're not delighted in him, then something's gone wrong with us.

Like we're missing, our faculties have got confused. Our emotional faculties. In fact, in a way, we're telling lies about the Lord Jesus, aren't we? if we say that he's not worthy of our excitement or pleasure.

And God is rightly offended by our apathy toward his son. Or our scorn or our disgust or whatever it is. Our emotions matter.

God commands us to rejoice in the Lord here because the Lord is worthy of our joy. So the third section of Philippians begins with a command to rejoice in the Lord.

[15 : 10] But the next thing to notice, I think, is the connection between rejoicing in the Lord and staying safe. See how Paul goes on. He says, to write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

Now have a think about that. Everything Paul is writing here has to do with rejoicing, rejoicing in the Lord and staying safe. Rejoicing in the Lord and staying safe.

Now what's the connection? Well, he leads into verse 2. See these three punchy warnings. Notice the repetition of look out. Look out for the dogs.

Look out for the evildoers. Look out, literally, for the mutilation. Look out for the mutilation. Okay, so Paul is using vivid, scary, emotional language to warn us here of the danger that we're in.

And that last warning in particular should alert us, I think, to the way that these people can do us harm. See, it's about getting us, what they're trying to do is to get us to rejoice in the things of the flesh instead of in the Lord.

[16 : 22] Right? That's the connection between joy and safety. You see, your safety depends on what you rejoice in. Will you rejoice in the Lord or in the things of the flesh? And beware, there are dogs, there are evildoers, there are mutilators about seeking to destroy you by leading you away from joy in the Lord and toward the things of the flesh.

Now, who could these monstrous people be? Well, for the Jews, these would have been common ways of describing Gentiles. Typical, easy ways of describing Gentiles.

The Gentiles were filthy dogs. Don't think cute puppy dogs. Think mangy, stray, disgusting dogs returning to their vomit, etc. And the Gentiles were the evildoers.

They didn't even know God's laws, let alone keep them. And the Gentiles were also the mutilation. This word is about those who slice and mangle flesh. If you remember the prophets of Baal, when they're dancing around Mount Carmel, their typical pagan behavior is to slice your flesh as part of idolatry.

So, the Jews would typically have described pagans this way, Gentiles. But the shocking thing here, and this is about to become obvious, but the shocking thing here is that Paul is talking about Jews.

[17 : 45] He's specifically talking about Judaizers. Okay? That is, Jews claiming to be Christians, Jews within the Christian community, who were insisting that in order for Gentiles to become Christians, they must first become Jewish.

Right? Now, Paul is warning the Philippians in the strongest possible terms that these Judaizers, who might appear as relatively harmless, even helpful religious folks, you know, just trying to help them, are actually dogs, evildoers, and mutilators that we need to guard against.

For, he says, see verse 3, we are the circumcision. We are the circumcision. You see, Paul is reversing the language here. He's saying, they are the dogs, we are the circumcision.

It's like saying that the Judaizers are really the Gentiles, and we Christian Gentiles are really the true Jews. In the Greek, the word for mutilation is catatomere, but the word for circumcision is peritomere.

So again, Paul is deliberately contrasting these two groups. He's saying, they are the kind of cutting you down people. They are the people who will slice you up and cut you to pieces, but we are already cut in the right and proper way, in the circumcision way.

[19 : 13] They are the mutilation, we are the circumcision. Now, circumcision in the Old Testament was a sign that you were righteous, right with God by faith.

You are walking in obedience to God and love for him like Abraham. It was meant to be an outward sign of an inner reality. And it was always a matter of the heart.

You remember, Abraham was declared righteous before he was circumcised, not after, because he was righteous. As soon as he put his trust in God's promises of an offspring, he was righteous, in Genesis chapter 15 verse 6.

And Moses says to the people of Israel in Deuteronomy chapter 10, that the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples as you are this day.

Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn. Or again, in Deuteronomy chapter 30, when Moses is in a remarkable passage, is foretelling the new covenant, and he's looking forward to the New Testament, he says to the people of Israel that after their exile and upon their return to the promised land, the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.

[20 : 40] That's Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 6. So circumcision was always a matter of the heart. It was always understood that it was a matter of the heart, it was a sign of being righteous, and what Moses was promising there is that a day would come when God would do the work of making us thoroughly righteous from the inside, and what Paul is saying here is that the day Moses looked forward to has come.

And it's come not just for the Jews, but for the Gentiles too. So that even those who are not circumcised on the outside can call themselves the circumcision because of their righteousness on the inside, you see.

Because God has done a work in their hearts. Now Paul adds to this description three modifiers, three kind of subordinate clauses to spell out what he means, or rather who he means by the circumcision.

Who are the circumcision? It's those who worship by the Spirit of God, number one, and glory in Christ Jesus, number two, and put no confidence in the flesh, number three.

Right, so you are the circumcision if you worship by the Spirit of God, number one, glory in Christ Jesus, number two, and put no confidence in the flesh, number three.

[22 : 02] Let's take each of these in turn very quickly. Number one, they worship by the Spirit of God. Again, we saw in Deuteronomy, circumcision of the heart is not something that you can accomplish on your own or that humans are expected to do themselves.

It is a gift from God. It was a promise that God would do this. It's something the Holy Spirit has to do within us. By nature, we are all stubborn. We all resist God's word and God's rule, just like the people of Israel did in the wilderness.

We don't love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. So we need circumcision of the heart to overcome that. And God does that by His Holy Spirit.

It's as if He cuts through and cuts out all our stubbornness, all our sinfulness, all our hatred, all our rebellion and lawlessness with His mighty sword or His mighty scalpel, His word.

He cuts us to the heart and He circumcises our hearts. just as Moses promised in Deuteronomy chapter 30. Circumcision of the heart is something we have to rely on God to do for us.

[23 : 09] It's not something we can do by ourselves. And secondly, the circumcision are those who glory in Christ Jesus. I've seen this idea before in the book of Philippians actually, back in chapter 1 verse 26, if you remember.

Glorying in Christ Jesus is about boasting. It's about boasting in Him. Who do you boast in? Who are you proud of? You know, you can tell people that you are friends with the King of the Universe.

I like to say to my children, every now and again when we go outside, just because I think I'm hilarious, but I say to them as we look up at the stars or something, I say, you know, I know who made that. I know the guy who did all that stuff.

I know who made that. The King of the Universe. He's one of my friends. We talk often. You know, it's that kind of thing. You're dropping him into conversation. You're just so proud of him.

You're glorying in Christ Jesus. And of course, glorying in Christ Jesus and rejoicing in all are very similar concepts. And finally, number three, Paul says, those who are truly of the circumcision put no confidence in the flesh.

[24 : 10] Put no confidence in the flesh. And so the choice Paul is putting before us revolves around where your confidence is or your faith. Is it in Christ Jesus or in the flesh?

You know, and in particular, are you circumcised in the heart or just in the body? Will you rejoice in the Lord, worship by the Spirit, glory in Christ Jesus, or put your confidence in the flesh, try to go your own way, do things in your own strength, and therefore maintain some grounds for boasting in yourself?

Now this introduces Paul's list in verses four to six, where he outlines the kinds of things that once gave him confidence in the flesh.

He lists seven things, and I'm sure that number is meant to be symbolically significant. Paul wants us to see that his spiritual resume is absolutely perfect.

He lacked nothing. So let's just race through them one by one. First of all, he was circumcised on the eighth day. So he's not some sort of second-rate, later-in-life convert to Judaism.

[25 : 14] He was born into it. He was circumcised exactly when he ought to have been. He's of the people of Israel, or literally, again, the race of Israel.

It's about the fact that he was a pure blood. He was ethnically of the right stock. He was even of the tribe of Benjamin, and Benjamin was a bit of a special tribe within Israel.

So even from the very beginning, if you remember, Benjamin was the favorite, was one of his father's favorites, because he was born to Rachel. Benjamin was the only child born inside the promised land.

The capital city of Israel, Jerusalem, was inside the territory given to Benjamin. The first king of Israel came from Benjamin, Saul, who Paul was probably named after.

And Benjamin was the only tribe to stick with the tribe of Judah and the Davidic monarchy when the nation split into two. So Benjamin was a very, a tribe to be very proud of.

[26 : 11] And this all climaxes then when Paul says that he was a Hebrew of Hebrews. Now, he may be referring to the fact that he spoke Hebrew.

So a lot of the people of Israel lost their language as well when they were scattered throughout the dispersion, but he also spoke Hebrew. I think more likely he's just saying, I was a Hebrew par excellence.

I am the ultimate Hebrew. I'm Uber Hebrew or something like that. Notice then at the end of verse five, Paul changes the format a bit.

He lists different contexts or different spheres or arenas, and he wants to show off his superiority in each of these contexts. So the first one, as to the law, a Pharisee.

In other words, Paul was from one of the strictest, most fanatically orthodox religious groups within Israel. Then, as to zeal, you want to hear about my zeal? A persecutor of the church.

[27 : 09] We read in the book of Acts about how Paul was there when Stephen was murdered. He spearheaded the great persecution of the church which arose after Stephen's death. He ravaged the church in Jerusalem.

Entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. In other words, he's saying, I was a fierce, fanatical, ferocious defender of the life and legacy of Israel.

He was a religious zealot, the kind of thing you might associate today with a Muslim jihadi or a Hindu nationalist. And then finally, as to righteousness under the law, Paul says, blameless.

Absolutely pure as the driven snow. Now, he isn't claiming to be totally sinless, right? Of course, he would never have claimed that. Part of keeping the law was that you offered sacrifices in the temple and so on for your sins and things.

Righteousness is not always a binary thing in the Bible. The way the Bible used the language, you can be more or less righteous, you know, and behave more or less righteously. And Paul is simply saying here that he was a morally upstanding and outstanding member of Israel.

[28 : 17] He was blameless. Now, as I've already said, I think these seven items can probably be categorized into three basic classes. And the point is that Paul's resume ticks all the boxes in terms of his racial pedigree, his religious performance, and his relentless passion.

Racial pedigree, religious performance, relentless passion for God. But then that brings us to a sort of a grinding halt or the turning point in Paul's argument in verse seven. The punchline of this impressive list.

Paul says, Now, at one level, even today, I think that's quite a confusing comment, actually, isn't it?

And I think some of the things on the list, we can understand that readily enough. You know, so persecuting the church, yeah, not a great move. But why exactly was Paul's Jewish heritage such a big loss?

I mean, surely it was a great advantage to be born of God's special chosen people. And in some ways, that's true. And Paul will list elsewhere advantages of being Jewish.

[29 : 31] Perhaps like some of the things on your list, in and of themselves, you might think, well, they're good things. It's not bad to celebrate your family history or your education or your cultural heritage, whatever it might be.

But Paul's point here is that even all the good things in his life turned out to be bad things because they all played their part in keeping him away from Christ.

They all played their part in bolstering his self-confidence, his confidence in the flesh. They actually turned him away from Christ. Even though there might have been good things in and of themselves, in the end, for him, they became losses.

Which brings us to verse 8. So in verses 8 to 11, Paul talks about the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. He says, 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. Now again, let me point out three things here. Number one, the word everything. Indeed, I count everything as loss.

[30 : 40] In other words, whatever it is that might be keeping you from Christ or keeping you from knowing him more deeply, whatever it is on your list, no matter what you've got, your job, your family, your accolades, you think it's a big gain, but it's not.

It's keeping you away from Christ. There's nothing worth clinging to. Knowing Christ is of supreme worth. It's all important. Number two, the thing that really matters in life is knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

The accent is on a personal relationship, isn't it? It's about knowing King Jesus. This is the one thing Paul ends up with in his prophet column, if you like.

The thing that he realizes of true value, the pearl of great price. Without Jesus, not only is life not possible, but it's not worth living.

And when you do have Jesus, you have everything. Many of us would have been here earlier in the year. You might remember in January, we looked at Psalm 27.

- [31 : 48] And David says, One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

And when we looked at that Psalm, you might remember we talked about this theme all over Scripture. One thing is necessary. The one thing David wanted from the Lord was the Lord himself.

But here again, the one thing Paul wants us to rejoice in, the one treasure Paul wants us to prize, the pearl of great price, which is worth selling everything just to obtain, is the Lord Jesus, our King.

And then thirdly, notice that, of course, Paul put his money where his mouth is. The tense changes halfway through verse 8. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

So the third thing I just want to point out about this verse is that for Paul, it wasn't theoretical. He actually did suffer the loss of all things. He was rejected by his community. He gave up his special privileges.

- [32 : 56] He gave up his creature comforts to live a life of suffering and humiliation in order to gain Christ. You know, it's all well and good to talk a big game, isn't it? When there's no real sacrifice.

It's easy to be swept up in the temporary romance of kind of the idea of being courageous and sacrificial and loving the Lord Jesus. But it's worth considering the reality of this and how hard it might actually bite for you if you live for Jesus.

Think about when knowing Jesus and wanting to know Jesus might start to frustrate your career or your plans for owning your own home or your comfort and safety.

What if knowing Jesus and striving to know Jesus really started to interfere with your happy family, with your social standing, or even just your own sense of who you are and how you like to see yourself?

You know, if you're perhaps you're a connoisseur of food, fine art, something like that. Or you like to, I mean, I like to think of myself as quite a reasonable, liberal-minded person, whatever it is.

- [34 : 10] Then unfortunately, some of the things Jesus calls on us to believe make me look like a fundy redneck, a kind of fanatic, and the kind of chattering classes of our society all of a sudden have no respect for me and my opinions, which I wish they would.

It's things like that that then knowing Jesus really makes life start to hurt. Jesus wants his people to live humble, simple, sacrificial lives.

So you might have to give up the sort of truffles and caviar or the fine wines or whatever it is and the decadence. Jesus' people will often be viewed as uncompromising, dangerous fanatics because we believe in silly things like hell and judgment and angels and miracles and heaven.

Hardly the polite conversation of the liberal elites. So when the rubber hits the road, would you really count all these things as loss and consider them all rubbish for the sake of knowing Christ Jesus?

My Lord. Or perhaps they've got more of a grip on you than you thought they did. So when that happens, remember these words of Paul. Rejoice in the Lord.

- [35 : 28] For your own safety, rejoice in the Lord. Don't let your heart be kidnapped by other things such that you lose sight of the great value of the treasure we have in Christ and fall for the weak pretense and show of worldly pleasures and trinkets.

Status in our academic communities or religious communities, fame, fortune, popularity, comfort, whatever it is. All right. But Paul isn't done yet. So in verse 9, he begins fleshing out, as it were, the benefits of knowing Christ.

To know Christ is to know two other things. You see verses 9 to 11. Two other things. Righteousness and life. You see, Paul wants to gain Christ.

Verse 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. In other words, Paul's previous way of life was about establishing a righteousness of his own.

Of his own. No, I wanted it to be mine. It was based on law keeping. This is his summary of the list above. He thought his standing with God was based on his racial pedigree, his religious performance, and his relentless passion for God.

[36 : 43] He thought that that was what made him right with God. But now he's come to see that that was all rubbish. That none of that makes a person right with God. God, it's actually faith.

What God wants from us is trust. He wants us to trust him, to rely on him, to depend on him. That's what he called Abraham to do. And all the saints down through the ages have lived by faith.

And through faith, you see, we receive a righteousness that is not our own. We get this righteousness that wasn't originally ours, that didn't intrinsically belong to us.

It's an alien righteousness. A righteousness that doesn't come from law keeping, or from who we are, or anything about us, but from God as a gift.

A righteousness that comes from being found in Christ, clothed in him, as it were. And again, just to return to the major headline, have a think about what this would do to your emotional life.

[37 : 43] I mean, first, you see, the wonderful thing about this kind of righteousness is that you can never spoil it. You are always looking good. But it doesn't go up and down based on your own performance, or how zealous you've been for God lately.

No, because it's all based on Christ, on his perfect and complete performance, on his immaculate credentials. He's the perfect son of Israel, the son of God. He's the Hebrew of Hebrews.

He's the perfect law keeper who loved God and loved all mankind. He's actually the perfect zealot who, in his zeal, accomplished our salvation and built God's house.

In other words, when we're in Christ, we meet all of God's requirements, because he meets all of God's requirements. And so our joy and our boasting and our glorying is not tied to our own successful performance, or conversely, there's no need for anxiety and misery and discouragement if our performance is less than adequate, because it's not about our performance.

It's all about his perfect performance. Our righteousness is safe in his hands. It doesn't rest on our shoulders. Christ is our righteousness. That is to say, our right standing with God depends entirely upon his right standing with God.

[39 : 06] And since the verdict over his life is abundantly clear, right, God raised him from the dead and seated him at his own right hand, then that means, you see, that for anyone in Christ, God's verdict over our life is already abundantly clear.

We are declared righteous, i.e. justified, not on the basis of our own works or performance. We are not waiting for the verdict in the future. We have been declared righteous on the basis of Christ and his performance that has already happened.

And the fact that by faith we live in him, as Paul says, it's like he surrounds us, he clothes us, he shelters us with himself so that God's blessings come to us because we're in him.

All right. Which brings us to the second benefit of gaining Christ in verses 10 and 11. We have Christ's righteousness and we also have life.

Knowing Christ is also about knowing the power of his resurrection and sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. Paul says that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

[40 : 14] Now, it all starts with power, you see. Right. Paul wants the Paul wants to know the power of Christ's resurrection. And first, he's talking about the kind of power that Christians experience in our lives now, the resurrection power of Jesus that we have living within us.

When we put our faith in Christ, we are born again through the resurrection. 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 3. We receive this new spiritual power to put to death the sin in our lives and live new lives of righteousness, faith, love and hope.

Then notice in the second half of the verse, verse 10, we experience this new power in the midst of sufferings. And in fact, Paul says he wants to share in Christ's sufferings, even becoming like him in his death, so that ultimately he might enjoy the fullness of his resurrection too.

And the word share there is the key word of the whole letter. It's the *koinonia* word. Paul wants to be a joint owner of Christ's sufferings. Now, in one sense, of course, this is impossible.

When Christ died for us, he declared, it is finished. In other words, mission accomplished. Our sins have been paid for. He paid for them. We weren't there. We're not partners in that work.

[41 : 30] But as Paul continues to further the cause for which Christ died, that is the cause of the gospel, he sees himself as a partner with Christ in his work in that sense. You remember elsewhere, Paul even talks about filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Here, it's the power of the resurrection in our lives, means the power to keep living righteously. It also means the power to keep witnessing and living for the cause of Christ, even in the midst of terrible suffering, looking forward to the day when ultimately that resurrection power will transform our bodies too.

Paul is looking forward to attaining a Christ-like resurrection from the dead. The hope of the Christian life is that one day we will walk in new, immortal bodies on a completely restored new earth.

And again, it's not because this is the future that we deserve to inherit, but because it's the future that God's true son, our Lord Jesus, deserves to inherit. And we get to enjoy everything in and through him.

All right, so time to wrap up then. As we finish, I want to return to those key verses at the heart of the passage, verses 7 and 8. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

[42 : 51] 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.

Now, the word rubbish there in the Greek is really a much more vulgar word. It means crap or something like that, right? Dung or excrement. And I just want to finish on slightly reflecting on why Paul might use that, this disgusting word.

So I think Paul is wanting to be deliberately shocking here. Because, in a way, this whole passage is about social standing, isn't it? And I think by being impolite, by being vulgar, crude, even disgusting, Paul is trying to shake us out of our self-importance and our well-to-do absurdities to understand their true value, or rather lack of value.

God is not impressed by all the things that we so readily are, which school you went to, or university, or how clever you are, or whatever, you know, your superior breeding, your religious rituals, or piety.

The problem with polite society is that there's no room in polite society for the crucified Christ, the bloody, battered, sweating, drowning, naked king that we all worship.

[44 : 25] Or at least he was bloody, battered, sweating, drowning, and naked when he hung on that cross for us. Which means, of course, that for those of us who follow the Lord Jesus, it's time to give up on social niceties, as it were, and call a spade a spade.

And that's what Paul is doing in this passage. What he's saying here is, not just what he thinks of all our racial pedigree, our religious performance and zeal, and so on, all our works not done in faith.

They're not impressive, you see. They're all crap. He's saying this is what God thinks about them. They're all disgusting and filthy. It reminds me of Isaiah as well, talking about them as menstrual rags.

They're just bloody and disgusting. They're filthy. The only thing of value, he's saying, is knowing Christ and being found in him. That's the only way to be right with God.

Anything else is just clinging to crap. So that's the choice we all face this morning, friends. What will you choose? Crap? Or Christ?

[45 : 33] Let's pray. Let's pray. Loving Father, give us humility, wisdom, faith to cling to Christ, to see the value of knowing Christ, and to treasure him above all others.

Help us not to put any confidence in the flesh and glory in these silly things that we know in your sight are just crap. We pray, Father, that in your mercy, you might rid us of these things if they have kind of kidnapped our hearts.

We do take them too seriously, put too much stock in them. If we judge others according to them, any of those things. Father, we pray that in your mercy, you might make us people who absolutely, wholeheartedly, every day, rejoice in the Lord Jesus.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.