

## Growing in Grace

### Philippians 3: 7-11

Our text today is actually a continuation of the verses we considered in our last study. In order to fully understand what Paul has taught in our text, we must look at this passage in light of its context. Previously Paul had counseled believers regarding their walk with the Lord. Some would be tempted to stray into legalism and religious tradition, allowing such an approach to become their focus rather than walking by faith. Having lived that life prior to salvation, Paul knew the dangers it presented and the emptiness it brought. He had been faithful to long-held traditions and religious practices, but they failed to provide salvation and peace within his heart. Christ alone could fill the void within the heart of man.

Following his counsel to focus on the faith, Paul reveals how a prosperous Christian life should look. He had given up much he once held dear, but the gains far outweighed the losses. Rather than seeking to live according to the law, he was now living according to grace. This brought a radical transformation to his life, and he was well pleased with the peace he now enjoyed. His personal testimony stands as an example and encouragement for all who strive to follow the Lord.

I want to consider the [thoughts](#) Paul shared as we think on: [Growing in Grace](#).

**I. A Profound Realization** (7-8) – Having discussed the pitfalls of his previous approach, Paul shares the reality he discovered walking with Christ. He spoke of:

**A. The Desire of the Flesh** (7) – [But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.](#) He speaks of things his flesh once desired, things he cherished and considered gain. What were these things? Look back at [Vv.4-6](#). Paul speaks of the man he was prior to Christ. He had become one of the elite within religious circles. He had set goals as a young man, and as he matured, he checked those goals off one by one. If anyone had reason to boast in personal achievement, Paul did. Religiously he had the right birth, the right heritage, and the right lineage (being of the tribe of Benjamin, known for devotion and respect.) He was a Hebrew of Hebrews. Paul was at the pinnacle of success.

- But, as he met Christ in salvation, Paul realized all these were not gain. They were nothing more than vanity, an attempt to secure personal righteousness. His focus had been more on fleshly desires than a genuine passion for Christ! What do your desires reveal? Are you seeking a more intimate relationship with Christ, or do you desire things that please the flesh? I pray our spiritual aspirations exceed the physical or material ones!

**B. The Denial of the Flesh** (7-8a) – *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.* <sup>[8]</sup>

*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:*

As Paul sought success as a young man, he was well pleased with his life. He was a rising star among the Pharisees. His zeal had been noticed and rewarded of men. Life was good and Paul was enjoying the ride. All of that changed in a life altering moment on the Damascus road. It was there Paul met Christ in salvation and his whole perspective changed. In fact, his entire being changed. Paul realized all he had sought was futile. The things he cherished most were worthless in obtaining genuine righteousness. He willingly forsook his personal desires to embrace Christ.

- The majority today share similar ambitions and goals. Their focus is on obtaining personal wants and desires. They strive for things that please the flesh. I am aware that we have to work and obtain to survive, but the material and physical aspects of life are not of paramount importance. As you consider your current pursuits, how much of that will actually matter in eternity. The redeemed in Christ must be willing to count much of our gain as loss. We must recognize what is truly important and put things in a proper perspective.

**C. His Deliverance from the Flesh** (8b) – *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the*

*excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.* Paul had obtained victory in life. He knew the man he once was, and he was happy to have suffered the loss of the old man in order to win Christ. His relationship with Christ exceeded any pleasure his former achievements had brought. Those who knew him likely thought Paul had wasted a grand opportunity, but he knew he had gained all in Christ and counted the former life as nothing when compared to life in Christ.

- This perspective is attainable, but it isn't easy. You must look at life through eyes of faith rather than the filter of the world. Everything must be measured according to our relationship with Christ, keeping eternity in view. You can rise above the desires of the flesh, enjoying victory, but it is only possible through a personal, fulfilling relationship with Christ.

**II. A Personal Relationship** (9) – Here Paul spoke of the abiding benefits of having a personal relationship with the Lord through salvation. Notice:

**A. His Position** (8c-9a) – *that I may win Christ, and be found in Him.* Things were no longer as they were before. At the end of the day he didn't enjoy the praise of men as before or the sense of pride in personal achievement, but he had a new found position in Christ! The joy of salvation and an intimate relationship with Christ exceeded anything Paul had experienced before. Christ was

now his passion and desire. Rather than being focused on the approval of men and climbing the social ladder, Paul enjoyed his relationship with Jesus!

- Many focus on experiences of the past and add unimaginable pressures for the future. There is nothing wrong in seeking success, but the child of God has every reason to rejoice with optimism and anticipation. I have no idea what the future will hold. I don't know what success will be mine, but I do know I belong to Christ. Regardless of what life has in store, I am saved and secure in Christ! That offers a measure of peace and contentment that exceeds the pressures I face in life.

**B. His Possession** (9b) – [not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.](#) Paul rejoiced that he had received the righteousness of Christ. Through faith in Christ, God imputed the righteousness of Jesus to Paul's account. He was accepted of God through faith in Christ.

- The world has many standards and expectations. Many live their lives bound by pressure to perform, meeting expectations. However, regardless of personal effort, we often fail to win the approval of others. That is never the case with a believer. At the moment of salvation, we are justified in Christ. His holy righteousness is applied to our account. We are viewed as righteous by God because of faith in the Son! Now, that ought to challenge us to live in a way that pleases God, but we need not fear being rejected of Him. Being in Christ promises eternal acceptance.

**C. His Persuasion** (9) – [And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:](#) Consider the context of all we've discussed. Prior to salvation, Paul was zealous in religion. He worked as hard at personal righteousness and religious advancement as anyone. He exerted great amounts of personal effort to achieve his goals. After salvation Paul realized righteousness was not obtained through works or keeping the law, but through faith in Christ. He no longer saw the need to work in order to be accepted. He was now able to serve with confidence knowing he was acceptable to God through Christ.

- I hope you realize the liberty believers have in Christ. I am not advocating laziness or promoting sin, but we can rest in Jesus. My salvation and eternity are not dependent upon the work I perform in the flesh. I am who I am in Christ! Regardless of the success or failures in life, I will remain in Christ. There is peace and rest in Him!

**III. A Permanent Resolution (10-11)** – Paul’s faith in the Lord had radically changed his life. He was committed to living for Lord, in an effort to please Him each day. He was mindful of:

**A. Spiritual Growth (10a)** – *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.* Paul had already experienced resurrection power in salvation. As we are born again, the old man of sin dies and we are resurrected a new creature in Christ. Paul also understood the continual benefit of Jesus’ resurrection power. Consider the triumph His resurrection secured. He rose victorious over sin, death, and hell. In essence Jesus conquered all that hinders us. He rose in power over all that sin had defiled. Paul knew the resurrection power of Christ would continue to sanctify him, continually conforming him into the image of Christ, prompting continued growth.

- I realize the need for resurrection power in our daily lives. We battle the flesh and cares of this life. Sin creates conflict within, and the power of Jesus is our only source of victory. I desire to continually die to self, being sanctified in Christ through His mighty power!

**B. Sufficient Grace (10b)** – *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.* Paul faced adversity for his relationship to Christ. Many sought to kill him for preaching the gospel. He was no longer loved and embraced by the religious. He was willing to identify with Christ and the sufferings such identification produced. Paul recognized his weakness brought power with Christ. *2 Cor.12:9 – And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

- I do not enjoy adversity and I can honestly say that I have never prayed for God to send a burden my way. However, I am convinced we need to learn this great truth. We need to be willing to identify with Christ in every circumstance, and if a trial or burden brings us closer to the Lord, we ought to embrace that and rejoice in them. I pray we will embrace every situation as an opportunity to serve the Lord, grow in Him, and glorify Him with our lives!
- **Being made conformable unto his death.** The power Paul spoke of progressively increases. I am sure we all desire to experience the power of His resurrection that brings victory to our lives. Some might even admit there was benefit to a trial they endured. Here Paul discloses the final aspect of the power available to us. This one will be difficult for most to embrace. Paul literally desired to die unto himself so that he could walk in a way that pleased Christ. He was willing to totally surrender his entire being to the will of God. He knew he had been bought with a price and he offered himself unto the Lord to use as He pleased.

**C. Subsequent Glory (11)** – [If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead](#). This reveals the committed focus Paul had to continue walking with the Lord, growing in grace. He was looking at the big picture. This life of difficulty and pain would not last forever. He was already anticipating a future glory when the Lord returned for the church. He affirms that the struggles of this life are worth the effort for those in Christ. They are but a fleeting moment in the scope of eternity. He would gladly endure the trials of this life in exchange for the glory to come!

- I can think of no greater motivation for the believer than the assurance of resurrection in Christ. We too must view our difficulties through a perspective of future glory with Christ. This life is difficult at best, but it is but a fleeting moment that leads to an eternal day of peace and joy!

**Conclusion:** Many who knew Paul in his season of popularity as a Pharisee likely thought he had committed professional suicide. He had given up a life that promised wealth, social status, and authority. He is now bound in prison, and yet he is rejoicing. Paul knew the success he previously enjoyed would eventually fade, and it could not grant eternal life. Yes he had given up much as far as men were concerned, but he had gained much more in return.

This presents a challenge for each of us. What are we working toward in life? What are we passionate about? Will our current pursuits matter in eternity? One thing is certain – salvation by grace through faith is required for eternal life. That is of utmost importance. If you have that, you have all you need. If you are yet unsaved, no amount of wealth or success will merit heaven. I pray everyone is walking with the Lord in salvation and growing in grace. If there are needs, bring them to the Lord.