

"Paul's Letter to the Philippians – 'The Witness of the Apostle Paul – Losing All but Gaining Christ'"

Review:

The seven-fold emptying of Christ now leads directly in this letter to the seven-fold offering up by Paul. In each case it is glory that follows.

- ***Christ gave what was rightly his; Paul what was not rightly his since he had gained it carnally, as it were***
- ***Christ regained what was rightly his; Paul gained what was not rightly his, but by the grace of God it was given freely.***

Some key verses we have already considered here in this chapter are these:

Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . . This is a very great exhortation indeed and immediately leads here in this letter to the Philippians to some very practical applications. If we have the mind of Christ, we will also be strongly motivated to fulfill these additional principles:

Then Last Time, the Fourth Witness – Epaphroditus:

- ***His Identity and Qualifications Revealed (verse 25)***
- ***His Deep Concern Highlighted (verses 26-27)***
- ***His Unique Value Explained (verse 28)***
- ***His Witness Promoted (verses 29-30)***

- ***The Fourth Witness: His Identity and Qualifications Revealed (verse 25)***
 - ***Phil. 2:25*** “Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants”:

- ***The Fourth Witness: His Deep Concern Highlighted (verses 26-27)***
 - ***Phil. 2:26-27*** “For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow”:
 - ***But verse 30 a little later summarizes the situation so well:***
“Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me”.

- **Phil. 2:29-30** “Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation. Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me”:
 - **“all gladness”**: Joy! Guilt could dominate. Paul suggests in these kind, loving, and powerful words that it must not. Joy unspeakable and full of glory is what the Lord would have instead.

Our Outline:

- **Paul’s Witness – Rejoicing In Christ Jesus**
- **Paul’s Witness – Willingly Losing Everything**
- **Paul’s Witness – But Nothing May Be Compared to Gaining Christ**
- **Paul’s Witness – The Glory of It All**

I. Paul’s Witness – Rejoicing In Christ Jesus:

[READ] Phil. 3:1-4

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed [is] not grievous, but for you [it is] safe.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

- **“Finally”**: Lit. ‘For the rest’ or to complete the current thought. The apostle will now draw near into the most important section of this letter. Everything earlier had been foundational. Three warnings are now expressed and constitute a direct identification of the enemies of the faith as Paul sees it, three “beware”.

This is one of the strongest exhortations possible, isn’t it?

3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe [ἀσφαλής, from which our “asphalt” is taken. In other words, helpful or stabilizing or confirming].

3:2 **Beware** of dogs, **beware** of evil workers, **beware** of the concision.

- ***Four “we are’s”:* This is one of the greatest single verses anywhere to be found expressing in a single verse the entirety of what the Christian life is to be.**

3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

- ***So much could be said about this verse, but it would take all of our time to say it. So be it. Perhaps another time. So let’s just leave it with this: We are the true circumcision [those that call themselves Jews but are not really do not really count] who worship God in the spirit and not in the flesh and who therefore can rejoice purely in Christ Jesus – they have no confidence at all in the flesh.***

May we all agree to this marvelous affirmation so powerful and true. Again, amen.

II. Paul’s Witness – Willingly Losing Everything:

- ***We come now to the heart of this section of the letter. Paul’s witness was that he had willingly lost everything of human value to him.***

[READ] Phil. 3:4-6

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

- ***Paul here is dramatically is looking back, a dangerous path to travel, as he has stated elsewhere. Any of you that have left much behind for the sake of Christ (and I am not referring here to a way of sinful life but far more) know the kind of thing Paul is doing now in these verse. This is his life story before all was gladly given over to the Lord, even his own life. See 2 Cor. 8:5 in this regard.***
- ***“confidence in the flesh”, what is it? The apostle’s “exaltation” will be the necessary consequence of his own humbling. But to understand thus we need to know what the apostle gave up? Much detail is given here to help us understand what might seem alien and obscure for us modern Gentiles.***

- ***His seven-fold losses are enumerated here:***
 1. ***“Circumcised the eighth day”:*** Not as a Gentile convert but as a Jew according to Moses law as the next phrase states:
 2. ***“of the stock of Israel”:*** His parents were apparently also Jews who were descendants of Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes.
 3. ***“[of] the tribe of Benjamin”:*** Not just any tribe either. Most of the tribes were of the rebellious northern kingdom. Such was not Paul’s tribe. Only Judah and Benjamin had remained true to the faith of the patriarchs (and Moses) after the rebellion and division of the nation at Solomon’s death.
 4. ***“an Hebrew of the Hebrews”:*** In other words, not just any kind of “Hebrew” as there were many sects, but a special kind of Hebrew . . . The anticipation here is rising as the apostle keeps adding more qualifications here.
 5. ***“as touching the law, a Pharisee”:*** Pharisee’s came in every variety as well. In the first century some historians have written that there were at least seven or eight types of pharisee. Clearly Paul thought his position there was of the highest honor possible.
 6. ***“concerning zeal, persecuting the church”:*** However, though his allegiance to this sect was most “honorable”, nevertheless he had dedicated himself to “persecuting the church”
 7. ***“touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”:*** Alas, what kind of “carnal” conviction this was. What he is saying is that his zeal for the Law was extreme and unbounded, not that he had thought that he had kept it perfectly. Surely he knew better than to have believed that.
- ***So all of these “excellencies” of the Jewish faith as Paul knew it he had given up for the sake of Christ and his glorious work of redemption. How may this be applied today?***
 - ***The sixth and the seventh seem particularly relevant to me:***

- ***“concerning zeal, persecuting the church”:* Take a stand for pure grace in the churches today and see where that goes!**
- ***“touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”:* Again, living up to the denomination’s requirements or your own group’s specific rules and regulations perfectly brings nothing really but carnal satisfaction. In Colossians Paul explains this in a way that is unforgettable:**

Col. 2:20-23

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

- ***It is also not only a matter of what we gave up by faith that led to our salvation. There is far more here it seems.***

III. Paul’s Witness – But Nothing May Be Compared to Gaining Christ:

[READ] Phil. 3:7 *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*

- ***A comparison with Christ’s “emptying” is not only unavoidable but intended. In any reading of this letter we are now only a minute or two after this listing in the seven-fold “emptying” of chapter 2:***
 1. ***“But made himself of no reputation”***
 2. ***“took the form of a servant”***
 3. ***“made in the likeness of men”***
 4. ***“and found in fashion as a man”***
 5. ***“he humbled himself”***
 6. ***“and became obedient unto death”***
 7. ***“even the death of the cross”***

- ***But do we really comprehend this comparison? What does it mean in our personal world today? What have you given up for the cause of Christ Jesus? Notice that this is not a matter of ethics or morality. No, it is far different. It is a matter of calling.***
- ***So, Christ's example is so great that in comparison with that, our sacrifices are nothing at all – even when from our so limited a perspective, they seem like everything! Paul's example of this "sacrifice" is so relevant and so directly applicable to us today. He sacrificed it all as he says so powerfully in this next section.***

But his motives were the most critical thing mentioned here, I truly believe. And there would have been now power in his sacrifice apart for his response to the example of his blessed savior. EXAMPLES, WITNESSES, TESTIMONY, IS SO VALUABLE AND SO POWERFUL INDEED.

Conclusion / Application:

- ***Remember "Cripple Tom!"***

[READ] 2 Cor. 5:12-15

12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to [answer] them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

13 For whether we be beside ourselves, [it is] to God: or whether we be sober, [it is] for your cause.

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

15 And [that] he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

What about us, you, me? That is the question. Is the love of Christ constraining us?

Next Time: "Losing All but Gaining Christ, Part 2"