

***“Paul's Letter to the Philippians — ‘The Witness of the Apostle Paul —  
Risking Everything for the Sake of Christ!’”***

**Introduction:**

- ***If you have been a student of God's word for any time at all, you have seen how it was Christ's Resurrection Power that was at work in Paul:***
  - ***It was not his strength that carried him through the many trials of his life. No, it was demonstrably Christ's resurrection power and life. Only the false teachers, Paul's constant thorn in the side, could possibly disagree.***

***You will remember well our main focus here on the “mind-set” that was in Christ Jesus as he left heaven's glory:***

***Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . .***

- ***And it was this motivation, to sacrifice everything that is unrelated to the mission ahead, that was central to Paul's life calling.***

***Paul, consequently, sacrificed so much for this glorious goal to be reached and in that became our example. While what Christ gave up in the Incarnation and then in his death for sin and sins may seem quite incomprehensible to us mortals, we may be able to grasp somewhat what Paul gave up for the sake of Christ. That is the power of his example, isn't it? He writes so powerfully of that sacrifice in his own life in Phil 2 - 3. Summarizing that, he writes:***

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

- ***What a risk indeed for the apostle Paul was it to live like he did. And for us it would surely be the same. But to have the example of the apostle set before us DOES MAKE A GREAT DIFFERENCE, DOESN'T IT?***
- ***And, in the life given by Christ to him, Paul Learned That Suffering with Christ Was Better Than Deliverance. This is an amazing thing, is it not? That suffering is for Paul better than deliverance from his many trials and sufferings for Christ.***

***He had “counted all things but loss” and the consequences of that had been so dramatic! Therefore he wrote in 2 Cor. 11 & 12 how he would now only glory in “his infirmities”:***

**2 Cor. 12:5** Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

- ***But the greatest trial in his life listed here in 2 Corinthians seems to have been his struggle with the proverbial “thorn in the flesh”. There, after three cries to his Lord for deliverance, the Lord responded with these words:***

***[READ ] 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.***

***Paul’s response was simply this:***

***2 Cor. 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.***

- ***He therefore had “pleasure” in his infirmities. Pleasure! What this is saying is that our many trials are at the heart of God’s working under grace and its fullness! Paul’s specific trial here was so great he asked three times that it be removed. But not only was it not removed, the Lord himself explained that it would not be removed for the very reason that his weakness was exactly what the Lord wanted. Indeed, sharing Christ’s sufferings was better than deliverance, and, even more, it was his life calling as well!***

**Today’s Theme: “Risking Everything for the Sake of Christ!”**

**Our Outline: What Did Paul learn that was so life transforming that his passion in life was sharing it with everyone he met? He learned that:**

- ***Suffering with Christ Is Better Than Deliverance***
- ***Risking Everything for the Sake of Christ Is God’s Highest Purpose***
- ***We will especially focus today on this “risk” knowing that this is a challenging concept. But through this some helpful contrasts will emerge.***

**I. Suffering with Christ Is Better Than Deliverance!**

- ***Now the Lord had early on revealed to Paul THAT he would be suffering “for his sake”. But the dimensions of that suffering and the***

*depths of it were not revealed to Paul and could not be.*

*The wording here challenges us to our limits and, of course, even beyond. There the apostle writes so boldly yet with clarity and simplicity that for him his life had become one of . . .*

**2 Cor. 4:10-11**

**10 . . . Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,**  
that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

**11 For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake,**  
that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

- *So the Lord revealed to Paul THAT he would be suffering for his sake and that was his life calling.*
- *Well, we all know that suffering “with Christ” is far, far more, than simply suffering which is common to mankind. Learning the difference between the two may indeed be our life long challenge just as it was for the apostle. Indeed, he writes that it is!*
- *So the Question Looms So Large: Will we imitate Paul as he imitates Christ, suffering together with him?*

*He writes in several places that WE SURELY SHOULD. But that means of course taking the form of a bond-slave as well and suffering the loss of all things, even, quite radically as he testifies of himself, even our own confidence in the flesh. But may it be so. SO SHARING IN CHRIST’S SUFFERINGS IS BETTER THAN DELIVERANCE BECAUSE THAT IS INDEED HIS HIGHEST PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES. THEREFORE, IT IS NO GREAT LEAP THAT WE SHOULD ALSO CONCLUDE THAT . . .*

## ***II. Risking Everything for the Sake of Christ Is God’s Highest Purpose:***

- *But, the question remains: What does “risking everything” in this case really mean?*
  - *Perhaps not all was counted loss and there is much more to be so counted*
  - *Perhaps all was counted loss then, but now we may wish to recall some of those*

- *What Paul does not mean is that the rule of the Kingdom applies still today, that all must be "forsaken", all lands and properties sold, and so forth. We have already seen here in our fellowships here on the subject of "The Long War Against God" that those Kingdom requirements as laid down in the gospels and in the early Acts (witness Ananias and Sapphira) no longer apply to us today under grace.*
- *But it remains that there is so much that may interfere with carrying this out in our lives ... many are so bound by the affairs of life, marriage, family, work, friends, health, finances and so forth.*

***BUT THERE IS HOPE HERE! I do not, of course, mean that we have no responsibilities in those things. For we surely do.***

- *There are Two Critical Issues that Paul addresses in his letters and these get to the heart of what God is doing today under the fullness of grace. They are #1: The radical implications of being "under [the] law", and #2: The proper understanding of "works" for the believer today living under the guidance and empowering of grace. The first we will consider today, the second we will save for next time.*

- *Issue #1: The radical implications of being "under [the] law:*
  - *But before we continue, let's remind ourselves of those verses we have studied much already:*

***Phil. 3:8-9 [Contrast: my righteousness vs Christ's righteousness]***

*8 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,*

***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***

- *Those words, "my own righteousness, which is of the law", are intended to help our understanding. Paul is cutting aggressively into the heart of legalism here. Legal works are those done in accordance with a legal*

***standard. That may be defined by the Mosaic Law or by another law. Even a so called “Christian” law or “church” law if the standard for our works will give the same result — “my own righteousness”.***

***[READ ] Heb. 9:13-14 [Contrast: Dead works vs. “living” works]***

***13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:***

***14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?***

- ***“Dead works”! My, what a thought. We are all told continuously by pastors and teachers everywhere that what is most important of all is our works! But what does Paul say?***
  - ***Verse 14: What we do not need, he writes, are “dead works”. But what might those be?***

***Well, it is clear from Paul’s teaching in many places that those are of two kinds: works of law devoid of faith, or just good works done fully independent of any divine purpose. In the first case they are religious works that are done apart from the revealed word of truth in which we have believed and which truth continues to empower us. In the second, they are merely a matter of ethics or human compassion and not spiritual in any sense. Unbelievers are often well known for such and have their societies and organizations for the promotion of such. The churches often have the same. But, whatever their nature, dead works are not in line with the will of God. We read of that here in Colossians 2:***

- ***For example:***

***[READ ] 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.

- ***Those kinds of work he writes of here (even if they are called “good”) are set in stark contrast here with that righteousness which is by faith and in accord with the workings of Almighty God. And, do not forget that this abandonment of legal justification is here in Philippians 3 part and parcel of the rest, being found in him, winning him, conformed to his death, and attaining to the resurrection out from among dead ones. It all goes together as one.***

***So no wonder the apostle is so seemingly unsure whether he might attain to it. Next time we want to examine that aspect of this more closely.***

- ***Risking it all comes down then to this:***
  - ***Holding all things loosely as the [temporary] gift of God by grace with willingness to release them if needed***
  - ***Knowing that all these things are passing away and are temporal***
  - ***Redeeming the time for the days are evil***
  - ***Walking not according to the prince of this world but according to God***
  - ***Resting, resting, resting. Amen.***

- ***But then perhaps the most compelling scripture of all is in Romans 7:***

***[READ ] Rom. 7:7-11***

7 What shall we say then? [Is] the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin [was] dead.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

10 And the commandment, which [was ordained] to life, I found [to be] unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew [me].

- ***This above all else teaches that legal systems of every kind encourage the flesh with its inevitable lawlessness. We all know that from personal experience, don't we?***
- ***So where then do we stand? When we have cast beside all things "legal" and the righteousness that comes from this, what do we have left. The "risk" of this may seem greater than we can bear. Why? Because of family, friends, peer pressures to conform, the influence of worldly desires. The list is long.***
  - ***Paul answers the question simply: We must rest in him and his righteousness by faith. Not, of course, by works plus faith. But by faith. We are righteous only in him. Rest, beloved. The Lord by his grace has carved out a place of rest. And indeed, his grace is ALWAYS SUFFICIENT! Amen.***

**Conclusions / Exhortation:**