

Sermon 4-7-19 Treasure that which is Most Valuable Philippians 3:8-14

Dear Recipients of God's Grace:

Do you know anyone whom the following words describe?

Secure and Successful

“You look secure and successful, but the half has not been told, right?”

Part of you is insecure and fearful. Underneath, you are pretty weak. You appear to be happy, easy-going, and fulfilled; but the half has not been told, has it? You wonder about where all this is leading you. Deep down, nothing within you smiles. Your salary is good and your material possessions are growing in number, but again, the half has not been told. The truth is that you are empty on the inside and you are faking it on the outside. Not one thing you own in all your ‘Kingdom’ has brought you the happiness you long for. So you’re thinking, ‘Maybe if I could land that better job,’ or ‘get into that bigger house,’ or....or....or....”

Is it possible for money or possessions to bring lasting happiness? I think we all would say, of course not!

Many people feel that they will never be successful or satisfied until they have acquired a certain amount of possessions or those “special things” they have longed for. The Apostle Paul knew what it was like to have many earthly possessions but found out that only Christ could bring him lasting contentment.

Philippians was written by Paul while he was a prisoner in Rome around 60 years AD. He wrote these words to the Christians in the town of Philippi. While Paul was in prison the Philippians sent someone from their church to visit him with gifts. Paul thanks them for this help and reminds them of our most valuable possession - JESUS CHRIST

In the words before us from chapter 3 Paul reinforces some truths that are the foundation of the Christian faith. Some Jews believed that God had a sort of balance scale for weighing good and bad deeds. Some thought that a person entered heaven if he ended his life with more good deeds than bad. Paul corrects this false teaching. Paul, also reminds them that what we have, what we own, may actually get in the way of our most valuable possession - JESUS CHRIST Paul's voice rises in praise of this glorious possession he has through faith.

TREASURE YOUR MOST VALUABLE POSSESSION

I. Everything else is a loss vv8-11

Before Paul had come to faith he valued the reputation he had as a leader among the Pharisees. He valued the honor he had before men. But once he came to faith he found out that everything in this world was useless when compared to eternal life.

A. Compared to the knowledge of Christ v8

To Know Christ

1. What does it mean “to know Christ”
 - a. more than head knowledge - “I know he existed”
 - b. John 17:3 “This is eternal life that they may know you - Jesus”

This knowledge of Christ is one that transforms the entire person.

We know many people - we know they existed but we know very few personally.

2. Salvation is knowing Christ in a personal way. Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship. To know Jesus means to trust him for your salvation.

3. “I consider everything a loss compared to knowing Jesus”

a. What did Paul lose when he came to know Jesus?

- 1- his family’s affection and inheritance - lost
- 2- his community standing – lost
- 3- his family’s business in Tarsus – lost
- 4- his friends – lost
- 5- his tradition in the Jewish faith – lost

b. By becoming a missionary Paul lost stability, security, sleep, health, wealth, liberty and eventually his life.

c. He considered “earthly things” that may get in the way of his relationship with Jesus as “rubbish” Greek = garbage or manure.

4. “That I may gain Christ” Jesus was Paul’s “Lord” Paul is saying that Jesus is my Life, Strength, Rock, Savior and King. cf Eph 3:17-19

B. Compared to the righteousness of Christ v9

Put to one’s account

1. Which is “put to one’s account” Paul lost his self-righteousness when he looked at his own record and found out he was spiritually bankrupt. He looked at Christ’s record and saw that He was perfect. Paul’s own righteousness no longer satisfied him. His own righteousness

could not measure up to the standard of God's holiness. He must have a better righteousness. He who gains Christ by faith has the true, complete and perfect righteousness.

- a. Great exchange - Paul's sins were charged to Christ
- b. II Cor 5:21 "To be sin for us that we might become righteous"

2. Many today see no need for righteousness

- a. I'm okay, you're okay
- b. I'm not as bad as the next guy
- c. I've done enough good to counter the bad
- d. Rom 9-10 "Seek to establish their own righteousness"

3. As long as one keeps clinging to his own righteousness he will not have the righteousness of Christ. Gal 5:4 "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ you have fallen away."

ROWBOAT - A lady was arguing with her pastor about faith and works. She said: "I think that getting to heaven is like rowing a boat – one oar is faith and the other is works. If you use both, you get there. If you use only one, you go around in circles.

Pastor replied: "There is only one thing wrong with your illustration – Nobody is going to heaven in a rowboat."

Paul's aim – that he may be found to be completely in Christ. "In Him" that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the sinner. Christ's righteousness is our own.

IN HIM = personal, powerful, painful

C. Compared to the fellowship of Christ vv10-11

1. Which is a personal experience - We walk with Jesus, pray to Jesus, obey Jesus, glorify Jesus. Paul wishes to become entirely wrapped up in Christ. We grow in our personal knowledge through worship, study and prayer.

2. Which is a powerful experience - "resurrection power"

- a. power from the risen and exalted Lord
 - Ro 4:25 He was delivered over to death...and raised to life for our justification
 - Ro 8:16 The Spirit...testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Day after day the beauty of the Redeemer is unrolled before us with greater clearness.

b. Christ's resurrected life is the cause of Paul's new life Jn 14:19 "Because I live, you also will live."

c. Paul desires a growing supply of this cleansing power, this dynamite power that destroys sin and makes room for effective-witness bearing.

Gal. 2:20 “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. His power is at work within us.”

We crucify our flesh with its affections and lusts, whereby we also gain a very valuable asset...life eternal that finds its fulfillment in heaven.

3. Which is a painful experience “a privilege to suffer for Christ”

Phil 1:29-30 “It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ...to suffer for him.”

a. As we grow in Christ we come under attack by the enemy Hebr 11:35ff

b. We suffer for the sake of Christ

-when you speak about Jesus as the only way to heaven

-when you use Scripture to say this is wrong ie Reggie White

II Timothy 2:12 “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...”

4. “to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

a. we are new people in Christ

b. become dead to sin Rom 6:4ff

Paul’s life did not depend on cheap things of this world but on eternal values. People who live for things of this world must constantly be worried about them.

TREASURE YOUR MOST VALUABLE POSSESSION

II. Press forward to win the prize vv12-14

A. With a sanctified dissatisfaction vv 12-13a

1. Paul never allowed himself to be satisfied with his spiritual state.

He was saved. The race of salvation had been won for him by Jesus.

“Christ Jesus seized me...took possession of me”

a. “Press on” idea of a race – the Greek chariot race where the participant stood on a small platform with two wheels. It was important to strain the muscles for balance to go forward. Remember, though, God supplies the resources for us to run the race of faith.

b. “Not that I have been made perfect” ie complete in sanctification I will never be the “perfect” Christian but I strive to live for the Lord each day. We do so because the Lord loves us and lives in us. Perfection itself will be attained in heaven.

c. Many Christians are self-satisfied because they compare themselves with others who are running behind them. Paul compared himself with himself and strove to do better with the Holy Spirit's power.

2. Self-evaluation can be dangerous

- a. we make ourselves better than we are - we don't see our sins
- b. we make ourselves worse than we are – we don't see our Savior

But one thing I do...

B. With a single devotion and direction v13

1. One thing...I need Lk 10:42 "listen to Jesus"
2. One thing...I know Jn 9:25 "I see spiritually"
3. One thing...I desire Ps 74 "Dwell in the house of the Lord"

C. Devote yourself to "running the race" = living for Jesus Paul must still run, still battle sin...he must not lose sight of his goal.

To Forget...

1. look ahead not behind - ie football player who ran into goal post
2. "to forget" means to be no longer influenced by or affected by the past
- forget the past sins and mistakes ie Paul forgot his persecution of the church
3. We are often shackled by regrets of the past. We need to set aside the past failures and successes.

One fellow was asked by a friend "What are you thinking of...You look so depressed"

Answer - "My Future"

Fellow: "Well, what makes it look so hopeless and dismal?"

Answer - "My Past"

We have a bright future because we can forget about the past sins – sins have been washed away – God remembers them no more. Paul has one thought – to reach the end of his race.

4. "straining toward what is ahead" = "to stretch out or towards something"
Stretch the muscles of sanctification as you overcome temptations.

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word to lead us to hate sin and to be eager to live a life of good works which God has prepared for us to do. Our new life consists in killing the works of the flesh...Sanctification is not a matter of our ability at all. It is a gift entrusted to us by faith...a personal individual matter; one that does not belong on the street corner...but into the seclusion of the little chamber prayer of the Christian.

I press on

D. With serious determination v14

All the thinking, longing and yearning of the Christian is directed heavenward.

1. I Press - word also to describe a hunter eagerly pursuing his prey
2. Galatians 5:25 “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”
3. Galatians 5:6 “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

Luther: Pray as if it all depends upon God and work as if it all depends upon you.

Every Christian should apply what he has learned in his life... To hold fast to the Gospel, to the Lord and His Truth, to the Word of Grace.

It was said of the Early Christians...

**THEY WON THE WORLD FOR CHRIST BECAUSE THEY OUT-FOUGHT, OUT-LIVED,
AND OUT-DIED THEIR ENEMIES. THEY RAN THE RACE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING**