

Paul's Loss And Gain

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Phil. 3:4-10

In one of Christ's most well-known parables, He depicted a man leaving his home in the morning with a heavy bag of gold, and making his way to the marketplace where pearl-sellers displayed their precious gems.

Matt. 13:45-46, *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."*

He was seeking goodly pearls and passed from stall to stall. From each stall he turned away dissatisfied, until at last he saw on a tray the most exquisite, perfect, and transparent pearl that his eyes had ever beheld. Asking the price, he discovered that it would take all the pearls he had, all the gold in his pouch, and all the earthly possessions he had to his name; but with all this, he gladly parted that this priceless pearl might be his own.

When our Lord spoke this great parable, He must have had Saul of Tarsus especially in mind, for this man had a noble pedigree and a rich religious background; yet, in his infinite hunger after God, he passed up all this and considered it as loss that he might gain Christ — the Pearl of Great Price.

In this text the apostle indulges in a spiritual paradox — he speaks of losses that were gains, and gains that were losses.

Let us note two things about Paul:

- What he gave up.
- What he gained.

What Paul gave up.

(Here we see the great price he paid for his Christianity.)

His religious status.

The apostle speaks of Judaism with profound reverence and affection. He was “... *circumcised the eighth day.*”

His illustrious ancestry.

He was “... of the stock of Israel.”

Circumcision alone did not prove that he had the pure blood of Abraham flowing through his veins; but being “*of the stock of Israel*” meant that he was a true descendant of the patriarch Jacob, whose name God had changed to Israel.

Hence, he was not a proselyte from a heathen nation, but he had all the advantages which could be derived from a regular descent from the venerable pillars of the Jewish nation.

He was “... of the tribe of Benjamin.”

The one tribe which stayed with Judah in Jerusalem when the other ten tribes revolted.

Hence, Paul was not from one of the revolting tribes, but he had as high a claim to the honor of being a Jew as any man could boast of.

He was “... an Hebrew of the Hebrew.” (No Gentile blood ever intermingled in his family.)

This was the Hebrew mode of expressing the extreme purity of the blood line.

Acts 22:3-4, “*I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.*”

His religious party.

“... *as touching the law, a Pharisee*” (Acts 26:5). That is, “I was born and bred a Pharisee.”

His devoted zeal — “... concerning zeal, persecuting the church.”

He carried out his religious convictions with such great zeal that he persecuted the church.

- Acts 8:3, “As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.”
- Acts 9:1-2, “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”
- Gal. 1:13-14, “For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.”

All in his day knew how devoted he was to Judaism, and how intent he was in uprooting Christianity.

With all this zeal, he was building up for himself such a reputation throughout the Jewish nation that would have given him prominence in his fatherland among his fellow countrymen.

But what was Paul’s attitude toward these things?

“... those I counted loss for Christ.” (verse 7).

That is, those things which he had counted gain while he was a zealous Pharisee — the advantages of birth, pedigree, education, reputation, and conformity to the Law of Moses.

Sometimes we value these things very highly, but as Christians we should look upon them, not as gain or advantage, but only as obstacles to our salvation.

“I count all things but loss.” (verse 9).

Not merely those things which he specified and which he himself had possessed, but anything that might be a gain to him he would give up if it hindered him from following Christ.

“... and do count them but dung.” (refuse, garbage).

Like chaff to be blown away, or waste or garbage to be tossed away.

What Paul gained.

Paul had consented to the loss of all things, and today one would consider him bankrupt.

But he now says that he has replaced all his canceled gains by one single item just one word just one name; the name of Christ. (*“... that I may win Christ.”* — verse 8.)

But what is it to win Christ?

It is something more than to become acquainted with the biography of His life, something more than to understand His doctrine.

To gain Christ is to gain His moral attributes, to gain His spirit.

Rom. 8:9, *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*

“For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” (verse 8).

No other type of knowledge can promise us so much.

John 17:3, *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”*

Compared to this, all things sink into utter insignificance.

Look at the Lord Jesus Christ, our Divine Example.

1 Pet. 2:21, *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”*

Did He not suffer loss in order to gain?

Phil. 2:5-9, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:”*

Whatever stands between our soul and Christ must go whatever it is.

Matt. 6:33-34, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”*

Jesus Christ must come before self.

Luke 9:23, *“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”*

Christ comes before our own relatives.

Matt. 10:37, *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”*

Christ comes before material possessions.

Matt. 13:22, *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”*

Christ comes before pleasure.

He warns us of the dangers of the pleasures of this life.

Luke 8:14, *“And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”*

However innocent and harmless any pleasure may seem to be, we should be willing to forego it if it hinders us from faithfully following Christ.

Conclusion.

What are we living for? What is our master passion? Do we live for the thing that really counts?

Paul recognized the things this world has to offer is worthless, and gave it all up for Christ, thereby gaining for himself greater riches in heaven.

Let's follow Paul's and Christ's example.

