

“Sharing the Cross”

- Easter 2020 -

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Philippians 3:7-11

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of

Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”



"Sharing in the Cross"

Easter 2020 – Philippians 3:7-11

Over the past weeks we have heard a lot from Paul the apostle. As he penned the letter to the church in Rome, he has repeatedly called upon us to stand upon Christ and Christ alone. To find our security, our joy, our purpose and identity not in the world, and not in a position we might hold...*even a religious position*, but rather in Jesus alone. Certainly it would have been easy for Paul to criticize others for believing and trusting in themselves or the world if he had nothing really going for himself. But the fact is, when Paul came to Christ, he truly had it “goin’ on.” He was destined it seemed, to truly be successful and powerful. He certainly could have had such a different life than the one he did live! He had the right blood lineage, the right education...the right politics and a job that was well connected with the powerful and influential. He could have literally been anyone and gone anywhere. For Paul, there was a lot to throw away. Quite likely far more than any of us have to lose. But he did indeed walk away from it all that day on the Damascus road. How did he do it? How did he do what few of us seem able to do?

Well...maybe it was simply a good trade? Maybe he just left his old life behind in exchange for a “happy life” to follow? Let’s see...how **did** Paul’s life turn out after the Damascus road? We can read the cliff notes version in 2 Cor 11:24-28: *Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches.* Hmmm...just what was *HE* thinking when he made *that* deal?

Indeed when a person has a very real meeting with the Son of God, it seems that nothing else this world offers after that will compare. Such a person is “ruined” in a way. Nothing so thrills them and nothing else fulfills them. You see, Paul had indeed “traded.” Not just in that one moment back on the Damascus road but every moment and every day since then. Paul says “I count *all* things loss...” It’s that statement...that thinking, which

separates those whose faith life is based upon a momentary emotional crisis, and those who have had a profound revelation: *those who had a real meeting with Jesus...*

For Paul, it was all gone...he had left it all. There was no negotiation with God that day on the Damascus road. It was simply "*Lord, what do you want me to do.*" Not, "*how much of the world can I keep?*" It was a total surrender. This passage is Paul's "profit and loss" statement. On the one side is the list of all the things he had left behind, and on the other, there was but one entry: *Christ*. He says he counted 'all of it gone...'

Paul wasn't here in this passage attempting to paint a pretty picture to convince unbelievers. No, Paul was never guilty of seeing the world through rose tinted glasses. He was being straight with us. There is going to be a cost involved. There is *always* a cost. There was for Paul...and there is for us. There is no away around it...he had to make a trade. But for Paul it was not a hard trade, because to him, all that he left behind was garbage in comparison.

How did a world that was seemingly so important at one time become rubbish? The pastor and author Guy King says, "*All financial gain, all material gain, all physical gain, all intellectual gain, all moral gain, all religious gain—all these are no gains at all compared with the Great Gain.*" When we struggle with the personal cost of following Christ, it is because we don't really believe Guy King's statement as truth. We have never truly realized our own blindness, nor have we let Christ open our eyes anew. And further, we don't really grasp the cost of the cross, or the love that He has for us. So we instead spend our lives trying to 'cut a deal.' We want the benefits that the cross brings us, but we inevitably want them to be delivered to us in the comfort of our worldly lives.

Remember Lot's wife? She was unwilling to count her salvation as preeminent over all and so she lost everything, including her very life. Jesus Himself tried to warn us: "*Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.*" (Luke 17:32 - 33) But for Paul, it all came down to this: "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*"

The missionary martyr Jim Elliott had the same attitude as Paul, writing that "*He is no fool to give what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.*" When I truly know my Savior, my mind will be full to the brim-I will feel that I have that which my spirit seeks after: Jesus spoke of such in John 6 saying "*This is that bread whereof if a man eat he shall never hunger.*"

3:9 "...and (to) be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith..."

Paul begins verse 9 by rolling off of verse 8, where he says "*it's all gone... I have surrendered it all...my plans, my possessions, my earthly loves and passions...everything. It's all gone!*" Now verse 9 begins with the *result* of that act... "*and be found in Him.*" Often I hear people make the claim... "*I really want to experience more of Christ...to get to know Him more...to feel His presence in my life.*" Yet those folks can also be the same individuals who say no to His directions, and refuse to surrender to His control!

Paul had thus far in this chapter been warning the believers in Philippi to 'beware of the wolves' that were no doubt already knocking on the door. The warning came with a reminder that the only way they will be able to successfully fend these wolves off is to lean upon Christ and the 'infilling' of the Holy Spirit...the "comforter." He went on to elaborate that in order for that to occur...in order to be truly filled, controlled and defended by the Spirit of God, I must "have no confidence in the flesh." Paul has recently been warning us of those very words in the Book of Romans.

Christ must be more than a 9-1-1 call when we are in trouble, but rather a constant companion and we must be in submission to Him and His **Word**: *which is simultaneously Christ the Son of God as well as His written Word* (...so says John chapter 1), in order for that to happen. When we reject his instruction, we reject *Him*. When we refuse his direction, we refuse His indwelling. When we deny his sovereignty and obedience, we know no peace, no joy, no fruit of the Spirit.

Spurgeon drives home the issue: *“This matter is like a balance, if one scale goes down, the other must go up. The weightier Christ’s influence, the lighter will be the world and self-righteousness; and when Christ is all in all, then the world and self will be nothing at all.”*

You see, a real faith is tangible: it moves! A real faith is a not just a mental assent to truth ...but rather a living out of God’s revelation of Truth. It is a personal surrender to that Truth and a conduct which reflects such a surrender! If this is not a fact in you, then James says your faith is dead.

3:10-11 *“I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!”*

“I want to know Christ”...NKJ says “that I may know Him.” The word ‘know’ here is the word ‘gnosko.’ That Greek word speaks of a ‘personal knowledge’ that comes through my interacting...my ‘experiencing’ Christ in just such a tangible fashion as Paul is expressing here in this passage. This is not merely church pew intellectual knowledge or even discerning knowledge but rather an ‘experiential’ knowledge.

Genesis tells us in chapter 4 verse 1 that Adam “knew” his wife. The words in Greek and Hebrew are virtually the same. They knew each other intimately and *physically*. Thus we can gather that such “knowledge” as this speaks of the most intimate and personal connection between two individuals. How does this take place? Well, for starters, we must wrap our minds around the instruction that we are to be the ‘body of Christ.’ You cannot therefore experience Christ unless you experience and embrace ‘body life’ ...an act of physical and active union with Him and the “body” that He has assigned you to. You cannot ‘gnosko’ him without participating physically with his living earthly body.

You also cannot fully know Him if you fail to “keep His commandments.” No, I’m not talking about some level of perfection! I am talking about those who outright and knowingly reject some of His instructions and still say they want to know Him! That can never be!

You see Paul was passionate to know Christ. Many of us would claim the same. But what is **our** giving part of this relationship? We can tend to think that since we do nothing to receive this treasure of salvation, because it is all the gift of God’s free grace and we simply have it by faith in Christ alone, that we therefore play no part in this exchange. Because of this we are often tempted to live in such a way that leads to laziness and passivity. We are then essentially spiritual ragdolls...void of passion, movement, and thinking. But that’s not what Paul is instructing! Paul said that what this does for him is to lead him to a life of passionately and actively pursuing the prize.

What does he say? *“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death....”* This could have read “that I may **know** (a different word here... oida - oy’ - da: meaning *to see and perceive with eyes and senses*) Him, and be resurrected.” That would be the heart of

many of us. But Paul sought for more. He desired ...*through knowing Christ* ...to experience and participate in not just resurrection, but to know and experience the *power of Christ's resurrection!*

Why would Paul want to experience this power and not just receive its results? Because He wanted to know His redeemer intimately and that is found through embracing that which Jesus experienced! Psalms tells us that Moses knew "the *ways* of God" while all the people only knew the "*acts* of God." There is a big difference in those two things! Paul too, wanted to know the "*ways* of God..." He wanted to **live** in that very "power" that was able to bring Jesus back alive again. He not only wanted to live again, but moreover he wanted...in this world, to actually live his life out in that power.

And once again, that life was not one of comfort and feel-good emotions, but rather one that was very different than his pre-resurrected life. For this was a life...*a lifestyle*, that pursued holiness, advanced the kingdom, served others, exercised the gifts of the present Holy Spirit within Christian community and found reason to worship every day. It was also a life that was persecuted...often with "lashes and beatings and stoning's." It was a missional life that shipwrecked him and placed him in the front and center position of numerous physical dangers. He lived a life that made him often hungry, thirsty and homeless. This life of "resurrection power" did not look like we might expect but it looked a lot like Jesus and the life of Jesus, and indeed that was the point.

Paul wanted to truly live out the power of the resurrected life that he now shared with Christ. He wanted more than just stuff from Jesus, He wanted to now be *like* Jesus! Many will claim a desire for a "closer walk with Christ" but at the same time essentially reject the life that Jesus lived! '*Why can't I be closer to Christ while staying home and pursuing my earthly and fleshly desires? ...Well, because that's not where Christ is!*' Oh yes, God is indeed omnipresent, but his great power was never greatly manifested in such places and in such activities. Read it in the gospels! Christ's power was lived out in interaction with people...serving them, loving them and in fellowship with them. His power was never for selfish feelings. His power was never manifested in realms of safety, but rather always in the "valley of the shadow of death."

We speak much about a "personal relationship" with Christ, but we must make no mistake! No relationship with Christ...*or anyone for that matter*, is ever lived out in a vacuum. We were never called to spend all of our time in our "prayer closet." Are we going where Jesus is going? Or are we still looking for Him to protect and provide for us while accompanying us where *we* are going? Are we trying to keep Jesus in our back pocket? Or are we unleashing him on our world and joining Him in His pursuits? Paul was moving, because Jesus was and is always active and moving!

If I was the object of your desire to "know," how will that ever happen if you don't go where I go, do what I do, and actively experience my life with me? The same is with Christ! Paul wanted to know...to experience...to live the "resurrected life" and thus he was a very part of what Jesus was doing. I ask you ...just where are you looking for Jesus today? Where He is active and doing the miraculous, or where **you** want Him to be?

Once again, such a unified life with Christ is both incredibly blessed and at the same time incredibly costly. Jesus saw both miraculous healing, joy, and renewal, while at the same time He experienced great suffering. It comes with the territory! He experienced the mountain tops as well as the valleys of dark despair. Your salvation is a free gift but there is no free Christian living. If you want to know Jesus...really know Him, then you have to get into the game and onto the field. You are going to get beat up, but you are also going to get to see the victories...the miraculous...the manifest power of God!

Verse 10 in the NKJ speaks of a "fellowship of suffering." Please note that word "fellowship." That innately requires contact with Him as well as with His body...and that's the rest of us! 1 John 1:6-7 clearly tells us that

“we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Let’s face it. There is no vertical relationship with God without a horizontal relationship with each other!

All of this comes on the heels of men seeking God and redemption without cost, without inconvenience, without discomfort! It is impossible. It will not happen! For this is where Jesus is! John 5: 39-40 *“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.”* We fail to understand the most basic and crucial aspects of Christianity: unless we come to Him and share in His death, we cannot share in His life!

This is essentially the salvation experience! This is why many of us who believe ourselves to be saved are in truth not born again. We never *died*, so there is no *new life*. It remains *my life* today, although I *am* looking for Him to ‘heal it’...to make it well. To make it full and rich and substantial. But Jesus is not in this business. He is in the business of *new life*. And for that, we must die to this one...

Our text tells us that Paul sought to “be conformed” unto Christ’s death. The original word “being conformed” means literally, “to bring to the same form with some other person.” To give “outward expression of one’s inner intrinsic nature.” Paul’s desire was that he might so come to know his Lord...the power behind the resurrection operative in his life, and a joint-participation in His sufferings, that he would be brought to the place where he would become, both as to his inner heart life and also as to the outward expression of the same, like his Lord. For Paul it was that living that conditioned His entire earthly life and made it the beautiful life it was, a death to self, a denying of self for the blessing of others. This was what Paul was striving for. It speaks of nothing less than the most radical of living.

Hudson Taylor said: “There is a needs-be for us to give ourselves for the life of the world. ... Fruit-bearing involves cross-bearing. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” We know how the Lord Jesus became fruitful—not by bearing His cross only, but by dying on it. Do we know much of fellowship with Him in this? There are not two Christs—an easy-going Christ for easy-going Christians, and a suffering, toiling Christ for exceptional believers. There is only one Christ. Are we willing to abide in Him and so to bear fruit?”