

“Gaining Christ Requires Renouncing Self-Confidence”

Listen to the audio of this devotional at bit.ly/210530php3 (or scan QR code)



(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Philippians chapter 3.

Our portion for this afternoon is verses 4 through 7 or maybe a song or two short of the eye or on singing but the last two songs we sang feed very well into the doctrine of the passage that we haven't God's providence we sang the love God, but we sang it not with doom and gloom and terror we sang it to a dance.

And it was very intentional that in reformation Geneva they put the law of God to a dance because as we've been hearing about in the Sabbath school classes on these Lords Day mornings, one of the things that the Lord does when he begins this work in us and he removes by Jesus Christ's righteousness and sacrifice that terror of the law and the bourbon of the law is he gives us this new love?

For the law we love him and we love his people because they're his and we love his commands because they're his and we no longer find them burdensome we find our sin burdensome and yet because he is the one who gave us that faith in himself and he is the one who gave us that love for his law and that is a work that he has begun we know that he who began it is also going to complete it and that whereas we've come to love his law and his laws like a dance to us but, To us no longer as Pharisee power felt like the law was this burden but Pharisee Paul thought Paul was awesome and he had confidence in the flesh because he could use the law to show how righteous he was it's flipped for the Christian isn't it our remaining sin from our original nature is the boredom but God's law is no longer the burden it's that delight and God himself and his grace and hit.

His doing the work in us enables us to say not just who will save me from this body of death, but thanks me to God through Jesus Christ our Lord and if we were there at the end of Roman 7 and we turned the corner to Romans 8, we'd be saying not only there is therefore now no condemnation for those were in Christ Jesus, but we'd rude joyce that the law understood by the spirit of life in us making us love the law and knowing that God.

Is working in us has set us free from the law understood from the position of sin and death where the law is always saying sinner the law is always saying you deserve death and now Christ having cancelled the guilt and Christ having endured the death the law can no longer say that to us is just describing to us what will be like when the spirit of life who gave us faith in Christ is done doing his work and we sang that of course in the last song we sang.

That the terrors of law and of death can no longer afflict us and he who begin the work will also bring it to completion. So on the heels of having some of that together folded appropriate that we moved directly into Philippians 3 verses 4 through 7. So let us ask for God's help as we consider his word now.

Our father how wonderful is your gospel your good law was a terror to us so long as our confidence was in ourselves and we had delusions of being good and ourselves we thank you that you were presented Christ destroyed him as the full attainment the propitiation so that not only do we know that we could never have a toned for our sin but we also know that you have completely toned for that sin.

Is there any pray that having brought us to faith by your spirit you keep us walking by faith that we would not fall into or stumble into the temptation to continue by confidence in the flesh, but that you would make us to keep walking by the refusal to rejoice in our flesh and instead rejoicing over Christ make us we pray a people who are especially marked by rejoicing over Christ.

And so we pray that this portion of your word which talks about these things your spirit would know use in us as you continue that work that you have begun. Jesus' name. Amen. Philippians 3 beginning in verse 4 and going through verse 7, these are God's words. I also might have confidence in the flesh if anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh.

Circumcise the 8th day of the stalk of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin. Of the Hebrews. Concerning the law the Pharisee concerning zeal prosecuting the church. Concerning the righteousness, which is in the law blameless. But what things were gained to me. These I have counted loss. For Christ. So far the reading of God's inspired and inerrant word last week in the first three verses we came out of this second half of Chapter 2 in which.

Not only has he given us twice as an example but he himself the Apostle Paul has been an example, he's given Timothy as an example, he's given a patent as an example and then the first three verses he in chapter three he's warned us about some people who will seem like they could have been examples but really they were josting isn't in Jesus isn't in the working in us that he does to wear them to work for his good pleasure which is how we work out on salvation if you're in trimming depending upon him, but who's rejoicing was in their flesh and they use.

A lot of the same language and talk about a lot of the same things you your church membership well or the sacraments or even doing good works and and those things are all good if we're joining in Christ, so he has started verse one rejoice in the Lord and then he turns around and after saying there are the yeah, they claim to be all about the sacraments, but really it's just this external fleshly thing he says beware of the mutilation because we are the circumcision the real circumcision has not.

The outward sign doesn't celebrate the outward signs and much as it celebrates by means of the outward sign the work that God does in us that the spirit does in us so he says we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have mental confidence in the flesh and so he now describes how he went from being seeing himself as the chief of the righteous to the chief of sinners, you remember the apostle Paul uses that phrase of himself in another place and he says, If Christianity had any room if saving faith had any room for confidence in the flesh.

Would have been the one who had that confidence and God very intentionally uses for us as the apostle the one who if it was an all possible that would have been he. Now he lists what at one point in time he thought were all the feathers in his spiritual cap were all his greatest credits, first of all circumcised in the alienates that God had done for Paul what God had also done for himself when God the son came into the world he gave him parents who would keep the law concerning their baby says back to mom and dad gave me righteous parents who not only brought me for the sign of circumcision, they brought me on the exact.

Right day for circumcision literally the the passage calls them circumcised as an eight dare yes, so yeah, he might have on his on his Pharisee varsity jacket the eight door patch. I don't know if they still do things like that a projected myself as old but he was an eight dare of the stock of Israel he wasn't one of these people who had to be grafted in by going from being a god fear on the outside to get circumcised he was an Israel from the beginning in fact.

He was from one. The premier tribes in Israel of the tribe of Benjamin no matter is a car semianna or one of these tribes yet you never hear of anybody great coming from he's a Benjamite one of the great as far as they saw in their mind the great patriarchs, this would have been even more emphasized to Paul because he was from Salicia he was from a Gentile area.

And sometimes when you grow up in a amongst a culture that is not the culture your family from you even more strongly identify with your home culture and so they didn't let all of that Greek culture stuff get into their house growing growing up in Tarsus upbringing he was a Hebrew of Hebrews concerning the law of Pharisee now Jesus actually complements this at one point he said listen to the Pharisees when they teach.

Them the law right they were the strictest things at the Pharisees got wrong because God's law is actually more demanding than even the Pharisees thought there's a shocking thing that Jesus taught wasn't it he's all these people who are used to the Pharisees being the the strictest group about the law Jesus comes along and says actually the law makes requirements of the intentions of your heart the law rich requirements of your feelings the law makes requirements of your desires and your goals.

So until he understood the law through Christ is as good as you could get to be a Pharisee as far as concerned as the love is concerning zeal persecuting the church. Paul wasn't one of these no action outrage guys, you know, we didn't invent that with social media we just made it much easier to puff yourself up and feel virtuous but talking about how bad everyone else is and how much better your ideas that in the first century too a bunch of you.

This isn't. Followers of that guy that they crucified for blaspheming the temple of blaspheming Moses they're going around doing the same thing and we see them accusing Christians of that in the early chapters of acts, but Paul wasn't one of these virtue signal all talk people he's had concerning zeal persecuted the church all these guys who thought that they loved the temple and they loved Moses talk.

There was no one so righteous and zealous as Paul he's a lion just talking as he gets letters from the authorities now that not just to drag them to be persecuted in Jerusalem, but even if they're as far as Damascus up in Syria get them because I have sealed for the temple I have zero for Moses and I have seal for God not one of those virtue signalers of the first century.

Turning the righteousness, which is in the law blameless. You see the Pharisees were the strictest that the that the popular Jewish culture and religion had but they didn't understand God's law, they actually thought that you could keep the law. You remember the rich young ruler and last week's Luke text.

This is all of these I've kept from my youth. He couldn't be desperate enough in for Jesus to sell everything he had in order to have Christ. He didn't feel like he needed Christ so much. He thought he had already had a righteousness of his own. And he had Paul's going to say in a in a couple verses.

By God's help we pray next week and verse 9 and be found in Christ not having my own righteousness, which is from the law. Why? Because he realized. When God regenerated and gave him spiritual life and to know Christ and the reason Christ was crucified. He didn't have any righteousness in himself and the law couldn't give it to him.

And so He of all people that ever from Abraham until Christ could have had confidence in the flesh. It would have been Paul.

And yet he says, That he counted all of these things that were gained. As loss imagine. You have a bank account. And you're keeping track of your bank account on your spreadsheet that he got the gain column and you got the loss column. And you have been putting everything you thought was in the gain column.

But then you hit calculate maybe this isn't a great illustration. I don't know how many of you spreadsheets. Then you hit calculate and you find everything that you fought was to your credit. Was actually to your debit. Everything that you thought was a gain was actually a loss and so you thought you were gonna have positive look at all the stuff that I've done possible and maybe you think like that about your own.

Family you were born into Parents who brought you up the right way doing what God said to do and your maintaining your distinction from the culture and your desire to do good works and and you're not just outrage at how bad things are in the culture and the church but actually doing things about it and and polishing your gold star everybody who knows, you knows that she's a wonderful Christian little girl.

's a wonderful Christian little boy. There's nothing wrong with any of those things unless you think that they are to your credit and you have confidence in the flesh. And instead of believing that Jesus is all the credit you have the only credit that you have before God is Jesus Christ.

Himself, you actually think that you're a little bit better for every one of these things than other people who aren't as good in them as you are. Then you're counting as gain. Things that you will find out were really lost for you because you're putting confidence in them instead of confidence in Jesus.

And so Paul says if anyone could have ever done this it was me and you know what I found out the Apostle says to the Philippians and the Scripture comes and says to us anything that is from you that you think goes in the credit column actually becomes negative.

And he says you think that you've built up the this great bank account and sadly we actually have that kind of idea in the history of the church. You know, the Roman Catholic Church thought you could bank some righteousness and they thought they actually had a whole bunch of people who had banked more than they needed.

So you could like get a special check that you could write from the Pope to to cash out some of the extra righteousness from the Treasury of merit they actually called it. No. There's only one place to have righteousness and that is Jesus himself, there's only one place to have confidence before God and that is Jesus himself.

So anything in this applies to where you're doing best not where you're doing worst. Anything that you think is to your credit before God does if it's a good thing? God gave it to you and he's even gonna reward you but he rewards you as of grace, right? Good works are rewarded for the sake of Jesus.

For him for those being done by union with him and out of faith in him and for his worthiness being the worthiness of your good works, not you and is not from you. But anything that you most feel more righteous about in yourself or better than others about yourself, that's the thing that you are in greatest danger.

Of losing Christ on you say I'm gonna count that not as gain but I'm gonna count my confidence in it and my temptation to be confident in it as loss so that Christ alone will be my righteousness before God will be my goodness. And then you turn around and you see all of these others whom God has brought to faith in Jesus Christ, and suddenly you're not looking down your noses at them say look they have Christ too.

And we're brought on to brought into equal footing it doesn't mean that all behaviors are equal don't miss hear me here but it does mean that we don't look down upon others because Christ alone is all the righteousness all the goodness all the hope all the strength that we have we are those who rejoice in the Lord and have no confidence in the flesh.

God grant that it would be so let's pray.

Father we pray that you would help us. That we would by your spirit blessing the word to us each one of us know ourselves as a chief of sinners knowing our own sin so much more than we know anybody else's. And we pray that you would set Christ before us and the perfection of his righteousness that you would make us to marvel his love for you and his joy to do your will is willingness to sacrifice himself every perfect intention every perfect desire and that we would be amazed at and delighted with the righteousness of our redeemer and that you would make us to rejoice over him who gave himself.

So that all of that and all who he is might be ours through faith in him. So we pray that rejoicing over Jesus that your spirit would make rejoicing over Jesus to squeeze out all rejoicing over ourselves or rejoicing over the flesh don't let us slide into that oh Lord, you know, then our remaining sin and our remaining fleshliness how easy it is for us to take even the good things that you are doing and to suffer loss by having some confidence or pride in them.

Keep us from that we pray so that we will rejoice over Christ who may have given and even in his name we ask that you would hear this prayer amen.