



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Counting Assets and Liabilities—Philippians 3.7-11

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PHILIPPIANS: CULTIVATING A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE AT THE CAPITOL

Don Garner / PO Box 302703, Austin, TX 78703 / don.garner@capitolcom.org www.capitolcom.org

INTRODUCTION

We live in a day when an individual's net worth is a matter of great interest. Interest runs especially high when someone is identified as a high net worth individual. A person's net worth is calculated by counting all assets and then subtracting all liabilities. This week we will reflect on your net worth from a spiritual perspective.

In the verses studied last week, Paul listed things he counted as assets in establishing his net worth before God. The list included advantages of birth into the covenant people of God and advantages of righteousness according to Jewish law. He claimed that according to such measures, he was a "high net worth" individual and had greater claim to boasting than anyone. Certainly he had more cause for boasting than those he charged with wrongly urging Gentile believers to place their confidence in their own efforts to fulfill God's law.

Yet, in Philippians 3.7-11, we discover that what Paul once counted to be his greatest assets in making himself acceptable to God, he now counts as worthless. More than worthless, he reckons them as harmful in comparison to what Christ has done on his behalf. All self-effort at establishing his own righteousness is detrimental compared to the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ and daily growth in His likeness.

Philippians 3.7-11—But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 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 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; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

I. ELIMINATING LIABILITIES (7-8A)

If you wish to increase your net worth, cutting liabilities is a good place to start. Paul made it clear that the long list of assets in building his net worth before God based on his scrupulous observance of the law has been reclassified as a long list of liabilities. Whatever things he once thought to be gains, or assets, he now considers to be liabilities. They are not merely void of value, they are actually counted against him as liabilities.

But Paul goes on to say that he has suffered the loss of all these things in which he once placed his confidence as assets. He now counts them as rubbish. He is saying that these losses have all been written off. He realizes that in losing all these things, he actually improved his net worth. He cut his liabilities. To abandon our efforts to establish our own righteousness before God is, in effect, to cut our losses—to eliminate our liabilities.

II. IDENTIFYING ASSETS (8B-9)

By eliminating the liability of his own efforts to be righteous before God, Paul has gained Christ. Paul has counted as loss and rubbish all the things that he once thought essential to his relationship to God. He has suffered the loss of these things that he might be found in Christ. He wished to be valued upon his relationship to Christ.

Being found in Christ meant that Christ's perfect righteousness had been posted to Paul's ledger as though it were his own. He had received the righteousness which is from God by faith in Christ. By virtue of his faith in Christ, his net worth was established upon the inexhaustible riches of Christ, with no liabilities to reduce it!

BIBLE STUDIES (MEALS PROVIDED)

LEGISLATORS ONLY: WEDNESDAY @ LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB (11:30 A.M. OR UPON ADJOURNMENT, WHICHEVER IS LATER) OR THURSDAYS @ 7:30 A.M. IN THE MEMBERS' LOUNGE (E2.1002)

CAPITOL COMMUNITY (ALL ARE WELCOME): NO FRIDAY STUDY IN OBSERVANCE OF GOOD FRIDAY

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III. INVESTING ASSETS FOR GROWTH (10-11)

The moment Paul placed his faith in the person and work of Christ, his net worth skyrocketed. The righteousness of Christ was counted to his credit with every liability taken away in a single Divine transaction. Now Paul lives out this new reality in sustained confidence in the person and work of Christ. He wants to continually pursue the surpassing value of knowing Christ. Rather than investing himself and his life in any further self-effort to produce his own righteousness before God, he will strive to gain Christ, to be found in Christ, and to know Him.

The excellence of the knowledge of Christ is his pearl of great price for which he is willing to trade all his possessions that he might gain it. His daily life will reflect this pursuit of an intimate acquaintance with Christ. He longs to know firsthand the power of His resurrection. He hopes to share in the fellowship of His sufferings. He yearns to be conformed to the likeness of His death, willing, himself, to lay down his life for the sake of the gospel. He will look in hope to the day when he will find himself united with Christ, not only in death, but in the resurrection from the dead.

Charles Spurgeon said in this way, “from the moment of the new and celestial birth the man begins to live to X. Jesus is to believers the one pearl of great price, for whom we are willing to part with all that we have, He has so completely won our heart, that it beats alone for Him; to His glory we would live; and in defence of His gospel we would die; He is the pattern of our life and the model after which we would sculpture our character.”

CONCLUSION

The following statement was made in the conclusion of last week’s study and bears repeating here—Christ has done all that is needed to grant standing before God to all who trust in Him.

The only way to counter the tendency to seek to live out our faith by doing good and religious things is to value the knowledge of Christ above all things. We are called to trust completely in Christ, exploring the depths of His righteousness, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to the likeness of His death. We are to abandon all efforts to establish our own righteousness as worthless, even detrimental, and cast them aside as rubbish in order to gain Christ, be found in Him, and to know Him.

- Is your confidence before God solely rooted in Christ and His work or do you think that you are a pretty good person and God accepts you based upon your efforts to do good?
- Having begun in helpless dependence upon the finished work of Christ for your standing before God, do you now think you can maintain standing before Him through living a good life or religious ritual?
- Will you ask God today to make it your controlling passion to grow in the knowledge of Christ?