



CAPITOL COMMISSION

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WYOMING

Philippians 3:4-8 THE GREAT EXCHANGE

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In Philippians 3:4-8, Paul gives us his list of impressive credentials. If there was anyone who could be saved by his own doing, Paul would be that one. And yet, Paul, when he encounters Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, instantly realizes that all he had in the profit column was loss. Even more than that, Paul counted his profit column as manure or worthless garbage to be thrown away. And Paul gives up all that he is in order to gain Jesus Christ. Martin Luther called this the great exchange...all that I am which amounts to nothing...for Christ!

I. THE GREAT EXCHANGE- PHILIPPIANS 3:3-8

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 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." Philippians 3:3-8

These verses represent the juncture at which Paul met the living Christ. Before this, he was a devout Jew and a persecutor of the church. Here, salvation is described as a transaction or an exchange and Paul takes us to the heart of a sinners' attitude in conversion when a person comes to Christ.

Keep in mind that Paul knew the Judaizers were trying to get their foot in the door of the church in Philippi. They focused on the importance of the Law and keeping it, thus putting confidence in the flesh which no true believer can. Paul knew they bragged of and boasted in their Jewishness. Therefore Paul showed that if anyone could boast in the flesh, he could but it profited nothing and God was not impressed with his "credentials".

As we study these verses, it is apparent that Paul uses accounting terms, business terms to equate conversion/salvation with a transaction or an exchange. "Gain" refers to a profit in the profit column, "loss" refers to something that is forfeited in the loss column and "counted" means to account for or reckon to be so. The heart of the passage is found in Philippians 3:7-8 where Paul counts his "credentials" as rubbish or dung.

"rubbish," Greek word "*skubalon*," a very strong word that means human waste, refuse, dung, what is thrown to the dogs, garbage, rejected waste, filth, manure.

Paul realizes that all the "impressive credentials" he had been accumulating to provide his way into the kingdom of God was of no value and he counts everything as loss. Paul gives it all up in order to gain Christ, exchanging a righteousness which he thought he could earn, but couldn't, for a righteousness only God gives through faith in Jesus Christ.

A. PAUL'S PROFIT COLUMN- PHILIPPIANS 3:4-6

If anyone could boast in his own accomplishments, Paul could. He was a Jew in the highest sense of the word. Let's see how Paul describes those achievements or credits he once considered gain, but now loss.

1. "CIRCUMCISED THE EIGHTH DAY"

Paul started his life with the correct rituals. He wasn't just circumcised, but circumcised on the eighth day as prescribed in Genesis 17:10-12. He was a Jew from the beginning and went by the book. But Paul found that salvation was not by any ritual because God was not impressed.

2. "OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL"

Paul was part of God's chosen race of people, the Jews. He wasn't a Gentile who had converted. His family line was 100% of the chosen race and he was pure Jew! But salvation does not come by being a part of any race because God is not impressed.

3. "OF THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN"

Paul's family was so well established that his roots went back all the way to Benjamin who represented one of the leading tribes that gave Israel its' first king, Saul. Most Jews by this time couldn't trace their ancestry because many records had been destroyed in the Babylonian captivity. But salvation does not come by rank because God is not impressed.

4. "A HEBREW OF HEBREWS"

Paul was stressing that he was a Hebrew child of Hebrew parents. When the Jews were taken into captivity, they were influenced by the Greeks and many

lost their traditions and Hebrew language. But not Paul, for his family had maintained the tradition of Hebrew Jewishness. (Acts 22:3, 26:4-5) But no amount of loyalty to tradition can save you because God is not impressed.

5. "AS TO THE LAW, A PHARISEE"

Paul was a Pharisee, regarded as the highest level of religious achievement in Judaism. (Acts 26:5) The group came from the inter testament period of 400 years between Malachi and Matthew. Many Jews were questioning the authority of Scripture and began to compromise so they started a group known as the Pharisees, meaning "separatists" and they held to God's Word. They began with a noble cause but later came to believe that their strict adherence to Scripture made them an elite group. Few people wanted to live according to their strict standard. Jesus saw that they lived the law to the detail but their hearts were far from God. Salvation is never through years of great religious achievement and God is not impressed.

6. "AS TO ZEAL, A PERSECUTER OF THE CHURCH"

Paul was so zealous, so sincere and loyal to Judaism that he saw the church as a threat to Judaism. Zeal was considered the highest virtue of religion. Paul believed he loved God and anything he thought offended God (such as Christianity), must be eliminated. As a result he beat, killed and put believers in prison. Paul had zeal and was sincere, but he was sincerely wrong. Salvation does not come by sincerity and God is not impressed.

7. "A RIGHTEOUSNESS FOUND IN THE LAW, BLAMELESS"

Paul's last point is that when it came to obeying the law, he was blameless. He is not saying that he never sinned, but that as a Jew, he kept the Law externally. Those who watched his life couldn't find anything to hold against him. By human standards, he was a model Jew. Yet even Paul confesses in Romans 7:9-10, "I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment which was to bring life, I found to bring death." Salvation can never come by keeping the law or being good because we are still sinners. Paul thought he had his profit column filled up to account or earn his salvation. But God was not impressed. Soon he would find the pearl of great price; Jesus Christ and discover a righteousness found only in Him which is the only way for salvation.

B. PAUL'S LOSS COLUMN - PHILIPPIANS 3:7

Philippians 3:4-6, Paul describes what he first counted as gain to his account. It was quite an impressive list that he spent a lifetime accumulating. He was banking on these spiritual profits for his salvation. These were a righteousness of his own derived from the Law as Romans 3:21 says.

Then Paul encounters the living Christ on the road one day to the town of Damascus. Before this point, Paul saw Christ as **loss**. He was persecuting

Christians who believed in Jesus Christ, having them beaten, thrown in jail or executed. (See Acts 9) Paul saw all his achievements as gain. But then, he met Christ and finds a righteousness not of his own, but a righteousness which comes through faith. (Philippians 3:9) Instantly, Paul takes all that he had in the profit column and counts it as loss, rubbish. Paul gives it all up in order to *gain* Christ. Paul exchanged a righteousness he thought could be earned, for a righteousness only God can give through faith in Jesus Christ.

C. TRUE GAIN: JESUS CHRIST - PHILIPPIANS 3:8

Salvation is an exchange or a transaction that takes place. ***It is an exchange of all that I am...for all that Christ is!!!*** It's not that Paul had something that was really good and this was better. Paul had nothing and exchanged his loss for *eternal gain*. This is an exchange that would be considered foolish and worthless to our world if they represented God. But that is salvation. It is an exchange for something we can't earn. I lose it all in order to gain Jesus Christ. No matter what I might gain in this life, it would mean nothing if I lost Christ. So a person who comes to God must be willing to pay whatever God requires, whatever the price, and abandon everything for Christ.

In Matthew 16:24-26, Jesus says to deny yourself and follow Him. We are to consider all that we have as worthless and follow Christ. In Matthew 13, Jesus tells of two parables. The first is comparing the kingdom of heaven (salvation or Christ) to a treasure which is hidden in a field. There is a man who has accumulated a certain amount of wealth or possessions in his life and he stumbles across this treasure in the field. That treasure is so valuable that he gladly gives up everything he has, selling it for the true treasure.

The second parable found in Matthew 13:45-46, compares the kingdom of heaven (salvation or Christ) to the pearl of great price. A merchant who has accumulated many pearls and wealth in his life discovers one special pearl of great value! He goes and sells all that he has to buy it. He sees that all he has is worthless compared to that one pearl of great price.

Salvation is an exchange of all that I am...for all that Christ is! Would you exchange all that you have for the true treasure found only in Jesus Christ? Jesus says that He will save your eternal soul if you willingly give up everything else you are putting your trust in. Acts 4:12 says, "for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Paul saw Jesus Christ finally as the true treasure. He saw what he had and counted it as rubbish. It could never save him and yet he was almost deceived into thinking it could. What about you? Will you exchange all that you are for all that Christ is? *He is the pearl of great price...the true treasure!!*