

"The Surpassing Value of Knowing Christ"
(Philippians 3:7-11)

Introduction: On one occasion, the Lord Jesus Christ told this parable to His disciples, "THE LAND OF A CERTAIN RICH MAN WAS VERY PRODUCTIVE. AND HE BEGAN REASONING TO HIMSELF, SAYING 'WHAT SHALL I DO, SINCE I HAVE NO PLACE TO STORE MY CROPS?' AND HE SAID, 'THIS IS WHAT I WILL DO: I WILL TEAR DOWN MY BARNs AND BUILD LARGER ONES, AND THERE I WILL STORE ALL MY GRAIN AND MY GOODS. AND I WILL SAY TO MY SOUL, 'SOUL, YOU HAVE MANY GOODS LAID UP FOR MANY YEARS TO COME; TAKE YOUR EASE, EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY.'" BUT GOD SAID TO HIM, 'YOU FOOL! THIS VERY NIGHT YOUR SOUL IS REQUIRED OF YOU; AND NOW WHO WILL HAVE WHAT YOU HAVE PREPARED?' SO IS THE MAN WHO LAYS UP TREASURE FOR HIMSELF, AND IS NOT RICH TOWARD GOD" (Luke 12:16-21). This man prospered in life. But of what use were his riches to him in death? Consider what you highly value in life. Place yourself on your death bed and see how valuable these things really are. They are not the true riches; the true riches are in Christ.

You will remember that last time in Philippians we saw the warning of Paul to beware of the false circumcision, or the Judiazers, who sought to bring the people of God under the requirements of keeping the ceremonial aspects of the Law, especially circumcision, in order to be saved. Paul, in answering their arguments, compared the works which he had done with their's to show them how he had far outstripped them in zeal and accomplishments under the Judaistic system. However, he came to realize that what he had gained through his own works of righteousness had become to him less than nothing when he saw the true value of knowing Christ. In fact, all earthly treasures vanished when compared them to Christ. For here he found the true riches, those that would profit not only in this life, but also in the ages to come. And what I want you to see from this portion of Scripture this morning is,

The surpassing value of knowing Christ is worth the loss of any and all of our worldly treasures if we may but gain Him.

First I want you to see that the things of this world are really not that valuable at all, and secondly, that the true riches are found only in Christ Jesus.

I *Worldly Possessions Are Only Temporary and Are Not the True Riches.*

A. *There Are Many Things Which Are Highly Prized by the World.*

1. *Paul before his conversion considered what he had accomplished worthwhile gain.*

a. *"But whatever things were gain to me" (v. 7).*

b. *The things that he considered gain were his heritage, that of being a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin; his vocation, that of being a Pharisee; his personal piety, considering himself to be blameless according to the Law; and his zeal, that of being a persecutor of the Christian church.*

c. *These were his accomplishments. Surely, he thanked*

God, even as the Publican who went up to pray with the tax-collector, for these accomplishments, but they were all done in the strength of his flesh.

2. There are many things in this world, as well, which men highly prize.
 - a. Some, like Paul, place a great deal of worth upon their own personal works of righteousness.
 - (i) There are sects of the Christian church which seek to add works to salvation.
 - (ii) There are non-Christian cults which turn Christianity into purely a works system of righteousness.
 - (iii) Their goal is to achieve salvation either through their own works exclusively, or by adding them to Christ's perfect work.
 - b. Some, being completely oblivious to God, seek after other things that they consider valuable, so much so that they devote their lives to the pursuit of these things.
 - (i) Most people in today's world have as their goal to get a good job and to climb their way up the corporate ladder.
 - (ii) Some do it to obtain money, others prestige, still others, power and authority.

B. *But the Fact Is That These Things Have No Lasting Value at All.*

1. Paul recognized that whatever he had obtained in his life prior to Christ really had no value when compared to Him.
 - a. The things that Paul considered gain, he counted as loss, because of Christ. That is, he considered it to be something which was a liability, rather than an asset; something that was a disadvantage, rather than an advantage; something that was forfeit, rather than something won.
 - b. More than that, he considered ALL THINGS to be loss because of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ. There was nothing in the world which could even compare.
 - c. More than that, Paul, in coming to Christ, actually lost all things. He lost his friends, his position, his supposed self-righteousness, and probably everything that he owned.
 - d. And even beyond all these things, his eyes were opened to precisely how worthless these things really were when he compared them to Christ. The word he used to describe their worth means, "refuse, rubbish, leavings, dirt, or dung" (BAG 765).
2. The things of the world really aren't as important as we think they are.
 - a. They have no value because they are worthless in God's sight.
 - (i) If they were truly valuable then the Lord would give them to His children, but

oftentimes He withholds them from His own and gives them to the wicked.

- (ii) God does not accept you because you are rich nor reject you because you are poor. After all it is the Lord who makes one man to differ from another.
- b. They are worthless because they only have value in this world and cannot be taken into the next.
 - (i) This life is but for a brief moment in the passage of time.
 - (ii) Man is like a shadow which disappears when the sun is fully risen; he is like the vapor from a teapot which quickly vanishes away.
 - (iii) The things which men prize so highly are only of value during this very brief moment, and after that they are gone.
 - (iv) You can't take them out of the world, and even if you could, they would not profit you in the life to come.
- c. Finally, they are worthless because they can capture your affections and cause you to spend all your time in the pursuit of them, while you fail to lay up treasures which are lasting in the world to come.
 - (i) The real danger of these things is that often times men will exchange their souls for them.
 - (ii) Instead of seeking diligently the kingdom of God and the only righteousness whereby they might be saved, they instead make houses for themselves in this world, which houses will fall because they are built upon a foundation of *sand*.
 - (iii) Even God's children can become caught up in worldliness to the point that, though it may make them more comfortable in this age, it will make them paupers in the age to come.
 - (iv) Seeking the riches of the world, they are not seeking to be rich toward God.

II. But the Child of God Realizes that the True Riches Are in Knowing Christ in a Saving Relationship and that There Is Nothing on Earth Which Can Even Remotely Compare.

A. Paul Considered Everything that He Had Gained as Loss in Order that He Might Gain Christ.

1. To gain Christ is to be found in Him, and to be found in Him means to be a fellow-heir of all that is His.
 - a. Paul was not a masochist; he was not in favor of losing everything for nothing.
 - b. Rather the loss of all things was on account of what he was to gain: Christ, and all the riches that are in Him.
2. To gain Christ is to become the possessor of His righteousness, which alone delivers from judgment and makes one acceptable to the Father.

- a. Paul had a righteousness derived from the law, but it was unacceptable to God.
 - (i) He had sought to keep the Law as a covenant of works, in order to gain heaven.
 - (ii) But such a righteousness is but filthy rags in God's sight. It is unacceptable.
 - (iii) They will not open the gates of heaven for those who possess them, but shut them tight and cast them into eternal perdition.
 - b. But in Christ, he obtained the divine gift of Christ's righteousness which comes through faith.
 - (i) In Christ all his sins were removed.
 - (ii) In Christ he was clothed with a perfect righteousness.
 - (iii) In Christ he was owned by God and given an everlasting inheritance which will not fade away.
- B. But Having Come to Share in the Benefits of Christ's Work Was Only Part of the Blessing. The Best Part of All Was that Now Paul Might Have Communion with the Risen Lord.
1. To know Christ is to enter into personal fellowship with Him.
 - a. It is to be a part of His body; it is to be His well-beloved bride; it is to be a branch connected into the very life of Christ.
 - b. It is not simply joining an organization, but it is entering into a relationship with the most worthy person in all the universe.
 2. To know Christ is also to experience the power of his resurrection.
 - a. Paul realized that to know Christ in intimate union with Him meant more than just having knowledge about Him, it also meant becoming a partaker of the power which raised Him from the dead.
 - b. It not only brings life from the dead to those who receive Him, it is also the power to live a godly life in conformity with that of Christ Jesus.
 3. Finally, to know Christ is also to experience the fellowship of his sufferings and to be made conformable to His death.
 - a. Paul wanted more than to know Christ only in His power, he also wanted to fellowship with Him in His sufferings.
 - b. To know Christ means to become conformed in all ways to the Lord Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection.
 - c. The Christian life is much broader than merely experiencing the joy of eternal life and deliverance from damnation, it is also communion with our Lord in His sufferings.
 - (i) To suffer in Christ's stead is a gift from God. Paul said to the Philippians, "FOR TO YOU IT HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, NOT ONLY TO BELIEVE

- IN HIM, BUT ALSO TO SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE" (1:29).
- (ii) Indeed, it is even required for us to gain the inheritance, "THE SPIRIT HIMSELF BEARS WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT THAT WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND IF CHILDREN, HEIRS ALSO, HEIRS OF GOD AND FELLOW HEIRS WITH CHRIST, IF INDEED WE SUFFER WITH HIM IN ORDER THAT WE MAY ALSO BE GLORIFIED WITH HIM" (Rom. 8:16-17).
 - (iii) If we are to be conformed to His death, this means that we must be putting to death the sin in our members inwardly, and that outwardly we must be experiencing His sufferings in life.
 - (iv) "IT IS A TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT: FOR IF WE DIED WITH HIM, WE SHALL ALSO LIVE WITH HIM" (2 Tim. 2:11).

III. Uses. And So Earthly Treasures Are Not So Valuable, But Knowing Christ in Intimate Union Is. What We May Learn from this Passage Is:

- A. First, This Passage Shows Us that Our Own Works of Righteousness Are Inadequate to Gain Heaven. We Can Only Gain Heaven Through Christ.
 - 1. Are you trusting in your good works to secure you a place in heaven?
 - a. Do you think that one day your works will be weighed in the balances of God's justice and tip the scales in your favor?
 - b. God has plainly declared that your works are repugnant in His sight. You cannot commend yourself to God through them.
 - 2. You must count everything that you think that you have gained as loss in order to gain Christ.
 - a. If anyone could have entered heaven on the basis of works and zeal, it would have been the apostle Paul.
 - b. But he counted everything that he had done as loss in order that he might be found in Christ on that day.
 - c. And so you must forsake your works as a basis for acceptance with God.
 - (i) They fall infinitely short of the mark.
 - (ii) Your works are like muddy waters. They are polluted with sin, and unacceptable to the holy God who is high and exalted and infinitely removed from sin.
 - (iii) And trying to add them to the perfect righteousness of Christ is like putting a few drops of this muddy water into a crystal clear pool of living water. They will only pollute that which is infinitely pure.
 - d. You must enter into a personal relationship with Christ, the only One who can wash away your sins, and clothe you with the pure white garments of His righteousness, to present you faultless before the Father.

- B. *Secondly, This Shows Us that the Things of the World, Far from Having Any Lasting Value, May Even Keep Us from the True Riches in Christ.*
1. *When the rich young ruler was told by Christ that he must give all his possessions to the poor and then follow Christ, he found that he did not really possess those riches, but that those riches possessed him. He was in bondage to them.*
 2. *What do your treasures consist of here this morning?*
 - a. *Is your treasure a large bank account? God says that you can't buy your way into heaven.*
 - b. *Is your treasure a pool of the muddy waters of your own works of righteousness? God says that they will not deliver you in the day of His judgment.*
 - c. *Is your treasure to have prestige among your friends? Is it a high position on the corporate ladder? God is no respecter of persons.*
 - d. *You must part with these treasures in your heart and consider them loss compared to the excellency of Christ.*
 - e. *If the rich young ruler had forsaken his riches, he would have found that they were not that important after all. He would have been as Moses who forsook the treasures of Egypt in order that he might follow Christ.*
 - f. *Don't forget that these earthly baubles will be worth less than nothing to you when you come to your death bed. All that will matter then and for eternity is whether or not you have done what the Lord requires of you.*
 - g. *If you pursue earthly wealth at the expense of Christ, you may gain it, but lose Him.*
 - h. *What have you parted with for the sake of Christ?*
 - i. *Part with all of it, and count it but rubbish for the sake of Christ.*
 - j. *As Jesus said, "SO THEREFORE, NO ONE OF YOU CAN BE MY DISCIPLE WHO DOES NOT GIVE UP ALL HIS OWN POSSESSIONS" (Luke 14:33). Let go of them in your heart, and embrace Christ as your greatest treasure.*
- C. *And Lastly, This Passage Calls Us to Pursue Our Relationship with Christ and to Value This Far More than the Things of the World.*
1. *The unregenerate hate Christ and will not come to Him, for the "GOD OF THIS WORLD HAS BLINDED THE MINDS OF THE UNBELIEVING, THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SEE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD" (2 Cor. 4:4).*
 2. *But to the regenerate, Christ is the most lovely of all beings, and the knowledge of Him the most sweet.*
 - a. *Paul, on the road to Damascus, hated Christ, and sought to kill all who followed Him. But as we can see from this passage, Christ changed his heart and opened his eyes to see His beauty.*
 - b. *He is the most glorious being in the universe, for*

He is God in human flesh.

- c. He is the express image of the eternal God.*
 - d. In Him is the sum of all wisdom and beauty.*
 - e. In Him are the true riches of everlasting righteousness, the inheritance of the saints, the communion with the true God!*
3. *What do you know of this? What have you experienced of this? Is Christ your greatest desire? Do you share intimate communion with Him? Do you want to know Him more deeply?*
- a. If you do not know Him, you must first come to Him in faith and repentance.*
 - b. You must turn away from all of your sins, everyone of them that you now cherish, and cling to Christ.*
 - c. You must lay hold of Christ and rely upon Him alone to save you, not on your works, not on Christ plus your works, but on Christ Jesus alone!*
 - d. You must experience the power of His resurrection in raising you from your spiritual death to newness of life.*
 - e. And once you have come to Him savingly, you must seek after the knowledge of Him. You must take His yoke upon yourself and follow Him as a true disciple.*
 - f. A disciple must learn of Him, what He is like: what He hates, what He rejoices in.*
 - g. You must seek to imitate His life. Not simply to copy what He does, but to seek that the Holy Spirit would work this same kind of holiness in you, that you would think like Him, that you would act like Him.*
 - h. And you must be willing to let the Lord take you through the valley of humiliation and experience the sufferings of our Lord in persecution and rejection by the world.*
 - i. To be a Christian means that you have died to yourself and that you live only for the One that gave His life for you. Learn of Christ, let the Holy Spirit work holiness in your life and teach you of Him. Pursue Christ and Christ-likeness with all your might, for this is what the Lord requires of you. Amen!*

3. *And what, in the books of God, have you deposited towards your account in heaven?*
 - a. *Have you given of your finances to advance the work of the kingdom, to help those who are poor and destitute?*
 - b. *Have you visited the widow and the orphan in their distress and relieved their misery?*
 - c. *Have you been developing and exercising your spiritual gifts and used them to benefit and build up your brethren?*
 - d. *Have you used some of your precious little time to seek for God's grace upon His church through prayer?*
 - e. *Have you been using your resources to serve Him and minister to His people, or have you been focusing your powers on obtaining the wealth of the world?*