

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

Philippians 3:1-7

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Bruce: Gracious Lord, it's with grateful hearts that we assemble here this morning. In Your providence You've permitted us to be here today for Your glory. Father, there's so much going on in this world—so much consternation, so much frustration. We just pray, Lord that You'd remove those thoughts from our minds that hinder our seeking You. Remove those thoughts from our minds that hinder us from following You. Remove those things from our minds that prevent us from serving You graciously. Father, we just pray now that You'd be pleased to open our minds once again, that we might behold Your glory for Christ's sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Two weeks ago we finished Chapter 2 of the book of Philippians in our study of Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. And now we're going to begin chapter 3. We'll look at verses 1-7 of chapter 3 of the book of Philippians.

“Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me, and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh, though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had I count it as loss for the sake of Christ.” May God be pleased to open our eyes once again, that we might behold Him more clearly. This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Now we're going to begin chapter 3 of the book of Philippians. And I just want to do a quick review to let you know where we have been in the first two chapters, and where we're going in the next two chapters—chapters 3 and 4.

Now there are many ways that one could outline the book of Philippians. I'm going to give you two outlines that I think are very, very excellent. In my study it worked out to be quite reasonable. Now I'm just going to offer for your consideration two outlines for the book of Philippians.

First of all, from a believer's point of view, from the mind of a believer's point of view, chapter 1 would be *the single mind*. The theme of that is the single mind. And the key verse would be Philippians 1:21.

Chapter 2 would be *the submissive mind*. You see, Paul is teaching us how to think. The first thing is that you have to have a single-mindedness. And then you have to have a *submissive-mindedness*. And the key verse there would be Philippians chapter 2 verse 8.

Transcriber's Note: Philippians 1:21, NKJV. *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

Philippians 2:8. “*And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*”

Bruce: Chapter 3, which we'll start today, is *the spiritual mind*. And the key verse would be chapter 3 verse 14. **Transcriber's Note:** Philippians 3:14, NKJV. “*I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*”

Bruce: And chapter 4 would be *the secure mind*—Philippians 4, verses 8 and 9.

Transcriber's Note: Philippians 4:8-9, NKJV. “*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*”

Bruce: The single mind, the submissive mind, the spiritual mind and the secure mind. It's a good way to look at the book of Philippians.

I'm going to give you an alternative which I believe is equally as good. And that would be what I would call *the fourfold view of Christ*. Paul presents four views of Christ in this particular book. Again, chapter 1—*Christ, our life*. And again, the verse would be Philippians 1:21. Chapter 2 would be *Christ, our mind*. We think with the mind of Christ. The key verse would be chapter 2 verse 5.

Transcriber's Note: Philippians 2:5, NKJV. “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*”

Bruce: Chapter 3—*Christ, our goal*. That would be chapter 3 verse 10. That would be the key verse.

Transcriber's Note: Philippians 3:10, NKJV. “*That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.*”

Bruce: And in chapter 4 it's *Christ, our strength*—Philippians 4:13.

Transcriber's Note: Philippians 4:13, NKJV. “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*”

Bruce: Christ our life, Christ our mind, Christ our goal, and Christ our strength. Now those are two good ways that you can look at this book, and summarize it with those chapter headings and those key verses, because Paul is teaching us how we ought to think about Christ. When you put the two together, that's where you get your synopsis of the book. He's teaching us how to think correctly about the Person and work of Christ.

And so now we begin chapter 3. If you notice your outline, he begins to defend the purity of the gospel in chapter 3.

Now when Paul hears that the church of Philippi is being harassed by false teachers who deny the sole sufficiency of Christ, and they trust in ceremonial laws and rites to supplement divine grace, he's deeply disturbed and he almost gets angry. In fact, I think he does get angry by the use of these words that he has. And he writes that believers should acknowledge their oneness in Christ, and should not permit this unity to be undermined by these false teachers. So the first thing he begins to do is to defend *the purity of the gospel*. That's verses 1 and 2.

Now take a look at these verses, 1 and 2. Paul is so incensed against those who are teaching that the Gentiles should become Jews by attacking the doctrines of salvation by

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

grace alone. And they were substituting a mixture of human merit and divine favor. And he was so angry with them that he called them “*dogs*.”

Now that's a term that the Jews used, referring to the Gentiles. The Gentiles were referred to by the Jews as “Gentile dogs.” Now the Jews called the Gentiles dogs, but Paul here uses the term *dogs* to describe the Jewish Judaizers, those Jewish false teachers who emphasized circumcision and keeping the law. You can read more about those Jewish teachers in Acts chapter 15 and the book of Galatians.

In fact, he is so angry and so upset about what these men are doing to the church at Philippi that he doesn't even call them *the circumcision*, which is a term relegated strictly to the followers of Christ. He doesn't refer to them as *the circumcision*. He calls them *concision*. And that literally means *the cutting and mutilation of the flesh*. Basically, what he is saying is that because circumcision had no spiritual value, he's saying that these people were just mutilators of the flesh. He said that they were mutilators of the flesh.

Now Paul is not thinking about household pets when he's thinking about this term *dogs*. He's thinking of pariahs. He's thinking of large, savage and pariah dogs which roam the streets of Philippi looking for garbage and rubbish to eat in the city streets. Those are the dogs that he's referring to.

Now let me walk you through some of the descriptions of these dogs in the Scripture that Paul is referring to, and the seriousness with which he takes the purity of the gospel. He's not only a proclaimer of the gospel. He's a purifier of the gospel. And we need to look at both sides of that.

So these dogs, Biblically, are unclean, and they're filthy. Take a look at Proverbs 26 verse 11. “*Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.*”

Now that's what Paul is calling false teachers. They return to their vomit. Their motivation is to return to their vomit. They're pariahs.

Matthew chapter 7 verse 6. “*Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot, and turn to attack you.*”

He calls these teachers unclean and filthy. A couple of other verses for your cross-reference would be 2 Peter 2:22 and Revelation 22 verse 15.

Transcriber's Note: 2 Peter 2:22, NKJV. “*But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.'*”

Revelation 22:15. “*But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.*”

Transcriber's Note: Static from the microphone.

Bruce: That's a point of emphasis. (*Laughter*)

Participant: Oh, I thought you said, “the point of Ephesus.” (*Laughter*)

Bruce: We're in Philippi, not Ephesus. (*Laughter*) Now Scripture also refers to these teachers as *dogs*. They howl and they snarl. Not only are they unclean and filthy. They howl and they snarl.

How about Psalm 59 verse 6?

*Each evening they comeback,
Howling like dogs and prowling about the city.”*

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

That's his view of these false teachers.

These dogs are greedy and shameless. How about Isaiah chapter 56 verse 11? *"The dogs have a mighty appetite. They never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding. They have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all."*

Now a couple of other characteristics you could attribute to these false teachers for which he is using the terminology *dogs* in the Scripture—such things as insolent, cunning, and roaming. When you put all that together, that's the comparison where Paul is saying that you've got to watch out, because these false teachers are like dogs, just like the dog you see roaming around the city, growling and snarling, ugly and unclean, eating things up. You've got to watch out. When they're inside the church, be careful.

So why does Paul use such harsh words to describe those who would pervert the gospel? Notice three times in verse 2. He uses the expression *"look out!"* Look out, look out! Or beware! Now when was the last time you heard a pastor in your church say, "Look out!", or "beware!"?

You see, we need to be as concerned about the purity of the gospel as we are the presentation of the gospel. And Paul right now is defending the purity of the gospel. He says, "Watch out for these people! They're just like snarling dogs!" And he gives a summary statement of how he describes them. He refers to them as evil workers, evildoers, turning people aside from the truth of freedom.

I call your attention to Galatians chapter 1, verses 7-9. It's a cross-reference of what these Judaizers were doing in the city of Philippi in southern Asia, Asia Minor. Galatians 1:7-9. *"Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed! As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed!"* Look out! Beware! They're right in your midst!

Now Paul is laying down for us not only the importance of proclaiming the gospel, but also defending it. He was a proclaimer, but he was also a defender of the gospel in its purity, guarding against its corruption and preserving it against error.

Now folks, it's a lot easier to be a proclaimer of the gospel than it is to be a defender of the gospel. You could proclaim the gospel and walk away feeling good about yourself, because you think that you're spiritual. How about defending the gospel when somebody takes you on and says, "What about the Person and work of Christ?" How do you defend yourself? You see, defending the gospel is much more difficult in our world today.

You see, Paul defends against distortion in three ways. There are three ways in which the gospel is distorted and destroyed, and we need to be defenders of it. There are three ways you can do it—by *addition*, *subtraction*, or *alteration*. Addition, subtraction or alteration.

Adding to the gospel would be this: *Jesus plus something*. Jesus plus your commitment. You're adding to it. Subtraction of the gospel would be that repentance is not necessary because God loves you just the way you are. And alteration would be baptismal regeneration. You add the ordinance of baptism and you now make it part of

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

the gospel. There are those who believe that when you're baptized, you're saved. They refer to it as *baptismal regeneration*. Yes, sir?

Participant: Just a question. Isn't proclaiming the true gospel the same as defending it. If we put all the truth in there, we don't need both proclaimers and defenders.

Bruce: Absolutely. I've already said that twice. (*Laughter*) I already said that Paul was a proclaimer and a defender. We need to be both. All I'm saying is this, brothers. Look at it logically. It's easier to be a proclaimer than it is to be a defender. To be a defender you have to know your theology. You have to know your Scripture. To present the gospel, you can do that very simply. You need both; no question about it. All I'm saying is this. It's tougher, more difficult to be a defender. And that's why we need to understand what Paul is teaching. Yes, Don?

Don: Isn't it more of a challenge, Bruce, in our day even than it was then, because you have to convince a lot of people #1 that there is a God to whom they are accountable, and #2 that they are sinners in our age of relativism?

Bruce: Absolutely. That's why it's much more difficult. Listen to my next sentence, Don. (*Laughter*) In our world today there is much resistance to putting up truth against error. It's unpopular in the church today to have truth stand up against error, as Don is suggesting. And when you do that you're regarded as a bigot, or regarded as not being open-minded. It's very, very difficult to bring up truth against error, which is defending the gospel. Yes, Thomas?

Tom: Isn't there a third aspect? To me there's a third aspect—to be a proclaimer, a defender and a liver. You have to live the gospel, which a lot of us just forget about.

Bruce: Well, that's a given. (*Laughter*) Living the gospel is a given. We are salt and light. That's the whole summary. But what Paul is dealing with is two aspects of it—the purity of the gospel and the presentation of the gospel. But you're right; we need to live the gospel. We need to live the gospel before they hear our words. We need to live it before they hear our words.

Participant: So my question has always been what is the gospel? (*Unclear*)

Bruce: The gospel is *the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith*. The holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. Those are the six elements of the gospel. And we need to keep that purified. And that's what Paul is dealing with.

Now Paul is saying with his threefold warning that there is such a thing as the truth of the gospel. Now notice this. *Since there is as nothing as important as the gospel itself, there is nothing more serious than the man who would tamper with it*. If the gospel is the most serious thing in the world, the most serious offense is to tamper with the gospel.

Now Paul was speaking against those who would add something to the salvation by grace found in the Scripture, and found in the Person and work of Christ—such things as outward ceremonial laws, ecclesiastical tradition that would interfere with the sufficiency of Christ. Paul is defending here in these verses the sufficiency of Christ as the only means by which a person can find his salvation. He's dealing with the most important issue in all the world, and that is this. What is the ground of your salvation? Where is it that a person can eternally rest with God and know that you're right with God? Where is

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

it that you can eternally rest and know that you're right with God? That's the issue that Paul is dealing with. There is only one right answer to that question. Yet there are many thousands of wrong answers.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Only one right answer. I would go so far as to say that Paul's teaching is this, men. If you and I do not have a zeal for the purity of the gospel, you don't have a zeal for Christ and a concern for your brothers, because to whom is he writing? That's in verse 1. He's writing to brothers; he's writing to followers of Christ. And he's warning them. He says, "*Look out!*" Beware! Why is that? Because he has a zeal for the gospel and a love for his brothers. And if you and I don't have a zeal for the gospel, we may not have a love for our brothers, because we'll let them be deceived.

You've got to ask yourselves, men. What is my zeal for the purity of the gospel? Do I have it? Is it there? If it isn't there, why isn't it there? Why isn't the zeal for the gospel there in your life? That's the vital question in these two verses that Paul teaches us. Do you have a zeal for the gospel, it's truth? And do you defend it and proclaim it? So men, are you equally willing to be proclaimers of the gospel, as well as to be defenders of the purity of the gospel? It's a both/and, not an either/or.

Now I think that the purity of the gospel is such a critical issue, because a person will never be saved by a corrupt gospel. Do you realize that? A person is never going to come to saving faith by a corrupt gospel.

Paul tells us in Romans 1 that "*it is the power unto salvation for all who believe.*" What is the *it*? The gospel, the pure Biblical gospel is that which will save. Nobody is ever going to be converted by a corrupt gospel. So we must point people solely to the Person and work of Christ--the Christ of the Scripture, not the Christ of our imagination, or some vague place where they suggest to go elsewhere for their salvation.

So men, we need not only to be concerned with the clarity of the gospel, but also for the purity of the gospel, to proclaim it clearly and to proclaim it purely. No one will ever be saved by a corrupt gospel.

So after that warning Paul makes a statement that begins to describe who the true believers are. In verse 3 Paul gives three distinguishing marks or evidences of the true grace of people who are true believers. He refers to them as ""the true circumcision." Look at verse 3. "*For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.*"

Now circumcision was the mark of true covenant people, all the way back to Abraham. And when he says that they are the true circumcision, he's saying that we are the true heirs of God who have been promised the faith of Abraham, which is being fulfilled in the fullness of Christ, who is the covenant messenger.

So he is saying that we are those who are truly saved, and he doesn't hold back on that. Notice how he says it. "*We are the circumcision.*" Who is he contrasting that with? Those people who have been deceived by the dogs. We are!

Then he gives some evidence. Paul never makes a statement like that without giving evidence. And he gives three evidences of the people who are the true circumcision, the true followers of Christ, the true believers, distinguishing the true from the false believer.

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

There are three evidences in their lives. *They worship by the Spirit of God. They glory in Christ Jesus. And they put on confidence in the flesh.* Those are the marks of a person who is a member of the covenant community. I believe that if you put them in reverse order, you have a very good framework for the rest of this chapter. So I'm going to talk in reverse order.

First of all, we're going to talk about *putting on confidence in the flesh*—verses 4-6. First of all, he says they're known by not putting confidence in the flesh. Now that's the very theme of verses 4-6. And it's the primary evidence of the people of God, and an evidence of the work of grace. They put on confidence in the flesh.

So the critical issue, men, is this. Where do you place your confidence in your salvation? Where does your confidence lie in your salvation? It's certainly not in your commitment to Christ. No one was ever saved by committing his life to Christ. He was saved by Christ's commitment to him. You're not saved by your commitment. Christ saves you because of His commitment. And it's not by your belief. It's by God's grace.

So where in the depths of your soul do you place your confidence for your salvation? Where is that? Surfacing, or somewhere down in the depths of the soul because your heart has been regenerated and truly born again?

Another way of looking at this question would be this. What are you resting on for the hope of your salvation? That's the issue that Paul is dealing with.

Now Paul is simply saying that the way of salvation is the way of putting no confidence in the flesh. The mark of a true believer is that this person has abandoned his confidence in his flesh to give him right standing before God.

Now what does he mean by that? Now the flesh can be defined as *all that a person knows that he is before Christ, and after his regeneration all that he is apart from Christ.* Let me give you that again. When Paul says that they've abandoned the flesh, put no confidence in the flesh, the flesh can be defined as *that which a person knows that he is before Christ.*"

Take a look at your life before Christ. You know that. Can you put confidence in that? Absolutely not. And after your regeneration, when you're reborn and God gives you a new heart and gives you the will to be willing to believe, after his regeneration all that he is apart from Christ. And then you take a look at your present life and all that I am apart from Christ. That's part of the flesh that I'm trusting.

So in broad terms I think it means this. Flesh is anything apart from Christ on which one bases his hope for salvation.

Now I find it interesting t we tend to think of the fleshly world to mean our weakness or our failures, or what we are at our worst. But notice. Paul is speaking in verses 4-6 of what man is at his best. He's describing man at his best, not man at his worst. We think of the flesh as the worst. Paul is saying, "That's my very best. That's not good enough to save me." Paul was referring to his religious, righteous best. And he can't even trust that.

Now Paul says that if anyone was in a position to have confidence in the flesh, Paul says, "It's me, me more than anybody else. He give seven reasons, seven qualifications for his having confidence in the flesh.

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

First of all he was "*circumcised on the eighth day.*" Paul was known to be a proselyte. A proselyte was somebody who changed religions, who went from one faith to another faith. He was known to be a proselyte, but he was an Israelite by birth, having by heredity and the sign of the covenant his part in the covenant promises of Israel, of which he was very, very proud. He had ecclesiastical propriety.

Next, he says, "*of the people of Israel.*" Paul's parents also were not merely proselytes. They themselves were Hebrews by birth. Paul was of Israel, an Israelite descendant through and through. And he was proud of his unblemished pedigree. He had an ancestral line. Not only did he have ecclesiastical propriety, he had an ancestral line.

Thirdly, "*of the tribe of Benjamin.*" The tribe of Benjamin was the one that first came to Israel, which remained true to the Davidic throne. All of the other tribes broke away. They helped Judah and Levi to restore the temple. He had the parental heritage. He had ecclesiastical propriety, he had the ancestral line, and he also had the parental heritage. It's quite a resume he's developing for himself, describing him at his very, very best.

Next, we're told that he was "*a Hebrew of Hebrews.*" Although living in Tarsus, Paul's parents adhered to the Hebrew language and customs. Paul was no Hellenist by upbringing. In other words, He was not a Greek speaking Jew. He knew the Hebrew language. He studied in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. He was proficient in the Hebrew language of the Scriptures, and he adhered to all the Hebrew customs. He had the right educational pedigree. Ecclesiastical propriety, ancestral line, parental heritage, educational pedigree.

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

Bruce: Yes?

Participant: Who was Gamaliel? You said that he studied under Gamaliel.

Bruce: He was a Hebrew theologian.

Participant: Well known, I guess, in that day?

Bruce: Very well known.

Second Participant: Gamaliel had a school of theology named after him, so there was a large following. You might say, "I'm a follower of Arminius, or I'm a follower of Calvin." Some would say, "I'm a follower of Gamaliel."

Bruce: Right. Thanks, Ted. Next, *he was strict as a Hebrew at keeping the law.* By birth an Israelite, by upbringing a Hebrew, he was also by his own choice a Pharisee. By his own choice he embraced the strictest sect in Israel, the one which had the strictest view of the law in its obedience. So he was a strict sect member.

Next, he was *a persecutor of the church.* By birth an Israelite, Paul was not satisfied even with being a Pharisee. He was a zealous Pharisee, a conscientious and relentless persecutor of all heretics and heretical sects contrary to the Pharisaic code. He was a relentless persecutor of other sects.

And lastly, in summary, *blameless in his personal life.* As far as the observance of all the formal rules and precepts and practices of the law were concerned, Paul was absolutely perfect.

Now men, the reason I go through that in detail is that we have a tendency to think about the flesh as our weakness. Paul is saying exactly the opposite. He's saying that this

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

is my absolute very, very best, my righteous self. And that can't cut it. It's not good enough. My very, very best—I died to all of that. I lose all of that. And he's referring to his very, very best.

Now how many of you can say that about yourselves? List those seven things in your life, and say that is my very, very best. But it will not save me. Paul came to the realization that all that stuff that I went through, all those lineages and that heritage, all the wonderful descriptions of who he was in his character and his personality, all those things didn't count. He counted them as loss when it came to the contrast of knowing Christ.

But the day came when Paul realized that none of those things could save him. And men, I think we need to come to a time in our personal lives and ask ourselves, has the day come for me when I will no longer trust the fleshly things I do to save me—my education, my job, all those things that would be so much of what Paul went through? Have you come to the point of saying, “I died to all that because I have no confidence in it anymore for my salvation?”

Now it may be, friends, that you were brought up in a good Christian home. You know all the Christian languages. You were active in your church. It may be that you never strayed away. You were baptized and even confirmed. Have you come to the realization, men, that there is not a day in your life that will save, that none of that will save you? Have you discovered, like Paul, that all of this and your personal righteousness is unacceptable before God? Only the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ imputed to you is acceptable. Have you come to that realization, as Paul did?

Look out! Watch out! There will be people there deceiving you, to move you away from the purity of that gospel call. Can you honestly say with the hymn writer, “My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness?”

Can you really say that and not trust in the flesh anymore?

Have you done that spiritual accounting that Paul did? Have you done that for yourself? Can you conclude that Jesus is the only One in whom you can have your confidence for salvation?

If the Lord were to take you home today, could you say, in the words of the hymn writer, “I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name?”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Can you really say that, men? No confidence in the flesh. You can't trust the Naval Academy ring anymore. (*Laughter*) You can't trust your education. You can't trust in your reputation. Paul says those things, I realize, are of no value when it comes to knowing Christ.

So the very first evidence that a person is a member of the true covenant is to have no confidence in the flesh. But watch out! There will be those in the church who will be trying to deceive you.

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

The second characteristic is that *“they glory in Christ Jesus”*—verses 4 and 7. No confidence in the flesh is the first evidence of a true covenant person. Next is, they glory in Christ Jesus.

Now notice that Paul is not only saying that he has confidence. Note that he is saying that he has confidence in Christ and no confidence in the flesh. He is also saying that he glories in Christ Jesus, which is his life. Not only do I have confidence in Christ and not my own flesh, but I glory in Christ Jesus, which has become my life.

And the increasing mark of a person who is a member of the family of God is that Christ more and more becomes our life. It is in Christ Jesus that we glory more and more and more and more! And that becomes more evident in our daily lives. And people will see it more and more and more, because we begin to live it. Christ is our true treasure and Christ is our true joy. That's glorying in Christ Jesus. You do that more and more and more as you grow in grace.

Now notice, men, that this is a growing activity. This is not stagnant. This is not a one-time event. Take a look at verses 7 and 8. In verse 7 he says, “I count it as loss.” Now that's past tense. He refers to his life before his conversion. All those things that I just listed I've counted as loss. Counted—past tense.

Notice verse 8. He says, *“I count everything as loss.”* That is present tense. And that's referring to his present experience. He not only gave up the confidence of the flesh of his past, but he's now giving up the confidence in the flesh of his present. Past tense and present tense.

And notice what he says. *“But whatever I had”*—past tense,--and now he says, *“Whatever I had, I count everything as loss.”* Your past tense and your present tense, count it as loss when it comes to trusting Christ for your salvation. “All the things that now I count as loss, I count them rubbish in comparison to knowing Christ.” They glory in Christ Jesus more and more and more. It's a growing aspect of our faith life.

Now in verse 8 what does he mean when he says, “I gain?” notice verse 8. *“I gain.”* The answer, I think, is found in that one word—*“righteousness.”* I gain righteousness.

Now what is righteousness? *Righteousness is who God is, what God possesses, and what God displays in His character.*

Take a look at Psalm 119:137.

*“Righteous are You, O LORD,
And right are Your rules.”*

Righteousness is who God is, what God possesses, and what He displays in His character.

Psalm 145:17:

*“The LORD is righteous in all His ways,
And kind in all His works.”*

That describes what righteousness is. And Paul says, “I gained righteousness.”

But notice this. *Righteousness is also what God requires of man.* God requires righteousness. Hosea 10:12. *“Sow for yourselves righteousness. Bring steadfast love; break up your fallow ground. For it is time to seek the LORD, that He may come and rain righteousness upon you.”* Sow for yourselves righteousness.

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

How about Matthew 5:20? *“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and the scribes, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Righteousness is what God requires. Where are you going to get it? Look out! Watch out! There will be those who will come along and say that you can get it by doing. We get it by being, by being in Christ.

Look out! Man also has no righteousness to offer God. Romans 1:18. *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”*

And Romans 3:10-11. *“As it is written:
‘None is righteous, no, not one.
No one understands; no one seeks for God.’”*

We don't seek God. Who seeks us? God seeks us. *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.”* Who does the seeking?

Participant: God.

Bruce: God does. Years ago there was a movement with a bumper sticker that said, “I found it.”

Participant: Oh, yeah.

Bruce: It really should have been, “He found me.”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Who does the seeking? God does the seeking. The other thing about righteousness that we need to understand is that not only does God require it, and that man has no righteousness to offer God, but thirdly that *God alone provides righteousness in the Person of Christ.*”

God alone provides righteousness. Romans 3:21. *“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law, although the Law and the prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Righteousness is found only in Christ Jesus.

How about Isaiah chapter 61 verse 10? *“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exalt in my God. For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of”—*

Participant: Righteousness.

Bruce: Righteousness. Where do we find our righteousness? Righteousness is found in God. Righteousness is who God is, what God possesses, and the way He displays His character. It's only credited to us by the imputed work of the Savior, the Lord Jesus. And so the second characteristic of the covenant person described is that they glory in Christ Jesus, and that they have no confidence in the flesh.

The third aspect is that *“they worship by the Spirit of God.”* And that is the rest of the chapter that describes this. But just briefly, it means this. It means *putting Christ first in everything that you do*, because what you place first in your life is what you worship. You put Him first in everything, because what you put first is what you worship.

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 9

They worship by the Spirit. Their worship is Spirit-guided. It proceeds from personalities renewed and energized by the Holy Spirit. Your personality is renewed and energized by the Holy Spirit, and God leads you to worship. Thus worship by the covenant people is wholly from the heart. It's not hampered by physical considerations. It's solely from the heart.

So men, watch out! Watch out! Watch out!

Let us pray. Father, You've given us much to digest, much to chew on, much to consider. Father, help us to look at ourselves in the mirror and ask ourselves the question. Am I trusting what I had or what I have, or am I trusting the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ? He alone will impute to me this righteousness that comes from Christ alone. Father, we just pray that we would be honest with ourselves. May we be true presenters of the gospel, with the pure clarity of the gospel as well as the power of the gospel. And may we keep it pure for the sake of Jesus and His glory. And all the Brave Men said,

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)