

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The apostle Paul warned the church at Philippi to “beware of the false circumcision” (Phil. 3:1-3).
 - 1. He also called them “dogs” and “evil workers.” From the context, it is evident that these were men who attempted to force circumcision upon others as a condition of salvation.
 - 2. In contrast to them, Paul said, “We are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (v. 3). Thus, “true circumcision” is a spiritual condition rather than a physical one.
- B. Following this warning, Paul used himself to demonstrate that circumcision of the flesh was of no benefit, but rather the real rewards come through knowing Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:4-14).
 - 1. Paul had done everything that the “false circumcision” was urging others to do.
 - 2. However, he said, “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ” (v. 7).
- C. In this study, let us consider the example of Paul, what he counted as loss, and what he gained.

II. WHATEVER THINGS WERE GAIN TO ME, I COUNT AS LOSS

- A. Paul had gained a great standing among the Jews.
 - 1. Paul, or Saul of Tarsus, had impressive credentials among the Jews.
 - a. In Acts 22:3, Paul described himself, saying, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.”
 - b. His mentor, Gamaliel, was a Pharisee, a well-respected teacher of the Law, and a member of the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:34). By Jewish standards, Paul had the best education possible.
 - 2. Paul gives further insight into his credentials in Philippians 3:4-6.
 - a. In his own words, he was “circumcised the eighth day, of the nation 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 the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”
 - b. Paul had all the qualifications to rise to the highest standing among the Jews. In terms of the Law, zeal, and righteousness, he excelled above all.
- B. Paul counted those things as loss for the sake of Christ.
 - 1. Concerning these things, Paul said, “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss...” (Phil. 4:7).
 - a. The term “loss” indicates that which is destroyed, utterly lost, and impossible to recover. It is the same word used in Acts 27:10, 21 to describe the damage to the ship and the cargo that was thrown overboard when Paul’s ship was caught in a powerful storm.
 - b. Thus, everything that had been dear to Saul of Tarsus was cast aside forever, and he had counted it as loss, for none of it would ever have the same meaning again.
 - 2. For any other reason, Paul would certainly have regretted the loss of such things. However, he left all of these without a second thought for the sake of Christ.
 - a. The Jews jealously protected their position in society. It was at least in part for this reason that they rejected Jesus. In John 11:48, they said of Jesus and His miracles, “If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”
 - b. However, Paul had gladly given away his position for the sake of Christ. For Jesus, he had gone from first to last among the Jews. Now, he was a minister to the Gentiles.
 - c. Notice how Paul viewed his new standing in Christ:
 - i. 1Corinthians 15:8-9 – ⁸and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
 - ii. 1Timothy 1:12-15 – ¹²I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, ¹³even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

III. ALL THINGS, I COUNT AS LOSS

- A. "More than that," Paul counted all things as loss for the sake of Christ.
1. Paul's departure from the Jewish elite meant losing much more than just his social standing.
 - a. When Jesus sent Ananias to instruct Saul in Damascus, He said, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16).
 - b. Indeed, Paul suffered tremendously by his own account in 2Corinthians 11:18-33. All of his suffering was the direct result of his service to the Lord Jesus.
 2. Eventually, Paul lost his physical life for the Lord.
 - a. From a Roman prison, Paul anticipated his death in 2Timothy 4:6-8. His only crime was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Scripture does not record Paul's death, but tradition holds that he was beheaded in Rome.
- B. Consider what Paul had gained.
1. Paul was "found in Him" (Phil. 3:9).
 - a. To be in Jesus is to have every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). The book of Ephesians repeatedly refers to the rich blessings in Him.
 - b. Paul, like any other Christian, came into Christ through baptism (Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:27).
 2. He obtained a righteousness that was through faith in Christ (Phil. 3:9).
 - a. Although he had been found blameless in terms of the Law of Moses, he was not righteous, for no flesh could be justified by works of the Law (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16).
 - b. As it was, Paul was the chief of all sinners, but he was forgiven through Christ and made righteous through faith in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 1Tim. 12-15).
 3. He came to know Christ (Phil. 3:10).
 - a. Paul knew Christ by "the fellowship of His sufferings" and conformity to His death in addition to His personal revelations and the knowledge of His will.
 - b. Jesus said that to know Him was to have eternal life (John 17:3).
 4. He had expectations for a resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:11).
 - a. Everyone will be raised from the dead (John 5:28-29), but Paul spoke in terms of the hope that Christians will realize at the resurrection. He spoke of eternal life.
 - b. Paul was looking forward to the scene he described in 1Thessalonians 4:14-17. It will be at the resurrection "that we shall always be with the Lord."
 5. The greatest rewards Paul stood to gain were ahead of him, and therefore he pressed forward. Notice his words in Philippians 3:12-14:
¹²Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

IV. CONCLUSION – WHAT DO YOU COUNT AS LOSS FOR CHRIST?

- A. All of us must give up certain things for the sake of Christ.
1. The pleasures of sin and all of its forms must be counted as loss for Christ. Repentance requires it.
 2. Anything that conflicts with Christ must be counted as loss for Christ. It may riches or a lucrative source of employment (Matt. 19:16-26), or it may even be relationships that prevent service to the Lord (Matt. 10:34-37).
 3. Christians must be willing to set aside anything that stands between them and the Lord and count it as loss. Jesus said, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).
- B. Do you count those things as loss for Christ's sake?
1. Do you think that you have too much to lose for Jesus? Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:24-26:
²⁴"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"
 2. No one has to count his soul as loss, so trade everything for Jesus, and gain eternal life.