

TRADING IN OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR THE VALUE OF CHRIST: PHILIPPIANS 3:4-9

1. We All Have *Righteousnesses* That We Trust to Make Us Worthwhile to God
 - a. A “righteousness” is that success which we trust in to make us good and worthwhile to God, others, or ourselves
 - i. It can be success in anything that we deem to be important to God, whether or not it actually is
 - ii. We compare these successes to others in order to justify ourselves
 - b. “Righteousness” Inherited by him:
 - i. Circumcised on the eighth day
 1. sign of the covenant of God
 2. Paul included himself in the covenant people of God, and his parents were, too (they circumcised him)
 - a. He was set apart at birth from the pagans of his day
 - b. His parents were faithful Jews, too
 - ii. Jewish (people of Israel)
 1. Not merely racially, but religiously
 2. people of God
 - a. a Hebrew of Hebrews
 - b. He had not “Hellenized” like many Jews of the day, adopting Greco-Roman culture
 - c. He had remained “purely” Jewish (learned in Hebrew and ancient Jewish ways) in his religious and social life
 - iii. tribe of Benjamin
 1. Benjamin was the only tribe that stayed with Judah (David's tribe) in the split b/w Israel and Judah
 - a. Born into a strong tribe, not a tribe of disrepute
 - b. Same tribe as the first king of Israel, Saul
 2. Paul obviously took pride in this (at one point, for sure)
 3. This tribal designation is included to “prove” his “purity” in regards to being fully included in the people of God
 - a. He was not a proselyte or convert
 - b. He was born into the privilege
 - c. “Righteousness” Achieved by him:
 - i. What was my respect for the Law?
 1. Pharisee
 - a. the strictest Law-followers
 - b. careful to observe to the point of creating new laws (Oral Laws) to steer them way clear of breaking God's laws
 - i. emphasized the resurrection from the dead as the hope of Israel (Acts 23:6)
 - c. clothing revealed their devotion to the law (tassles, phylacteries, etc.)
 2. This designation would have gained approval from the Judaizers as one who was truly desiring to follow God in its most literal and strict obedience
 - a. Acts 22:3 – educated under Gamiliel according to the strict law of our fathers, zealous
 - b. Acts 26:5 – lived according to the most precise party, Pharisee
 - ii. Was I sincere, passionate, and heart-felt?

1. Persecutor of the church
 - a. how dedicated?
 - b. how heart-felt?
2. went after those who would defy God (as he understood it at the time)
 - a. cared so much about the respect and holiness of God that he pursued those whom disagreed
 - b. He is clearer in Galatians 1:13 – “I used to persecute intensely the church of God and tried to destroy it.”
 - c. Strong sense of irony as Paul writes this: he has become the strongest advocate of that which he tried, in his zeal for God, to destroy
3. He was not a passive Pharisee, but a heart that wanted desperately to obey and honor God
 - a. His heart was sincere, fully sincere, and passionately zealous for God
 - b. But his heart’s sincerity was misplaced
- iii. What was my righteousness according to the Law?
 1. Blameless
 2. Paul is not stating that was sinless, a concept foreign to Judaism
 - a. Moreover, if he was, then why did he sense his need of Jesus as Savior, feeling his guilt in connection with his conversion on the Damascus road?
 - b. This would have flew in the face of other writings by Paul of his sinfulness (Rom 7:5-11, for example)
 3. Paul is not speaking subjectively here, but objectively defining his *religious credentials* in order to provide the foil for the gospel of grace
 - a. His point is that anyone could objectively check the record, so to speak, and see that there was no accusations against Paul that he had broken the Law
 - b. There was no blame to be laid against him, he followed the Law so closely
 4. Paul did not convert to Christianity because it was easier and he had trouble following the Law
 - a. He uses this example precisely because of the opposite: he did follow the Law and did so without blame or accusation of his failure of it
 - b. Externally, Paul’s obedience was verified by others around him and he was found “without blame”
 - i. The Law required “observance”
 - ii. That is, the righteousness according to the law requires an observable standard of life and he had fulfilled it
 5. The real question that Paul wants to be raised is simply this: Did his heart condition of zealous desire to honor God or his observable righteousness according to the law have any value in his acceptance by God?
 - a. The answer is in verse 9
- d. We all have “righteousness” which we use to define how good we are
 - i. Nice Righteousness – “I am good because I am nice to people”
 - ii. Moral Righteousness – “I am good because I’m not struggling with heinous sin right now”
 - iii. Football Righteousness – “I am good because my team won yesterday”
 - iv. All of these “righteousnesses” that we base our goodness (importance, acceptability, significance) upon lead us to:
 1. Compare ourselves with others (it’s not just that we think we’re *good*, but that we think we’re *better*)

2. Trust in our own righteousness before God and devalue Christ as our source, securer, and sustainer of our acceptance before Him
3. If we believe that our works have any value to God in and of themselves then we are desperately deceived.
 - a. Our works are only valuable to God when they are done in reliance upon Christ
 - b. His righteousness alone is what has value, freely given to us by His grace, so that we boast in Him!
 - c. See yourself and weep. See your God and rejoice!!

2. Our Righteousness is Actually a Liability Compared to Gaining Christ

- a. Paul contrasts the "gain" of these strengths with the value of Christ and counts them as a "loss"
- b. He contrasts his previous way of life with the gospel of Jesus
 - i. There is a downward progression of thought concerning his religious credentials of heart and observance
 1. I consider these things a "loss"
 - a. "These things" – the previous credentials mentioned
 - b. "loss" – an actual negative for him
 - i. Not merely neutral or pointless
 - ii. Actually negative and damaging
 - c. He starts out by impugning only "these things"
 2. I consider all things a "loss"
 - a. Here he increases the intensity to include "all things"
 - b. Every success and strength on which he relies is a detriment to him
 - c. Isaiah 64:6 – all of our righteous deeds are as filthy rags
 3. I have suffered the loss of all things
 - a. Change from the noun "loss" to the verb "to suffer loss"
 - i. This means "to suffer damage" or "to forfeit"
 - ii. He considers his previous "gains" as actually damaging, as liabilities against him
 - b. Our own righteousness can blind us to our desperate need for a Savior
 - i. In this way, our performance and privilege can become devastatingly obstructive
 - ii. This is why it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 19:24-26)
 1. It's not about money, about self-righteousness
 2. Wealth was believed to be a sign of God's favor and acceptance, when in reality it could be an idol
 4. I count them as rubbish
 - a. What he once considered valuable and worthy he now considers to be filthy and revolting
 - b. The word "rubbish" is actually the vulgar term for "excrement" and shouldn't be downplayed
 - i. Paul considered his earthly achievements and rights as revolting in the light of Christ
 - ii. Christ changed everything

- c. Important to note that Paul did not consider his Jewish heritage as revolting, but rather viewing that heritage as a right or as an achievement that garnered God's blessing
 - i. He loved his Jewish roots and his Jewish kin (Romans 3; 9:1-5)
- ii. These things have no value in comparison to the greatest treasure: knowing and gaining Christ.
 - 1. For the sake of Christ
 - a. He is the ultimate purpose and result of God's eternal plan
 - b. All my own righteousness is worthless compared to his genuine worth, beauty, and value
 - 2. For the sake of the incomparable value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord
 - a. 2 Cor 3:10 – the old covenant has “no glory” compared with the glory of the righteousness which comes through Christ
 - b. Knowing Jesus as the Christ (Savior from sin in all its forms and devastations) and as the Lord (King who rules and heals) overshadows all his “gains”
 - c. Nothing can compare with knowing His treasured Savior more
 - 3. That I might gain Christ
 - a. Like the treasure hidden a field (Matt 13:44) and the pearl of great price (Matt 13:45-6), the immeasurable worth of Jesus leads us to sell all else in order to gain Him
 - b. This is the final exclamation of such a radical change in the way of the Christian's thinking
 - i. It's about desire: I desire Jesus more than my own reputation and righteousness
 - ii. I consider my own strength as worthless so that I might gain Christ in my weakness
 - c. Jesus is the most valuable object in all of existence and to be united with Him is my greatest goal
- c. There was a conversion in Paul's life when he met Christ
 - i. Paul didn't convert because he was failing at Judaism, because he felt obeying the Law was too hard
 - 1. He was succeeding at it: it was his righteousness
 - 2. He converted because he saw the worthlessness of his righteousness in the light of the face of Christ on that Damascus Road
 - 3. Jesus' beauty opened his eyes to the futility of his achievements and revealed the beauty of Christ's achievements for him
 - ii. Though his new faith in Christ was not considered an abandonment of the God of Israel, there was definitely a change in Paul's understanding of how one approaches and serves God.
 - iii. He treasures Jesus the Christ (“for the sake of Christ”)
 - 1. There is always a deep, deep, sense of appreciating, valuing, treasuring Jesus that exemplifies the truly righteous
 - 2. They boast in Jesus because He is their treasure, rather than boasting in their successes or even attempted successes, or even in the general person of “God”
 - a. “God” is largely a vague title today, highly undefined or personally defined
 - i. Many believe in “God”
 - b. What about Jesus? What is believed about Jesus?

- i. Particularly, are they talking about Jesus and praising Him?
 - ii. Do they boast in His cross? (Galatians 6:14) or just His good life and teaching?
- 3. What people boast about, talk about, emphasize, comes forth from what they truly believe
 - a. Talk is cheap and definitions are usually hidden
 - b. It is easy to deceive by giving the “pat answers” that one thinks people want to hear
 - c. But what do people actually talk about and boast in the greatness of?

3. The Only Valuable Righteousness in the Economy of God’s Kingdom is the Righteousness that Comes from God Through Faith in Christ

- a. The only righteousness that has value to God is the righteousness that comes from God, through Christ, and is received solely by faith
- b. When we come to Christ we trade in our worthless attainments and varying “amounts” of righteousness and must receive the righteousness of Christ by faith alone.
 - i. There is nothing to compare with each other here: all of our righteousness is worthless for His sake
 - ii. The desire of the Christian is to know Christ, to gain Christ, to lay down our righteousness for His sake, to suffer with Him, receiving His righteousness that makes your and I acceptable to God only by faith
 - 1. You can’t trust yourself any more
 - 2. You will lose control over your own righteousness
 - 3. You will gain Christ

Will you trade in your righteousness for His today? Repent of your righteousness and place your trust in the glorious blood of Christ to atone for your sins and in His righteousness to stand you up blameless before God. He is your hope, and He is for you.