

Gains and Losses

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[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 3, verse number 7. We are getting close. Not too many weeks left, and we will have worked our way through the whole book of Philippians. Yeah? So good.

Emily, please come and read for us. Here's Philippians chapter 3, verse number 7, and down through verse number 11. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word.

Thank you, Holy Spirit, for being with us as we open your word. Would you please guide us and keep me faithful to the things that you have said in your word, what you have seen fit to inspire and have the apostle Paul write down and now have preserved it for us even until now?

We're humbly grateful. Would you please keep me faithful and help us to believe the things that you say and to obey the things that you ask of us? Please comfort and encourage, convict and challenge.

We want to hear from you and we want to see our Savior Jesus lifted high. So please do this work in the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen. In Mark chapter 12, in Mark chapter 10, the gospel of Mark in chapter 10, Mark records for us a story of a man who comes running up to Jesus and kneels down in front of him. I think he must have something very important to say to Jesus. That's why you would run up and catch up to somebody, right? He asked Jesus this question, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[2 : 38] What must I do to inherit eternal life? What an intriguing question. Jesus answers the man this way. He quotes for him from the second tablet of the Ten Commandments, the portion of the Ten Commandments that deals with how we relate to one another. Jesus says this, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother. I wonder if Jesus's answer surprises you. The man has asked, what do I have to do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus says, here's a whole bunch of stuff that you should go do these things.

Does that surprise you? It shouldn't surprise us. Here's why. If your goal is earning eternal life by doing, then Jesus is exactly right. You should try harder, you should do more, and you really should be a better person. If that's your goal, to earn eternal life from God by doing, then you got a lot of work to do. If your goal is earning a relationship from God, then like Paul before his conversion, you'll probably say things like, well, I was born in a Christian home, and my parents raised me right, and I've been baptized and confirmed. I married another Christian. I'm a good citizen. I vote the way Christians are supposed to vote. I provide for my family. I don't cheat on my taxes. I live by the golden rule.

The man responds to Jesus. I have obeyed all of these commands since I was a kid. Mark records that Jesus loves this man, and so Jesus instructs him, go sell everything you have, give the proceeds to the poor, and then you come and follow me. Come be with me. Come and know me. Why do you and I tend to emphasize earning from God when Jesus invites us to enjoy him? What if instead of having your very best life now, you earnestly desire to experience God's grace to the fullest? What if you learn to see that your adversity and your suffering, that these are not reasons to doubt God's power and goodness, but rather privileged opportunities to plunge yourself into deeper union with your Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ?

[5 : 48] What if God begins to stir in your heart unshakable hope in the future that He promises His people?

If these what-ifs will be true, then you must, like Paul, reassess everything in order to prioritize knowing Jesus. Kids, do you know what a discount is?

A discount. I'm going to explain it to you. If you own that little spot in the hallway of the mall, or you, I guess you probably don't own it, you lease a spot, a space in the hallway of the mall, and you sell calendars. What happens on January 1st?

Elon? Yeah, you probably get a discount on your calendar. Why? Because now these calendars are starting to get old, aren't they? And the more time that goes by, the more what? The greater you would expect the discount to be, right? Like two weeks into January, if you're leasing that spot in the mall, you're just happy to start getting rid of these to try to recoup your costs. You're not even so concerned about making money. So you're discounting the price. You're bringing down the price of these calendars in order to try to move them, in order to try to sell them and not lose too much money. That's a discount.

I want you to notice how Paul discounts everything that he was and everything that he did before meeting Jesus. Look at verse number seven.

[7 : 44] everything. But everything, everything, everything, everything, but everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ.

more than that, I also consider everything, everything, everything, everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. Because of him, I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung so that I may gain Christ.

before meeting Jesus, Paul values his ancestry, his heritage, his lineage, his circumcision. When he thought that he could earn a relationship with God by his doing, Paul values his zealous obedience to God's law. But since meeting Jesus, Paul discounts all of those things.

Notice these four discounts that he makes. It's like the guy marking down calendars in the mall. The first discount in verse seven. Everything that was a gain. Everything that Mike showed us last week in the text just before this.

Everything that I previously thought was a gain, I have now considered that to be a loss. First discount. Second discount. I also consider everything to be a loss. I'm reconsidering everything.

[9 : 41] I'm reassessing, reevaluating everything. And I'm realizing all of that is a loss. Third discount. I have suffered the loss of all things.

Fourth discount. I consider them, all of the things that we looked at last week, I consider all of those things as dung. Do you know what this is? This is what the dog leaves behind in your yard.

This is what comes out of cows after they eat some green grass. Okay? Do you hear this?

Everything that Paul used to value, he now says what? Now it is revolting to me. I am happy to be rid of it.

I want nothing to do with it. Like when you flush your toilet and everything gross disappears.

You are happy to be rid of it. That's how Paul views all of the things that he used to view so highly. He just says they're worth nothing to me and I'm happy to be rid of them.

[10 : 59] Paul is not rejecting here his ethnicity. He is not an anti-Semite and we should not be either. Paul is not teaching that obeying God's law is a bad thing.

He will elsewhere teach. Obeying God is a very good thing. That's not the point that he's making here. But he has reassessed everything he was and everything he did and he has recognized that whatever obscured his need for God's grace was fit only to be flushed.

Imagine you're a developer and you purchase a piece of land because you are going to put up a new neighborhood.

And I guess I'm not sure what kind of equipment you would bring in. A backhoe to strip the land? You'd bring in some kind of a big piece of equipment and you start stripping the land and I don't even know how you would become aware of this.

But you'd become aware of it somehow. And you realize this land has natural gas under it. In it. Under it. Whichever it is. It's under and it's in.

[12 : 27] I'm telling the story. It's under and it's in. Okay. You previously were going to make a bunch of money, especially if your land is in South Fargo, right?

You're going to make a bunch of money putting up this neighborhood and selling off chunks of land to people for their homes. But now, your land has natural gas underneath it.

And now, it's even more valuable than you could ever imagine it was before. This is the second progression that Paul makes in our text.

The first one is to discount everything that he was and everything he did before knowing Jesus. And simultaneously, Paul re-evaluates Christ and says, This, Christ, Jesus Christ is now the most valuable thing to me.

He marks up, if I can use that opposite of the discount. He marks up the value of Jesus Christ like you would do if you were this developer with this land that now has natural gas under it.

[13 : 45] Notice three markups. The first one is in verse 7. Again, everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss. Why would you do that?

Paul, why would you consider it to be a loss? And he says, because of Christ. Because of Christ. Verse 8. I also consider.

Don't miss the present tense. Paul has no regrets about this decision. No buyer's remorse. I also consider everything to be a loss in view.

Why would you do that, Paul? Why would you discount the value of everything that you are and everything that you've done? In view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

I suffer the loss of all things and I consider them as dung. They are revolting to me. Why would you do that, Paul? Why would you give it all up? So that I may gain Christ.

[14 : 53] Incidentally, the Greek word that is here translated dung, it may be derived from a phrase, an idiom, that which is thrown to the dogs.

Perhaps Paul is hinting back to what he said just previously.

And perhaps he's saying, Go ahead, Steve. You want to eat whatever we're going to scrape into the dog's dish? You go ahead and you have all of that.

I want Jesus Christ. Verse 9. I want to be found in him.

Not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ.

[15 : 58] The righteousness from God based on faith. Before Christ, Paul chases after a righteousness of my own.

Do you see that there in your Bible? It is my righteousness. It is self-righteousness. How do you get at self-righteousness? Well, you get it by valuing who you are and what you can do to inherit eternal life.

But all that Paul was and all that Paul did could never earn him a relationship with God. It's all just self-righteousness.

Brothers and sisters, our need is so deep and so wide and so ever-present that giving us Jesus Christ is the only thing God could do to lift us out of the depths of our sin.

To be in Christ, to be one with Christ, this, this is amazing grace. He made the one who did not know sin.

[17 : 29] To be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Do you see this exchange that Paul does?

Before it was my righteousness. It was just a bunch of filthy self-righteousness and it could never get me a relationship with God. But now I have Christ.

And how am I in Christ? Not by my righteousness, but by Christ's righteousness. Because God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us.

So that we could become the righteousness of God. How? In him. In him. In him. How do we receive this righteousness of God?

Not by earning. Not by doing. Like the man in Mark 10. We earn this by receiving through faith. This is how Paul reassesses everything that he was and everything that he did.

[18 : 34] If I don't know Jesus, nothing else matters. If I don't know Jesus, nothing else matters. And there's a second reassessment that Paul needs to make here.

God will lead us where we would have never decided to go.

God will take us into valleys that we never thought that we would enter. And there we will endure devastating losses.

Loss of relationship. Loss of reputation. Loss of careers. Loss of dreams. Loss of what we thought life would be.

God will usher us into the shadow of suffering. God will bring sickness and pain and even death into our lives.

[19 : 38] Not to ruin us. Not to ruin us. But to make us more like Jesus. To strip away every tattered shred of pride and self-righteousness until we declare, if I have Jesus, then nothing else matters.

Let me ask you, how will following Judaizer Steve's suggestions sustain you in your suffering? Do more?

Try harder? Be better? Come on! That's not going to sustain us in our suffering. What will sustain us in our suffering?

This is our hope in suffering. Verse number 10. My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death, assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.

Don't hear any insecurity or doubt in those last few words. Paul is absolutely convinced of the resurrection. He knows that he will be raised from the dead.

[21 : 13] But Paul is also very realistic. But Paul is also very realistic, and that's helpful for us. Life between now and the resurrection is certainly uncertain, isn't it?

Think about this. When we tell our own stories, we tend to go from rags to riches to riches to riches to riches to ever greater riches.

Isn't that how we like to tell the stories? From rags to riches. From bad to better and better and better.

But listen, when you reassess everything and prioritize knowing Jesus, listen, then you abandon your own story arc and join Jesus' story arc.

Remember when Ryan taught us that a couple weeks back? You give up this story arc that says, I want to go from rags to riches. From bad to better to better and better. That's Steve's way.

[22 : 29] That's garbage. And you join yourself instead to Jesus' story arc. What does Jesus' story arc look like? Well, he had everything in glory, and he left it all in order to what?

To humble himself. To enter into suffering. To go down, down, down, down, down, down. Until it seemed like he couldn't go any lower.

Joining Jesus' story arc means giving up your plans. It means giving up your goals. It means giving up your agenda.

It means giving up your little kingdom where you get to be the king. Why? Because if you have Jesus, then nothing else matters. And if you're going to give up all of that and recognize that if I have Jesus, then nothing else matters, then we can walk humbly with Jesus, following Jesus' story arc down, down, down, down, into ever greater humility.

Even down into suffering. Even when it seems like this story arc hangs out in suffering for a long time, and we wish that it would go differently.

[23 : 58] We can join ourselves to Jesus' story arc because we remember that our hope is anchored, not in a better life here and now, but in Jesus' resurrection power.

Remember, Jesus' story arc comes down, and then what? There's the resurrection, and he is ascended, and God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

We're on Jesus' story arc. We're some here down in the bottom portion of Jesus' story arc, and we are waiting for what?

For the resurrection. We're waiting for glory. And it is coming. It is coming.

Because we know that God has highly exalted him. And we know that as we endure suffering and pain now, following Jesus' story arc, that a time is coming when we will also be raised.

[25 : 15] Even if this story arc should leave us in death here. Even if. Doesn't Paul address that?

Being made like him, even in his death? And yet, our hope remains sure. We are on Jesus' story arc, and his story arc ends in glory.

That's where we are going, brothers and sisters. That's our hope. The resurrection of Jesus. His power. Raising us from wherever we are and bringing us to be with him.

If you own a dairy, you know what a dairy is? Sylvia, you know what a dairy is?

Oh. Dairy is where you milk cows to get milk. Oh. Now you know. Okay. So, that's why we call it Dairy Queen, I guess.

[26 : 24] Right? Okay. So, let's imagine that you own a dairy, and you have 300 cows. I think that's a lot.

I don't know for sure, but it sounds like a lot of cows to me. So, that's what we're going with. You have 300 cows in your dairy, and your cows produce lots of milk, and you sell this milk, and maybe you make cheese out of some of it.

Maybe you sell it to people who actually turn it into milk or cream, and they make ice cream out of it. I got your attention now, everybody? Kids? Okay? And you are making lots of money on your dairy with these 300 cows.

Let's say your business plan changes, and you decide, you know, I've got all this land that these cows are eating all the grass on and producing this milk, but you know, I've taken up golf, and I would like to make a golf course right here on my land.

Maybe your land even has natural gas under it. I don't know. There we are. Like, those stories all just came together, okay? What is your problem now? You have a dairy.

[27 : 49] You have 300 cows. They're producing lots of milk. Your plans change, and now you wish to have a golf course, a beautiful green golf course.

Where people can come and walk and enjoy being on the green golf course and doing all of the things that you do when you golf. The cows that, that was a perfect sound for this, the cows that used to be your assets are now what?

They're liabilities, aren't they? Before, those cows were making all kinds of milk and making all kinds of money, but now, your plans have changed, and now when you want a golf course, and now I have all of these cows, I need to reassess all of my assets and make sure that they don't become liabilities.

Why? Because cows are going to eat all of the fairways and leave messes behind. It's not unusual for people to try to earn a relationship with God by doing.

That's not unusual for people to try to earn a relationship with God that way. Perhaps you made a decision for Jesus one night at youth group, or maybe you prayed the prayer with a parent one night during a thunderstorm, but now you're not really sure if it worked.

[29 : 30] But you feel like you have your get out of hell free card, but just to be safe, you work really hard at being nice, being a better person, doing whatever you can, trying to apply some salve to your conscience.

Friend, I wonder if, like Paul, or like the dairy farmer who has now turned into a golf pro, everything that you have piled and stacked and stored and collected needs to be reassessed.

And that can feel scary. That can feel scary. What if your assets have become liabilities, and what if the things that you used to hold on to and the things that you have been doing are actually inoculating you to God's grace?

Maybe you are turned off by an all-powerful God who allows pain and sickness and even death.

Maybe you have been burned by Christians acting like hypocrites.

Maybe you have sophisticated objections to faith. Please do not continue to ignore God. Come, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and be saved.

[31 : 01] Followers of Jesus, here is how Paul reassesses everything and prioritizes knowing Jesus. If I don't know Jesus, nothing else matters.

And if I have Jesus, nothing else matters. I suspect there is reassessment and prioritization work for you and me to do.

see your ethnic background and your spiritual heritage, your Christian parents, your strong spiritual disciplines, even your religious practices, your political affiliations, your college degrees, your career advancement, none of these things are a danger to your spiritual health so long as they remain secondary.

But the moment they become a basis for earning or maintaining a relationship with God, they are like dairy cows on a golf course.

Much more trouble than they're worth. Knowing Jesus means joining Jesus' story arc and that means humility like Jesus showed us that turns the other cheek.

[32 : 20] It means grace that refuses to revile even when you are reviled. It means trusting God's timing even when it's not your timing. It means submitting to God's perfect justice rather than defending yourself.

It means gentleness that forgives others. The kind of gentleness that Jesus modeled when he's hanging on the cross and assures this repentant thief.

The thief that just moments before was mocking him and reviling him but now he repents and Jesus says to him today you will be with me in paradise.

What did that thief do? For just minutes that were left in his life he joined himself to Jesus' story arc and Jesus assures him today you're gonna die.

Your life here is coming to a very quick end but you will be with me in paradise. you're on my story arc now. Will you reassess everything to prioritize knowing Jesus?

[33 : 32] If you won't then like the rich man we met earlier who wants to earn by doing you are turning away from Jesus' invitation come follow me come be with me come and know me but if you will reassess everything and prioritize knowing Jesus then life doesn't have to make sense or be fair or go your way because you have Jesus and there is no other love no lifelong pursuit no righting of wrongs no desire or privilege that can begin to compare with knowing him.

Should we pray about that together? Father thank you for your word we're so grateful for what you have shown us here we're grateful for what Paul taught the Philippians and what we are now privileged to learn together would you please help us right now as we take a couple of moments to do some reassessment and some prioritization of knowing our Savior Jesus Holy Spirit please work in our hearts!

speaking with another brother or sister perhaps it means having a conversation with someone close to us that we want some accountability from we want some wisdom some insight some counsel from on our lives would you please help us give us courage to follow through on the things that we have confessed hope thank you for your grace and thank you for the forgiveness that is ours in our Savior Jesus that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ that even if we have recognized during this time sitting under your word that we have gotten our lives a bit upside down we have made ourselves the king of the kingdom we have broken temporarily as it were, from the story arc of Jesus.

That even now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. And so we confess again the great privilege it is to be in Christ, to be found in Him.

Thank you, Holy Spirit, for continuing to do work. Thank you for uniting us with our Savior, Jesus.

Thank you for giving us hope that we believe, we confess, will outlast any hope, any suffering, any injustice, any cruelty, any pain or sickness or death that we endure here.

[37 : 12] Father, we give our lives to you and ask that you would use us for our good and for your glory. It's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.