

THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS

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In the third chapter of his letter to the Philippians Paul discusses the subject of “confidence in the flesh.” To have confidence in the flesh is relying on one’s birth, station in life, education and accomplishments. If anyone could be justified in doing this, it would be Paul (Philippians 3:3-8). He was from a “right” family and was well educated. The expression “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” is indicative of the ability to speak Hebrew, a rarity in the first century, even in the land of the Jews. He worked hard as a Pharisee and was a diligent persecutor of the church. He said, I believe sardonically, that he was blameless touching the righteousness which is in the law. He had been operating as henchman for the high priest (Acts 9). He was ambitious. There was nothing he would not do to succeed. He even looked after the coats of the murderers of Stephen and agreed that he should die (Acts 6, 7 and 8). Paul had it all. He was the man.

Now listen to him: *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ”* (Philippians 3:7-8). You know what happened to old Saul when he became the new Paul. He lost his place as an up-and-coming young Pharisee. But he did not care. He did not just lose all the things that made him a big man...he got rid of them like we toss out the trash. Why did he do this? He did it so he could be a Christian.

What can we learn from this that can help us today? Well, obviously, too many things to get to here. So, let’s start with the recognition that on our own, you and I are no big deal. Sometimes Christians get a little enamored of their own significance. We see it in preachers that think they are big dogs. But it also shows up in the pew when folks feel they have the perfect right because of their elevated place in life to say and do things critical and hurtful of others.

Christians *must* realize that not a one of us is worth a thing on our own. As Paul said in Philippians 3:9, our own righteousness is nothing. We are saved by the righteousness of God. In the end everything else is just so much trash.

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