
Church in Campbell Weekly News

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LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS MESSAGE 18 COUNTING ALL THINGS LOSS ON ACCOUNT OF CHRIST

Philippians 3:7 and 8 say, "But what things were gains to me, these I have counted loss on account of Christ. But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them to be refuse that I may gain Christ." When we come to these verses, we come to the heart of this book. Here we are initiated into the experience of Christ.

In verse 7 Paul speaks of "what things were gains to me." These are the things mentioned in verses 5 and 6. The things that were gains to him Paul counted loss on account of Christ. All the different gains were counted as one loss by Paul because they all issued in one thing, that is, the loss of Christ, as indicated by "on account of Christ." All the things which were once gains to Paul hindered him and held him back from participating in Christ and enjoying Him. Hence, on account of Christ, all the gains were a loss to him.

Whereas in verse 7 Paul refers specifically to religious things, in verse 8 he goes on to say, "I count also all things to be loss." Paul counted as loss on account of Christ not only the things of his former religion, but all other things as well. In this message I have a particular burden to point out what these things include.

Years ago, many of us were taught that the things in verse 8 refer to worldly, material things. In a sense, this understanding is partly right. However, to interpret Paul's word in this way is not very practical. According to verses 5 and 6, Paul's concept is not mainly related to material things. It is true, of course, that worldly, material things occupy people and keep them from experiencing Christ. However, Paul realized that the things which truly frustrate people from experiencing Christ are mainly the things of religion, philosophy, and culture. For the most part, the thoughtful, philosophical people are not occupied by material things. Those who are not thoughtful or philosophical are the ones usually distracted by material things. Those who are more philosophical care for religion, culture, and philosophy. When you go out to preach the gospel, you will discover that religion, philosophy, and culture are the most powerful strongholds of resistance to the gospel.

Before Paul was converted, he was not one who loved material things. On the contrary, he was a person fully given to Jewish religion, philosophy, and culture. His whole being was for Judaism and everything included in it. Apparently Jews care for their religion. Actually they care much more for their culture and philosophy than for religion. The same is true, of course, for people of every race, culture, and nationality. Moslems, for example, are fully occupied with their own type of thought, logic, philosophy, and culture.

Let us review the items covered by Paul in verses 5 and 6. He says that he was circumcised the eighth day, that he was of the race of Israel, that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, that he was a Hebrew of Hebrews, that concerning the law he was a Pharisee, that concerning zeal he persecuted the church, and that concerning righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless.

These items are related to religion, philosophy, and culture. This is a strong indication that as Paul was writing these verses he was conscious not of material things, but rather of religious, philosophical, and cultural things. At the time the book of Philippians was written, most of the people in the Roman Empire were for religion, philosophy, or politics. In fact, the three main elements of Western culture, then as well as now, were Jewish religion, Greek philosophy, and Roman politics.

For thousands of years, Satan, the enemy of God, has been using religion, philosophy, and culture to possess people and to keep them from experiencing Christ. Man was made for Christ. God created man in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), and the image of God is Christ (Col. 1:15). Man was made in the image of God for Christ. But Satan uses religion, philosophy, and culture to hook people and to keep them from Christ. Although the more simple people may be hooked by material things, the more thoughtful ones are hooked by religion, philosophy, and culture. Actually it is the people who are occupied by these things who control the earth. The thoughtful, philosophical, and cultured ones are the most powerful ones. However, Satan has used religion, philosophy, and culture both to occupy these people and also to nail them on his wall.

Before Paul believed in Christ, he also was one hooked and nailed by Satan. He had been hooked by Jewish religion, philosophy, and culture. How strong he was for Judaism! Perhaps there has not been another person more absolute for Jewish religion, philosophy, and culture. To people like Saul of Tarsus, wealth or material things mean nothing compared with their religion, philosophy, and culture.

If we get into Paul's spirit and thought in Philippians 3, we shall realize that as he was writing he was thinking of religion, philosophy, and culture when he spoke of "all things." The "all things" in verse 8 must certainly include the three categories of religious things, philosophical things, and cultural things. If we would drop our religion, philosophy, and culture, we would truly abandon everything. By dropping these categories of things, we would automatically drop the worldly, material things, which are actually dominated by religion, philosophy, and culture. Although it is easy to overcome the influence of material things, it is very difficult to overcome religion, philosophy, and culture. Those who love the Lord may easily abandon material things for His sake. But it is not easy for them to lay aside their particular thought and logic. You may love the Lord and seek Him for years without dropping one bit of your personal philosophy or logic.

Every nationality and culture has its particular type of logic and philosophy. The British, for example, are noted for their diplomacy, which embodies their logic and philosophy. The Chinese and Japanese are steeped in their own national logic and philosophy. Every nationality is strong in its particular kind of cultural peculiarity. As a result of all the different kinds of logic and philosophy, Christ does not have a way with any group of people on earth today. He does not have a way either with those in the Orient or with those in the West. At the time of the Reformation, Christ tried to find a way with the Germans, but He was not successful. Later, He tried to find a way with the British, also without success. We repeat, there is not one group of people

on earth with whom Christ has been able to fully have His way. People of every nationality have been taken over by Satan and hooked by him through religion, philosophy, and culture. It has been difficult for the Lord to find any group of people available to Him for His move on earth.

It is important for us all to realize that we still hold on to our national philosophy and domestic logic. Those from one part of the country hold to their logic, and those from another region cling to their philosophy. Holding to our domestic logic and national philosophy deprives us of Christ. In a sense, this drives Christ away from us in our experience. In a subtle, secret, and hidden way, the religious, philosophical, and cultural things occupy the believers, even the best of Christians, and keep them from the experience of Christ. Wherever you may go in the world today, you will find that Christ simply does not have a way with any nationality or group of people. In every part of the world, the national philosophy and the domestic logic are so strong that there is little ground in the believers for Christ. Years ago, I was invited to stay in a certain place as an honored guest. As I observed the way the people there behaved themselves, I was deeply impressed that because they were so strong in their religion, philosophy, and culture, Christ had no way to get through in them.

For the most part, people are willing to accept God's salvation for their personal benefit, but they are not willing to give full ground to Christ. In a sense, they receive salvation, but, experientially speaking, they may not receive Christ and allow Him to have a free way in them. The cause of this problem is religion, philosophy, and culture.

If we would get into the depths of Paul's thought in 3:7 and 8, we would realize that Paul was very concerned about the matters of religion, philosophy, and culture. His word about the dogs, the evil workers, and the concision in verse 2 confirms this. The concision, a contemptuous term for circumcision, is a matter not only related to religion, but is a matter especially related to Jewish culture. Moreover, Jewish culture is based upon Jewish philosophy and logic. In verse 3 Paul says that we are the circumcision, who serve by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Then he goes on to give the reasons he once had for confidence in the flesh, listing seven items related to Jewish religion, philosophy, and culture. These are the very things Paul counted as loss on account of Christ. Do you know why he counted them loss? It is because they were all substitutes for Christ, hooks used by Satan to keep people from Christ and from the experience of Christ. How subtle is the enemy in keeping us from the experience of Christ!

Oh, the subtlety of the enemy needs to be exposed! To some extent at least, we still have within us certain things which are a substitute for Christ in a subtle, secret way. These substitutes mainly involve religion, philosophy, and culture. As a result, we still are not fully and thoroughly occupied by Christ. We have not yet counted all things loss on account of Christ.

Many of us have known 3:7 and 8 for years, and we are very familiar with these verses. However, we probably have not touched the depths of this part of chapter three. Without this, we cannot be initiated into the genuine experience of Christ. You may have heard many messages on how Paul counted all things loss on account of Christ and on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. But has knowing these verses in an objective way brought you into the real experience of Christ? I believe that, if we are honest, we shall have to admit that we have not experienced Christ according to these verses. The reason for this lack of experience is that, until now, we have not probed into the depths of Paul's thought in this portion of the Word.

We cannot experience Christ if we only drop the worldly,

material things. If this is our understanding of "all things" in 3:8, we are far from the experience of Christ revealed here. These verses are not shallow. According to the context, Paul is not speaking of superficial, outward things. He is not concerned mainly with material things. His concept is much deeper and is related to religious, philosophical, and cultural things, even to our domestic logic and national philosophy, things hidden deep within us. As we have indicated, it is very difficult for us to set aside these things in order to give ground to Christ and experience Him. During my lifetime I have met many Christians. But I do not know many who have been able to drop their national philosophy and domestic logic in favor of the experience of Christ.

This word about our national philosophy and domestic logic is extremely practical. It exposes a hidden substitute for Christ and a subtle enemy of the experience of Christ. By the Lord's mercy and grace, may we learn to say that on account of Christ we count as loss our national philosophy and domestic logic, realizing that these things are a substitute for Christ and keep us from the deeper experience of Christ. Yes, we have experienced Christ to a certain degree, but our experience has been severely limited and blocked by our national philosophy and domestic logic. Perhaps we can testify that we are free from the influence of religion. But who can say honestly that he is not hindered by his national philosophy or domestic logic? We must confess that we are still hindered by this subtle substitute for Christ, that Satan is still using our national philosophy and domestic logic to hook us, to occupy us, and to keep us from going further and deeper in the experience of Christ. May the enemy's subtlety be exposed and may we truly count all things loss, including our own philosophy and logic, on account of Christ and the experience and enjoyment of Him!

Burdens for Church Prayers

- Pray for the enjoyment of reading Philippians
- Pray for 5/29 outdoor blending and gospel.
- Pray for the NorCal brothers' prayer retreat 6/2~3 at Campbell that the Lord strengthen the prayer and be with the brothers.
- For daily exercise in GOW training: prophesying on Lord's day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth and attend Lord's day meeting on time.
- Pray for Russian speaking saints for their needed shepherding from past co-workers.
- For gospel preaching on West Valley College campus, as well as for English-speaking testimony in Campbell.
- Pray for Boston Training Center that all the practical needs will be met.

Announcement

- Morning Revival: Philippians, I-3:1~6, II-3:7~8, III-3:9~11, IV-3:12~16, V-3:17~21, VI-3:1~21, Life Study 17~25.
- YP Bible Reading this week: Mark chapter 15-16
- GOW training 4th term registration: 5-day RCP deadline 5/21, monthly 7/24, registers with brother Peter.
- Prayer meeting 7:30PM on Tues (5/24) at meeting hall.
- 5/29 Lord's Day 10am blending at Sanborn Park, Saratoga.
- Summer school of truth, July 24-29, Alliance Redwood.
- Memorial Day Conf. webcast at Santa Clara meeting hall: 5/28 (Saturday), 3:00 - Message #1; 4:45 - Message #2 5/29(Lord's day), 3:00 - Message #3; 4:45 - Message #4 5/30 (Monday), 3:00 - Message #5; 4:45 - Message #6
- SB SST Teachers Training, 7:30 ~ 9:30pm, 5/25 (Wednesday), Cupertino meeting hall.