

How to Turn Loss Into Gain

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. Glad that you're here with us online and by video, whether it's Facebook or YouTube or you're listening to this podcast.

We're glad that you're here with us today. And so we'll go ahead and get started. In 1730s England, there was a young man named George Whitefield, and he desperately wanted to be right with God. He was going to Oxford University at the time, and he was part of a club called the Holy Club. And he was part of that club along with John and Charles Wesley.

And what the members of that club did was they got up early every morning for lengthy devotions. They disciplined themselves during the day so they wouldn't waste a minute of that day.

And in their diary every night, they examined themselves and wrote down ways they had sinned during the day and ways that they felt that they had wronged God.

[1 : 11] They fasted every Wednesday and Friday. They set aside Saturday as the Sabbath, preparing themselves for the Lord's Day.

On Sunday, they did a lot of things. They tried to persuade others to attend church. They also tried to persuade them to stay away from sin.

And finally, what Whitefield did in order to, in an utter sense of desperation, what he did was, in rejection of all self-trust, what he did was, he went outside in the wintertime, and he lay prostrate on the ground for hours, crying out for deliverance in the cold, and crying for deliverance from sin, crying for deliverance from Satan, in order to buffet his body, in order to try to catch the attention of God.

But he ended up getting sick. As a matter of fact, for seven weeks, he was sick in bed. He was confessing his sins. He was spending hours praying, spending hours reading his Greek New Testament.

And even by Whitefield's own admission, he said he wasn't saved because he was trusting in all those things they were doing, the fasting and the praying, the journaling, the lying prostrate in the cold on the ground for hours in desperation to God.

[2 : 56] And one day, as he says, he put it, in a sense of utter desperation, in rejection of all self-trust, I cast my soul on the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and a ray of faith granted me from above, assured me that I would not be cast out.

And as he prayed this prayer, Whitefield said his burden was lifted, and he was filled with joy, and Whitefield went on to become the great evangelist that was used by God in the first great awakening.

He ended up trusting only in Jesus Christ, and he laid aside, he did away with, he turned all that he thought was gain into loss, and placed himself completely on Jesus Christ, and trusted him in faith. Now thankfully, we don't have to do the things that Whitefield did for us to be right with God. And that's what the Apostle Paul is talking about in our text this morning in Philippians.

If you want to grab your Bibles this morning, as a family, or wherever you are, if you're able to have access to your Bible, we will be in the book of Philippians chapter number 3, and verses 4 through 11.

[4 : 30] And we're going to be there this morning talking about how the Apostle Paul, or the Apostle Paul talking about what he had considered at one point in his life to be good works, to be things that he was trusting in to make him right with God, and realizing that none of these things was what it took to be right with God.

And we have to understand this one thing, that trusting in Christ and our good works is really not trusting in Christ at all.

We have to give everything up, as far as good works, our religion, our morality, if we expect to receive Christ as our Savior. So to be right with God, we have to lose in order to gain. Now, let's take a look. As we see in verse 4, we're going to read all the way through verse number 11. He says, Though I also might have confidence in the flesh, if anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so.

Circumcise the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, concerning the law, a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

[6 : 00] But what things were gained to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness, which is from God, by faith, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being conformed to his death, if by any means I may attain, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

And so what the apostle Paul is saying here is the very best of who we are and the very best of what we are is actually worthless.

Whatever we can point to that remotely might, we think might make us acceptable to God, is in fact to God offensive. Whether we feel it's our morality, or whether we think it's our pedigree, as we talked last week about our parents or our grandparents being Christians, whether we're looking at who we are, whether we're American, or any of those things, good works, nothing will make us, apart from Jesus Christ, nothing will make us right with God.

All those things that we're placing our faith and trust in, apart from Jesus Christ, is actually offensive to Jesus Christ. So what are we going to look at first?

The first thing that I believe that we see here in Philippians chapter 3, verses 4 through 11, is you have to lose in order to gain.

[7 : 59] So there are some things that we need to lose. Now what are those things? If we look at verses 4 and 5, Paul says, Though I also might have confidence in the flesh, what's Paul referring to?

Do you remember last week, we talked about these Judaizers that had come into the church in Philippi, and they were saying that these Gentile believers, or these Gentiles, had to be circumcised in order to be right with God.

So what they were saying was, it's okay to trust Jesus, but you have to go and catch up the Old Testament, and be circumcised, and follow all these other rituals.

You have to live right, you have to be circumcised, in order to be a good Jew before you can be a good Christian. So what Paul's doing here, is he is pointing back to what he, at one point in time, saw as what made him right with God.

So he says, Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. You guys think you're confident in you being right with God? Well, listen to what, listen to my pedigree.

[9 : 18] He says, If anyone thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so. So you Judaizers think you have a special place with God?

You've got nothing on me. So he goes on to say, in verse number 5, he says, I was circumcised, the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and concerning the law, he said, I was a Pharisee.

And then he says, in verse number 6, concerning zeal, I persecuted the church. Concerning righteousness, which is in the law, I was blameless.

You could not point to anything in my life where I had broken the Old Testament law of God. So what is Paul talking about? What is Paul mentioning?

Well, first of all, Paul mentions that he was circumcised the eighth day. We see that in verse number 5. He says, I was circumcised the eighth day.

[10 : 27] You Judaizers are telling these Philippian Christians that they have to be circumcised to be right with God. Well, as an eight-day-old, my parents took me to the rabbi, and I was, to the Jewish leader, and I was circumcised on the eighth day according to the law.

Then he refers to rank. He said, of the stock of Israel, and then more specifically, he says, of the tribe of Benjamin.

So he was a blood-born citizen of the covenant nation of Israel, specifically, the tribe of Benjamin, in whose territory is the holy city, Jerusalem.

As a matter of fact, the tribe of Benjamin was a tribe that provided the first king. Very possible who Paul, whose original name was Saul before God changed his name, was potentially named after King Saul.

So it was the tribe of Benjamin that had provided the first king, and also it was of the tribe of Benjamin that ultimately our Lord Jesus Christ would be born through.

[11 : 45] and later remained in Judah when the northern kingdom separated. And Paul is saying even this didn't help him gain salvation in the least.

Then what else does he, to which, to what else does he refer? He refers to race. He said, I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. His lineage and his language.

He was a Hebrew Hebrew, and he was a Hebrew that stuck to the Hebrew language, and he was where he felt God wanted him to be.

And then, fourthly, he refers to his religion. He said, concerning the law, I was a Pharisee, which was the strictest sect of Judaism.

And what they did, what the Pharisees did, was they sought to obey the law in the most scrupulous manner possible. I mean, they even went down to tithing of their table spices.

[12 : 51] It wasn't enough to tithe of their income, to tithe of everything that came into the household. They took their table spices, and they took the 10%, and they gave that to the temple.

And so, we see that in Matthew 23, 23. So, as a Pharisee, he was even zealous to persecute Christians.

We see that in verse number 6, concerning zeal. He said, before I came to know Jesus, I even persecuted Christians because I wanted to satisfy God's holy law.

And this new sect, this new religion, religion, I thought was not right. And so, I persecuted them.

And then, as it concerned righteousness, Paul says in verse number 6, he says, which is according to the law, blameless.

So, outward obedience. Couldn't find anything with the apostle Paul's life to place a finger on. They couldn't find any violation with Paul at all.

[14 : 03] So, what do we do? We say here that we find that we need to trade the trash for the greatest treasure.

Trade the trash for the greatest treasure. Now, you're saying, what in the world are you talking about? Well, the apostle Paul has talked about all of these things, and as we see, as we continue, trade the trash for the greatest treasure.

here, he says, in verses 7 through 11, he says, but what things were gained to me? What things?

The things he just mentioned, that he was circumcised the eighth day, he was of the stock of Israel, more specifically, the tribe of Benjamin, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, his mom was a full Hebrew, his dad was a full Hebrew, Hebrew, he spoke the Hebrew language, and he said, concerning the law, he was a Pharisee, the strictest sect of Judaism, concerning zeal, persecuted the church, according to the law, I was blameless.

Now, you might think, well, Paul, are you bragging? No, actually, I think it's just the opposite. He says, I thought these were great, but in reality, those were all offensive to God.

So, what did Paul gain by trading the trash for the greatest treasure? We see in verse number eight, he says, yet indeed, I also count all things lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.

[15 : 44] In verse number eight, he says, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ.

Christ. So, he considered all of his good works. He considered his pedigree, he considered his religion, he considered the religious rituals, all of those things, he considered them garbage, trash, refuse, things that you throw out and you never want to see again that ultimately end up in the garbage heap.

He says, those things were worthless to me. So, what did he trade all of that for? Verse number eight, he says he gained the ability to know Christ.

He said, I count all things lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. What does knowing Christ mean? I mean, it means more than just knowing about Christ.

it means to have a personal relationship with him. You and I may know a lot of people that we studied about in history.

[16:57] We may know the explorers, we may know people who accomplished either great things, or we may know about people who did very, very vile things in history.

Now, we don't know them personally, we know about them. And there are people who are history majors, who become experts on a particular character in history, and might even have their PhD on a particular era in history, or a particular person, but they know about them.

They don't really know them personally. To have a relationship with Christ requires that we have the indwelling Holy Spirit within us, and that comes only, as we saw last week, for by grace are we saved through faith, that not of ourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast, or woman, or boy, or girl.

And once we receive that free gift of salvation, the Lord Jesus, we become part of the family of God, but in order for us to have a relationship with him, requires that we spend time with him.

Let him speak to us through his word. You may be asking, how can we have a relationship with someone we cannot see? Well, have you ever had a pen pal relationship with someone?

[18:26] Maybe you've never met them, but you've written them. Back now, I'm dating myself, that's back before the time of the internet, and you actually wrote letters. But even emailing someone, I imagine, could have the same effect.

You pour out your heart to that person. They open up their heart to you, and you get to know their innermost thoughts and emotions, and you back and forth, you have this relationship, and you may say, well, I've never met them personally.

You may not have even traded pictures with one another. Can you really know that person? In some ways, I believe you can, especially if you're being honest with one another.

You say, well, how is that the same with our relationship with the Lord? Well, for one thing, the Bible says that when we trust Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit indwells us, and he speaks to us, he has written to us through his word, the word of God, what we call the Bible.

And so, he speaks to us through his word when we read the Bible, it's like he is speaking to us. And when we pray and when we talk to him, we're having a conversation back and forth.

[19:53] We fellowship with him, and we develop a friendship with him. So Paul gained the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and he also said he gained Christ's righteousness by faith.

he says in verse number nine, and be found in him, not having, as he referred to in verses four through verse number six, he says, not having my own righteousness.

All of these things I thought were gained, really just lost. Not having my own righteousness, which is from the law. All the law did was show us how guilty we are, that we cannot be good enough, and the law made us guilty before God.

He says, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness, which is from God by faith. He gained Christ's righteousness by faith.

Righteousness was Paul's goal, if you remember, when he was a Pharisee. he couldn't ever get there, because none of those works ever made him good enough to be right with God.

[21:05] So he could never get there. But by throwing out the trash of his good works, he was able to receive what he had been so desperately trying for simply by faith.

Whether we're Whitefield, and we're prostrate on the ground in the middle of the winter, and getting sick seven weeks in bed, because we're trying to buffet our bodies and bring our bodies under control, and whatever we feel that we need to do, abstaining from food, or abstaining from whatever, none of that will get us right with God.

But by throwing out the trash of our good works, we're able to receive what we truly want, simply by faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Then, what he goes on to say in verses 10 and 11, was that he gained experiencing Christ's power.

Notice verse number 10. Paul goes on to say, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed, being made conformable to his death.

If by any means, verse 11 says, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Now, what Paul is talking about here is the power to change.

[22:34] The power to change. You may find yourself wanting to turn over and you leave. You may find yourself wanting to get rid of a habit, bad habit, or a sinful habit, and you find that you're having

difficulty changing.

are you resting on the power of the Holy Spirit? Are you resting on that same mighty power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead?

That's the power to change. That is what gives us the power to change and transform us into a whole new person.

Therefore, if anyone be in Christ, he or she is a brand new creation. All things are passed away, are passed away, past tense, all things are becoming new, present tense.

It is that consistent state of change because of the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

When we take time to know Christ, the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead works in us to set us free from sin.

[23 : 47] So, as we bring this down to a conclusion, what do we need to throw in the garbage? What do we need to throw in the trash?

When we think about it, we may still, even as Christian, we may have pride in certain things.

We may have pride in our morality. we may maybe not overtly, but be proud that we follow the word of God. Proud that we don't do certain things that other people do.

It may not even be sin, but because we think it might be, or it might lead to sin, and we don't do that which we think might lead to sin, then we think we're better than someone else, or we judge someone else by doing that which the Bible didn't tell us we shouldn't do.

And so, what is that? That's a form of pride. That's judging another person for that which may very well be permissible.

[25 : 02] And so, by judging someone else based on what we wouldn't do, that literally is pride. And that's rubbish. Think about it this way. if you brought, if you fill all your garbage bags with your garbage, put them in your garbage can, you wheel that garbage can out to the road, and when you're out of the road, someone stops and says, I'll trade you.

I'll trade you your garbage for this brand new and you fill in the blank, whatever it is, whatever you feel would be something awesome.

brand new lawnmower, brand new car, brand new truck, new house, healing, complete healing, whatever it is, something that you long for, and they say, I'll trade you your garbage for this, and if it was totally legitimate, would you trade?

Kind of a no-brainer, right? Yeah, you can have my garbage if I can have this, no strings attached, no. What's the deal? Well, nothing. I just throw out your garbage, I'll take it, and I'll trade you the most wonderful thing in the world that you can imagine.

Isn't that what God has done for us? Give me all your good works. Give me all that is considered garbage, give it to me, and I'll trade it for salvation.

[26 : 38] I'll trade it for a relationship with you. I'll trade it for a brand new life now, and life in heaven forever with me.

Now, no wonder Paul had so much joy. He saw that what he had gained in Christ was far more than he had lost. He says, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead, his life was no longer about himself, Paul now looked at life from a heavenly perspective, not an earthly one.

There are people today who live for things, live for money, live for fame, and for themselves, and may never truly be happy. But when you live for Christ, and he is your ultimate treasure, you know he can never be taken away from you.

and his value will never decline. It doesn't matter the economy, it doesn't matter what epidemic or pandemic is going across the world, it will not devalue what you have in him.

The value will never go down. So let our joy be found in Christ. If you've ever been saved, if you've not been saved, call on him right now, totally, totally, completely surrender yourself to him, and just like Whitefield did, totally surrendered himself, and said, all of this is worth nothing, and I lay myself upon your mercy, I know I'm a sinner, and I am trusting Jesus Christ alone for my salvation, and he will save you, he will forgive your sin, and he will make you a part of his family.

[28 : 35] Now, if you already know Jesus as your Savior, don't forget that your joy is not in things of the world. It's not in the things that we may pride ourselves in.

Our joy is found in Jesus alone. It's knowing him, having a relationship with him, it's in fellowshiping with him through reading his word, through talking to him in prayer, and if you're listening to this and you say, well, I really don't know how to pray, it's just talking.

Let him know what you're thinking, let him know what you're feeling. He already knows it, but he wants to have that relationship, and that's what builds a relationship, is that conversation with him. So we take in his word, through the reading of his word, and we talk back to him through prayer. It's in having his righteousness and not our own.

It's in experiencing his power at work in us to make us like Christ. Thank you for being with us this morning, and before we go, I'd like for us to spend a moment in prayer.

[29 : 49] glad that you're with us, and I pray that if you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, that you would place your faith and trust in him. Throw out the garbage of what we think are good works, and totally depend and trust on Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christ follower, then still, we will do good works after we trust Christ, because God changes us, and it's good works that follow salvation, but don't depend on those to make us right with God.

We do those because we're right with God. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we are so, so very thankful that you've made a way for us to be made right with you, because we know that we can't be made right with you on our own, no matter what we do, no matter what we try.

So, Father, we pray this morning that you may help us to look to you completely in faith, trusting Jesus alone to make us right with you, and that you will exchange the rubbish of our good works for brand new life in Christ.

Lord, I pray for each one listening and watching this morning that you would protect them, guard them, guide them, and we give you all the honor, all the praise, all the glory.

[31 : 20] For it's in Jesus' name that we pray, amen.