

# The Loss that turns out to be Gain

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] Psalm 360, Psalm 98 in the Scottish Psalter. The tune is Gainsborough. O sing a new song to the Lord, for wonders he hath done.

His right hand and his holy arm him victory hath won. The Lord God his salvation hath caused to be known. His justice in the heathen sight he openly hath shown.

Singing verses 1 to 4 there on page 360. O sing a new song to the Lord. His right hand and his holy arm him victory hath won.

The Lord God his salvation hath caused it to be known.

His justice in the heathen sight he openly hath shown.

[ 1 : 49 ] He mightful of this grace and truth to Israel's house hath been.

And the salvation of the Lord. His right hand and his holy arm him victory hath seen.

Let all the earth unto the Lord.

Set forth a joyful noise. Lift up your voice above to him.

Sing praises and rejoice. We're going to call again on the Lord.

[ 3 : 12 ] Let's join together in prayer. Amen. Our gracious and ever-blessed God. We gather in your presence this evening.

Both to give and to receive. We thank you Lord that we are able to come together. To give you the praise and the worship that you are due. And we ask Lord for your Holy Spirit to help us in doing this.

Likewise oh Lord we come to receive from you. The blessing that you have promised for your people. And as we reach out to you oh Lord. We pray that by that same Holy Spirit your blessing will reach us this evening.

Bless your word to us. Bless this privilege of being together to us. Bless us Lord from your word of truth. So that we may find our lives further enriched.

By knowing that you have come and applied your word to us savingly. And in a way that will further us in our knowledge of you. Lord we thank you tonight that we have such a great God who is worthy to be praised.

[ 4 : 22 ] We thank you that as we come to praise you. You have given us your word as a guide for us. You have given us your word so that we may not only sing your praises from it.

But also find that the substance for our thoughts. For our deliberations. Is set out for us in the record of your word. We thank you Lord for all that it contains.

By way of narrative. By way of wonderful poetic passages. Epistles. And gospels. We thank you oh Lord for the wisdom books that brought before us.

The wisdom that you have instilled in your people down through the ages. But especially that wisdom that you have in yourself. The wisdom that lay behind the creation of the universe.

And especially the wisdom that devised our salvation for us. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh Lord our God we pray that all aspects of your word.

[ 5 : 22 ] May continue to be precious to us. Especially in a world that does not have much regard for your word. And Lord when we are surrounded by so much that is hostile to your word.

And to the gospel message. To your people in their walk with God. Lord we pray for grace oh Lord. That we may not only resist such pressure and tendencies.

And meet such challenges. We do pray also oh Lord. That you would help us to be consistent with what you require of us. In the teaching of your word. And we do ask oh Lord.

That even this night we may know the benefit. Of having your word. And of having your word. Brought before us in such a way. As places your will. As it's revealed to us before us.

So we ask oh Lord. That your blessing will be with each of us here. And help us. As we come before you. To carry your blessing into the world in which we live. We ask that you would forgive our sins.

[ 6 : 24 ] For we come before you also Lord. As part of our relation with you. To confess our sin. And to confess our need of your forgiveness. And your cleansing. Your establishing of us.

In matters of holiness. Of life. And righteousness. We pray oh Lord. That as we know of these things. Brought to us also in your word. We pray that you would help us.

To continue to. Depend upon yourself. For all of these aspects. Of our lives daily. We pray that you bless those. We bring before you.

This evening who are ill. And those of our number. Especially. Who are ill at this time. Those who are going through periods of treatment. Whether it be for mental health issues. Or recovering from surgery.

Or procedures. Oh Lord. We commend them all to you. And ask that you would lay your good healing hand upon them. If it please you. To restore them to health and strength. Especially Lord.

[ 7 : 24 ] We ask that you would. Bring them close to yourself spiritually. And enable them to draw their strength. And comfort from you. And at all times Lord.

To be aware of. The way in which you have promised to be with your people. And may that be their experience Lord. At this time. And we pray also for those who are bereaved of loved ones.

We ask your blessing Lord. For those recently or in times gone by. Who have lost loved ones.

Through death. And we pray oh Lord. That as we so often find ourselves.

Either attending funerals. Or hearing of the death of others. And reading death notices. We pray Lord. That this itself might be a reminder to us. Of how short and how brief our life is.

Compared to eternity. And of how uncertain it is Lord for us. Knowing we do not know. What will pass from day to day. Help us Lord to be wise.

[ 8 : 23 ] And to turn our hearts to wisdom. Enable us especially Lord. To make our calling and election. Sure in faith. And trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grant us your blessing. We pray. As we would seek to. Depend upon him. For each and every day that we live. And especially for our needs. Against eternity.

Lord continue we pray. To bless us now. And continue to bless us. In our congregational life. We ask oh Lord. That you would continue to bless the work. That we engage in.

From day to day. And week to week. That accompanies the preaching of the gospel. And the worship services. Of your people. Remember we praise. Especially all those who teach our young people.

In Sunday school. And other classes. And other groups. Oh Lord. From time to time. Once again. We pray for your blessing upon them. And we thank you for the input.

[ 9 : 20 ] Of those who lead such classes and groups. In our congregation. We thank you for them. We pray that you would grant them encouragement. And bless them we pray. And continue to watch over us.

We ask too Lord. For Marianne and for Joanna. As they head up the binding brokenness sessions. Lord we pray. We pray that this may be of much benefit. So that others will come.

To benefit from this time. Of approaching your word. And finding lives that have been broken. To some extent. Brought under the teaching of your word.

Lord we pray that you would continue to bless. Every effort to that end. And so we pray now. That you would continue to bless us here. As we turn to your word. We pray that it may prove to be a light to our path.

A lamp to our feet. Hear us we pray. In Jesus name and for his sake. Amen. Let's now read God's word.

[ 10 : 23 ] And our reading tonight is from Acts chapter 9. The book of Acts chapter 9. And as we're going to look shortly at Paul's account.

Of his conversion. As he puts it in Philippians chapter 3. We're going to read through chapter 9 here. Verses 1 to 22. Where the actual event itself occurred.

At least we usually refer to it as his conversion. Which it was. But there were things before this. That had obviously attracted his mind.

So in Acts chapter 9. From the beginning. But Saul still breathing threats and murder. Against the disciples of the Lord. Went to the high priest. And asked him for letters to the synagogues.

At Damascus. So that if he found any belonging to the way. Men or women. He might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he went on his way. He approached Damascus.

[11:29] And suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground. He heard a voice saying to him. Saul. Saul. Why are you persecuting me? And he said.

Who are you Lord? And he said. I am Jesus. Whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city. And you will be told what you are to do. The men who were traveling with him stood speechless. Hearing the voice. But seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground. And although his eyes were opened. He saw nothing. So they led him by the hand. And brought him into Damascus.

And for three days. He was without sight. And neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple at Damascus. Named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision.

Ananias. And he said. Here I am Lord. And the Lord said to him. Rise and go to the street called Straight. And at the house of Judas. Look for a man of Tarsus.

[12:26] Named Saul. For behold. He is praying. And he has seen a vision. A man named Ananias. Come in and lay his hands on him. So that he might regain his sight.

But Ananias answered. Lord. I have heard from many about this man. How much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests.

To bind all who call on your name. But the Lord said to him. Go. For he is a chosen instrument of mine. To carry my name before the Gentiles.

And kings. And the children of Israel. For I will show him. How much he must suffer. For the sake of my name. So Ananias departed. And entered the house.

And laying his hands on him. He said. Brother Saul. The Lord Jesus. Who appeared to you. On the road. By which you came. Has sent me. So that you may regain your sight. And be filled with the Holy Spirit.

[13:24] And immediately. Something like scales. Fell from his eyes. And he regained his sight. Then he rose. And was baptized. And taking food. He was strengthened.

And for some days. He was with the disciples. At Damascus. And immediately. He proclaimed Jesus. In the synagogues. Saying. He is the Son of God. And all who heard him. Were amazed. And said. Is not this man. The man who. Made havoc in Jerusalem. Of those who called upon this name. And has he not come here. For this purpose. To bring them bound.

Before the chief priests. But Saul increased. All the more in strength. And confounded the Jews. Who lived in Damascus. By proving that Jesus.

Was the Christ. And may God. Add his own blessing. To a reading. Once again. Of his holy word. I will sing further. To his praise.

[14:19] In Psalm number nine. Psalm nine a. That's in the sing. Psalms version. On page nine. And we're singing.

Verses 10 to 14. June this time. Is martyrs. Psalm nine a. On page nine. At verse 10. All those who know your name.

O Lord. And you. Their trust will place. For you do not abandon. Those who seek. Your gracious face. Sing praises to the Lord. Who sits in Zion. On his throne.

Among the nations. Of the world. Proclaim. What he has done. So on to the end of. Verse 14. Mark there. All those who know your name. O Lord. In you.

Their trust. Will place. Amen. All those who know your name.

[15:17] O Lord. In you. Their trust. O Lord. Amen. O Lord.

Hear. in ■■■■ and may below. This is now my name.

Thanks. Sing praises to the Lord who sits inside on his throne.

And the nations of the world hold in what he has done.

For he, the avenger of man's blood, remembers evermore The cry of the afflicted one, he never will ignore.

[17:00] O Lord, see how my enemies are persecuting me.

Have mercy from the gates of hell, where the outside be free.

So that in Zion's city gates, here is thy pity fair.

And that I may exalt with joy in your salvation there.

Now we return with me to Paul's letter to the Philippians. Once again, as we pick up our studies there. Philippians chapter 3. Tonight we're looking at verses 4 to 7.

[ 18 : 36 ] We'll just read again from the beginning where we looked last time at the first three verses. Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the real circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

As to the law, a Pharisee. As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. As to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

As to zeal, a persecutor of the church.

[ 20 : 07 ] Circumcision. And then worship God by the Spirit of God. And then glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. And it's that final third clause there, confidence in the flesh, that he's now drawing out in verses 4 to 7.

Which is important for us to understand because it gives us the background as to why he could then count all things but loss. In terms of knowing Christ compared to what was the case before.

So he's really expanding on what he means by confidence in the flesh. And we'll look at that just under the heading of the former life that Paul lived as Saul of Tarsus.

The former life, confidence in the flesh. And that will include both his ancestry and also his achievements. There are seven points actually that he mentions here in terms of confidence in the flesh as to the way of life that he had.

The first four of these points are to do with his ancestry. And the others five to seven are to do with his achievements.

[ 21 : 23 ] And then secondly, he turns from the former life to the new life. The life that he now has as a believer in Christ.

Where it's no longer confidence in the flesh, but what we could say is Christ is all. Christ is everything for him. Going back really, if you like, to chapter 1, verse 21, where we saw some time ago that he exclaimed, Therefore to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

And in a sense, he's picking up that emphasis here in chapter 3, where he's saying, Whatever gain I had, those I counted loss for the sake of Christ. So the new life is really the life that he has in terms of counting all things but loss in verses 7 to 8 here.

So, first of all, the former life, confidence in the flesh. Now, the number of points, as we said here, he mentions in terms of his ancestry. And he's not being disparaging of his ancestry.

He's not repudiating his ancestry as such. What he's actually repudiating and wants to make clear to the Philippians is that the way that he regarded his ancestry, while he was proud of his ancestry, and rightly so, he belonged to the covenant people of God, but he was using that itself as a base for acceptance with God.

[ 22 : 51 ] He was using that as a base for righteousness, that this is the people he belonged to, that this is the kind of background he had and ancestry he had. So, as far as he was concerned, that counted towards righteousness with God.

Now, he's repudiating that, but he's not repudiating the ancestry itself or the people that he belonged to. Let's look at what he's saying here in terms of his ancestry. He's saying, first of all, circumcised on the eighth day.

Circumcised on the eighth day. He's making the point that there was an exact correspondence with his circumcision on the eighth day and what God required way back in Genesis of Abraham, where circumcision was, first of all, established and came under the command of God.

What he's saying really is that I belonged to a family, to a parentage, where these things were exactly kept, where God was honored, where even to the point of the day on which I was circumcised, that's the day that God himself required circumcision to be carried out on, on all the male children of the covenant people.

Then he calls it, he goes on from there to say, circumcised on the eighth day and of the people of Israel.

[ 24 : 10 ] He belonged to that covenant people of God that had been called by God and led by God under Moses out of Egypt on into the land of promise, people to whom God had given promises,

people to whom God had fulfilled promises of bringing them out of Egypt and into the promised land.

These are my people, he's saying. These are the people that I was born into. I was brought into this world as one of those people of Israel, people who were given the name Israel as a mark of dignity by God, the people who belong to God himself.

And he was proud of that, proud in the proper sense of the fact that he belonged to Israel, to these covenant people of God. And then he goes on, the tribe of Benjamin, as he singles out from the people of Israel.

He also belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. And if you had been an Israelite, you would have been proud of the tribe that you were born into. You took on the promises of God from the Old Testament regarding all of the tribes, as Moses expressed before they entered into the promised land.

And the tribe of Benjamin, the Lord was one of the smaller tribes. Remember, Benjamin, the son of Jacob by Rachel, he was the only son of the twelve sons of Jacob born in the promised land.

[ 25 : 40 ] And maybe that's behind something of what Paul is reflecting on here. But in any case, Benjamin itself as a tribe had a distinguished place among the tribes of Israel.

King Saul, for example, the first king of Israel, came from the tribe of Benjamin. One of the commentators has a question. I wonder if, he says, Saul was named after King Saul, the first king of Israel from the tribe of Benjamin.

It's quite possible that that was the case. But of course, the tribe of Benjamin, too, remained loyal to the throne of David after the kingdom split into two following the death of Solomon.

And the Rehoboam, and most of the tribes formed the northern kingdom under Jeroboam, who rebelled. And the rest remained as the people, as the nation of Judah, loyal to the Davidic throne in Jerusalem.

So Benjamin was associated with that continuing loyalty to the throne of David as well. So all of that is built into what he says here as he singles out the tribe of Benjamin.

[ 26 : 50 ] You might say, well, why would he single out the tribe? Well, for these reasons at least. He was proud that this is the tribe he belonged to. Even if it was sometimes despised as one of the smaller tribes, the smallest tribe indeed of Israel, then he's nevertheless proud of belonging to it.

And in terms of going out to battle, very often the tribe of Benjamin had an important role in going out amongst the armies of Israel, despite the fact in numbers that they were fewer than other tribes. So there he's saying, circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Why is he saying a Hebrew of the Hebrews?

Everybody knew he was a Hebrew. Why is he saying a Hebrew of the Hebrews? Well, because he's talking here especially of language. The language that Israel spoke, their native language, was Hebrew.

And that's what he was brought up to actually speak. And of course he was brought up in Tarsus, which was away from Jerusalem. Tarsus in North Africa.

[ 27 : 56 ] And what Paul is saying here is that despite the fact that I was brought up well out with the region of Jerusalem or Israel itself as a land, nevertheless, I was taught Hebrew.

I was brought up in the Hebrew language. My parents spoke Hebrew. This is what my ancestry was about. And it proved in a sense that it proved my belonging to this people that I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

I suppose it's something like what you might say those who were brought up born into Gaelic culture today as much as in the past. And you relocate from the place where you were born and brought up.

Like, let's say, for example, in the Isle of Lewis. You locate somewhere else in the world. And you continue like people did in North America or New Zealand or wherever. You still maintained aspects of the culture and kept speaking the Gaelic language and so on.

You could say, well, I'm a Gael of the Gael's, despite the fact that I'm not any longer in the Gaeldom as such. Something like that is behind Paul's reference to a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

[ 29 : 02 ] So there he is. You see, he's got these four elements in his ancestry. He's circumcised the eighth day. He's of the people of Israel. He's of the tribe of Benjamin. He's a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

And that's what he's using as a base or an aspect of his basis for acceptance with God. Now, it's one thing to belong to a covenant people, to have a good upbringing, to be proud of the way that

you're brought up, to know the God of your ancestors.

But it's another thing to make that upbringing itself a basis for God's acceptance of you. You can be proud of your ancestry and proud of your family and proud of your roots and proud of your culture. And there's nothing wrong with that as long as it's not ungodly. But you cannot be proud of it as Saul of Tarsus was, thinking that that itself brought up some bonus points with God.

Well, his ancestry, he brings that into confidence in the flesh. You see, that's what he's saying. Maybe you yourself can relate to that this evening.

[ 30 : 23 ] It's a great, great privilege to be brought up in the church, to be brought up in your own environment, in this part of the world that we belong to. We have so many advantages.

We have especially the advantage of the gospel, the advantage of having freedom of access to this church, to this congregation, to whatever church we frequent from time to time.

And all of these things are hugely advantageous to us. But that itself is not a basis for our acceptance with God, even if we come, as you all do regularly, to church.

You cannot go to God tonight and say, Lord, I'm in church every week. I'm in church twice on a Sunday. I'm in church even on a Wednesday or Thursday as well. So I'm bound to find acceptance with you on that basis.

God is saying, well, that's not a basis for righteousness. It is something certainly to be thankful for, but it's not something to trust in as if it gave you some sort of kudos with God.

[ 31 : 26 ] There's the first thing he's saying, as belonged to the confidence of the flesh, his ancestry. But he goes on then to speak of his achievements. As he says, to the law, a Pharisee.

As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. As to righteousness under the law, blameless. And briefly, let's take these in turn. A Pharisee, he says. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee.

That was the sect or the section of the people that he belonged to in terms of the religious setting out of the various groupings within Israel.

Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and so on. This was him, the Pharisee. As to the law, a Pharisee. The Pharisee was taken up with the law and with the regulations of the law.

Like we saw last time from Luke chapter 18, the Pharisee and the publican, the Pharisee and the tax collector, went to the temple. This is the Pharisee's approach to God. Lord, I thank you that I am not like other men.

[ 32 : 28 ] I fast. I give tithes. I'm not like this tax collector. And we saw how that really is. The essence of self-righteousness.

As to the law, Paul is saying, I was a Pharisee. This is where I stood. This is where I looked at my acceptance with God from the fact that I was so connected to the Pharisaic way of life.

And then a persecutor, he says, as to zeal, persecuting the church. Now, he was once very proud of this until he met Jesus or Jesus met him.

And then it turned to his shame that he had been a persecutor of the church before he became a Christian. Remember his testimony before King Agrippa in Acts chapter 26, where in a few verses there, he summarizes wonderfully what his past had been as a Pharisee and as a persecutor of the church.

26 of Acts verses 9 to 11. I myself, he says to the king, was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

[ 33 : 43 ] And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme. And in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

What an amazing confession on the part of this now apostle of Christ. I was a persecutor of the church. And Jesus himself, of course, had told the disciples in John chapter 16 that this is what would, in fact, happen to them following his departure from the world.

And this is exactly, of course, what happened as you read in the book of Acts. I have said these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues.

Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father nor me.

[ 34 : 53 ] And so on. And this is what Paul is really saying. His zeal was such that he just was bent on persecuting the followers of Christ. And he thought that zeal was perfectly well placed.

Because as far as he was concerned, he was doing God's service. You see how terribly blind even people as religious as the apostle Saul of Tarsus was, how blind they can be to reality. And especially to what it takes to be accepted with God. Well, here is him saying, I was a persecutor of the church. But then he says, blameless as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Now, he doesn't mean by that that he was sure all through his life that he was sinless. He would have had many occasions when he would confess sin, at least in a formal fashion to God. Something like the Pharisee before God in the temple with the tax collector. A kind of confession of sin, but really in a very formal and a way that his heart would not have been in it.

[ 36 : 02 ] And so, he's saying he was blameless in terms of he had a sincere belief that he was in fact keeping the law as much as possible, as far as he could.

There was the pedigree of Saul of Tarsus. There was his pedigree as a human being. It's not in any way a small achievement. To actually have such a pedigree, not only from his ancestry, but from the efforts that he went to, to live as a Pharisee.

To actually keep the law of God. And to set out against those that he deemed to be contrary to God. It's no small achievement that he could say, my stock was really high, as far as I was concerned. And indeed, you could say from one point of view, there were very few like Saul of Tarsus. In terms of zeal, religiously. And then, Jesus Christ took hold of him.

He apprehended him on the way to Damascus, as we read in Acts chapter 9. You could say that Jesus actually accosted him. He just took hold of his life.

[ 37 : 16 ] That's what he's saying. In fact, later on in Philippians chapter 3, he's saying Jesus apprehended him. It's a wonderful word. He took hold of me. He apprehended me.

He actually put me into his own custody, as it were. I became a prisoner of grace, not unwillingly. That's something of the idea he means there.

We'll see it later on, God willing. But this is what he's saying. I was this kind of person, confident in the flesh. And then came the change. Then came the eyes being opened.

Then came the turnaround. Then came things to be seen for what they were. Jesus accosted him. And his stock crashed.

His value of what he had been doing and where he had come from completely disappeared. And instead of all of that that he had accumulated in his thinking and in his practice, that he thought gave him an acceptance with God, he now realized that Jesus, Jesus Christ and the righteousness of Christ was what he needed.

[ 38 : 28 ] And indeed was all that he needed to be right with God. So let's look at his new life in verses 7 to 8 here. Christ is all. Now he's talking here about his conversion from the point of view of personal experience.

He has a lot to say about it theologically as well. Of course, there's something of that here too. But it's largely from his experience that he's setting out how this change came about in his life.

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 and so on. So it's important that he's doing this from a personal experience.

And because one thing that's important from our point of view of that is that as he sets this out for us, so we are taught to distinguish the counterfeit from the real.

[ 39 : 36 ] We're told here things which belong to a sincere and genuine conversion. And it confirms what is true as against what may be false. And it actually helps us in our understanding, although we're not going to have the same circumstances usually as the Apostle Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, as he met with Jesus.

Yet in principle, it's the same. Jesus takes hold of your life. Jesus turns you around. Jesus brings you to know himself properly. And Jesus especially makes you to understand that confidence in the flesh.

There's no basis for acceptance with God. Confidence in the flesh being a life not in Christ, a life especially that was given to self-righteousness. So he's saying, he's setting this out by way of loss and gain.

He's really saying, using the imagery, if you like, of accounts books. And people like treasurers will appreciate that more than most of us.

But he's setting out his experience here of conversion in terms of profit and loss, in terms of losing, in terms of gaining. And what he's saying is, I counted all things as loss for the sake of Christ.

[ 40 : 55 ] All the things that I once thought of as gain, all the things that I once thought of gave me acceptance with God, the gain in that sense. All the things I thought of as gain, I counted as loss.

And I still count them as loss. And that's important that we see that emphasis. You see the word count there three times. Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss.

That's something that happened in the past, but carries on into the future. The kind of terminology that's used there in the Greek text. That's what he's saying here.

I count everything as loss. I counted it as loss. And that continues with me to the present day.

Indeed, he says, I count. I go on counting everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

And that too is so important. Because the word consider here, what he's saying here, I count or I consider everything as loss. I counted. I considered everything as loss.

[ 41 : 57 ] That word counted or considered, you could translate it as, he's used it already. He's used it back in chapter 2, verses 3 and 6. If you just cast your eye back there for a moment.

He is saying, verse 3, do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

And then, of course, in verse 6, he moves to Jesus himself. Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

Something that stood in the way of becoming human, becoming the servant of God. He's saying this word consider, this calculation. Jesus did not consider.

He did not count his position as God. Something that militated against his becoming human. Neither did not Paul here. He's saying, when he came to Jesus taking a hold of his life, that's when I counted all things but loss.

[ 43 : 02 ] The things I once saw as gain. See, there's a calculation going on. There's a consideration. He's looking at the things in a spiritual account book that he had taught it up and that he had marked as gain.

And he would add to that, if you like, if you think of that imagery, he would add something on a daily basis to that list of achievements. Adding it to his ancestry. And thereby accumulating a greater wealth, if you like, spiritually, in terms of acceptance with God.

That's all gone. That page has been wiped clean. But it's not empty. Instead of it, he's got the gain of Christ himself. Of having Christ himself instead of what he once thought of as gain.

Now you see, when you think about the years that have passed between when he started counting all things but loss. And the time that he's now writing to the Philippians and still saying, I still count everything as loss.

There's at least 20 plus years in that time span from the time Jesus met him to the time he's writing this to the Philippians. What does that tell you?

[ 44 : 14 ] It tells you that for all that he has suffered for Jesus and for following Christ. And even though much has happened in his life that has been painful in the extreme.

Yet he's still counting all things but loss for the sake of Jesus. He has no regrets over what he chose to do by God's grace in counting all things but loss so that he could have Jesus.

And all the sufferings and all the various ups and downs of his life. He is still as convinced as he ever was, if not more so, that Jesus is everything.

That the complete Jesus is all that he needs for his acceptance with God. Do you doubt that yourself tonight? Is there anything of your own hand left in the way that you think of being accepted with God?

Is there something there that you think you can contribute to God's approval of you? As a ground for God's acceptance of you? As if that would actually convince God that you're a good person?

[ 45 : 31 ] Well, if that's a view of a relationship with God, something's far wrong. Because here is Paul saying, that's how I once used to live, confidence in the flesh.

And wherever there's a degree of confidence in the flesh, you've got to simply turn away from that and look at Jesus and his completeness. Jesus and his worth as your gain instead of all that you might once have thought was gain in the presence of God.

And it's interesting too, that actually he's talking here about gains rather than gain. Whatever, verse 7, whatever gain is translated in singular, but it's actually literally, it's actually plural.

So it really is literally, whatever gains I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. In other words, he's saying, I put all my gains together, plural.

I put them all together. I just taugth them all up. And as I come to summarize them and put them all together, it all adds up to one great loss.

[ 46 : 39 ] Because there's nothing there of my own contributions, of my own goodness, as he once thought of it, that could give me an acceptance with God.

Friends, tonight, it's an absolutely magnificent thing that Jesus is all we need. And there is no more important truth to realize than that.

And you need to realize it not only in order to come to know of acceptance with God and God's approval of your life in Jesus Christ. We need to remind ourselves of this as we go on in life.

It doesn't matter how long we've been preaching the gospel. It doesn't matter how long you've been sitting in the pew or serving God in whatever way you're serving God. It doesn't matter how long you've been a believer.

Again and again, you will come to have this thought in your mind. There's something here that I've done myself that gives me approval with God. It's natural to our fallenness, to our fallen human thinking, our fallen heart, to think that somehow or other confidence in the flesh is necessary for us to be accepted with God.

[ 47 : 48 ] That's what Paul's enemies were saying. You need to be circumcised. You need to have something by your own doing that adds to what is in Jesus. And once you add to Jesus, in that sense, you've taken away from him.

You've actually taken away from his sufficiency, from his completeness. Tonight to be accepted with God for all of us here tonight. Whatever your station in life is. Whatever your experiences have been.

Whatever age you're at. The youngest to the oldest. Jesus is everything. He's the God provided ground of acceptance with himself.

He's the ground of our acceptance in terms, as we'll see in our next study, God willing, of the righteousness of God that we receive by faith in Christ. So put all your gains together.

Whatever advantage we've had from them. And undoubtedly they have been advantageous in a human sense. They may have been much beneficial to ourselves or to others as well.

[ 48 : 52 ] But as far as our acceptance with God is concerned, as far as providing a ground upon which we can stand righteously before God, they are, as Paul is saying, worthless.

All my gains I count but loss. For the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. He counts them, he says, as rubbish.

It's a very strong word. It's translated here as rubbish. There in verse 8. I count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him and so on.

Rubbish is probably, in a way, too mild a word to translate the word that he is using here. Because he feels so strongly about this.

He feels so strongly about Christ being absolutely sufficient. Christ being all we need for acceptance with God. That he uses such a strong word even to describe what he had trusted in previously as to his ancestry and his achievements.

[ 49 : 56 ] And we have to take a lesson from that. That tonight, to be accepted with God, you don't need anything other than Christ. You don't need anything more than you have in Christ.

You don't need anything less than you have in Christ either. This is really, in a sense, like the merchant you find described in Matthew chapter 13.

You know the passage very well, I'm sure. Whereas one of the ways in which Jesus spoke there by parables and so on.

Matthew 13 and verse 45, where he's describing the kingdom of heaven. He says, The complete Jesus.

The whole Savior. Jesus and his death. Jesus and his resurrection. Jesus and his ongoing ministry to his people. Everything in Jesus and about Jesus is sufficient for us tonight, friends.

[ 51 : 22 ] That's what we need. That's what God has provided. That's why he calls us to come to him. And to place our trust and our confidence in Jesus. But I want to finish by looking at what he says here.

So that I might know him. These I count, he says, as loss. I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Now the word know there is really very similar to the Old Testament way of using the word know. And what he means is to know someone rather than something.

Because knowing is a relationship word in the Old Testament use of it. And here is Paul using it in that sense to say that I might know Christ. That I might have the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

This is what is now filling up his ledger, his accounts book. This is all that fills up the page that was once filled with his own ancestry and achievements. He has now one word there.

[ 52 : 23 ] Christ. Or two words. Christ Jesus. For the sake. Christ Jesus my Lord. He gives him his full title. The whole Jesus. The Lord Jesus.

This immense Jesus. This Jesus in all his grandeur. In all his power. In all his majesty. In all his mercy. In everything that's true about him.

That's what he says. Is now here as my gain. And I count all things but loss. In order that I might have this. Do you know something of that yourself tonight?

At least to the extent where you can see and have acted on the fact that God has shown you. What he requires for your acceptance with him. For you to be righteous in his presence.

It's not your own achievements. Not your ancestry. It's not your privileges in themselves. It's Christ. It's him. It's the Jesus offered in the gospel.

[ 53 : 27 ] As our savior. And for all that you have. This immense. This wonderful. This great Jesus. Do notice what he's saying.

Christ Jesus. My Lord. He belongs to me.

In the sense. In which. I have taken him. As my savior. That's why he's saying. The surpassing worth of knowing.

Of having a living relationship. With. Christ Jesus. My Lord. Now is there anything more precious to you than that tonight? Is there anything more precious than that you know Jesus?

That you know him personally? That you know him not just in terms of a theological understanding. Of where he is in God's scheme of salvation. But that you know him for yourself.

[ 54 : 44 ] As a friend. As your dearest friend. As your savior. As your king. As your redeemer. As everything that he is. But Paul is saying. Christ Jesus.

My Lord. Now how precious. That little possessive pronoun. My. Is in the context. How precious to yourself.

That you can use it. And if you can't quite yet use it. Well God is urging you tonight. Urging you lovingly. Urging you tactfully through his word.

But urging you nonetheless. To receive this Christ. As he's offered to you in the gospel. Friends don't leave yourselves. Short of receiving him.

Short of accepting him. Personally. Welcoming him. Into your heart. Because that's all. Behind these words. Of the apostle. What a portfolio.

[ 55 : 42 ] He now has. The apostle Paul. Compared to what he had. As Saul of Tarsus. His portfolio. Filled with his own achievements. In the past. As he carried that around with him.

As he showed it to others. And that's all gone. And he's got a new one. And as he opens it. It's all about Jesus.

Jesus. It's all about his worth. It's all about the gain. That he now has. When Christ is. Christ Jesus. My Lord. In a sense.

That's why we've. Called our study this evening. The loss. That turns out. To be gain. The loss of. All things that we once thought. To be gain. In order to have the gain.

That is Christ. Himself. I'm sure you know. The story of. Jim Elliot. Missionary. Who went to Ecuador. And very soon after. Going there. Was killed.

[ 56 : 37 ] By some of the natives. Having brought the gospel. To them. And his wife. Of course. Later kept. A ministry too. In that part of the world.

But. There's a saying. Of Jim Elliot. Which has become famous. I'm sure you've heard it. But it can conclude. Our study tonight. Of the loss. That turns out. To be gain. Jim Elliot. Put it this way.

He is no fool. Who gives away. What he cannot keep. In order to gain. What he cannot lose. He is no fool.

Who gives away. What he cannot keep. Your own self-righteousness. Your own achievements. Before God. One day. They're going to disappear. Anyway. Even if you don't have Christ. They're not going to be worth anything. He is no fool. Who gives that away. In order to gain. What he cannot lose. And that. Is Jesus Christ.

[ 57 : 38 ] May God bless. His word to us. Let's pray. We thank you. Gracious Lord. For. The wonderful gain. That you give. To your people. To experience. And to.

Continue to. Enjoy in their lives. As they gain. The Lord Jesus Christ. As they have him. As their complete savior. We thank you.

Oh Lord. For the way that you. Turn lives around. We pray that. Any. Here this evening. Or under the gospel. Anywhere else. We've. Not yet come. To receive you.

And. Accept you. Willingly. And wholeheartedly. Lord. May they do so. Even now. And. May they do so. In these days to come. Help us to reflect upon. The great advantages we have.

But help us Lord. Never. To depend upon these themselves. But rather upon the son of God. Who gave himself. To the death of the cross. And arose from the dead. That we might have him.

[ 58 : 35 ] As our great gain. So receive us now we pray. In his name. And for his sake. Amen. Let's conclude our worship. This evening singing. Psalm 32.

Psalm number 32. And the sing psalms. On page 38. Singing to a tune. Orlington. Verses 1 to 6. How blessed the one.

Who has received forgiveness. For his sin. Whose sins are covered. From God's face. Whose debt is cancelled. In God's grace. There's no deceit. In him. Psalm 32.

Page 38. Singing verses 1 to 6. Who has received forgiveness. Blessed the one who has received, forgiveness for his sin, whose sins are covered from just his, whose death is counseled in God's grace, there's no deceit in him.

When the light and silent of my wounds, with no need wear or wear, in the inner hand I felt and drowned, both day and night my strength was soft, as in a summer night.

[ 60 : 53 ] Then I make there my sin to, that guilt and day within.

I said, O Lord, I have expressed, and you forgive when I confess, your heart and all my sin.

So let the God we pray to you, when you are to be found, surely when we are sweeping past, and mighty waters rising past, you keep them safe and sound.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and evermore. Amen.