

A Reality Check

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Date: 08 October 2023

[0 : 00] Well, can we turn back to your reading in Philippians chapter 3? We're going to focus on verse 4 through to verse 11 this morning together.

We can just read again there at verse 8. Indeed, I count everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Last Sunday morning when we had Scott preaching to us, he was preaching in the book of Acts and had Paul and Ananias there for us, showing us the remarkable change that had taken place in the life of Paul and how he was to be an instrument in the hand of God.

And his life was completely transformed. And there's a number of different places that we see the power of that transformation that took place in his life.

In the book of Acts chapter 9, you see there an account of his conversion experience. And as Paul is writing his letters to various churches throughout the New Testament, we see there him outlining his own experience in life, the wonderful work of grace in his life.

[1 : 22] And the question that it all boils down to is what he was looking at and trusting in. And how initially he was trusting in his own righteousness, in his own works.

But how when the Lord changed his life and opened his eyes and showed him the grace that he had to offer, he realized that that counted for nothing compared to knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord.

And leaning not on himself, but on Christ's righteousness. And it's a question again and again we have to ask ourselves. Paul was given a reality check as to what he was trusting in and leaning on.

And again and again we have to ask ourselves. Give ourselves a reality check and examination. And ask ourselves, well what is it that we are leaning on?

Are we trusting in ourselves for our salvation? Or are we trusting in Christ Jesus as my Lord? And what we see here in chapter 3 in verse 4 to 11 is Paul outlining the real change that has taken place in his life.

[2 : 37] What standards he is looking at now and what standards he had previously. In the world of manufacturing, whenever something is being produced, it has to pass a quality control check to make sure that it's up to being used in certain circumstances or certain places.

If you are looking for something that's going to be reliable, it has to be marked with a stamp that shows it's approved for that task. There's a standard to be met.

In other parts of our lives, we ourselves come under examination. We come under scrutiny. Whether it's going through school and sitting exams or university being challenged and tested along the way, we have to see what standard we are at.

Sometimes it's in the workplace where we're having a review of how things are going. Other times it's in a medical way. When we go to the doctor, we maybe have to answer questions about our lifestyle.

And if we don't answer honestly, well, the doctor is still going to tell us the reality. There are so many ways in life that we are examined. There are so many things in life that we use that need to be examined to make sure they meet a standard.

[4 : 01] But what about when it comes to ourselves and this other examination that we need to face when we come under God's Word? And when that Word examines us, what standard are we at?

And what standard should we be at? Paul, as you see here writing to the Philippians, is going through this process of examination.

And he's looking at himself and he's looking at what he used to put his confidence in. But now he's showing how the Lord has changed that. And how the Word of God is so much more probing, so much more deeper than a doctor's examination.

Not any other examination we sit in, it goes right into our hearts, right into our core, right into our being. And God's Word asks, well, what are we standing on when it comes to eternity?

What are we standing on when it comes to our salvation? Is it ourselves? Are we merely looking in the mirror and looking to ourselves and thinking how good we are?

[5 : 12] Or are we looking to Christ? So much of our examination of self highlights all that is wrong with us.

We often look in the mirror and all we'll see is what we see as our faults and our weaknesses. And sometimes that is what Paul does.

He looks at his faults and he looks at his weaknesses, as we all have to do at times. But it goes further than that. This examination that he looks at here, it goes deeper.

So it's not just looking at our faults and thinking there's nothing we can do. But it's looking, well, what can happen? What can change me? In the same way as we find a faulty device, we're going to look at some other alternative to it.

Something that's going to be more reliable. Or if we're looking to ourselves and we're under a doctor's examination and something's wrong, we ask, well, how can we make it right? Well, this examination that Paul shows is, yes, looking at what is wrong, but also looking at, well, how is it going to be made right?

[6 : 25] How is our eternity going to be right? How is our life now going to be right with God? Well, it's not putting confidence in self, but putting our confidence in Christ.

The only way we can meet this standard of standing before God on the day of judgment, the only way we can meet his standard, is not to come with our own works and our own righteousness and say, Lord, here is what I have to offer you.

We have nothing to give. But what we have is to know Christ Jesus as my Lord. And when we come to God with that, we are stamped approved.

We pass the quality test because it's not our own righteousness, but his. And that's what Paul is examining in himself, but also for ourselves here today as well.

What is our confidence in? And whom is our confidence? And Paul does this, first of all, by outlining what he had.

[7 : 41] What he was looking in the mirror and so proud of in himself. That's where he begins, what he had. In verse 4, he speaks about confidence in the flesh.

In light of what he had and what others were teaching in the midst of the people, he speaks so strongly about what his previous confidence was in.

He says, 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.

You almost see this as a proud boast. But yet that's not what he's using it for. But he's saying, This is what I used to have.

What he previously put his confidence in. And the list is long. One commentator puts it like this. Here we have the rags that Paul mistook for robes.

- [8 : 41] Robes. So as you read through this list, This confidence in the flesh he has. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, Of the tribe of Benjamin, A Hebrew of Hebrews. As to the law, a Pharisee. As to seal, a persecutor of the church. As to righteousness under the law. Blameless. He's got all of this to offer. This is how he would stand before God.
- And say, Look, this is my CV. This is all that I have to present to you. Surely I am worthy through my righteousness. He was standing in front of the mirror, Admiring himself in all of these things.
- Thinking they were beautiful robes. When actually they're just rags. He could stand up to the best of them.
- He could put any of them to shame as he saw it in his own eyes. But at the heart of it all was pride. Pride and self. And self-righteousness.
- [9 : 50] You see, What he was doing was comparing himself to others. And aren't we all so guilty of that at times?
- Don't we all stand in the mirror and look to ourselves And look at what's good in us? Compared to others, I'm so much better. Like the rich young man who came to Jesus.
- We're putting our boast in everything that we've done for the Lord. I've given. I've done this. I've done that. But just like the rich young man, Paul, Here there was something missing.
- It was all about self. Pride and boasting in self. And when you look at the different things that he had confidence in, So much of it can resonate with ourselves as well.
- Look at the teaching that he had learned. You know, He describes himself here as confident in so much. Circumcised on the eighth day. The people of Israel, The tribe of Benjamin, A Hebrew of Hebrews.
- [10 : 58] You see, Like at the heart of it all is a people he sees as he belongs to. And this is what counts. He sees this teaching that he's been under.
- He's learned so much. He's done so much for the Lord. And this is what counts. But what was missing? He didn't know Christ.
- He didn't know Christ Jesus. Jesus as his Lord. And for ourselves, Maybe we know so much of the Bible. Maybe we know so much about church.
- We know how things operate. We know how things work. Or we think we do. We read our Bibles maybe every day and think we've learned so much from it.
- We can quote the Psalms. We can repeat their catechisms. We can do all of that. But do you know Christ? Do you know him as your Lord? Do you know him as the one who died on the cross for you?
- [12 : 03] What he had was all this wonderful teaching. But with no wisdom. No application of it as to what does it actually mean.
- He speaks about his family line. How he belongs to this proud family with a long tradition. And again, it's something we can fall into a trap of.
- Well, I belong to a Christian family. We've been brought up in a Christian home. And these are things to be thankful for. But is our confidence in that?
- Or is it in Christ? Our works, as Paul is outlining here. He's done so much. Sell us for the Lord as he sees it in his own heart.
- But being busy and sell us is fine in and of itself. But not when it's not for Christ. And not for when it's not knowing Christ in the middle of it all.

- [13 : 09] But it's his final boast. As to righteousness under the law. Blameless. His own self-righteousness is what's his greatest downfall of all.
- He was sincere. Totally committed. Sell us faithful. Outwardly righteous. And yet utterly wrong. So far from God.
- And so far from Christ. He was like the fake counterfeit products that will flood our markets at this time of year coming up to Christmas.
- Things that seem like a great deal at the time. So much cheaper. And yet they maybe last a week. Or turn out faulty after a few days.
- They'll fail. Buy cheap. Pay dear. And that's what self-righteousness is like. It's counterfeit. It's not fit for purpose.
- [14 : 14] And it's not going to stand the test of judgment. What he thought he had. And it was also worth so much. It was nothing.
- His own self-righteousness. It was what he thought counted for everything. So that's what he had. Perhaps it's what you have today.
- And what you're putting your confidence in. But the second thing we see is what's it worth. Paul outlines again for us here what it's worth.
- But whatever gain I had I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. It says in verse 7. What happened in the life of Paul to change things?
- The Lord spoke. The Lord convicted him. The Lord challenged him. And so often what we need ourselves is the word of God just to speak into our hearts and tell us, You are so far wrong.
- [15 : 20] When you go right back to the beginning with God's question to Adam in the Garden of Eden, after they had sinned, the Lord asked him, Where are you?
- The Lord knew where he was. But the question was going deeper. What have you done? Where are you now with me? And that is what happens when we meet with Christ.
- Where are you? When Paul met with the Lord on the road to Damascus. He said to him, Why are you persecuting me?
- Are you persecuting Christ today? Are you failing him? In thinking that you can stand in your own righteousness and your own works, when actually that is worth nothing.
- Everything that Paul was doing to find favor with God, you know, it was actually making him an enemy with God. And that's what we are like too, if we think that we can find favor with God through our own works, our own righteousness.
- [16 : 34] We're just making ourselves enemies with God. Is that where you want to be? Is that where you want to stand before God as an enemy?
- Surely not. And that's what Paul highlights for us here. Whatever else we have, as we count as gain, is actually loss before God compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.
- There is nothing else that counts. We are always warned about that, about laying up for ourselves treasures in this world.
- Jesus warns us so clearly about it in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 6, where he says, Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth where moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
- For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Where was Paul's heart away from Christ? It was in the flesh, in the world, and in everything it had to offer, in self and in pride and in self-righteousness.

[18 : 03] But at the end of the day, it's worth nothing. And that's the warning to ourselves too. Are there things that through pride in our own hearts are keeping us from God, keeping us from salvation?

We're not right with God. We wonder why, but it's because of our confidence in ourselves, our lack of confidence in Christ.

When zoos became popular, and when they were trying to attract animals that they could display, put on display for people, it meant that there was a market where money could be made.

And many people would travel to different parts of the world to catch animals so that they could be sold to the zoo. And one of the most popular animals that people would often try and capture were monkeys, and all kinds of monkeys that could be caught and put on display in zoos.

But there was one particular monkey that people would try and catch. It was called a ring-tailed monkey. And they proved really hard to catch until they found the secret, until they found the weakness of the monkey.

[19 : 27] They found that in just a simple way, they could trap the monkey and get a hold of him and then sell him on. And all they needed was to have a melon on a vine.

And what they did was they cut a little hole in the melon so that the monkey could get his hand inside the melon because the seed inside the melon was one of the monkey's favourite food.

But as the monkey would put his hand in, the hole was just big enough to get his hand in through the hole. But as soon as the monkey would take a good bunch of the seeds and try and pull his hand out, he couldn't get his hand back out.

Because it was bald enough fist now, it was too big to come back out the hole. And the monkey would stay there. It wouldn't dare let go of the seeds because they were so precious to him.

And this made it easy for people to catch them. And doesn't that ring through for ourselves? The sins in this world that seem so appealing to us are just like the seeds inside the melon.

[20 : 40] And we'll just go and we'll hold on to them, not realising the trouble that it brings our way. They're too much, too precious to us these things of this world to let go.

But they'll be your downfall. But we have to let go. In order to be saved, we have to let go.

And there are things in this world that we are holding on to, the things that we see as gain, but that are really loss. What do you need to let go in your heart today?

What is keeping you and what are you putting your confidence in that you believe is gain for you but is actually loss? And what compares to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord?

It is that alone that will save you. And that's what Paul shows us. He shows us what these things were worth.

[21 : 50] Everything that he has confidence in, he counted as a loss for the sake of Christ. I count everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

And he's saying, this is what I needed. This is what you need. Again and again, he repeats himself in these verses, in verse 7, 8, and 9.

And look at the way he puts it. 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.

Again and again, he's repeating there what we need. What every one of us needs is Christ. Gaining the Lord Jesus.

[23 : 03] Being found in Christ Jesus. Standing in his righteousness. That is what you need. That is what I need. That is what Paul comes to see for himself and is showing to the church at Philippi and all believers since.

Nothing compares to knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. But the question often is, do you know him?

Are you standing there in front of the mirror looking at yourself and saying, oh the good that I've done? I'm nothing like that person down the road.

I'm nothing like him who goes here and there and everywhere doing all these wicked things. I'm a good person. I do right. God will accept me for what I've done.

If you're looking in the mirror, you're looking in the wrong place. If you're looking to self, you're looking in the wrong place.

[24 : 14] You need to look at the gospel. You need to look to the word of God. You need to look to Christ. Because there and there alone you can stand.

The offer of the gospel is before us all. It's a worthy, it's worth more than anything else this world can offer us.

And yet we put it away. We put it away so often. We don't count it everything else as loss because it seems what we need is before us in this world.

To be comfortable. To be well off. To have food. To have cars. To have homes. All of these things have their place.

But they're worth nothing compared to knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord. And that's the challenge that Paul puts before us.

[25 : 16] That's the reality check that he puts before us today. Are we standing confident in our own righteousness or Christ's?

In one we will fall. In the other we will stand. And stand secure in the righteousness of Christ.

Are you trying to do it yourself and failing? Well he says to come. To come to Christ. And to find your rest in him.

There was a story from a pastor in the Philippines who said that he once heard this story about a man who was driving along the road in his wagon.

A flat bed in the back. So when he was driving along and he saw this man walking along the road with a big weight on his back a big basket on his back going to the market he thought he'd be kind to him and offer him a lift.

[26 : 26] So he came alongside him and he stopped and he says look jump in the back of the wagon I'll give you a lift into the town save you carrying that heavy load by yourself.

And the man was delighted so he jumped in the back of the wagon and the driver drove on but after a few moments he looked in the back to see if his passenger was okay and what he saw stunned him.

The man who had come on board his wagon instead of putting his basket down and resting was standing in the back of the wagon with his weight still on his back and he thought what was the point in that?

He doesn't get it. But isn't that how we are so often ourselves? Christ has come and he's come to take the burden of sin from us to take it all away from us and yet we go along and we just say well I can carry it myself.

I'll manage fine. I'll try and have a little bit of Christ in my life but the rest I'll take care of myself. And we're not resting in Christ.

[27 : 35] Friends it's worth nothing at the end of the day. What you need is that burden of sin removed and the only way is not through your righteousness but Christ's.

And that's what Paul is showing us here to know Christ Jesus as my Lord. is he your Lord today?

Are you looking in the mirror and proud of yourself and your own righteousness or are you looking to the light of the world Christ Jesus who to know is worth so much more and the difference between life and death.

Don't stand in your own righteousness righteousness. It's worthless. Come to Christ and stand in his. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven we thank you for the gospel and for its offer to us.

That offer of rest in Christ. The offer of rest that we so often fail to grasp or to think that we can manage without we can manage by ourselves but teach us Lord not to be so proud in ourselves but to see our weakness to see our faults but to see Christ who is able to take them all for us.

[29 : 03] So Lord lead us to him and to his righteousness that we may stand in him to be presented blameless in that day of the Lord's return. Lord we pray these things confessing our sins but thankful for the mercy that there is in Christ as we ask it in his sake.

Amen. We're going to sing in conclusion in Psalm 36 in the Sing Psalms page 44 of the Psalm books.

Psalm 36 we'll sing from verse 7 to verse 10 three stanzas the tune of Prince Edward Island Psalm 36 verse 7 how precious is your steadfast love what confidence it brings both high and low find shelter in the shadow of your wings.

We'll sing from verse 7 to 10 to God's praise. How precious is your steadfast love what confidence that before know what is your way large Watch and go find shelter in the shadow of your way.

A feast within your house and drink from streams of your delight.

[31 : 06] For with you is the source of life and your life is delight.

And your life is delight. And your life is delight.

For with you is the source of life and your life is delight.

To those who know you as their God, your steadfast love impart.

Maintain your righteousness to those of you and of my heart.

[32 : 08] Of pure and upright heart. Of pure and upright heart.

Maintain your righteousness to those of you and of my heart.

After the benediction I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[33 : 24] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.