

Philippians Chapter 3 Part 3

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[0 : 00] Let's turn together then in our Bibles to Philippians chapter 3, which begins with talking about rejoicing, which is just what we've been singing about.

Philippians chapter 3, and that's page 1180, page 1180, Philippians chapter 3, beginning at the beginning of the chapter, reading through to the whole of the chapter.

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. It's no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh, for it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh, though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reason to put 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 Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee.

As for zeal, persecuting to the church. As for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But, whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

[1 : 33] What is more, I consider everything a loss, because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.

I consider them garbage, 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 is through faith in Christ.

The righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ. Yes, to know the power of his resurrection, and the participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal. But I press on, to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. One thing I do, forgetting what is behind, and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal, to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

[2 : 45] All of us then, who are mature, should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, just as you have us as a model. Keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For as I have often told you before, and now tell you again with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies, so that they will be like his glorious body.

Clearly, clearly we're meant to have more time for preaching. So that's good. Please turn with me then to Philippians 3.

I'll explain why we're there again this Sunday morning in a minute. I think we're all well aware of the concept that if we want to gain something, we have to lose something else.

[4 : 09] I think we understand there's part of that in everything and every aspect of life. So for those of us perhaps who've set the goal of 2020 of increasing our fitness, we know that we're going to have to first lose weight.

There's a loss for a gain. If we want to regain our figure, that one that we had, or at least thought we had when we were 21, then we know that we're going to have to give up on cake.

There's a loss for a gain. If we want to receive love, we must give love. If we wish to save money, we must stop buying shoes. All these things, loss for gain.

And it's a concept that is all the way through our material life and world and all that we do, but it's also a very clear spiritual and biblical concept as well. For at the very heart of the gospel is the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ gave up his home in heaven, laid down his life, that he should win for us eternal life and all the treasures of God's kingdom.

He made the loss that he might have the gain. So too, to become a Christian begins with loss. To gain the blessings of which I've spoken with Jesus, eternal life and the treasures of God's kingdom, treasures beyond our imagination, we have to begin with the loss.

[5 : 37] The loss of our sin. The loss of our pride. The loss of our very own self. For Jesus himself said on more than one occasion, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

There is a cost to following Christ. There is a loss in following Christ. But the gain, as we shall see, far outweighs it all.

And that principle of losing to gain is not only the way that we must start the Christian life, but it is also the way that we must carry on the Christian life.

The whole Christian life is made up of loss for gain. That's why we're back in Philippians 3. And if you remember last Sunday, very briefly, we talked about how Paul was sharing his deepest desire, his deepest longing, that which he wanted more than anything else in the world.

And what was it? That I may, verse 8, gain Christ. He puts it another way. Because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. To be found in Christ.

[6 : 53] And he makes plain through these verses and through this chapter that to accomplish his goal, to strive for this goal, to seek for this prize, would mean, first of all, the loss of much.

And so if you read there with me and notice how he mentions loss and lost and losing. Verses 7, whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage. So Paul is telling us that if we have that same goal, that same desire, that same longing, that same earnest pressing on, then it must mean loss.

And so last Sunday morning and evening we looked at this passage together and I hope, I hope that from God's word you took hold of that same passion and desire for yourself to make your goal for 2020 that I might know Christ more.

And after the evening service, so you can blame these people, I'm not going to give away any names, but some people said to me, I'm sure there's more to come out of that passage. I'm sure there's more. And so I went away and prayed about it and felt, yes, we should return here to this passage again this Sunday morning.

[8 : 21] We're looking at something different this evening but it's connected as well. It will take us on a bit further but it won't be here. Now according to God's word, God's word here, we see that for every Christian believer we are indeed to have this same goal as Paul.

for Paul says there in verse 15, all of us, all us believers who are mature should take such a view of things. It doesn't mean that you are perfect when he says mature but everybody who's a believer and who's been walking with Christ for any time and knows and loves him should have this same view, this same goal, this same desire, this same passion.

Now that's not to say that we cannot have other dreams. It's not to say that we cannot have other goals or plans for the coming year and beyond.

But whatever those goals, plans and dreams are, they must be secondary to this one supreme desire, this one supreme goal of knowing Christ more.

And it's again not to be simply like a wish, if I can put it that way. You know, well I wish that I could lose some weight in 2020, I wish that I was fitter or I wish that things were better in our family or I wish this was better or wish I could change.

[9 : 42] It's not that. It's not an empty hope. It's not something that is just sort of in there, out there in the ether as it were. But it's something that we are to strive for. It's something that's to move us.

It's something that's to cause us to take action. It's something that must take hold of us in such a way that our lives are measured around about it and molded by it.

That's what Paul is saying here, isn't he? Because as we picked up our verse particularly for last week, brothers and sisters, one thing I do, in the words, one thing above everything else, forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal.

It's not sitting in the armchair and wishful thinking. It is action. Now again, that's something that shouldn't surprise us.

Because in the world in which we live, in the everyday world around about us, we know that if anything is worth having, then there's a sacrifice. If there's anything worth having, then it comes with a cost, doesn't it?

[10:47] It doesn't come freely. So if you're a student at university and you've got set in your mind's eye to get a first class honors degree, then you know that you're going to have to study hard and study long.

You know that you are going to have to press on if you ever hope to receive that reward. And so you're going to be willing to lose out on the parties that your friends go to, lose out on the pleasures, even lose out on sleep if it's needed to gain that reward.

Take it to the field of sports. A sportswoman who dreams of winning a medal at this summer's Olympics likewise recognizes that along with the training and the work that they must do in the gym before any race can be won, they have to give up certain things.

They've got to give up booze. They've got to give up the late nights. They've got to give up the fatty foods and the things that they enjoy. If they've got any chance of achieving that prize, and they'll gladly make that loss and gladly lose those things because it's worth it.

So dear friends, dear believers, dear Christians this morning, if you really want Jesus, if you really count him as the prize, if you want to know as Paul puts it here, his resurrection power, if you want to know what it is to share in his suffering, if you want to know what it is to be like in his death, then you've got to give up certain things.

[12:15] You've got to count things as a loss because ultimately this is the heart of the matter. Ultimately, this is the litmus test, as it were, to what Christian life is all about.

Christian life is all about this. It's about loving Jesus above everything and everyone else. Would you agree with that? I hope so.

It's loving Jesus. Now we may talk about our faith, we may talk about our testimony, about what happened to us many years ago, we may talk about prayer, we may talk about how much we know the Bible and the stories of the Bible, we may even talk about our love for our fellow Christians, but dear friends, all that is meaningless if we do not have a love, a passionate love for Jesus.

Because that's what he wants, that's what he desires, that's what is the nub, as it were, of the Christian faith. Are you head over heels in love with Jesus?

It's not enough to say, well, I really, when I became a Christian, when I was first a Christian those years or decades or ever long ago, I just had such an overwhelming love for Jesus.

[13:32] but, but now I, I sort of don't have that same love for him. I'm sure you all know that those seven letters that Paul wrote to the churches in Asia that are written for us there in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, and I'm sure you know that the very first of those letters was written to the church of Ephesus.

Jesus has much to say to that church which he commends them for, but he has one accusation against them, one thing, above all else, in spite of all that they did, in spite of their faithfulness, in spite of their righteousness, their upholding of truth, their defense against wickedness, you have forsaken your first love.

And he calls them to repent of it, calls them to recognize it, turn away from it, and he says to them, I'm there to receive and to forgive. Have we lost, dear friends, our first love?

All of us have to hang our heads to some degree or another and acknowledge that we have failed to love Jesus as we once did or as we now should.

Not one of us here, including myself, can say that we love him as he deserves to be loved.

However, the question is, do you want to love him more?

[15:01] I'm not here to beat you up and to say, well, you're a terrible Christian and you haven't loved Jesus as you should have done and therefore that's it. You're a failure. I'm not here to say is this, dear friends, do you want to change?

Dear friends, do you want to love him more? Do you want to know him more? than if you say, yes, I do and I realize that this is the hub of the matter, this is what I'm missing, this is why my life at the

moment as a Christian has been quite dour.

And I have to say this to you, dear friends, sometimes we go through periods where our spiritual life is dour and we look for reasons and people to blame. We say, well, of course, if only the church worship was livelier, then I'd be happier in my Christian faith.

If only there was a better preacher who gave us a better message than this, then I'd be happier in my faith. If only my Christian friends, if only this would happen or that would happen and we look around for fault and dear friends, what we've got to go back to and what the scriptures always tell us is this, search me, oh God, and see if within me there's anything.

And ultimately, I have to say, dear friends, 99.9% of the time when our spiritual life, our Christian life, is dull or we are off colour as it were, it's because in our hearts we have lost our love for Christ. [16:16] And the only way back from that is to seek to love him more. The only way back from that is to grow in love. And to do that, we have to put aside and to lose those things that have got in the way of our view of Christ.

Because that's often what happens. Other things have crammed in. Other things have come in. Our own selfish desires, our own plans, our own wants, our own materialistic attitudes or whatever it may be, they've come in and as it were, they've squashed Jesus out of the picture or hidden him and got in the way of him.

And that's what Paul is talking about here. He's talking about losing those things. He had so much to lose, we might say. All this incredible heritage as a Jewish person, this incredible descendency, these incredible works that he did for God, this pharisaical zeal and all these things, he says all of them are in the way.

They've got to be removed. If I want to gain more of Jesus, if you want to gain more of Jesus, then you're going to have to lose something. And you might say to me, well, all right Peter, I'm sort of following your drift in this.

What makes gaining Jesus worth losing those things that actually at this moment in my life, I count as life's gains, life's pleasures, life's joys? What's the good about knowing Jesus that I should consider all other things as Paul does here, garbage?

[17:47] Remember what we said yesterday morning, Paul is, well, the NIV is translating his language very politely and Englishly, but it's actually a steaming pile of dung. Why should I count all things dung compared to knowing Jesus more?

Because we need to recognize that compared to knowing Jesus, everything else in this world is so much less, so much, so inferior.

We need to recognize that the gains we have that replace the losses that we make are so much greater and more wonderful that actually you'd be stupid to want to keep hold of these things which are the dung and garbage instead of holding on to the beauty and the glory of these treasures.

Think about it for a moment and it comes out here in this passage but it's clear, isn't it? Whatever we lose for the sake of gaining Christ is only something which is temporary, a temporary pleasure or a temporary possession.

See, everything in this life is only here for a little while, isn't it? Everything that we have, whether it be money or status or job or even our health. We can't hold on to these things.

[19:02] We can't keep them. They rust, as it were, in our fingers. They crumble in our fingers as Jesus said. Build up for yourselves treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and thief does not steal but they go.

We can't hold these things even in this life. We certainly can't take them into the next. But the more that we gain of the Lord Jesus Christ day by day, month by month, year by year, is never lost.

Neither in this life nor in the one to come. The blessings that we have in Christ, the gain and the knowledge of him that we receive is something that continues to increase and grow and grow and grow and is never on the decrease, never rusts.

Whatever gain we lose, dear friends, is garbage by comparison to what we gain.

Now, that's not to say that everything in life is useless or everything in life is bad. Of course it's not. That's not what Jesus is saying or Paul is saying here. But compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ, Jesus is so much more valuable.

[20:21] We have that saying don't we? One person's treasure is another person's junk. People collect stamps and postcards and all sorts of different things and to the person who collects those things, these things are valuable to them and they become even more valuable when they're rare or unique and they can spend fortunes on just possessing this one-off stamp or this post, whatever it

may be.

But to the rest of us, those things are just bits of paper. bits of card. They're valueless to us. If you love the Lord Jesus Christ, if your heart and passion is for him, whatever other people think and whatever else there is in the world, it pales.

You can think of all sorts of comparisons, can you, between a diamond and a piece of broken glass, between a golden crown and a paper hat in the cracker.

All these things that you can see, but even then, they don't come close to the infinite comparison between what Christ has for us and what this world has to offer us and what the devil has done so well.

And he's done it for Christians too, but he's done it in the world so well, he's told people that this paper mache sawdust world is so amazing, so wonderful, so marvelous, and that the things of God are worthless and useless.

[21 : 59] There's nothing and no one that compares to Jesus in value. He truly is priceless. And to the believer, and again, I have to say, this is the test, the acid test, the litmus test of our hearts, really, to the believer.

Jesus, knowing more of Jesus, possessing more of Jesus makes everything else pale into insignificance. Remember those parables that Jesus taught in Matthew, but in Luke as well, where he speaks about the kingdom of heaven, but he's talking about possessing himself.

He says, in one sense, I am like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again.

Then in his joy, went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Again, I am like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Is that how you feel about Jesus?

To have him, I would lose everything. Well, let's get down to some practicalities. How do we do this?

[23 : 09] What am I talking about? How do we gain more of Christ? And what do we mean by losing? That we might incur more of him. Well, again, let's go back to Paul and to Philippians 3 because alongside this word loss, there's also the word consider.

Verse 7, but whatever work gains to me, I now consider loss. What is more, I consider everything a loss? Verse 8, I consider them garbage. Consider is to think through.

It's to understand a particular viewpoint and to make it our own, to come to a conclusion about it. So the way that we live out this life of Jesus, of loving Jesus and seeking Jesus, begins with a change in our thinking.

Our minds, as I say, and you know it yourself, are largely shaped and molded by outside influences. Perhaps our parents, our peers, what we hear or read or see or have been told.

And many of those influences upon our thinking, in fact, much of them in the world, are contrary to God's way of thinking, God's way of understanding things.

[24 : 20] That's why Paul, when he writes to the Christians in Rome, urges them, do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

He's talking about the mind. To be a Christian is not somebody who leaves their brain at the door when they come in. It's not somebody who puts aside reason and understanding. A Christian is somebody who thinks carefully and seriously about the things of God, seriously about the world, seriously about themselves.

He says, do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you'll be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, perfect will.

We need to see things, dear friends, from God's perspective. And that is to see them as they really are. The world says, this is how life is.

This is what the world is like. But in fact, the world is looking at itself and everything else upside down. When our vision is in line with God, then actually, we look at the world and life and ourselves the right way up as it really is.

[25 : 36] Our spiritual needs, dear friends, are much greater than our material wants. So how do we go about losing what is either a hindrance or a diversion so that we might gain more of Christ?

I think it's two very simple things. In fact, even one simple thing. When we are faced with a choice, we need to ask ourselves, what really will do me the greatest good?

I've got a choice in life. What will do me the greatest spiritual good? What will do me the greatest good in the sense of draw me closer to Christ, make him more real to me, and so on?

So I think this is a fair illustration. You're watching the TV on Sunday afternoon and it's half past five. Amazingly, there's something worth watching on BBC Two. But what will do you the greatest good? Watching that program or getting along to fellowship with God's people? I don't think it's rocket science.

[26 : 47] Another situation, you like to buy a newspaper or a magazine most days. Perhaps you particularly like the celebrity gossip page and what's going on.

But it seems you never have time to read your Bible. You never have the desire to. Or your daily study notes. What's going to do the most spiritual good? What's going to draw you to Christ? What's going to feed your soul? What's going to bless you? The same goes with everything else that we do in our lives, dear friends. Am I saying it's wrong to read the newspaper? Of course not. Unless it prevents me from reading my Bible. Is it wrong to watch TV? Not always. But if it stops me fellowshipping with God's people and with my brothers and sisters in Christ, then yes it is. Is playing football or cricket or golf or netball bad for me? No, except when I put my sport before the chance to meet with Jesus and know him better. You see, we've been duped.

[27 : 53] We've been deceived. And we don't even realize it. We've listened to those voices that tell us that what we see and touch and hear and taste is what we want and what we need and what will satisfy.

and it's absolute steaming pile of dung. So let me put you again, dear friends. Do you love Jesus? Are you addicted to Jesus? Do you find him to be the most wonderful, glorious, delightful treasure in this life?

and make the sacrifice to know him better. It's worth it. You're worth it.

But most of all, he's worth it. Let me close with this. Jim Elliott, many of you will have heard of, was a missionary in South America in the 1950s.

[28 : 58] On January the 8th, 1956, along with four other missionaries, he was killed by a tribesman in the Amazonian jungle. His wife, Elizabeth, stayed on at the mission and in later years saw all of her husband's killers come to faith in Jesus.

Jim Elliott said this, He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. losing what we could never lose. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. Sharon, Campbell, that the Take to hear what he does and he...