

## Philippians 3:8-11

### “The Right Kind Of Righteousness”

It's good to have goals. Goals can keep us focused, free from distraction & pressing forward in a positive direction. But as it *pertains* to goals, *priorities* are equally important. My question is this; what's the *primary* goal of your life? Maybe you're at a place where you're looking to get that college degree or move up in the company. Perhaps you're looking to buy a house or move from the “dating scene” (so to speak) into a marriage relationship.

Here's the tell; my pursuits will always reveal my priorities. If I'm looking to buy a house, I'm saving every extra cent. If I'm gunning for that degree, I'm putting in the hrs studying, if I'm wanting to move up in the company I might put in extra time or take on more projects to make an impression. *If I believe marriage is on my horizon, I'm spending time w/that person, learning more about them, how to communicate w/them, how to better encourage them in the Lord... My priorities will be seen in my pursuits (what I'm doing w/my time, talent, energies & resources).*

Goals are good. But there should be one goal in the life of every child of God that supersedes all others. It's the priority that Paul points out here in Phil Ch 3, that being to *know* J.C. & become more *like* J.C.

We “glory”, we make our boast not in everything we've given to God, or that we've done for God, but in all that He's done for us & given to us in the Person of J.C. The focus is never about what we've given up to serve Christ, but what He gave up to leave throne of heaven to seek & to save that which was lost, to serve us in the giving of His life for us. What love is this? We want to know Him!

We read in the book of Jeremiah, *“Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>*

But it doesn't stop in *knowing* Him. God's heart for us isn't only that we *know* Jesus, but that we are (Rom 8:29) conformed into the very image of Jesus... That we're made more like Him w/each passing day. Every other goal should come in at a distance 2<sup>nd</sup> in our lives. To know Jesus & be made like Jesus, this was Paul's priority.

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<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Je 9:23-24]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We're coming into the context of "confidence." What confidence can we have in being made right in the sight of God? We can rest in 1 of 2 things, yes? Either *our* works for God, or *His* work for *us* in the Person of J.C. upon the cross (the Lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the world). We can't have it both ways, we either trust in what *we do* or what *He's done*.

& Paul has been sharing w/us his personal experience in coming *out of* the camp of confidence of trusting in who he *was* & *into* the camp of trusting in who *Jesus is*. He was positioned perfectly to obtain salvation both by inheritance (being born as a Jew, kept in strict accordance w/the law) & by achievement (those works he'd accomplished through his own merit/discipline). He was the most elite of the religious elite. He excelled in zeal beyond all his peers. He sought not only to *spread* what he thought was right, but also to *stamp out* what he thought was wrong. As it pertained to keeping the law from every outward angle, he'd achieved it. If it were possible to "work" your way to heaven, he'd have been 1<sup>st</sup> in line.

But that day (Acts Ch 9) on his way to Damascus he had an encounter w/the Person of J.C. that changed him forever. He threw away *every religious effort* in exchange for a *personal relationship w/Jesus...* As far as the world was concerned, he had it all. High standing, money, influence, respect, admiration. But as Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." That was the story of Paul's life. Jesus said that like this, "*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*"<sup>2</sup>

So everything that was gain for Paul in the world, everything that was helping him make headway in his religious efforts or gain power & influence in the eyes of man, he tallied them all up on one side of the ledger. On the other side of the ledger was J.C. What he discovered was that all the things he thought was working *for* him, were in reality working *against* him. Because he could either trust in *his works* or the *perfect* work of J.C. on his behalf, but he couldn't do both... so in Vs 7 he concluded that all those things he'd worked his whole life for didn't profit him at all, they weren't gain, they were loss. True gain is found in Christ... Notice.

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Mt 16:25-26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Vs 7-8

I want you to realize that Paul's not being repetitious for the sake of emphasis here. He's not simply repeating in Vs 8 what he said in Vs 7 in a little more dramatic tone. We should take note of the verb tense. Vs 7 is his past, Vs 8 is his present.

It's like he's saying, "You know, I've had a lot of time to consider & reflect on my position, my persuasion & 30 yrs later I'm more convinced than ever before." The impact that Jesus had upon him in his past was still making a difference in his present. Here's the point; if what happened to you 2 yrs ago or 20 yrs ago in your past isn't translating into your present, then the past doesn't really count for much... In other words, we can't rely on what used to be, or when things were really pumping, how is God moving in your life today?

Paul didn't simply have some emotional experience that happened on the road to Damascus & then he went on about his life (business as usual). What happened to him (& in him) stayed w/him... do you see that? Conversion happens in a moment, but it stays w/you for life. Being conformed into the image of Jesus isn't some great emotional experience; it's a daily walk & dependence upon God throughout the entirety of your life...

Paul went from trusting in his own works to make him right w/God to being completely confident in Christ in a single moment of time (we call it conversion, he was "born again" on the road to Damascus).

Is he still convinced 30 yrs later, writing from a prison cell in Rome because of his belief in J.C.? How's he feeling about that now? Family; I'm not sure it would be humanly possible to find a more forceful refutation of human effort to please God than what Paul presents right here... The words "Yet indeed" are actually the translation of 5 Greek particles. It's like Paul is piling word on top of word to build up all the force & conviction he possibly can to make this statement. Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest translates "yea, indeed, at least, therefore, even." Paul is in essence saying, "Yes, amen, absolutely, emphatically, w/all my strength & every ounce of conviction I declare to you, that I 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, & count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ!"

Btw, many of you may know this (some of you may not) but the word "rubbish" is more literally "dung", he says, "all those things are garbage, nothing in this world matters to me outside the knowledge of J.C. my Lord."

& When he speaks of the “knowledge” of Christ Jesus, he’s not saying that he lives for academic or theological information, that he wants to know what Jesus can teach him (though certainly that’s a huge priority). His primary passion is to know Jesus *personally*, intimately. He says, “Man, I flushed *religion* down the drain that I might have a *relationship* w/J.C.” He wants to commune w/Christ, to *know* Him.

This isn’t knowing “about” Jesus. Eternal life is not found in knowing *about* Jesus. We can know a lot of historical information about a lot of people but never *know* that person. Paul cast off everything that he might grow in a personal relationship w/Jesus. It’s what Jesus was talking about when He said, “*And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*”<sup>3</sup>

Paul had lost everything. His money...gone. His public platform & position of influence among the “elite” ... gone. The admiration of the “who’s who” ... gone. He was an outcast, forsaken, hated by the Jewish religious community & now in prison because of his love for J.C. & **What does he have to say about it? “All those things that made me seem important & powerful in the eyes of man were garbage, I’d throw it all away 1,000xs over that I might have fellowship & experience a close relationship w/Jesus.**

Btw, if he wants to “know” Jesus what’s that mean? It means Jesus is alive 😊. You can’t have a relationship w/a historical figure. But you can grow to know someone who’s alive!

Guys, anytime we trust in our own “goodness” our own “righteousness” we’re saying, “We don’t need the cross, I can make it on my own” that’s offends the cross of J.C. **It basically spits in the face of the love of God & says, “No thanks, I got this.” Paul said, “Get it all (anything that would tempt me to trust in myself) as far away from me as it can possibly be, give me Jesus.”**

### **Vs 8-9**

This whole little section is all about the right kind of righteousness. Do you want “your own righteousness” which is what you can drum up through what you consider to be “good works”, or do you want the righteousness that only God can provide that comes through faith in J.C.

**Because that’s what it means to be found “in Christ.” To be “in Christ” is not having my own righteousness, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.**

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [In 17:3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Which (btw) is the *only* righteousness God has *ever* accepted or approved. Fellowship w/God is always based on righteousness, even going all the way back to Abe. God has never approved what we might call an “achieved” righteousness. But He will accept what the bible calls “imputed” righteousness.

To impute something to my account is to accredit it to my account. In other words, God will account the fact that you believe Him as righteousness to you... God told Abe that He would give him a son, make him a great nation & that in him all the tribes of the earth would be blessed (that Messiah would come from his loins). We read in Gen 15, **“And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”<sup>4</sup>**

Today God says, “My Son J.C. has lived a sinless life, He died a sinner’s death. He shed His blood, paid the penalty of sin (which is death) but being Himself sinless He rose again from the dead 3 days later. If you will believe in the sufficiency of His work I will accredit to you, impart to you, account to you His righteousness on your behalf.”

Now, you can try to work it all out on your own. No one ever has, no one ever will (because we have a sin nature imbedded into us from the factory) we can’t obtain perfect righteousness. But if you will believe on the Lord J.C. a beautiful exchange takes place. God gives us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning & the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Is 61:3). Old things pass away, behold all things become new... new life, “born again.” You’re now, “in Him”, no longer trusting in a legal religion, but a living relationship w/God through faith in Christ Jesus.

“Faith”. It’s the key. You can’t work for the righteousness of Christ, you can’t buy it, steal it, or in any way earn it, all you can do is humble yourself & trust Him for it.

**Vs 10-11**

Have you figured it out yet? This is Paul’s passion, to know J.C., this One who has loved him, given Himself *for* him, stood in the place *of* him & did for him what he could never do for himself; achieve perfect righteousness. & That Jesus would robe him in that righteousness through faith, Paul says, “I want to *know* this Man... & not only do I want to *know* Him, I want to be *like* Him.”

Paul wanted to know (that is, experience) Christ on the deepest levels. To know the *power* of His resurrection... The same power that raised Jesus from the dead, is now alive & at work in us as believers... How deep do you want to go w/that?

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ge 15:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

How intimately do you want to experience that? That Power that breaks chains, sets free, overcomes...

The power of His resurrection was the evidence that everything Jesus did & said was true, it was the receipt & proof that His sacrifice was sufficient for the sin of the world, it was the power of life from death... & It gives us comfort & consolation knowing that our friends/loved ones who passed from this life are more alive than ever, living w/Christ.

30 yrs later, Paul still had an ambition to *know* Jesus, he hadn't arrived, didn't polish his halo every morning having attained to spiritual super saint status, all these yrs later he said, "I want to *know* Him more..."

"The power of His resurrection" notice "& the fellowship of His sufferings". It's like the record needle scratches & we say, "Wait, what? I'm all down w/the 'power' thing, but what are you talking about (Paul) w/this whole 'suffering' bit?" Yeah. Paul wanted to know the fullness of His person, His power & His sufferings (not in a substitutionary way, the work was done, but Jesus suffered for righteousness sake, Paul wanted to enter that same understanding).

We might understand it like this, before the crown, is the cross. Before honor is humility. To the Romans he said it like this, "*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*"<sup>5</sup> Peter put it this way, "*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.*"<sup>6</sup> If you suffer for the sake of righteousness, you're in great company.

But it doesn't stop there. "Being conformed to His *death*,". What does that mean? Couple things. #1 I believe this speaks of the fact that if Jesus has died *for* our sin, then we're to die *to* our sin. Again, to the Romans Paul wrote, "*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*"<sup>7</sup> #2 Not only are we to die to sin, we're to die to self that we might be alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ro 8:16–17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Pe 4:12–13]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ro 6:3–4]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Gal 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*<sup>8</sup> When we seek to save (or hang on) to our lives, we'll lose it. But when we lose our lives (that is die to self) for Christ's sake, we find life. When I'm conformed to His death I realize it's about *God's* plan for me, not my own.

Listen, I'm not going to lie to you, suffering & death isn't fun, it's not glamorous, it's not glitzy or great times (that's why it's called suffering & death)... But we don't get to the power of the resurrection w/out going through Gethsemane & Calvary... You don't get the power apart from the suffering, it's who Jesus is...

& That's not to say that we're to go out & look for ways to suffer for Jesus, or suffer for the sake of suffering... But there are times when life gets tough, will you look to avoid those times or seek the grace of God to sustain you in the midst of those times? Here's your passage to write down & look up for this study, 2 Cor 4:7-11.

Paul wanted the whole of who Jesus was. *"If by any means, I may attain to the resurrection of the dead."* He refused to avoid the path that led to life, come what may He wanted all of Jesus.

& He wasn't doubting his salvation, but he did long for its completion. As it's been said we've been saved, we're being saved & we'll be saved. We were saved when we received Jesus, but that salvation is being worked out in us day by day as we walk w/Him & we'll be saved ultimately, finally when we're called home to see Him face to face.

Some will be raptured, some will be resurrected, all will be changed. But it's all about the right kind of righteousness. We refuse the righteousness that comes through our own efforts & rest in the righteousness which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

### Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your word. We *believe* You, we trust in J.C. & the cleansing power of His blood to wash us from our sins. Have Your way in us, be glorified in our lives. Pour Your Spirit out upon us & renew our 1<sup>st</sup> love.

God loves You, Jesus died *for* you. Receive His righteousness today, believe on Him & the forgiveness of sin & newness of life will be yours.

<sup>8</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ga 2:20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.