

# Gain or Loss (Part 1 of 3)

by Roy Hession

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*Roy Hession's sermon examines Paul's transformation from pride in his religious achievements to finding true value in knowing Christ.*

**Duration:** 46:00

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:2-12

**Topics:** "Counting Loss"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the testimony of the apostle Paul and the profound change that occurred in his life after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus. The speaker compares Paul's transformation to a profit and loss account, highlighting how Paul willingly gave up his previous gains and assets for the sake of Christ. The sermon is divided into three parts: Paul's former assets, his realization that they were liabilities, and the new gains he received in Christ. The speaker emphasizes the importance of surrendering to Jesus and being willing to endure criticism and unjust treatment for the sake of righteousness.

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## Transcript

Will you turn to the epistle to the Philippians, chapter 3. The epistle to the Philippians, chapter 3. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me, is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

By that he means those that were always pressing circumcision, and he used the word almost of contempt. He says they're the concisioner, just a lot of flesh cutters. That's what it means.

Beware of dogs. He knew how detrimental it was to their spiritual welfare to be brought into bondage. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision, for we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof, he might trust in the flesh. I more circumcise the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, and Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but done, that I

may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

As I've been thinking before the Lord as to the line that he wants us to think upon in these days, it's come to me that he would have us spend these three mornings meditating upon this one passage, Philippians chapter three, and the particular verses which we've read. It is the great autobiographical passage in Paul's writing. There are two such passages, Romans 7 where he tells us of his inner struggles to keep the law and his failure and his finding rest in Christ, that's one piece of autobiography, and here this great passage in Philippians 3 which takes the same story but perhaps from a different point of view.

This then is Paul's personal testimony to the Lord Jesus. He gave his testimony of course in the Acts of the Apostles, standing on the steps to the crowd of those Jews who were clambering for his blood, he told them how he met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. But this is his testimony viewed years after, and he's seen all the implications of it even more than he did at first.

And as I've thought about this passage and perhaps as you have done in the past, it seems to us to be a passage in which more of the gospel and Christian truth is concentrated than perhaps any other passage. We've got great mines of riches here which could well occupy us a great deal longer than three mornings. Paul is giving his testimony, what he was, how he thought, and what's happened, and the great change.

And it looks to me rather like a profit and loss account, because you've got that word in verse 7, what things were gained, literally, plural, what things were gains to me, those I counted one combined loss for Christ. And it does look, does it not, like a profit and loss account. And it seems to divide itself into three, and we shall look at it under these three divisions in these mornings.

Verses 4 to 6, he enumerates his assets, he's spreading out the balance sheet, and there are the things that he used to regard as his assets, his gains, things about which he felt justifiably proud. And then in verses 7 to 8, he realizes his assets are in reality only great liabilities, and he makes a great change in his bookkeeping, and he transfers his gains, the profit, to the loss side. The credit is transferred to the debt, and a very, very deep surrender, which we shall think about, is made by Paul, because he met and came to know the surpassing excellence of the Lord Jesus.

And then, the rest of the passage, verses 9 to 12, or 11 rather, he speaks of the new gains, the new profit that's come to him in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the interesting thing, for what it's worth, is that his former gains were seven, which gains were counted loss, and the new gains he received are also seven. But of course, the gain about every gain, that includes every other, was that he found and received the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

He was his great gain, including everything else. Now, just look then, this morning, at the things that Paul regarded as his assets. And as he describes what he was, and how he regarded himself, we have a picture of a man going up.

He was a real up-and-coming man in the sphere in which he chose to excel. And the sphere in which Paul chose to excel was the sphere of religion, the sphere in which it is more obnoxious than in any other sphere in which to try to excel. And that was the sphere where Paul chose to excel, in the sphere of religion.

And here you see an up-and-coming man. And he tells us, he says, well, if there are those who go around trusting in the flesh, in what they are naturally, well, I have more right, I think, to trust in the than anybody else. For, I must confess, it seems to me, there were few people who could have said about themselves what I used to say.

And it was true. He really did excel many, most of his equals of those days. Well, then, have a look at them.

First of all, he enumerates the gains, or assets, of his birth and upbringing. He says, I was circumcised the eighth day, which was the command of God, that every Hebrew man-child, eight days after his birth, should be duly circumcised. That was to separate that child from the Gentiles.

That was the mark that they were God's chosen people, the superior race, different from the Gentiles. And he said, I duly had that ceremony performed upon me. And I was the stock of Abraham, of Israel.

I wasn't a proselyte, a convert from the Gentiles, who became circumcised. But I was an Israel, Israelite by birth. I was the stock of Israel, this chosen special race, so honoured by God.

More than that, he says, I was of the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe from which Israel's first king came, Saul. And it was something to be a member of the tribe of Benjamin. Real blue blood, old school tie, and all that sort of thing, to be a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

And summing it all up, he says, I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Philip says, translates that I was a full-blooded Jew. Real top drawl.

And that was the first set of things of which he felt himself justly proud. And you know, sometimes we feel a bit proud about our upbringing, about the circle we've come from, about our parentage, perhaps, perhaps about our accent. You don't know how proud you are of your accent until you find yourself mixing amongst people who don't speak with quite your accent.

English people spend an awful lot on their accent. I believe one of the reasons why we send our children to boarding school is not because the education is necessarily any better there, but we pay hundreds of pounds a year just for the accent. I'm involved in this myself.

I don't get anybody else. I know some of the motives that guided us. And when you have it, it's something.

It certainly gets you a certain type of job. In spite of the fact that England has progressed so much more in a democratic direction, we're still full of these things and they mean something to us. And you don't know how much they mean until you move among other circles.

And we're proud, too, of being English. And you don't know how proud you are of being English until you go to another country. I never knew I had such pride in my race until I went to America, first of all.

And I really had to repent. Of course, Americans often tell us how much bigger their things are than ours, but we, on our part, we are quite sure. We have the culture.

We have the depth. We know. The extraordinary thing is, of course, they admit it.

But we don't admit it the other way. They do. They have no doubt about it at all.

And I tell you, it's something to be an Englishman when you go to the States. You're treated as something. And people even gather round in a shop to listen to your accent.

You'll be sitting at a restaurant, chatting away, and you'll find tables all round, all stop-talking, listening to you. Oh, and I tell you, I find that quite a bit of pride is there. These are things.

These are assets. They really count. But Paul's assets were not only in the realm of birth and upbringing, but also in the realm of personal achievement, especially in the realm in which he chose to excel.

He chose to excel not in the realm of secular employment, but in the realm of religion. Now, he says, I wasn't content merely with being a full-blooded Jew by birth, but when it was left to my choice, I chose to be of the straightest sect of the Pharisees, the most religious, the most consecrated, the most scrupulous people of the whole nation, as touching the law, I was a Pharisee. And we mustn't always import all the bad notions into that word that we usually do.

They had their faults, terrible faults, it's true. But on the other hand, there wasn't a more earnest, dedicated group in Israel than that. It was only when their righteousness was challenged that they manifested the spirit they did.

But there was much which left everybody else standing. Of course, they intended to leave everybody else standing. That was part of the business of being a Pharisee.

I mean to say, if nobody knew you were a Pharisee, what was the point of being a Pharisee? You had to say your prayers so other people could see you. And you had to give your arms so other people could observe it. Otherwise, what was the point? Which, of course, really revealed the reason why the human heart wants to be so very earnest sometimes.

Even in our Christian lives, we want to be thought to be something. Yes, he was a Pharisee. And that was something, it really was something, something to be proud of.

And then when it came to zeal, the moment where some smell of heresy around, no one was quicker on the ball than Paul. And the moment he heard of this heresy that was going around about this Jesus, he was at the forefront of those, out to stamp it out. And doing so, as he thought, offering God's service in the doing of it.

So much so that when the Sanhedrin were looking around for a proper man to go and deal with this sect away in Damascus, who could they choose better than Paul? And my, what a glow that gave to Paul when he had that invitation. You know, rather like the minister or the evangelist who gets an invitation to take service at an important church. My, that's real good, isn't it? Had it been a little insignificant church, you might have been too busy, but not for this one.

And really it was something to have that down in his diary. At this special request of the Sanhedrin themselves, he, Paul, was asked to go and deal with this heretical sect. Oh, it was something.

It really meant something to Paul. He was an up-and-coming man. Everybody talked about him as an up-and-coming man.

Have you heard about Paul? Tremendously keen these days. Very gifted. Just the man we want.

And, of course, all this wasn't lost on Paul. And then, touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. Philip says, no one could find fault with me as regards what the law required a man should do.

All the ceremonies were duly kept, and all the outward deeds of almsgiving and much else. Frankly, people just couldn't find fault with him on that score. And the fact is, these things really did mean something to Paul.

They weren't matters of indifference to him. Now, when you add them all up, what does it mean, these assets? Because, you can see, we're in the same place. We shall apply that a little more closely in a moment.

I believe all these things added up to his own righteousness. It was these things were his righteousness. And what he saw happening was his righteousness.

His good standing with God as he hoped, and certainly his good standing with his fellows was increasing. And he thought, well, that's the way, that's the way to please God. You increase in good standing with God, and you increase in good standing with your fellows, that's the way.

That's the only direction for me. There's only one way for me, said Paul, and it's the way up along the sphere in which he chose to excel. And, of course, as we shall see in a moment, that is every man's dearest possession, his righteousness.

Because we, too, are up-and-coming men, or we want to be. Everybody in the world wants to be up-and-coming, each in his sphere. And we were all like that before we were saved, wanting to go up, wanting to enlarge spheres, better job, to achieve great ambition.

But the tragic thing is this, that this up-and-coming spirit has been transferred into our Christian lives. And sometimes our meeting of the Lord Jesus has done nothing to touch that. We were up-and-coming before, and we're up-and-coming now.

Indeed, our desire to be up-and-coming may be even stronger in this new sphere in which we find ourselves. And there may be all sorts of things that we feel stand to our credit, of which secretly we're proud, and we're glad about. Yes, it may be matters of birth, of upbringing, of accent.

It may be matters of spiritual background. We can thank God we're not as these liberals, that we're evangelical and fundamental. And that means something, to be born again into such a sphere.

It is a privilege, but it can become part of our righteousness. And you never know how much it means to you to be classed as that, until you sometimes find yourself moving amongst those of a different type. I remember when the Billy Graham Relays, the second year, were being organised in Bristol.

I had some share in helping with the organisation of them. And I, and I think others too, were very disturbed when all the churches wanted to come in and share in it, wanted to be on the committee. Well, that was all right, I'd like them to hear.

Then they said they wanted to also provide their share of counsellors. And I've got very worked up about that. I wrote off to headquarters, why these people may not even be clear on the gospel and so on.

Well, I believe there was a right and proper concern over that. I don't know even now what the real answer is. But I do know this, that God had to speak to me.

He says, you're a Pharisee. You're saying, I thank God I'm not as these liberals are. He says, the gospel of the Lord Jesus is not something to add to your righteousness.

It's not something to contend over. It's for your deep, desperate need as a sinner. And can you say that your need as a sinner is any less than the need of a liberal as a sinner? Indeed, I came to see that my need was greater.

For perhaps I sinned as I did, and I did sin against light and knowledge that other people might not have. And this was for my desperate need as a sinner. But oh, there's so much it can be of that in our hearts.

And it's often seen, by the way, and we get hot and aggressive. I know I do. And I know it because somewhere along the line, it's been of my righteousness.

And so along these other lines, how this can apply to us? Our zeal. We want to seem to be zealous. We want to seem to be keen.

We like people to note it. We like people to see that we've been used. We like to tell people of the blessing that's come.

And ostensibly, it's for the glory of the Lord, that we want them to know that we actually happen to be the instrument. And a little bit of a halo grows round our head. We like to see our sphere of influence increasing.

There are invitations to us. I know it was a matter of great satisfaction to me at one time that my diary was always filled up full for a year in advance. It didn't matter what the engagements were.

Sometimes invitations would come. I wouldn't enquire how on earth they got my name. It was just something more to put in my diary.

And what a source of satisfaction that was. And I didn't know how much it meant to me until the time came when everything seemed to fold up and my diary was empty for a year. I used to lie awake at night and say, well, I'm finished.

Finished at 40. Ah, it meant something. You don't know.

I don't know how much these things mean to us. Until you reply, Donald. We may think that being a Sunday school teacher or helping in that Bible class or leader of a Christian union or something like that means it's just for the Lord's sake.

No, no, nothing to me at all. But you wait until somebody else is appointed. And you lay awake at night feeling it really means something.

These things. And Paul didn't see it at the time. He very thought he was doing God's service.

But he had to have it revealed. Now, all these things, as I said, add up to our righteousness. The thing that we want is righteousness.

And the dearest possession in the human heart is a love of our own righteousness. I believe it is easier to give up anything rather than to give up our righteousness. We are moral creatures.

We can't help it. The most depraved person is a moral creature. That woman in the streets is arguing with herself that it isn't really bad.

Take the case of Russia. She's done things which, however you view them, are completely and utterly unethical. She doesn't see the mind, from one point of view.

And yet she goes through infinite pains and spends vast sums in proving to the world she's right. Right over hungry. Perfectly right.

Why does she bother? Well, you see, it's wrong and I don't care it's wrong. Because man's a moral creature. Man cannot say that.

You've always got to prove it's right. You've got to rationalize it. And this is the activity of the human heart all the time to justify itself, to vindicate itself, to rationalize its actions.

And the thing that a man gives up last is his righteousness. The thing we hate more than anything else is the admission we are wrong. That's why you know how much you love your righteousness by your unwillingness to admit you're wrong.

It's the dearest thing in every man. Job is the classic example of that. He was willing to lose other things and bow to the will of God in great surrender.

Except when it came to losing his righteousness. He felt lost first of all. What was it? He lost his possessions.

And the day whirlwind came. Farm and stock gone. Then he later lost terrible loss.

His loved ones, another calamity. His sons and daughters lost their lives in one day. He was bereaved of his dear ones in one day.

And then he lost something even deeper than that. His personal health. Reduced to an absolute skeleton and a cripple.

Going on to the dust heap. Finding something with which to scratch his soul. And yet in all this Job sinned not.

Nor charged God with folly. He bowed his head. The Lord gave these things.

The Lord's taken them away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. What brokenness.

But it wasn't quite as brokenness as you might think. For brokenness is not merely losing, meaning willing to lose your possessions or your loved ones or even your health. The last ditch is losing your righteousness.

And that was the fourth test. Job came through the others splendidly, but that fourth one he broke right down. His friends came along and they sat alongside him.

And they said, sympathized. And then they said to one another, not talking of course, you know, I've never seen anybody suffer like this who wasn't a wicked man. I agree with you.

It's only wicked men who suffer like this. And the point wasn't lost on Job. What do you mean? Are you going to infer that this has come upon me because I'm wicked? But we know, the reader knows he isn't wicked.

God has said he wasn't in the very first chapter. And Job knows he isn't. And in a sense it's true.

And they're telling lies. They've got the wrong construction on it without any doubt. But this is where Job failed.

He wasn't willing to be wrongly accused. The righteous was not willing to be regarded as a sinful. It meant something to be regarded as righteous to himself.

He said, I'm not going to let it go. And you have chapter after chapter of self-indication. It's wearisome reading.

I will not let go of my integrity of a verse along those lines. He argues. And then of course, he begins by arguing with them.

It isn't very long before he starts arguing with God. Some of the great gospel texts, as we think, are really texts of self-indication. Oh, that I might, and I knew where I might find him.

That's not the cry of a sinner, at least seeking a savior. If only I could find him, I'd come and I'd spread my cause to him and I'm sure I'm right. If I'm wrong, tell me.

And so he slipped into the most appalling justification of himself. I don't think any of us have been any better in the circumstances. That's the test.

Am I willing to be regarded as a failure? Especially when I don't think I am. Am I really willing to be criticised even when those criticisms seem to me to be unjust? Must I write? Must I explain? Must I call in that solicitor? People do. Anything.

They'll fight right down to the grave for one thing. They must be shown to be right. But I am right.

All right, perhaps you are. But we aren't willing to let it go. We must be shown to be right.

And of course, being what we are, there are many matters in which we aren't really right at all. But we're determined to show we are. And so here are these things, many, many things, subtle things, varying perhaps with each one of us, which are gains to us, what things were gains to us, what we think are assets.

It really helps, you know, in the Christian life, you see, to be well thought of and all sorts of things. It really helps. You're really going places.

I think it can be with regard to our knowledge of the scriptures. When we're first saved, we sit on the back row. Poor sinners, nothing at all.

They're no thing. Just that Jesus is our saviour. If we only knew those were our best days.

Since those days, we've got to know quite a lot. We've got to know our Bibles. We've got our dispensations, all in order.

We know a lot of other things, all about the second coming, with the help of Scofield, of course. And a very quick way for the young Christian to get everything straight. Praise the Lord for it, nonetheless.

But, oh, how we feel we're going places. And we were asked to give a testimony. We gave a little message somewhere.

We've got a little facility. And when we let us go, that was something. Since those early days, we've been increasing and increasing in our righteousness.

And the more we have of righteousness, the further we're getting away from grace. For God's grace is for the guilty. God's grace is for self-concessive failures.

And we are not told in the scriptures to grow in goodness. Did you think we were? Peter says, grow in grace. And that means growing in the apprehension of thy sinfulness, of the fact that I haven't any righteousness at all.

But our growth, naturally, is all the other way. We're all of us naturally wanting to become up-and-coming men. And I must confess, I believe, without trying to be especially humble, I have more than my fair share of that in my heart.

I've been shown only the last conference I was with, with some brethren here, God convicted me of my desire to excel. My desire to excel. We say things, we declare things in order to excel.

But devil is bringing it at us all the time. And, of course, then it provokes other people to jealousy and so on. And maybe it's our fault.

Because, subtly, there it was, that desire to excel. Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast-wind it in either direction.

And this love of righteousness, I say again, is supremely revealed in our unwillingness to admit sin and admit we're wrong. That's where it really comes out. My natural thing, when my wife challenges me or somebody else is to explain it, I'm right.

God can't do anything with us. He can't get us convicted. He can't show us the things we need to see.

We're right. We're right. These people, my wife doesn't really understand me.

She's always misunderstanding me. And we're impervious to what God has to say. And we go on just building a picture of ourselves up, which just isn't the truth.

That's how much I love my righteousness, by my unwillingness to take reproof, to humble myself, and to say I'm wrong, and to obey God. Now, the extraordinary thing is that Paul made a terrific new bookkeeping entry. Something happened whereby he took all those assets.

He says, I've been wrong. No more assets at all. As St. Augustine said, he said, I came to see that his virtues were but splendid sin, and what things he thought were gains, that's the plural apparently, those he counted lost in the singular.

One combined loss, and he ditched the whole lot. Now, what on earth has done this? This is a broken man. He got to the place where Job ultimately got, where he appalled himself, and he appalled his very

righteousness.

He said, there are just so many filthy rags. Well, now, we will never understand Philippians 3 without understanding Philippians 2. And what happened in Philippians 3 is a simpler result of Paul seeing what he records in Philippians 2. For, as in Philippians 3, you've got the man coming up, going up. In Philippians 2, you have the touching picture of another man going down.

And what happened one day was that the man going up met the man coming down, and it broke him. Well, the man coming down is, of course, our Lord Jesus. Verse 5 of chapter 2, let this mind or disposition be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, I read the revised here, who being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself.

I still feel that for accuracy, you've got to go to the revised version. Other versions are helpful, but for accuracy, there's little improvement on the revised. And the revised doesn't say merely he made himself of no reputation, but he emptied himself.

He's God's self-emptied servant. He had so much, and yet he emptied himself of it all for us. Taking upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and being found in passion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ, who stooped so low, is now Lord to the glory of God the Father. Now, this passage tells us, first of all, the first basic asset of the Lord Jesus.

One thing, sums up everything, who being in the form of God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the form of God.

That's his great asset. Then the scripture tells us what he did not do with regard to that asset. It tells us he did not regard it.

It was no matter of special delight to him that he was in the form of God. Nothing that he gloated over, nothing he was pleased about. Which fact is shown that the moment the world's need, our need as sinners required it, he cast it all away for us.

It was no prize to him. You see, there is a connection between Philippians 2 and 3. I don't know if the Greek is the same word, prize and gain. It's the same thought.

It's once again profit and loss. That great high position, the worship of the angels, the one by whom our creation came into being, he counted it no prize. He gave it up so quickly, so easily.

He saw me ruined by the fall. He loved me notwithstanding all, and he forsook everything to run to our relief. He couldn't achieve our redemption while he was in the form of God.

And so he counted it no prize. Well, just contrast that with the things that we count prize. And if the good of the work should require that we resign to give place to another, we're not willing.

Oh, what a prize. Not so him. He had it all.

He counted it no prize. Then it tells us what he did do with regard to this great asset. Negatively, he didn't count it a prize.

Positively, he emptied himself of it. It tells us two things. Construction, as it is in the revised, gives us just two main sentences.

First, he emptied himself of it. That's inferred. Of it.

Poured it out. And the way in which he emptied himself of it is shown by the next two clause, being made in the form of a, the word is slain, becoming in the likeness of men. He gave up his positions and gave up his rights.

You know, there are two sorts of servants in scripture. A hired servant. The Israelites were never allowed to make a slave of their own country, countrymen.

They could only have them hired servants. And a hired servant has rights and wages due to them. But a slave, no rights.

Not even wages. And the Lord Jesus Christ emptied himself of his equality with the Father. And made himself a slave.

Of course, this is a passage that those who are the enemies of the Lord Jesus have tried to tell us that he wasn't God in the flesh, he was. As the amplified version says, he emptied himself of all that was inconsistent with his humanity, becoming man. And he took upon him the form of a slave without rights.

He didn't let him stake out prisons. He didn't say, you must treat me with respect due to my position. He didn't say, how dare you put nails through my hands? Don't you know who I am? He didn't do that.

He took the form of a slave. He was the man coming down. And when none of the disciples would wash one another's feet, they were too proud to do this service for others.

That's the work of a slave. We haven't got one today where we prefer to eat with unwashed feet. The Lord Jesus rose from supper and he did what they weren't doing.

He was really all the time in the form of a slave. And being made in the likeness of the very men that he was come to save. That's the first thing he did positively.

He emptied himself of that great asset for us. The second thing was that having done so and being found in the fashion of man, he humbled himself. Our idea of power is being able to humble others to our will, his to humble himself.

That's why the foolishness of God is stronger than men. The weakness of God, wiser. This was God's great wisdom.

He humbled himself. He didn't wait for man to say they were wrong, to take the blame. He said, well, if you won't break and take the blame, I'll take the blame.

And then, of course, that's the thing that's changed all of us. If God said, it's you, it's you, it's you, we stiffen. But we see God in Christ himself taking the blame as if he was the transgressor.

But more of that in a moment. He humbled himself. And then we're described in two subsequent phrases how he did, becoming obedient.

That's a word that we like to give to the children, but we grown-ups don't like this word obedient. But he was obedient, bowed his head to the father and accepted the father's will, even when that father's will meant his death, his extinction as to physical life. That's obedience carried right to the limit.

But the deepest note is this. The sort of death that he was obedient, even the death of the cross. The cross was a punishment.

You see, you can die on a bed about which there's nothing disgraceful. The best and the most honoured die on beds. But to die on a cross was a punishment.

And it was a punishment reserved for common criminals. And he was willing to bow his head to die the death of a common criminal. And everybody thought he was one.

It was obvious there was a criminal one side of him, a criminal the other. Everybody said, well, he must be a criminal too. We don't know quite what he's done.

But you can be quite sure our rulers would never have put him there had he not done something terribly wrong. And what did he do? Well, I know what I would have done. I've been very careful to explain.

But whereas I was on the cross, I wasn't there for my own sin. I was there for the sins of other people. I would like them to know that.

He never did that. He never disabused them. He really let them think it.

He really was, allowed himself in everybody's estimation to be numbered with transgressors. And I believe that was the most acute pain of the cross, not the physical. But the holy one to be regarded by everybody as a transgressor.

And when he had to cry, why hast thou forsaken me? That finished it. They were quite sure. And in the deepest way possible, he was numbered with, regarded as, counted as, a transgressor himself.

When he wasn't one at all, what did he do? In that dark hour, he let go what is our greatest possession, and which was his too, his righteousness. It was ripped off him. He was not only physically new, the sense in which he was morally so, he let go his righteousness.

He was willing. He was the Job of the New Testament. We did esteem him strict and certain of God and afflicted.

They said, all right, sing it. He did not answer as Job did. And all that for Paul, this up-and-coming man.

All that for us, we up-and-coming men. We want our righteousness. He gave up his for us.

Right down to the bottom. When I surveyed the wondrous cross, on which the young Prince of Glory died, Philippians 2, my richest gain, I count the loss and poor contempt on all my pride. But the thing that struck me today has been the grace of it.

You know, he didn't have to do it. He didn't have to do it. We almost think it's a duty on the part of the deity to die for us.

There was no such duty. If God had left this world in its self-chosen ways and sin, no angel in the sky could have charted with injustice. In fact, the thought God did do took them all by surprise, which things the angels desire to look into.

The grace of it, that he should give up that holy righteousness for me, who want one of my own when I haven't got one at all. I deserve the very opposite. But here we see the grace.

Do you know the grace of our Lord Jesus? That though he was rich, rich in righteousness, for our sakes he became poor and he became a felon in the eyes of men. He was willing, right down to the bottom, that we, through his poverty, might have a perfect righteousness which Paul speaks about here. So there it is.

And when the man going up met the man coming down, he didn't know where to put himself. He didn't see it immediately. That's why he had those three days' blindness in Damascus, seeking it out.

The one that I was opposing, Jesus, is law. None else could stop me on the road to Damascus and speak as he did. But then why did he go so low? What happened then? And in those three days in Damascus, in that blindness, he saw it all.

He saw the man coming down for Paul and it broke and convicted the man coming up. And he ditched his righteousness. He scrapped the whole thing.

And he was prepared to have another righteousness altogether, the sinner's righteousness. There's only one righteousness in the world and that's the sinner's righteousness. It's not a successful Christian's righteousness.

It's not a successful preacher's righteousness. It's not a soul winner's righteousness. None of these things can give you joy except temporarily, because if you preach a sermon one day and you feel very elated, you'll preach a terrible one the next and you'll be down.

There's only one righteousness and that's the sinner's righteousness, which is imputed to any man who admits that's what he is. And that's a divine righteousness clad in which you have a perfect title to the holy of holies. You can walk into the place as if it belongs to you, which indeed it does.

The blood of Jesus has made it thine in that righteousness. And the doubtful rise of our own excellence, our own victory. I believe some of this victorious life teaching.

I know it's helped me on certain lines, but I found it was becoming my righteousness. And I tell you how I knew it's becoming my righteousness, because when I wasn't in victory, I was in despair. But God's got a righteousness in which sinners don't despair, in which failing saints don't despair.

They acknowledge it and then they know themselves to be as right with God as if they were the holiest men in all the world. There's not a greater righteousness than that which is reckoned to the repented one, who rips off their own righteousness and admits it. And that's the reason, that is the theological reason why when you repent you're filled with such joy, when you admit you're wrong, because you've exchanged the very dubious ground of your own righteousness for the ground of the blood and ashes of Jesus Christ.

That's the reason when you get to prayer you have a wonderful time, when you put things right, when you've admitted you're wrong, when you've been willing for God to go right down to the bottom of that thing, when perhaps you've got another person to say, look I was wrong to say I was right. You were right

over that, I was wrong. I don't know, something happens.

Why? Because that moment you're in the present enjoyment of a divine righteousness, which is what Paul got, he says so. When he got things that were gained to him, he counted loss, which is more of what it really meant and it wasn't just a theological thing, it wasn't merely a bookkeeping entry. It worked itself out in the most deepest ways in his life.

But there's our picture then, this wonderful one coming down for us, giving up his righteousness in order that we might have his imputed to us. And thus, no salvation. And whereas we don't have righteousness imputed to us in one day and not the next, we are in and out of justification according to our state.

If we're saved, we lose experience of it, because justification by faith is not merely a form of doctrine. It's the most tingling, up to the minute experience. You may be, thank God you are if you put your faith in Christ, counted right before God, but you aren't having a piece of it, the joy of it, if we're not in a sinner's place, if we're not willing to break and admit where we are.

Justification by faith is the great all-inclusive blessing of the gospel. I don't know what else you want. In that is included everything.

When Christ is seen to be my righteousness, peace, liberty, freedom, boldness, power is all mine, but I've got to be in that sinner's place to enjoy it. So may God help us to see these fancied assets of ours. May God see how much we love our righteousness by our unwillingness on this, that, or the other matter to take reproof, to admit we're wrong, to take sides with God against ourselves.

And though, as we do so, we shall have not our own righteousness based on the law and our own achievement, but that which is reckoned to the repentant one through the blood of Jesus Christ.

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