

(Men Who Saw God) 2. Paul

by Roy Hession

The sermon explores the transformative encounter of Saul of Tarsus with Jesus and the implications for personal pride and righteousness in the life of believers.

Duration: 55:51

Topics: "Paul The Apostle"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Job and his struggles. Job faced numerous tests, including losing his wealth, his sons, and his health, but he refused to lose his righteousness. His friends tried to justify his suffering by suggesting that he must have done something wrong, but Job defended his integrity. The speaker also mentions the apostle Paul and his personal testimony of encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul's encounter with Jesus had a profound effect on him, leading him to share his testimony and the significance of this encounter with others.

Transcript

Not only seeing the Lord, but the effect that a new sight of the Lord has upon us. It's designed to have that effect. I remember when I was discussing this theme some time ago with Dr. Joe Church, he says, you know, the subtitle should be, Where Revival Begins.

When I saw him, that's where new life, recovery, in our own lives, in our fellowships, in our churches, begins. And I trust that God is going to so see the Lord, give us to see the Lord, that something utterly new will begin to take place in all our lives. Yesterday, we were thinking about when Isaiah saw him, and the effect that it had on him was that he who had been saying so strongly, woe unto other people, then was broken in conviction and said, woe is me.

And that, which it seems he was most convicted of, was the intrusion of self, even into holy things, rendering them unclean, unacceptable to God. But thank God we were given a ray of hope. We saw that when we take a sinner's place, we get the exclusive attention of heaven.

And the seraph was sent with the live coal, we took that to be a picture of the finished work of Jesus, the blood of Jesus, laid upon his lips, and he said, this hath, thy sin is taken away, and thy transgression expiated. Then he was ready to hear the word go. And he really had something for other people.

This morning, we want to take another person who in Bible times saw the Lord, and this time it is Saul of Tarsus. When Saul of Tarsus saw the Lord. And we will read the story, it's very well known, but it has a power all its own, as we read it again in Acts chapter 9. And Saul of Tarsus, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

And as he journeyed, he came near to Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and he heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. Interesting God didn't tell him there and then. He had to be dependent on the ministrations of another Christian, Ananias.

It wasn't a matter of him seeing the Lord, but he had to settle the whole matter of his identification with the despised people that he was persecuting. Many people would like to see the Lord, but they're not quite sure whether they want to be identified with a group of people who are everywhere criticized. You can't do it.

So he was only told to go into Damascus, and there it should be told him through Ananias what he must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man, and Saul arose from the earth. And when his eyes were opened, he saw no man, but they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

And he was three days without sight, and he'd neither eat nor drink. What a heart-subduing story it all is. On his way to Damascus, intent on this dreadful errand of his, he was accosted by a supernatural person.

In a later account, he says the light was above the brightness of the sun, utterly dazzling. And he heard that supernatural person speaking to him. And this supernatural person who met him told him that he was Jesus.

And that in persecuting the Christians, he was persecuting this supernatural person called Jesus. And it was more than he could bear. Now, what effect did this vision have on him? And we're concerned to know this morning what effect it had on him on the inside.

Well, we all know it utterly changed his life. Surely revival and regeneration began with Saul of Tarsus when he saw the Lord. But what we want to do this morning is to ask ourselves why? Why did this sight of Jesus have this astonishing effect on him? And I want you to turn now, you can leave Acts, to Philippians 2 and 3 and have your Bible opened there.

Paul, ever after, was always giving his personal testimony and sharing what this encounter with Jesus really meant to him. There are five times when he gives his personal testimony. He gives it twice in the Acts of the Apostles, once in the early chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians, again in Romans 7, where he tells us the story of his personal struggles on the inside.

And it just occurs to me as I stand here, there's another one that I haven't got down on my nose, in 1st Timothy chapter 1, where he says, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief,

and he tells a little bit about himself. And that makes five, and the sixth one. And perhaps the most important testimony he gave is here in Philippians 3. I just mention that because some people say, all this giving of testimony, sharing Jesus and sharing your inside to other people, isn't right.

You don't find it in the Scriptures. Paul did it. Each time from a different angle on six occasions in the New Testament.

So when we have our fellowship meetings and this one and that one shares deeply, we're acting according to the Scriptures. According, if you like, to apostolic practice. Now first of all, I want us to look this morning at this man, Saul of Tarsus, who saw the Lord on the road to Damascus.

He describes what he was at that time. If you turn to Philippians 3, you have a very honest description. He gives of himself as he was in those days, beginning at verse 4. And as we read it, you will see that this man was full of pride, though blissfully unaware of that fact.

And pride is never so perilous as when we are unaware of it. Others aren't, but you can be, so can I be. Well, here's the man as he was.

Halfway through verse 4. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, and remember flesh means self. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in self, I am all. And then he mentions seven things.

Circumcised 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. He there enumerates seven things, which at that time he regarded as very special gains. He regarded them as real prizes.

He was so happy that he had them, and could say these things of himself. Seven things in which he took pride, seven things which he thought really gave him status before men, and even before God. Not everybody had these things to their credit.

He had, and he was happy he had them, and they meant much to him, and he felt they in no end helped his whole situation with his fellows and with God. And the same could be true of us. We may largely be unaware of it until things come to an issue.

There are certain things about yourself which you may count as prizes. You may count them as gains. You may think them very important.

They give you status amongst other Christians. And deep down, subconsciously, we feel they give a special status before God. These are important, and you're happy to be able to say them about yourself.

Now these seven things, I think, can be reduced to three. The first is pride of ancestry. Circumcised the eighth day.

He was no proselyte from the Gentiles to the Jewish faith, who would be circumcised in midlife. But, as a true born Jew, he was circumcised the eighth day. He belonged to the stock of Israel.

God's chosen people, set apart from all other nations. Not a proselyte, a convert, but a born Israelite. That was really something.

I mean, they prized it. This was privilege indeed. And then he was of the tribe of Benjamin.

Benjamin was the tribe that gave Israel her first king. And to become a member of the tribe of Benjamin really was something. I mean, you didn't actually say too much.

We just let it drop, you know, now and then. Benjamin. I don't know whether they had a special accent, the Benjamites.

Perhaps they cultivated it, just to let it be known that they were from the top drawer. Oh, it counted to be a tribe of Benjamin. I think, in a vague way, they thought that God gave them special consideration.

Tribe of Benjamin. And Hebrew of the Hebrews. Although he was born amongst the Jews of the dispersion, it was a true Jewish home.

And all the Jewish customs and ritual were maintained, even in the dispersion. A Hebrew of the Hebrews. Well, and this was his ancestry.

And it really meant something to him. You know, you can have more pride of ancestry than you realize. It only needs a situation to arise and you to be amongst a people of another class, or even of another country.

And you realize how proud you are that you're an Englishman. Alas, the English have that reputation abroad. Not quite so much.

We've been humbled as a nation. Just as well, perhaps we needed it. Or when you're amongst a people of another class, and you know there lurks, even in the heart of a child of God, pride that he comes from the class or nation that he does come.

As I say, it can lurk unsuspected until a special situation arises. Years ago, I went with the Joe Church, William McGendron, Peter Marrow, to a wonderful revival conference in Gebville, in Alsace. And in that, it was shortly after the war, and in that great conference, there were gathered people from Switzerland, France, and Germany, a few from England.

And at the end, a man got up and gave this testimony. And we were getting the testimony, whispered to us by interpretation on the platform. He said, I fought against England under the Kaiser, and I learned to say, Gott strafe England.

And then I fought against England under Hitler, and after a number of years of when this thing had died down in my heart, I learned again to say, Gott strafe England. But the war's over, and I thought I had nothing more of this in my heart or life at all. Until they walked onto the platform, a man who reminded me of Winston Churchill.

And he said, there arose all unexpected in my heart, hatred. But he said, God has dealt with me, and he helped me to bring this hatred that was lurking unsuspected in my heart, this natural hatred, to the cross. And he walked up to the platform, and he gave me a great big whopping kiss with a bristly moustache, and the same he did for Peter Marrow, and the whole crowd burst into songs of praises that Jesus had washed and made us one at the cross.

You don't know what may yet lurk, how much there is of it. And then there was also, we can see here, not only pride of ancestry, but pride of orthodoxy, as touching the law of Pharisee. Now to us, the Pharisees

are equated with hypocrisy, but not necessarily so, not basically.

The Pharisees were the very orthodox people. They were the people who really took the Word of God as they then had it, as it was, and believed it, and were very, very strict about what they believed, and how they conformed their lives to the Lord of Moses. And Paul belonged to them.

It really was something to be a Pharisee. I mean, they were the strict orthodox people, and he really felt that really counted in his status with men, and of course it counted in his status with God. And you know you can be a Pharisee, as we heard last night? A Pharisee because you're so orthodox, because you're a conservative evangelical, because you believe the Bible from cover to cover, and you may think that your orthodoxy gives you status with others, these liberals, and with God.

It's right to be a Bible believer, but the human heart, being what it is, makes its orthodoxy a part of its righteousness, and can despise others. I've seen myself in this light. Years ago, there were the Billy Graham Relays in Bristol, where I was living at the time, and I was involved in the preparation of these relays.

The first set of relays, it was a venture, and only the dedicated Bible believers backed it up. But the second time, it had become such a big thing, that the other churches that were not particularly evangelical, but were liberal, wanted to come in on it. And at first, we were delighted to see the scope extend.

But then, when we had a few of them on the committee, we found ourselves running into problems, because they said, well, you're having a counseling room, then we want to provide our share of counselors. And these men were not men who probably really believed the scriptures, and understood the gospel. And I remember getting on the phone to one of them, and, you know, he said, well, he said, these converts are going to go to our churches in the end? Yes.

And they're going to get our teaching then? Yes. All we suggest is that we advance it a little, they're getting in the counseling room. Well, I got very hot under the collar, and I got in touch with the headquarters in London, of the Billy Graham Association, and said, look here, for goodness sake, send us a directive, strengthen our hands, and so on.

And eventually, God dealt with me. Because, you see, in effect, I was really saying, I thank thee, I'm not as these liberals. It's a problem.

Now, two ways, I don't mean to say it wasn't a problem, but my attitude had got wrong in the heat of the controversy. And Guy was saying, like the Pharisee did, I thank thee, I'm not as these liberals. I believe the scriptures fully and completely.

And the Lord showed me that the gospel was not to give me a special status, it was not to put me on a special pedestal, it was for my own desperate need as a sinner. And could I say that my need as a sinner was any less than that of the liberal theologian? Indeed, my need as a sinner was even greater, because my sins, and I had them, were against greater light and knowledge. And you may have that lurking in your heart, pride of orthodoxy.

But don't dare to say you're free of pride in it. Beware lest you think that you're not, in some degree, making it a part of your righteousness. Orthodoxy gives us no righteousness before God.

Only the blood of Jesus is our righteousness. And I'm as needy a man as any liberal. Perhaps we would help them more if we went to them not higher, but lower, as greater sinners, but to found peace with God in this simple, easy, artless way of his.

And then there was pride of activity. I said they can be reduced to three, I'm sorry, they're reduced to four. Pride of activity, he says here, concerning zeal, persecuting the church.

Oh, he was an active of the religion of his fathers, none more active, on the go. And the moment a little bit of heresy came up, he was dominated like a ton of bricks. And this heresy of the Nazarene, and he made it his business to hail them before the judges and have them put in prison, even if it meant going to distant cities.

And he went and he applied to the Sanhedrin for letters of authority, and doubtless they considered it. Well, Saul, we'll let you know. And in due course, he got a letter, I imagine, on headed notepaper from the Sanhedrin, saying, we're very happy to confirm the fact that we appoint you as our representative in this suppression of heresy, none more suitable than yourself for this important task.

And I think he loved that letter. Did he stick it up on his desk and have a look at it every day? Because I remember one person, the first time she ever spoke, it was my first wife Revel, she used to tell, the first time she ever spoke at a meeting and there was a handbill printed with her name on it. She was at the university and he stuck it on her desk and it was there for days.

Well, did Saul of Tarsus act that way? Oh, I'm being noticed. I'm an up-and-coming man. They spotted my zeal.

They want me to do it. Pride of activity. Are you rather gratified they've spotted you in the church? They're asking you to do this and asking you to do the other.

You're invited to speak here or speak there. I know for myself, there was a time when it was a matter of great gratification to me that my diary as an evangelist was full for a whole year ahead. I didn't always know who the people were who had invited me or what vision there was.

It was enough that I was able to fill a diary and it was a matter of great gratification. Pride of activity. Are you an activist in God's service and really proud of it and think that that really gives you a little bit of status? Well, Saul did.

And the worst of all was pride of morality. Touching the righteousness which is of the law. Blameless.

He said, I don't want to boast, but I said, tell me frankly, where am I falling down? What rule am I not keeping? And I suggest to you, you would have found it very difficult to fault Saul of Tarsus on any matter of morality and religious observance. And we too may have lurking in our hearts pride of morality. I mean, you don't do worldly things.

Others do. You don't. And that's also very pleasing to God.

That gives you status. Could be your abstinence from certain worldly things. Could that be a part of your righteousness before God? You're so regular in your quiet times.

Scripture to you, you'd never miss it. Always there. Such a well-regulated person.

Some people are wonderfully well-regulated. This is a matter of gratification. And when one of the workers in this conference had to confess he hadn't had a proper quiet time for the first ten days.

Oh, how terrible. How can he get on if his quiet time is as righteous as he hasn't gotten it? Thank God it isn't. When you make it your righteousness, it'll always be dead.

But when Jesus and his blood is, you'll have a heart for God and a heart for his word. You'll find a way to get something for your heart's desire. Oh, I don't mean to suggest.

We ought not to be well-organized, if we can be. And getting into the word, every one of us ought to be in the word. But you can take pride in that fact.

Shown by the fact you're such despair if circumstances make it difficult or impossible. So that your quiet times really become your savior. It's the one way around.

Jesus is. And as a result, you've got a heart and an appetite for God and his word. You'll find ways and means to satisfy that appetite, all right.

Your work in the church. Pride and morality. Pride a very terrible thing.

Now, all these things in which he took pride had to do with his righteousness. And I suggest to you that all his efforts were to add to his thought of righteousness before God. His great thing was to excel his contemporaries.

A little bit of one-upmanship. In the realm of religion, activated Paul. And you know he succeeded.

He tells us so. He profited in the Jews' religion above many of his equals. I think we can call this man Saul of Tarsus the man going up.

He was an up-and-coming man and recognized as such. And he was very pleased that that's how it was. And the things about which we've been trying to talk this morning with regard to us are all to do with our righteousness.

And I suggest to you that in more, in a greater degree than you realize, you may at bottom be trying to add to your store of righteousness. You know, a man's righteousness is his most precious possession. More precious than anything else, shown by the fact that the one thing he hates more than anything else is to admit he's wrong.

Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast wind it in either direction. You know, a man's righteousness is his most precious possession.

More precious than anything else, shown by the fact that the one thing he hates more than anything else is to admit he's wrong. I hate to admit I'm wrong. Which shows how much I love to be right.

My natural reaction is always to justify myself. And it's a death indeed when I've got to go back on my words and say, brother, you were right. I was wrong.

This is how it was with Job. He loved his righteousness more than anything in the world. When God allowed his wealth to be taken away, he said the Lord has given and the Lord has taken away.

He seemed to be wonderfully broken. And when he lost his family in a day, you'd have thought he would have resented that. And he said, if we receive good at the hand of evil.

And when at last he lost his health, even then he refused to charge God with folly and bowed his head to accept what God had permitted. But there was a fourth test coming. He was prepared to lose his wealth, his sons, his health, but not his righteousness.

For his three friends came along and talked and gave a little commiseration, if only by their sympathetic silence. But when they talked, they said, you know, as I've observed life, I've never seen good people suffer like this. Have you? No, no, never.

It's always the bad that do. That was the gist of what they had to say. And the point wasn't lost on Job.

Hey, he says, what are you saying? You mean to say I'm supposed to have done something wrong to account for all this? Well, they philosophized, this is how we see it. And then you have chapter after chapter, wearisome chapters, of Job justifying himself. I will hold fast my integrity, I will not let it go, different truth.

Not only did he say it to them, but then he began to say it to God too. If I'm wrong, then show me. He was willing to part with everything else, but not with his righteousness.

Now this is brokenness. I remember a dear brother of mine telling me of great tests that had come into his life. His little daughter was terribly ill, she was in and out of hospital, and he said, Roy, you know, we're really learning what brokenness is.

He hadn't, he wasn't. Because in the conference to which he came, he got so unrested with the message. And he took me aside, and I said, Roy, there's all this emphasis on sin, sin and the blood.

There's more to it than that. Well, I said, let's come sit down and talk. We looked at the scriptures, and suddenly he said, Roy, stop.

I need this message. And he began to tell me of guilty secrets in the cupboard. And that man has made a blessing in these conferences, year after year.

That was brokenness when he prepared to lose his righteousness and take a sinner's place. That's the real meaning of the word. Unless you're willing for that, you'll hide sin and present a good image.

Repentance will be a terribly hard thing for a man who's a Christian, a respected leader, to have to repent. That's hard, if he's still loving his righteousness. And to give up, stand up and give a sinner's testimony, this is a pain indeed.

Because we love our righteousness. But brokenness is when we're willing to part with our righteousness, and take a sinner's place, and give before our brothers an honest sinner's testimony to what Jesus has done again. Now I've taken time to see the man who met Jesus, who saw the Lord.

When this man saw the Lord, what happened? Well, before we even come to what happened, we must consider, what did he see on the Damascus road? We've read the historical facts, but obviously on the inside there's more to it than that. And I want to use my imagination a little bit, perhaps not quite so widely as our brother Jim did. His imagination is a little more widely than mine.

I enjoyed that story about the fish, didn't you? That was the real fisherman's story. I always knew that things in America were bigger and greater than anywhere else, even the salmon are. But let me lose my imagination modestly, and I think, I hope I'll carry you with this.

He was met by this light, heard the voice of the supernatural person, realized that this supernatural person was Jesus, and that in persecuting the Christians, he'd been persecuting him. This was absolutely stunning to him. And for three days he was in the darkness, three days thinking, thinking, thinking.

That was Jesus. But the last we heard of him was stripped naked, dying on a cross before the crowds. And here he is, obviously Lord of all.

But how in the world did such a man come to be hanging on a cross? And slowly, slowly the Holy Spirit interpreted to him what he had seen. And what he saw on the inside, he penned for us in Philippians 2. So just turn your eye back to Philippians 2. And this is what came to him, I believe, in those three days of blindness. Do you know what he saw? That if he'd been the man going up, the one that he met on the road to Damascus was the man going down.

And that day the man going up met that other man going down. The one he met was apparently traveling in exactly the opposite direction to that which Paul wanted to travel. And here in Philippians 2 he tells us of the seven steps down which the Son of God took for him, and which he began to realize.

Verse 5 of Philippians 2, let this disposition be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. And then he tells us of the disposition that was in him, who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself of it, taking upon him the form of a slave, being made in the likeness of men. And as if that wasn't low enough to come, he went lower still.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This is the man going down. It begins with Jesus in the form of God.

He wasn't the man going up because he was already up, occupying the highest place that heaven affords in the form of God. If he's going to move at all, it can be in only one direction, down. And then having stated his, that high station where he had been for more than eternity, Paul tells us one thing he did not do about that high station, who being in the form of God, this is the Greek, this is the literal thing, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God.

A prize is something you're eager to grasp, and when you've grasped it, unwilling to let it go. And although Jesus was in the form of God, the object of the worship of heaven, it was no prize to him. He regarded that high and holy place with a holy indifference, no prize, shown by the fact that when man's need required it, he let it go.

Maybe you're doing something for God, and you really think it is for God, but you don't know, perhaps, or perhaps you do, what a prize it is to you. Until you're asked to let it go, until somebody else is appointed over you, you come back so angry to your wife, you tell him what the church vote was, and you don't sleep at night, you have mental arguments with the people that wanted somebody else, and you win every argument. That's what I do sometimes.

Oh, my dear friend. And then you create trouble. You get a little party around you.

Terrible. This is the devil's work. It was more of a prize to you than you realized.

You didn't think it was. Oh, what a prize. But not to Jesus.

He counted equality with God, no prize, in that he let it go. And then having told us the one thing he did not do, he then tells us the two things he did do. And the grammar of these passages is very interesting.

But he emptied himself of it. A.V. made himself of no retribution, but literally he emptied himself of it, he relinquished that which he had and did it for us. God's self-emptied servant.

Emptied himself of it. Emptied himself, says Charles Wesley, of all but love. Do you know he's taking the opposite direction to which Adam took? Adam, who wasn't in the form of God, tried to become it.

He who was, emptied himself of it. As C.S. Lewis says, he trod Adam's dance backward, and that with infinite pain and sorrow. But then there are two phrases, clauses, which follow emptied himself, to show us the extent to which he did.

Who emptied himself of it, taking upon himself the form of a slave. Now there are two words for servant in the authorised version. There's one, I get this purely second-hand from my dear friend Dr. Young, Young's analytical concordance.

As I don't have a direct knowledge of Greek itself, I recommend this to you. That's the reason why I won't forsake my authorised version. Because if I forsake my authorised version, I'll have to forsake my Young's analytical concordance, and I'm not going to do it.

And if you haven't got one, you sell something and buy one. And there, there's the word servant, diakonos, from which we get deacon. A servant, who serves you in the ordinary way.

Very often, a diakonos, I'm not thinking of a church position, is someone who's paid for it. He has rights to wages, presumably rights to strike. But there's another word, which isn't always revealed in the authorised version, and not even in the RSV always, where the word is dalos, which means a slave.

And a slave has no rights to wages. He has no recourse to a court of justice. He can never strike.

And if you please, he took upon himself not the form of a diakonos, but the form of a dalos, a slave. He did a slave's task when he washed the disciples' feet. Slaves did that before a meal.

None of the disciples would do it for one another. Then he rose, laid aside his garments, and he did it, because in spirit, all the time, he'd taken the form of a slave, with no rights. He never said, you can't do that to me, I insist on my rights.

He didn't. You see, he'd taken upon himself the form of a slave. As Fred Barth wrote in a beautiful little poem, he humbled himself to the manger, and even to Calvary's tree, but I am so proud and unwilling, his humble disciple to be.

He chose, I can't remember the next verse, but it's precious. Anyway, he took upon, taking upon himself the form of a slave, next clause, being made in the likeness of men. He doesn't say, as you might think he does, try and be like me.

Rather he says, I've come to be like you. And perhaps we ought to echo that to the world. Don't say to them, be like me.

I'm the Christian I am. Rather I am like you. Don't identify always with the answer.

Identify with the need, as if brother, that problem's mine. That thing you're sharing with me is my trouble. But I'm knowing where to go with it.

This is what Jesus did. He was made in the likeness of men, shared their humanity. But then he tells us the second thing he did.

The first was emptied himself, with those two explanatory phrases, and then second, as if that wasn't low enough, he humbled himself. Our idea of power is to humble other people. The executive presses a button, someone answers, and comes to his room.

Power. But God's idea of power is different. He humbled, not others, himself.

And the self-humbling of the son of God is shown to consist in, secondly, becoming obedient unto death. He gave up, in obedience to God, even his right to live. If obedience to God meant death, he was willing for that.

And it did mean that. Charles Wesley says, "'Tis mystery all. The immortal dies.

Who can explain his strange desire?" But then he went even lower, as the next phrase says, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. You see there are different sorts of deaths. There's death on the field of battle.

And men are honoured in memory for having laid down their lives for their country. There's death on the bed, with all their relatives gathered round, gratefully remembering the life of this man. But Jesus didn't die on a field of battle, he didn't die on a bed, he died on a cross.

And a cross was a punishment. A punishment reserved only for criminals. And everybody thought he must be one.

There was a criminal on one side, a criminal on the other. It's obvious he must be one too. We don't quite know what he's done, but he must have done something.

We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God on his own account. That was the common idea. And Jesus never disabused them.

He just let them think it. In the deepest sense possible, he was numbered with transgressors. Someone has said he stooped to humanity, to mortality, and lastly to ignominy, for the shame and disgrace of being regarded by everybody as a common criminal.

Our chorus talks about he was made a little lower than the angels. That phrase, a little lower than the angels, is only used by the apostle Paul in Hebrews, because he's taking up Psalm 8, which applies to the first man, and applying it to the second man. But the truth is, he was not made a little lower than the angels, but a long way lower.

Lower than any man's got. You know, there's not an indignity, not a shame or a disgrace that men suffer, but Jesus has gone lower still. You say, sir, some man in prison.

Not the terrible disgrace of being found out and being regarded as a criminal. Yes, even that. Though he wasn't a criminal, he was willing to be classed as one.

Now do you see what he did? Now here we come to the point. He gave up for us what is normally every person's most precious possession. He parted that day with his righteousness.

He was willing to be regarded as the wrong one. And this is the deepest note of the cross. This is what you find hardest to do, and this is what cost him most of all, to be counted as a transgressor.

One of that lot. But he wasn't at all. He parted with his righteousness in order to give it, as we shall see in a moment, to you.

Well, we must hurry on. Now, we've seen the man who saw the Lord, what he really saw. The man going up saw this other man coming down for him, and the effect on him.

What things were gain to me, those I counted lost for Christ. He was ashamed of the things which he'd counted gain, which he thought gave him status. As Saint Augustine said, he saw that his virtues were only splendid sins.

And he dumped and ditched the whole lot. What price being a Pharisee. What price being the up-and-coming man, when this one was the man going down for him.

What things were gain to me, those I counted lost for Christ. He absolutely despised the whole lot. And because he was willing to count them lost and quit his own righteousness, he was at last free no longer to hide his sins.

He was at last free to begin to repent and take a sinner's place, and thereafter, bold and glad, to give a sinner's testimony. In other words, the brokenness of the deity provoked the brokenness of the creature. Because what happened on the cross was brokenness.

Brokenness is the opposite to hardness. Hardness says, it's your fault. You're to blame.

Brokenness says, I'll take the blame. And that's what Jesus did. And that's why the cross, we must preach it, confront us sinners, confront us all with this sight of the right taking the place of the holy wrong.

And it cuts the ground from under our feet. It was these two passages that Isaac Watts had in his mind when he wrote the hymn, when I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of Glory died, Philippians 2, my riches gained, I count but loss, and count and pour contempt on all my pride, Philippians 3. This is the effect it had on him. Listen, look a little more detail at the effect.

Chapter 3, verse 7. What things were gained 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've suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but done, that I may win Christ. Would you see the progression? First of all, he says, what things were gained? Those particular things of status, just so much loss.

I changed them from the credit side to the debit side of my balance sheet. But he goes further, not only those things, but he goes on to say, I count all things but loss, because after I've been converted, I find I'm considered somebody amongst the church, and I just learn under the shadow of the cross, that's nothing at all, all things but loss. And then he goes further too.

He says, not only have I counted them loss, but I've suffered the loss. It's one thing to say, oh, I don't care about that. It's another thing when the world shows it doesn't care about you either.

It's one thing for you to turn down an invitation to a worldly do, that you were always invited to, and like going to, it's another thing when they don't invite you anymore. You don't mind the world being dead to you, but you may not appreciate being dead to the world. You get dropped.

Dropped out of polite society, dropped out of the whole thing. He actually suffered the loss, financial, home, everything. He not only counted it loss, but he actually suffered it, and he became nothing more than a common tramp preacher going around Asia Minor.

And having suffered the loss, he had no repinings. He, in the present tense, I do count what I have suffered loss. I still count them, and this time is even stronger, not lost, but done.

The things that I thought were so important, the popularity, just so much done. That was the effect. When Saul of Tarsus saw the Lord.

I was helped yesterday, because I had in mind a course I wanted to start with, and had a big itch to do it, but John did the early courses, and the Lord showed me self-will, I. And you know, I was able, as I sat here, I broke before God, thank God, all right, and it was so much better. I hadn't thought of having that course, but we see Jesus, it was so much better. But it goes right down, and I saw Jesus going lower, and here was I, wanting something and not willing to, if it'd be otherwise.

And then I saw Jesus going lower for me. What Christ, my pathetic little bit of what I want, and my bit of self-glory, and so on. Jesus says, where there is gator, he that reclineth at meat, or he that serveth him, surely he that reclineth at meat is the greater than the servant, but I am not the one who reclines at meat, I am among you as he that serveth.

I want to tell you, the big business in the Christian life is going lower. Going lower. And you've got to.

You'll never be able truly to get right with God unless you're prepared to go lower. Take jealousy. When you're jealous, you want to be the head of the queue.

But when you repent of jealousy, it means you're willing to go to the end of the queue. If you're not willing to go there, you cannot rightly repent. If someone's excelling you, and you're jealous, you can only repent of it by being willing to be excelled, and seeing that God's doing his own work in his own way.

It may be something, even a wrong thing that's being submitted to you, and it makes you jealous. But you can only repent of that jealousy if you're willing to go lower, and to say, this that's happened, though it's wrong, you have permitted it to happen, at least for the time being. I go to the back of the queue and cede my rights.

Then you can repent. The whole business really is going lower. You go higher, as we shall see in our last minute or two.

He counted his gains, losses, but he got a whole range of new gains. Just a moment or two on this. He counted all these tens of gains, loss, what for? For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

That word excellency simply means that which excels. And he saw that knowing Jesus, and having Jesus, utterly excelled all the vain things that charmed him most. And he got seven new gains, we're not going to mention all seven now, but the first and all-inclusive one, that I may gain Christ.

And you know you've got to choose, sir, if I sometimes, which do I want, my righteousness or Jesus? Because you can't have both. If you want your righteousness and be right, then you miss to that extent Jesus. But if you see the excellency of knowing him, you'll be willing to lose your righteousness, take the sinner's place, and you gain Jesus in an utterly fresh and new way.

Secondly, not only did he gain Christ, but he was found in him not having his own righteousness, which is of the Lord, but that which is through faith in Christ. That righteousness which is credited to the sinner from Calvary. In other words, when at last you and I prepare to count all things but loss, and count our righteousness but loss, you gain a new righteousness, an unassailable one before God.

The moment a man says, oh God, I'm all wrong, God says, I've been waiting a long time for that. Now I want to tell you, you're all right, you're completely right with me, as right with me as the blood of Jesus can make you.

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