



## Transcendent Joy: Learning How to Rejoice No Matter What

Message #15: **Embracing God's Cost-Benefit Analysis** (Philippians 3:4-9) – March 12, 2023 - Pastor Jeff

- If your liabilities exceed your assets, it is well-known that your business or net worth is in big trouble. It is always helpful when desiring to experience the best and most profitable in life to do a cost-benefit analysis.
  - This is what Paul does in this passage as he pictures his life as a bookkeeper who opens up the spiritual ledger for everyone to see the real ultimate gains and losses of life.
  - He reveals his bottom-line that shows how much of a gain it is to know Christ and how much of a loss it is to trust in your own merits.
- There are ultimately two sets of books or balance sheets that reveal our gains and losses in life: ours and God's. Our ledger is subjective and based upon misplaced values and God's ledger is objective and based upon the ultimate reality of life.
  - Our ledger puts our sincere efforts, confidence in the flesh, good deeds, and acts of love and sacrifice in the gain column. But in reality, God's wrath (hell) is in our gain column since we value sin and self without Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:18; 3:23; 6:23a)
  - God's ledger puts His Son Jesus Christ in the gain column since He is the only One who is the "*surpassing value*" of all things (v. 8).
- In this passage, Paul highlights two realities about God's heavenly balance sheet that are true for everyone, and not one person can afford to mis-assess the greatest gain and loss.

### ① Your greatest loss will come from trusting in your own merits (3:4-7)

- This is why every religion in the world other than Christianity is a great loss. The religion of human achievement damns people made in God's image to an eternal death. Only the religion of divine accomplishment (Christianity) will deliver people from their sins.
- Paul shares seven features from his own spiritual resume he thought were gains, yet learned they were really losses:
  - He was proud of his religious ritual (v. 5a: "*circumcised the eighth day*"): Like Abraham, Paul wasn't declared righteous by God when he was circumcised. Paul was saved long after his circumcision and Abraham before his.
  - He was proud of his ancestral roots (v. 5b: "*of the nation of Israel*"): Paul could trace his lineage to Jacob which added dignity to his spiritual pedigree.
  - He was proud of his tribal respect (v. 5c: "*of the tribe of Benjamin*"): Benjamin was the one tribe (of the 12) that remained with Judah and was in the territory of the holy city, Jerusalem.
  - He was proud of his distinct race (v. 5d: "*a Hebrew of Hebrews*"): Paul wasn't a half-breed, but a pure blood without any Gentile blood in his family.
  - He was proud of his orthodox religiosity (v. 5e: "*as to the law, a Pharisee*"): Paul was meticulously devoted to the Mosaic law and a member of the most respected spiritual leaders in Judaism.
  - He was proud of his zealous reputation (v. 6a: "*as to zeal, a persecutor of the church*"): Paul measured his zeal by how much he protected the Jewish religion and was willing to persecute anyone like Christians who were a threat to its existence.

- o He was proud of his unblemished righteousness (v. 6b: *“as to the righteousness, which is in the Law, found blameless”*): Paul scrupulously followed the law of God and when he sinned, he brought the appropriate and mandated sacrifices God demanded.
- Paul was sincere, totally committed, zealous, faithful, and outwardly righteous, yet utterly wrong and headed for God’s eternal wrath as a highly religious man. He was using the wrong measurement until Jesus appeared to him and erased everything in his gain column. He realized that *“whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ”* (v. 7)

## ② Your greatest gain will come from trusting in Christ’s merits (3:8-9)

- Paul discovered Christ was the greatest “gain” (v. 7, 8, 9, 10). Your life, faith, and salvation are the only legitimate things in the gain column because of Jesus Christ.
  - o This gain is an incomparable gain because nothing matches *“the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”* (v. 8). It’s also an incomparable loss because it is worth *“the loss of all things”* that can bring earthly meaning and it is *“rubbish”* compared to Christ.
  - o This gain is an indispensable gain because there is only one kind of righteousness that fits in the gain column: *“not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God...”* (v. 9). There is only one good work that can remove you as a sinner from God’s eternal wrath and it is the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.