



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Philippians 3: 1-8

2013

"One Big Lie"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Mark, and good morning. We're continuing our studies in the Book of Philippians and we're beginning chapter 3. This morning Mark did the announcements, and he introduced this chapter as one of the great chapters in the Bible, (and of course they're all great; can't say one is really better than the other), but some certainly hit themes that are tremendous—and that is true of this chapter. It is just full of excellent passages and it's our privilege to begin it this week. And then we'll skip it next week; we'll have an Easter sermon and then get back to it in the weeks to come. But what a wonderful chapter this is. We're going to look at verses 1 through 8 where Paul writes,

3 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things *again* is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

² Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³ for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, ⁴ although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

Philippians 3: 1-8

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless us as we study it. Let's pray.

Father, we do ask for Your blessing upon us. It's a privilege to read Your Word. It's a privilege to read a text like this for it gives us some biographical background on Paul and yet, teaches us so much about his life and what he learned, and what is true for all of us; and that is, "our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags", as the prophet put it. (Isa 64:6). There's nothing in us that commends us to You—we are debtors to mercy alone. Paul learned that in a dramatic way and defended the Gospel, the Gospel of the absolute sufficiency of Christ.

And so we come to that in our text and we pray that You would teach us the lessons of this passage—remind us of the emptiness of our own efforts, the emptiness of our works of righteousness, and the complete sufficiency of Jesus Christ. And may we always rest upon Him.

And may we have hearts of gratitude. Certainly that is to be the effect of our time of study in this text this morning; to give us a sense of deep appreciation for all that we have in Christ because He's done everything for us. We can do nothing to gain what He's gained for us. He's gained it all. We'll never lose it. We're Your children forever, and all that that means. It's reason to do what Paul tells us at the very beginning of the chapter, and that is "rejoice"! Help us to do that. May that be the consequence of our time together this morning. Bless us spiritually.

But we have material needs as well, LORD. We look at the prayer requests, and we have just really a few names mentioned. And I say a few because, LORD, every name in this auditorium could be listed on the prayer request. We all need Your help, Your sustaining power at every moment, both spiritually and physically. But we pray for those whose names are listed. We pray that You'd give healing. We pray that You would bless, give healing and strengthen them.

There's others who are going through difficulties, whose names aren't listed. You know them. Bless them, encourage them, encourage all of us with the fact that we're in Christ, that if we're experiencing the good things of life, (and this is something we pray every Sunday but it's something we need to be reminded of), it's from You, and that shouldn't lead us to idleness or indifference. We should be greatly appreciative of the health we have, of the employment that we have, of the friends that we have.

And we should be particularly appreciative that we're here this morning, and we're studying the Word of God. This is what we need. Bless it to our souls and build us up in the faith—and prepare us for the week, we pray. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) Imagine being rich. May be a dream, but it's a nice one. You have many and substantial investments and they have a very good return, so you feel good about yourself. You feel secure. Then imagine it's all gone, suddenly. In a day, you are poor, you're destitute. Everything you had saved, everything you had invested, is 'up in smoke'. So now the dream is a nightmare.

On December 11, 2008, that nightmare was real for a lot of wealthy people, (or people who thought that they were wealthy). That was the day that Bernard Madoff was arrested and they learned that their investments were worthless. Banks, foundations, universities, celebrities and individuals—doctors, lawyers, etc., entrusted millions and millions of dollars to Madoff, and lost it all. One man, a mayor on the east coast, lost \$5 million. It was his net worth. A widow lost \$17 million—Gone!

And you all know about that; you, no doubt, remember the stories. They were covered very well in the papers and on the news. It was a big Ponzi scheme. They thought they were putting their money in a fund. They were really putting it in a pocket—they were putting it in Bernie's pocket and he was spending it on himself and his family. He confessed to it and called his scheme, "One big lie." And it was.

But it wasn't the biggest. The biggest lie of all, and the oldest lie of all, is the one Paul had invested in. At one time, he had been fabulously wealthy; when, in a moment, literally in a flash, he learned he really had nothing.

His wealth was not in money. His wealth was in *merit*. It was in *righteousness*...he thought. He had invested his life in a single-minded effort to build up a spiritual credit with God, 'spiritual currency' that would give him favor in heaven. And he thought he had it; he thought he was secure; he was proud; he was smart; he was confident.

Then one day, on his way to Damascus, (he was on a business trip), when he learned it was all a sham. His stock was worthless—less than worthless; it was waste. That's the testimony he gave to the Philippians who were being tempted to invest in the same spiritual scam that he had been in. It's the promise that we can earn God's favor by doing some work.

So Paul warns them not to fall for it and he used very strong language to persuade them. The men who had come to town were charlatans; he calls them "dogs". And all these guys could give them is *dung*. Really, that's what their credit will be if they invest with the dogs. I thought of titling this study, "Dogs and Dung", it's catchy but I thought it was a little crass for a sermon—so I didn't. But, from the negative, that makes the point of the passage. The larger point, the main point, and the positive point of chapter 3 is, 'Christ is sufficient', or, 'the total sufficiency of Jesus Christ'.

False teachers had come to Philippi and challenged that. They were teaching that 'Christ, really, is not sufficient; we need to add to what He has done. We need to add some work of our own to Christ's work.' So Paul speaks to this issue. He challenges their

message, which was different from the one that He had taught, the one he taught the Philippians—the one he taught wherever he went. What they were teaching was different from the Gospel that he preached—and he speaks about this very forcefully.

But he doesn't begin that way. He begins reassuringly by telling the Philippians to “rejoice”. Joy's a familiar subject of this book. Earlier, in verse 18 of chapter 2, he told them to rejoice, and now he does it again. “Rejoice in the Lord,” he says. (vs1). He tells them it “is no trouble” for him to say that, to tell them to do that, (even though he's repeating himself), because, he says, “it's a safeguard for you”. (vs1b). ‘I'm glad to tell you to “rejoice” again—and I'll tell you again later on in the book to “rejoice” because this is important. Rejoicing is a safeguard.’ Now why is that? How can rejoicing be a safeguard against what he'll describe as gross error?

Well, I think the answer to that is it guards us against despondency and depression in times of testing and trials. When life gets hard and circumstances just seem to overwhelm us, we can get discouraged. And then we can adopt some bad judgment and we can make some bad decisions that lead to error. It can lead to seeking happiness in false ideas—and that leads to failure. But it's impossible to be down when we're up, when we're rejoicing. —That's the safeguard.

Now Paul's command is not to simply ‘be happy’. It is “rejoice in the Lord”, which means we are to be joyful because we belong to Him. We are in Him and our lives are completely different from what they were. Our lives are joined to Him and all that He is—and all that He will be for eternity. And so we're to be joyful because of what He's done for us.

What has He done for us? He's done everything for us. He's gained salvation for every believer. Paul develops that later in this chapter when he speaks about our “citizenship”. (vs20). It's not in this world; it's in the world to come. We certainly have our responsibilities here, and yes, we are citizens in this world, but we have an eternal citizenship—and it is full of glories. And it means that we're under the hand of God right

now; we're in His hand; we're protected by Him; He keeps us; and He never changes. —
Never.

Circumstances change. There's no basis for security or joy in the circumstances of life—or even in the people that we know in this world. This life cannot guarantee us any kind of security at all.

But we're not tied to this life; we're not tied to this world. Our citizenship is elsewhere—and our security is elsewhere. We're connected to Jesus Christ. And we're not just connected to Him, we're in Him. We have His life and His future—and He never changes.

Now when we understand that, (and we really understand that), we will do just what Paul tells us to do and that's rejoice: 'Rejoice *in* Him'. Our confidence is in Christ alone. He has done everything for us. There's nothing to add to His work. He is sufficient. So any addition to Christ is false. Any substitute to Christ is false.

But that's the very thing that is being offered to these people in Philippi. Some false teachers had come to town. They taught that Christ alone was not enough. Paul calls them *dogs*, and warns of them, "beware of the dogs." (vs2). That's a sudden shift in tone from "rejoice in the Lord", (vs1), to, "beware of the dogs." But it was a move from the 'defense' to the 'danger': the Philippians had 'hounds at their heels.'

Now I like dogs. I have two dogs; seems like I've had two dogs for a long time and it seems like I'm always going to have two dogs. But I like dogs. I even like watching the Westminster dog show. And there were good dogs in Paul's day. Some even domesticated dogs. In the British Museum there's an ancient Roman statue of a Mastiff, this very large dog that guarded against wolves and humans. In fact, the Celts used them to fight the Romans.

And they were pets. There's a scene in Homer's Odyssey. If you've read it you know that Odysseus comes home, he's been gone for 20 years: 10 years fighting in Troy, then 10 years on the Aegean trying to get back home and going through all these

adventures. He finally arrives home, but it's dangerous there and so he's in disguise. He's disguised as a beggar, and as he approaches his home, his old dog is there—and it recognizes him immediately. It wags its tail—and dies. Kind of sad (I sense that it was sad to you just then.) But they had these pets back then.

But that was really a Gentile attachment. The Jews were not fond of dogs. They considered them unclean—and with good reason. The Law put them in that category and most dogs were wild and menacing. They roamed eastern cities in packs: They prowled through garbage, they fought among themselves, they attacked people. So they weren't, for the most part, pleasant animals. And the Jews thought that they were a good symbol for the Gentiles, who were generally immoral and pagan—unclean and ungodly.

But Paul turns this epithet on the false teachers. They were “dogs”, “evil workers”, and “the false circumcision.” The irony was deliberate and biting, (no pun intended), for these teachers of the Law were really the unclean ones. They were the unlawful ones. They were the real dogs.

They preached Christ—they did that, they believed that He was the Messiah—but they also taught the necessity of circumcision for salvation, (much like people today teach the necessity of baptism for salvation).

What's typical of heresy is that it's usually a half-truth—or even more than that, a lot of truth with just a little bit of error. But it's that little bit of error that makes it so deadly. And that was the case with this, or the case with any gospel that preaches works. Faith plus works. Faith plus some ceremony. Faith plus circumcision or baptism; that's what was going on here.

Now Paul had no quarrel with circumcision as such. He didn't criticize the Jews for circumcising their children. He wasn't standing against that. He circumcised Timothy. What he criticized was the idea that circumcision was necessary for salvation, that faith alone in Christ alone was not enough. His opposition was not to Jews, but to

'Judaizers'—people who claimed to follow Christ but insisted that Gentile converts had to be circumcised in order to become 'full Christians'.

Paul had a long history with these people. They followed him wherever he went not long after he left Galatia, early in his ministry. (And he had a pretty long ministry before we even come across Paul's first missionary journey in the Book of Acts.) But there, at the beginning of his ministry in the Book of Acts, he has that 'First missionary journey.' He goes to Asia Minor and then he returns to Antioch—and no sooner does he get back to Antioch that he learns that the Judaizers have come in and preached this 'different gospel'.

And so he writes the Book of Galatians to them. And he called what they preached "another gospel which is not another." (Gal 1:6-7). 'It's no gospel at all'. And he told the Galatians that if they received it and were circumcised, "Christ will be of no benefit" to them. (Gal 5:2). He describes these false teachers as 'trophy hunters' who wanted to get the Galatians circumcised so they could "boast" of their converts. (Gal 6:13). They were not genuine.

Paul was genuine, and he reminds the Galatians that He had scars on his body to prove it. He's suffered for the Gospel. These Judaizers had not. Why would they suffer for a gospel that everyone likes?

The gospel of works is the gospel of human religion, natural religion. They didn't suffer for that. No one's going to persecute them for speaking about ceremonies and works of righteousness. But when you preach grace, there's suffering for that—and Paul could prove his devotion to the Gospel by the scars that he had on his body.

Well here, (in our text), Paul calls these men "evil workers." (vs2). And he turns everything that they taught against them: Their circumcision was false; and it made them the real "dogs". And I think Paul would say, (and my apologies to the dogs; at least they are what God intended them to be), these heretics are an aberration far more menacing than any mad dog roaming the streets. The true messengers of God, the real

people of God, Paul explains in verse 3, are those who “put no confidence in the flesh.” (vs3b). They, he said, “are the true circumcision.”

The true circumcision is not in the flesh—it's on the heart; it's spiritual. And that's what the prophets taught. Moses told Israel early on, in Deuteronomy chapter 10, verse 16, he told them, "Circumcise you heart." Obviously, that's a spiritual thing; that's not something physical. Physical circumcision was only an outward sign of an inward reality. It was only an outward sign of the circumcised heart. It signified consecration to the LORD: the denial of self and denial of self-reliance—and trust in the LORD, complete trust in Him. Faith; it was a sign of the new birth, a sign of a new heart—and that's where true worship occurs. That's where the Christian life is, really, fundamentally, lived. It's lived in the heart, where we, as Paul says, “worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus...” (vs3).

The religion of these false teachers was external. They relied on a physical ritual as a necessary step in salvation. Their confidence was in the flesh, not in the Lord. Their confidence was in their own works, not in grace. Paul knew what he was talking about for he had come out of that religion—and he knew it better than anyone. He knew from experience the futility of the flesh and the vanity of human merit. He'd been there. In fact, he says that, ‘If anyone might think that he had reason for putting confidence in the flesh, reason to feel secure in their own achievements, the things that they've done’, he said, ‘he had far more reason for that than they did.’ (vs4).

And then in verses 5 and 6, he gives a brief biography of his life in Judaism, (which answers any challenge that might be made to his authority to speak on this subject). Very clearly, he can speak as no one else could speak. First he recounts his heritage, his pedigree: It was pure. He wasn't like some eager convert to Judaism. He was a Jew by birth and in full compliance with the Law. Verse 5, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, of Pharisee."

Lots of Jews then, as today, knew that they were Jews, knew that they were Hebrews, but they couldn't name the tribe from which they had descended. Paul knew his tribe—and it was an auspicious one. The tribe of Benjamin descended from the only patriarch of the 12 that was born in the promised land and born to Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel. Israel's first king was of Benjamin. It was a prestigious tribe—and Paul could trace his lineage to it.

He was an authentic Israelite, “a Hebrew of Hebrews”, he says. And a leader in Israel, a Pharisee, the strictest sect. He studied the Law. We learn from the Book of Acts that he was trained in Jerusalem under the great rabbi Gamaliel. In Galatians chapter 1, in verse 14 he wrote, "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions."

And in verse 6 he writes that, ‘His zeal led him to persecute the church.’ He was the grand inquisitor and he relentlessly pursued Christians. He wasn't a malicious man. In fact, I don't think that we should understand Saul of Tarsus, Saul the rabbi, Saul the persecutor as a fanatic. He was a man who saw himself in the spirit of Phinehas, the young priest who put a spear through the apostate Israelite and the Moabite woman to stop a plague that was sweeping through the camp of Israel. (see Num 25: 6-8). —And Paul was doing that, (in his mind he was). He was trying to end what he considered to be a plague of heresy that was sweeping through the Jewish people.

In Acts 26, verse 11, he says that he was “furiously enraged” at Christians: He hunted them down; he put many of them to death. None of the Judaizers could boast of such zeal for the Law, and zeal for the nation, and zeal for the traditions that Paul had. Nor could they match his obedience: “As to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”, he said. (vs 6b). Who can match that?

Maybe the rich young ruler who told the Lord, in Luke chapter 18, verse 21, ‘From his youth up he had kept the commandments.’ And seen from the outside, externally, Paul did appear to have done that, ‘to be blameless.’ He hadn't worshiped a false god. He hadn't made an idol. He kept the Sabbath faithfully. He'd honored his

parents. He'd lived a chaste and honest life. He kept kosher. Every way he could look at the Law, externally, he complied with it. "Found blameless", he said, 'No one could point a finger at me and say, 'You broke that', 'You didn't do this.' ' He had a pure pedigree. He was circumcised, educated, and zealous for the Law and traditions.

And yet he says in verse 7, that all of these things: his proud heritage and his large achievements were of no value. He considered them all "loss". "Loss!" What happened?

Well, the Philippians knew what happened. He met Christ on the Damascus road in what has to be the most famous conversion in history. There, in a blinding light, he was made to see the truth that Christ is God the Son, He is the Savior of the world, and that all Paul's good works were worthless. He was bankrupt. That's how he puts it here in the language of a merchant, "Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." (vs7), —written off as a bad investment.

Paul may have been actually thinking in terms of an investor or a merchant here because a year earlier, when he was being brought to Italy across the sea, he had witnessed the loss of a lot of merchandise. Travel by ship in those days was very dangerous. Paul had experience on the sea and had experience with more than one shipwreck. And while his ship was in port, in Crete, he warned them that it was not the right time of the year to travel on the open sea. He said that the voyage would be with 'danger and great loss.' (Acts 27: 9-10).

No doubt the captain of the ship knew that that was not a good time to sail, but he had a schedule to keep and the captain thought that it was safe enough. And the Centurion said, 'Then let's go forward', and they did. They ignored Paul's wise counsel; and the rest is recorded throughout the 27th chapter of Acts. Just as Paul warned, the ship was caught in a terrific storm. All the cargo was lost, and eventually the ship itself was wrecked on the rocks of Malta.

Paul uses the same word here of his own spiritual investment. He warned that that ship and its cargo would be a "loss". And here he speaks of all of his works and

deeds and righteousnesses as “loss”, —like a large cargo being thrown overboard or a life's savings being put into a scam. That's legalism; it's a bad investment. It promises salvation by law keeping, but it's “one big lie.” Like a Ponzi scheme, it's too good to be true. It promises something it'll never deliver.

But people fall for it because it has a natural appeal. That's natural religion; it makes sense to us. We live in life this way, don't we? We work hard and we gain the reward—‘we earn our way...and surely, if that's true on earth, that's true in heaven. God honors our good deeds, our good works’, and so we adopt that belief in things. We want to think of ourselves in that way: that we're smart, that we're diligent, that we're good, that we're able. And that God is pleased with us and pleased with the things that we do, with our effort. That's man. That's, again, as I say, ‘Natural Religion.’

That was Paul, the Pharisee—until that day on the Damascus road when he found out that he was broke, spiritually. And what a shock that must have been to him. He had worked hard all of his life and he finds, in a moment, that it was worth nothing.

You can imagine the experience of someone the evening of December 11, 2008, at his favorite restaurant, just finishing a bottle of Chateau Lafite Rothschild as the dessert is served; and he's just about to enjoy that when his cell phone rings. And as he picks it up says, “My lawyer. What's he calling about?” He answers, and his lawyer says, “Did you hear the news?” “What news?” “About Bernie. Madoff was arrested this morning. He said it was, “One big lie.” The whole investment was a sham. Everything's gone.”

Suddenly he realizes that he can't pay for dinner. He couldn't even buy the salt in the salt shaker. He just looks at his dessert and stares at it. He's lost his appetite. A moment earlier, he was rich—rich as Croesus. Now he's poor, poorer than a church mouse. He's destitute.

That was Paul the Pharisee on the Damascus road. In a flash, literally, in a flash he realized he was spiritually broke. And not just broke, he was in debt—deep debt. In verse 8 he calls his investment, his works, “rubbish”. That is what's called a *hapax*

legomenon. We saw one of those last week. It's a word used one time in the New Testament.

This is where this word is used. The only place in the New Testament it's used. The Greek word has more than one meaning, but whatever the meaning, it's not a good meaning. It was used of *scraps* that were fed to dogs. And worse, it's used of *refuse*. It's used of *dung*. It's used of *manure*. And that seems to be the way Paul is using it here. It's used very often in that sense.

And what he was saying is, his works, his good works, his righteousnesses—were dung. Isaiah called it all “filthy rags”. Not much to show for a lifetime of labor. Utter poverty. Spiritual bankruptcy. His whole life had been a poor investment. It didn't earn what he thought it had earned. It was all *rubbish*.

And yet, it was at that very moment, when Paul realized how poor he was, that he became truly rich. It was at that moment he believed in Christ. He called Him “Lord”. He was saved. He traded this world for the next. He gave up time for eternity. He exchanged his rubbish for Christ's righteousness.

That's what he says in verse 8. He counted his life and achievements to be “rubbish”, so that he might “gain Christ”. That's what everyone does who realizes that works don't save. They count them worthless—and Christ priceless. They let go of their own value. They take hold of Him, and they gain everything. Paul did. And it all cost him nothing; didn't cost him a thing. It was a free gift, all of it a free gift. It was all of grace.

Now that was an adjustment for Paul. He had not lived in that way. He had not lived according to *grace* and *gift*, but according to *works* and *merit*. So over the next few days he must have done a lot of thinking and praying to get this straight in his own mind—his whole world had been turned upside down.

We know from Acts chapter 9, and the story of his conversion, that while he sat in that house on “Straight” Street in Damascus, in the dark, blind and alone, he had a vision of a man named Ananias coming to visit him and to pray for him. And I can just

imagine that he had some conversation with the Lord: All of that time, all of those hours, those days, he sat there in the darkness, he must have communicated with the Lord.

And I can imagine a conversation that would have gone on in which he said, "Ananias. I know that name. That name was on the list that the priests gave me, and I was coming to Damascus to arrest him along with the others." And he might have asked Jesus, "Why me? Why did you appear to me, Lord, of all people? I have persecuted Your people. I put them in jail. I put some of them to death. I hated You and wanted to purge the world of Your name. Why me?"

And the Lord, had that conversation taken place, would have answered something like, "Paul, you of all people should know. You're a Pharisee. You've been trained in the Scriptures. You have the whole Bible memorized. Recite for me Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 7."

And Paul did, where Moses spoke to Israel and said, "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all the peoples." In other words, 'It's not because you were such a great nation that God chose you. You were the least of the nations. God chose you because the LORD loved you.'

That's it. It's that simple. The Lord chose Paul and saved Paul because He loved Paul. And He loved Paul—because He did. That's as far as we can go with it. Why does He love you? Why does He love me? Because He loves. His love is eternal. His love is unconditional. It isn't earned or deserved—and we can't fully ever comprehend it.

Paul became rich because of God's grace; because of His unconditional love. Paul became rich, specifically, because Christ became poor. He lived because Christ died. He owed everything to Him.

So when Paul learned that men had come to Philippi teaching something different, (They were teaching that we earn our salvation by works and by ceremonies. That Christ didn't quite accomplish everything, so, we've got to 'push it over the line', so to speak, by being circumcised; by doing some deed; some work.), he, (Paul), opposed it

vigorously: 'It was a lie, One big lie!' It was demonic—and it was blasphemy. It stole glory from God and it robbed people of salvation.

Paul's testimony was, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." He said he counted "all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord", and gladly "suffered the loss of all things" for Christ. (vs8).

"Suffered the loss of all things." But what did he really suffer? What loss did he sustain? The esteem of Gamaliel? Prestige within Judaism? A professorship, financial security? None of that can compare with knowing Christ and having life in Him—which is eternal life, unending life, glory forever. Nothing can compare with that. And nothing is sacrificed compared to that.

One of the great missionaries of the 19th century, certainly the most famous of the great missionaries of the 19th century was David Livingston. In 1857, he returned to England from Africa, and he spoke to students at Cambridge University. He commented on the fact that people often spoke to him of the sacrifices that he had made by spending his life in Africa and giving up a promising career in medicine. He said, "Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blessed reward in healthful activity—the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter?" He didn't think so. He didn't think that that could be called a sacrifice.

He recognized the danger of such a life; the suffering, the hardship, and how those incidents and those dangers could make, as he put it, "the soul to sink—but only for a moment." He said, "All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us." And then he said, "I never made a sacrifice."

Paul was saying the same thing. And really, the more we understand that salvation: the more we understand that it is free; that it is because God loved us unconditionally and Christ died for us; and the Spirit brought us to Jesus Christ;

He created within us life and faith; it is then that we will understand that there's nothing we do that's really a sacrifice. And we will live for Him sacrificially.

But first you must understand that fact. You must understand the grace of God. You must let go of your works and your sense of personal merit—count it all *rubbish* and lay hold of Christ and trust only in Him. If there are some here who have not done that, that are really relying upon your sense of goodness, your sense of merit for your salvation, cast that aside. Turn away from that. It is the big lie. Look to Christ. Trust in Him. He's the Savior: Salvation is in Him and Him alone. And we have it through faith alone, by grace alone. Trust in Christ, and then by God's grace live for Him. May we all do that. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for Your goodness to us and this great passage of Scripture, this very interesting text of Scripture that gives us a glimpse into Paul's experience before and after his conversation; with the life that You transformed and the great illustration of grace that it is. We thank You for Your grace and thank You for the life that You've given us in Your Son. We thank You for Him, for the Lord Jesus Christ who willingly becoming a man in order to suffer and die in our place. We give all the glory to You, to our Triune God. And we thank You in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(End of Audio)