**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***Good News - God’s Life-Map***

**Philippians 3:7 -11**

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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 Continuing our series in Philippians, Paul is directing his audience’s attention to the center point of the Good News, which is God incarnate as Jesus Christ and “His work” during His three and one-half ministry years culminating at the Cross. Paul directs the Philippians away from their work and uses himself as an example of a person. If they did try to justify themselves to God, they would fail. Paul uses his own personal resume because it is most likely superior to anyone else’s. If Paul’s works cannot justify him to God, then no one’s would.

 In verse 7, Paul highlights the futility of his life-works to gain salvation. In actuality, Paul’s works are not only deficient for justification to God but they are a loss. Meaning that if someone boasts about their good works to gain salvation, they are really holding onto a false hope and will find themselves in a worsened life situation. In witnessing to someone. . . I see that it is almost preferred that a person not have been indoctrinated by false information. Let us read the text:

**Philippians 3:7** But whatever things were gain to me,

those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

 Loss: Strong’s 2209 ~ Greek = ζημίαν

noun accusative feminine singular common from ζημία

Friberg, Analytical Greek Lexicon: ζημία, ας, ἡ

as coming into a worsened situation from previous advantage loss, damage, disadvantage

**Wasted Time Down the Wrong Road**

 Ever gone down the wrong road because you followed the directions on the google map? I have. The google maps are supposed to be good. At least, that is the idea. Are they always up-to-date? I would not bet our life on it. Follow the wrong road in life and you find yourself at a worse place than when you started. It is painful to backtrack, because we waste time and effort and miss-out on the gain we could have made.

We see the Greek word “zemian” (translated “loss” in the NAS) additionally signifies “damage and /or disadvantage”.

If Paul was to rely upon his life-work to justify himself to God, he would not only be deficient but at a worse starting point than when he started. In fact, when Paul met Jesus on the Damascus Road, he was at a disadvantage for pursuing the wrong road persecuting members of the Way.

**Got the Right Life-Map?**

In the Houston Police Academy (1979), I was trained to use a Key Map to get around Houston. However, the instructor told us that the Key Map company purposely put incorrect streets and markings in their publications in order to always identify their work. These were small embedded errors but at times they made a difference. Their maps were under a copyright, because they wanted to protect and prove if someone had copied their work. This meant. . . for the most part, their maps were good. . . until the time you counted on a road to go through. . . but it dead ended. So, the maps that were to guide us were deficient. God’s **life-map** is not deficient. However, in time, I learned the roads in my district from driving them and did not rely upon the Key Map. Through trial and error, I learned every back-alley thorough-way in the district.

Following the wrong map and the wrong **life-map** can lead to not only dead ends but driving over a cliff.

**God’s life-map, the Good News, is infallible regarding how to have a relationship with God and your neighbor. There are not any embedded errors.**

A simple case to make this point is a drug addict. The drug addict pursued the course in life (the drug road) of getting high for recreation or to soothe their heartache . . . but if, and when, they get clean, they have damaged their mind and body to a lesser condition as compared to their life prior to their addition. They may be clean, but they are damaged to a worsened condition than a time prior to their addiction. Our society sees the repercussions of drug addict’s selfish choices when they birth children that are deformed mentally and physically. When they took the drugs to get high, they thought they were only affecting themselves. Obviously, their selfish choice negatively impacted their children and society. These drug-babies need life-long care by the government and medical community. Who pays for that? And consider the immeasurable suffering for the child.

Now, we continue to detail Paul’s letter in verse 8, where Paul repeats the **lostness** of his works in comparing them to Christ and the **value of knowing Him.**

**Philippians 3:8** More than that,

I count all things to be loss in view of

the surpassing value of knowing (Greek - gnosis)

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,

Verse 8 drives home the point of the “surpassing value” (*excellency*)of knowing Christ. The lesson we learn is that to *know* Christ we have to lose ourselves. That is, “get over yourself”, surrender to God.

The Greek word “*gnosis*” carries with it not only knowing something or someone but in addition to . . .we are called to *understand Christ*. Therefore, many people *know about* Christ but they do not *understand* Christ.

Paul writes that there is a “*surpassing value*” (Greek = hyperechon) to knowing Christ. The KJV, Tyndale and Young’s Literal translate the Greek word “hyperechon” as “excellency, excellent, excellency”. Therefore, Christ is the Being that brings a *surpassing excellent value* to our lives than no one else can bring.

Surpassing: Strong’s 5242 ὑπερέχον / from ὑπερέχω

verb participle present active accusative neuter singular

Friberg, Analytical Greek Lexicon

ὑπερέχω strictly hold above; hence

(1) of value surpass, be better than, excel (Philippians 4:7)

(2) of power be in authority (over), be in control (1 Peter 2:3)

**A person may know about Christ but not understand Christ and His Biblical Gospel Message.**

For an example: when someone asks us if we know someone. . . we may respond that we’ve heard of their name or know they exist, but we do not really know them. Or we may know them through another person, but do not have a personal relationship with them, and, therefore, do not really know them as a friend.

I know that most Christians are not theologians, and God does not require anyone to be a biblical scholar. I observe that many Christians are conditioned by their religious culture to explain their faith in a certain way. Which is perfectly innocent and does not diminish their standing with God. However, my concern is directed at our witness to “outsiders” . . . “the lost” who have not surrendered to God.

**Vicarious Religion**

I have asked different people if they are a Christian . . . and they respond that they are Methodist, or Baptist, or Lutheran, or Catholic. Some people skip the denomination affiliation and simply say. . . yes. However, many self-identify and qualify their relationship with God/Christ as established and maintained through a denomination’s traditions and practices focusing on water-baptism, the Lord’s Supper, End Times teaching, worship days, music, speaking in tongues, and not least of all. . . some claim of apostolic succession from Christ.

 We need to understand their denominational response. What they are telling us. . . is that a person’s relationship with God is established and maintained through a denomination. There are two issues here. One is a false mediator. The other is works-salvation. We are hearing that they have a particular sectarian work and/or practice of faith that justifies them and maintains their relationship to God and excludes others. I see that often times their response tells me they really do not understand Christ and His Good News and the finality of His Work on the Cross. From Paul’s writing, we see that he knew his Jewish “denominational works” would not justify him to God. What did Jesus say from the Cross regarding His works? “It is finished” (John 19:30). So, once again, as in last week’s sermon. . . what can we add to Jesus’ lifework culminating at the Cross, which was the crowning achievement to propitiate sin (Romans 3:25)? Did Jesus call to us from the Cross that we had to add to His work? No.

From last week’s sermon, we looked at Paul’s self-defining and justifying words that were not regenerative. . . when he said. . .

**Philippians 3:4**

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.

 All of these accomplishments Paul identifies can be compared to the same accomplishments achieved following denominational works a person believes will justify them to God and maintain a saving relationship with Him.

**Objectively, I see that most denominations have religious practices that do not make any difference to God if you do them or not. I consider these works to be religious baggage.** These proscribed works lend to a person’s fear and uneasiness in their relationship with God and their neighbor.

It is sad that a person believes they have to do religious works to be saved or to maintain their saving relationship with God. In reality, these religious works provide a platform for sectarian leaders to create and maintain control over their parishioners.

**Good works are a product of faith (James 2) that naturally occur from a heart that is indwelled by God’s Holy Spirit.**

 So. . .

 **What** makes a Christian? **Who** is a Christian?

How does a person become a Christian **outside** of man’s institutional claims of exclusivity to heaven?

These are the questions that Paul provides the answers to the Philippians, Corinthians and the whole world, when he wrote. . .

. . . brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. **(1 Corinthians 15:1-8)**

 **This is the concise Gospel Message. There is not any other.**

 **If Paul’s works did not justify him to God, then what did?**

**Back to the questions . . . Where is the Biblical answer?**

 **What made Paul a Christian?** His faith. . . Paul wrote to the Ephesians. . . *For by grace, you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*; (Eph. 2:8) Paul also proclaims that he was *justified as a gift by His God’s grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus* (Romans 3:24).

Paul never claimed his Jewish denominational works and affiliation justified him to God. In fact, Paul repudiated and rejected their value. Therefore, why should anyone today make a claim to God through denominational traditions and practices that make demands beyond the Good News? In Philippians 3:8, Paul announced that he gained Christ when he jettisoned his own attempts to justify himself to God through his Jewish works.

**Who** is a Christian? (Romans 8:9-11)

9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

 10 And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

What does the **day-to-day life** of a Believer look like?

God’s Spirit indwells Believers. Therefore, Believers exhibit the fruit of God’s Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) to apply their spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12). In theory, Believers are on display every day being a neon sign, a posterchild representing the Good News of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. And our witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Anyone who has the Son has the life; anyone who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to **you who believe** in the name of the Son of God, **in order that you may know** that you have eternal life (**1 John 5:11-13).**

**Paul makes his summation in verses 9-11.**

 9 and may be found in Him,

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

on the basis of faith,

 10 that I may know Him

and the power of His resurrection

and the fellowship of His sufferings,

being conformed to His death;

 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

**AMEN**