

"I Count All Things To Be Loss ..."

"Howbeit, what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may Christ, and be found in him ..." (Phil. 3:7-9a).

Paul has put in sharp contrast the concision (of whom the Philippians were to beware) and the true circumcision of whom Christians are. As he recounted the attributes of those who are the circumcision, he stated those who the circumcision *"worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."* Of the latter item Paul reflected, *"though I myself might have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh to have confidence, I yet more"* (3:3-5a).

Notice some of Paul's credentials in which, said he, were he disposed to boast and glory in the flesh, would allow him to do that. *"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless"* (3:5b-6). He was *"circumcised the eighth day."* This was the exact instruction God gave Abraham as touching the sign of the covenant between Him and Abraham (Genesis 17). He was of the stock of Israel, not a proselyte, nor the son of one; he was a bona fide descendant of Abraham! Further, he was of the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe among the twelve from which Saul, Israel's first king was chosen; the only tribe of the eleven which remained loyal when the others rebelled against Solomon's son and formed the rival kingdom of Israel. Further, he was a Hebrew of Hebrews. Although he was born in Tarsus of Cecilia, his parents before him maintained their orthodoxy. They had not sanctioned becoming Grecianized although they lived in a land foreign to Judah! As touching the law, he was a Pharisee, a sect of the Jews well known for their hypocrisy and self-righteousness, but also known for being a "stickler for the law." Of them Jesus said, *"The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat. All things whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe, but do ye not after their works, for they say and do not"* (Mt. 23:1ff).

Two other qualities described Paul. As touching zeal, persecuting the church, as touching the righteousness which was in the law, he was blameless. Paul did not claim perfection, nor sinlessness. He called himself the *"chief of sinners"* (1 Tim. 1:15). But he did keep the law observing all things it required that he should do. Yet, for all this, Paul wrote, *"Howbeit, what*

things were gain to me, I have counted loss for Christ." The aforementioned items, if held by other less discerning Jews, would have been an occasion to boast, trusting the flesh, but not Paul. It was not in himself he wished to boast, it was in Christ Jesus. He had no confidence in the flesh and he taught Philippians they should not, either. Paul knew that no earthly, worldly attainment could equal the blessing of being found in Christ and he was willing to regard all other things as worthless, that he might gain Christ and be found in him. Do we have the same ambition?

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