

Winning Christ

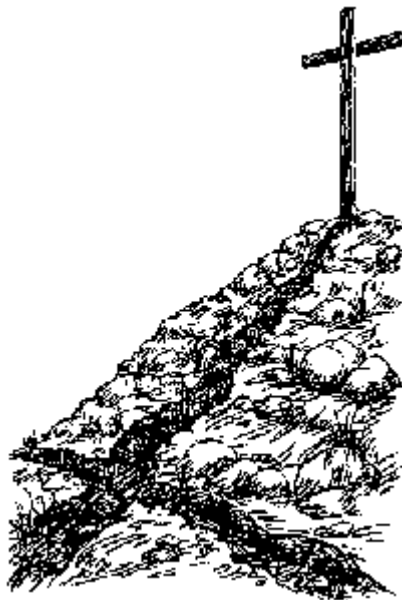
Philippians 3:8-11

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(Philippians 3:8-11 KJV) "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, {9} And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: {10} That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; {11} If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Why should I continue to strive and to work for Jesus, after we have been saved? If I am assured that the Blood of Christ *cleanseth me from all sin* (1 John 1:7) then why not, after I have professed Christ, just *relax*. Why come to Church more than is necessary? Why give of my income? Why do anything?

This was a common argument in Paul's day among a group of people called *the gnostics* - and, believe it or not, it is a common argument today as well. The average *professing* Christian sees absolutely *no need* to occasionally attend Church nor to worship God with others. Many have joined Churches and remain on Church rolls because it gives them comfort *to belong* - though they have no desire to participate in the affairs of the Church.. Is This Biblical?

If I wanted to look for a “role model” to base my life on, then I guess one of the best models I could find (outside of Jesus Christ our Lord) was Paul the Apostle. Paul did not have an easy life. He was born of the tribe of Benjamin, a scholar trained under Rabbi Gamaliel, and the youngest man ever to sit on the ruling council of Israel called the *Sanhedrin*. When Paul was converted to Christ on the Damascus Road he began to work for Jesus. Paul said of his lot in life:

(2 Corinthians 11:24-30 KJV) "Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. {25} Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; {26} In journeyings often, *in perils* of waters, *in perils*

of robbers, *in perils* by *mine own* countrymen, *in perils* by the heathen, *in perils* in the city, *in perils* in the wilderness, *in perils* in the sea, *in perils* among false brethren; {27} In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. {28} Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. {29} Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? {30} If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities."

Paul came from the *cream of the crop* and, from the time that he met Jesus on Damascus Road, he went *to the bottom of the barrel*. Paul came from the heights of glory and riches and was lowered to be beaten like a dog for preaching Jesus Christ. This is a man who has been thrown into prison. He had been robbed. He had been stoned and left for dead, bleeding in the street. Had Timothy not come and tended to him he might have died after that incident. What drove Paul to work so hard for the Lord?

1. Driven – To Win Christ

(Philippians 3:8 KJV) "Yea doubtless, and I count¹ all things

but loss for the excellency² of the knowledge³ of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung⁵, that I may win⁴ Christ,

¹ Present Middle Indicative hegeomai {pronounced hayg-eh'-om-ah-ee}, to consider, reckon, think on and come to a conclusion over.

² huperecho {pronounced hoop-er-ekh'-o}, Present Active Participle, the superior or surpassing.

³ gnosis {pronounced gno'-sis}, to know someone, to have an experiential knowledge of someone.

⁴ kerdaino {pronounced ker-dah'-ee-no} Aorist Active Subjunctive, to win the friendship or favor of another.

⁵ skubalon {pronounced skoo'-bal-on}, manure, animal refuse, excrement

The Apostle said “nothing matters to me but winning Christ”. When you look at the sentence in the original text it is clear that Paul wasn't talking about *being* saved – he was talking about growing in his relationship with God. Paul was saved on Damascus Road, saved by faith in Christ. If you read the Apostle's statement carefully – let's read it together:

... I have suffered the loss of all

things, and do count them but dung, that I may win⁴ Christ

Paul looked at the fame he lost – for he was now infamous, considered a traitor by the Sanhedrin, a council that once held Paul up as the *cream of the crop*. He looked at the prestige he lost. Paul looked at the family he lost – for many of his family, the tribe of Benjamin, would have nothing to do with him. He looked at his old way of life. After considering all that he lost when he began to walk with Jesus, he looked at that loss and said skubalon {pronounced skoo'-bal-on}, *excrement, manure, trash*.

This is a harsh word, skubalon – but an appropriate word. Anything that I pursue in life apart from friendship with God is ultimately foolish. Think about some of the things that Paul pursued prior to meeting Jesus on Damascus Road. Paul chased down Christians for the Sanhedrin. He was given a duty to follow, and he followed after it with all his heart. Paul was instrumental in the death of Stephen, one of the first deacons of the Church (Acts 7:60-8:1). Paul worked hard at being the best at what he thought was a good job. The one day he woke up and discovered something.

He discovered he was a murderer.

Imagine his shock when Jesus knocked him down on the Damascus Road and woke him up to what he had *really been doing*. Here Paul thought that he was doing a good thing, and all along he was doing evil. Oh, that God would open all our eyes to the truth!

When I was a young man going through the Air Force NCO Academy I thought that the greatest thing I could ever have was to be the best in that school. So I worked hard and poured every ounce of my strength into excelling in my studies, in my drills, in all that I did. I won top in class, and had my picture taken with the Commander. Oh, how I struggled to get here. Oh, how sweet to get to the top of the class. Do you know where those awards are today? They are gathering dust in storage in Valdosta, Georgia. The newspaper clippings of my “great victory” are yellowed and faded. My name is on a wall in a building along with many other names, forgotten people, decoration that no one looks at anymore. That thing that I struggled to get is today dung, manure, of no lasting value.

The Bible says:

James 4:14 (NNAS) "Yet you do not know

what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."

Oh Beloved, we attach so much meaning to *things*, to *temporal things*, but these things so quickly pass away. Life is just a vapour, a fog in the morning. It looks so real and so permanent when we are in the moment. Then fame passes, money is spent, honor is forgotten.

When you base your life and your hope on temporal things, on the glory of the moment – what value is your life? For you see, the temporal things quickly pass away. The sun rises, and the vapour of the field disappears. You may have won the race today, and you may enjoy the trophy of it, but what value does it have tomorrow? We must have a relationship with Someone greater than ourselves, Someone greater than time, if our lives are to have any lasting meaning.

God designed man to be His friend. This is the greater thing we should be seeking – friendship with God. We should be striving, driven to *win Jesus' as our Friend*. I'm not talking about salvation, Beloved. You cannot earn nor deserve your salvation – salvation comes by faith alone in Christ alone.

Titus 3:5-6 (KJV) "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; {6} Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;"

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior then you are saved – we're not talking about that. We're talking about *being a friend of Jesus*. Oh, how wonderful to have God as your friend. If God is your Friend then you have stability. One day Jesus shall return and set up a millennial kingdom on the earth. One of the main reasons that Jesus is going to do this is because He promised *Abraham – His friend – a land all their own (2 Chronicles 20:7)*. When you have God as your Friend and your Friend promises you something, you'd better believe you will receive it.

We must set our life's compass by Someone greater than ourselves if we want our life to have meaning. Beauty passes, money is spent, fame is fleeting, but friendship with Christ ... this is a blessing that continues into eternity.

2. Driven – Not By Righteousness, But By Relationship

Philippians 3:9 And be found¹ in him, not having mine own righteousness², which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

¹ Aorist Passive Subjunctive *heurisko* {pronounced hyoo-ris'-ko}, to be found out, discovered.

² *dikaiousune* {pronounced dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay}, righteousness, a state acceptable to God.

People love to get off on side issues. I believe that Satan is at work in our world – and many times at work in our churches – and one of his greatest tricks is to get us off on side issues.

Christianity has *never* been focused on *being religious* or *being good enough*. The driving force behind Christianity is not *working your way into Heaven*. *No one* can be good enough for God apart from Christ. The Law of Moses showed us that. So many people today foolishly try to get to

God through the Law. So many self-righteous Pharisees turn to the Mosaic Law or some church established law and say, "If you keep this, then you shall be holy". My Beloved, this is not Scriptural, nor is it even common sense. The Law does *not justify* or make you holy - the Law points out our obvious flaws, our human frailty:

(Romans 3:19-20 KJV) "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. {20} Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Hear those words again, a clarion call that cannot be denied: "**by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight**". If you want to be holy, the Law is not the way to go! The Law points to the good man and says, "He stinketh". The Law points to the good woman and says, "She lacketh". The Law *condemns* us, points at us, shames us, tells us we are far short of God's holiness. The Law laughs at us and says:

(Romans 3:10-12 KJV) "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: {11} There is none that understandeth, there is none that

seeketh after God. {12} They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

If you're going to be a friend to Jesus then that friendship begins by *trusting Him for your salvation*. That's the first step! Paul said:

... And be found¹ in him, not having mine own righteousness², which is of the law

You cannot go to Jesus as His Friend and say, "I cannot trust what you said about salvation". Friends trust one another. Jesus paid the penalty for my sin on the Old Rugged Cross. I have accepted Him as my Savior so now I am free to *pursue a deeper relationship in Him*.

Friends trust one another. Friends rely on one another. Listen to what Jesus did for us:

(2 Corinthians 5:21 KJV) "For he hath made³ him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

He *was made*³ sin on the Cross for us. This is the

Aorist Active Indicative of poieo³, which means “to make or manufacture a product out of something”. God the Father took God the Son and *poured out* our sins on Him – then judged these sins *in Jesus*. Isaiah prophesied of this when He wrote:

Isaiah 53:12 (KJV) "... he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

God demanded we be righteous, then provided a means to give us that righteousness. Once I have accepted Christ as Savior His righteousness is *placed on my account*. Now I can focus on *winning Christ* as my Friend. I want to, as Paul put it:

be found¹ in him

God looks at me and says, “David is righteous – I declare that to be true – because he has accepted the payment of the Cross. I pardon Him because I inflicted Jesus.

Now I am free from the worries that the Jews had. I do not *strive to be holy by living under the Law of Moses*. I am holy because of Christ, because of

His finished work. Now I have a new goal – to become a friend of God.

3. Driven – To Know Jesus *Because* of Life

Philippians 3:10-11 “That I may know⁴ him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; {11} If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

⁴ ginosko {pronounced ghin-ocē’-ko}, to have a deep, intimate knowledge of

What the devil doesn't want you to know is that Christianity is *a progressive discipline*. Let me see if I can explain this.

Many years ago, long before the invention of aircraft, when men wanted to build a bridge across a wide chasm, they would tie a thread to the haft of an arrow and shoot it across the void. They would then tie a string to the thread and use the thread to pull the string across to the other side. Next they would tie twine to the string, then rope to the twine, and with each addition pull the next

stronger thing over the chasm. In time they would tie a chain to the rope – first light chain, then heavier chain, until they had a chain strong enough that would allow them to pull a beam across the void.

We make connection with God by first accepting Jesus Christ as Savior. This is the thin thread shot across the valley. But Beloved, you cannot draw a beam across the void with a thread. Faith in Christ – this is the beginning that brings New Life – a beginning that guarantees our entrance into eternity. But this is by no means the be all and end all of Christianity. This is the all important start, but God wants more.

God gave man the world, and only asked that we be His friend. Friends surrender to one another. Friends share with one another. Friends are in one accord. Friends help each other. If you want to be friends with Jesus:

John 15:14 “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

Then you need to do the same thing that you do with your earthly friends. You need to do what your Heavenly Friend asks you to do. You need to talk to Him – we call this prayer.

Luke 21:36 (KJV) "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

You need to spend time with Him – we call this Church.

Matthew 18:20 (KJV) "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

You need to give yourself to others, give of your time and your money:

John 13:34-35 (KJV) "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. {35} By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

John 15:12 (KJV) "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

Christianity is a discipline of love. Those who know Christ as Savior *will be held accountable by Christ* for how we walk in this faith. This alone should make us want to strive to know more about

Jesus. But even if I take eternity and put it to the side – and that's quite a “putting away” - even if I forget that and consider only the moment of time we live in, it is still better to be driven to know Christ better.

Beloved, life is hard, we are fragile, and time ends unexpectedly. A quiet walk in the beautiful woods of Tennessee can quickly turn into pain and death if you step on a copperhead. We live our lives day in and day out expecting things to be easy, then tragedy strikes without warning.

The wise man sets aside a few savings for a rainy day – because the rainy days will come. The wise man buys fire insurance for his house, and medical insurance for his family. You stay prepared for whatever comes, and life is much sweeter. In the same way, it is good to have Christ as your Friend – especially when the bad times come. The Apostle knew this. He sought friendship with Christ, and in so doing discovered *real power for living*. There is no value in pursuing Christianity as a *religion*, but as a *relationship with Christ* – Beloved, there's great value in that!

Life has its up and downs – but if you're friends with Jesus, the downs are not as low – and the up

times are a greater blessing. Salvation comes by faith in Christ, but *duration* comes by *friendship* with *your Savior*. Shallow Christianity is of little value in day to day living. There's an old hymn we sing that sums up:

**Just a Closer Walk With Thee,
Grant It Jesus, It's My Plea,
Daily Walking Close To Thee,
Let It Be, Dear Lord, Let It Be**

May God prick your hearts and draw you closer to Him.

In the name of Jesus Christ:

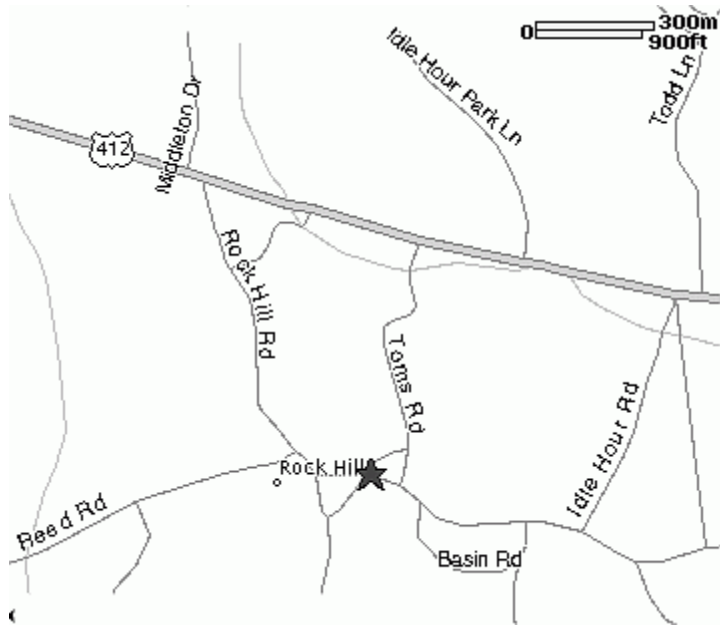
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Located in Highway 412 between Lexington and Parsons, Tennessee, Rock Hill Baptist Church is a Bible believing family oriented Church. We'd like to invite you to attend our services and grow with us. We hold Sunday School on Sundays, 10:00 AM, Worship Services at 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM. On Wednesday night we have Teamkids, Youth, and Adult Bible studies beginning at 7:00 PM. For a friendly, seeker oriented worship experience where Christ is preached – come and join us.!