

International Bible Lessons

“Teaching the Truth in Love”

Sending International Sunday School Lessons and Bible Studies Around the World
L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

What Do You Consider Rubbish?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday, August 15, 2010
Philippians 3:7-16

“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 3:8—NASB-U).

“More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:8—NRSV).

“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” (Philippians 3:8—KJV).

Before Paul became a follower of Jesus, he enjoyed political power among the elite, prestige as a Pharisee educated by a famous rabbi, and financial security. After he began to serve Jesus as his Lord, and to teach that Jesus came to Earth as the Messiah, he began to suffer religious and political persecution. He “suffered the loss of all things,” and turned to tent-making to support his teaching the good news about Jesus. Because Paul once persecuted the church, he knew the cost of living for Jesus before he made his decision to follow Him. Paul considered any and all of his personal sacrifices well worth the price to pay for coming to know by personal experience Jesus the Messiah as his Lord and Savior.

True belief means more than thinking Jesus was an inspired teacher, prophet, or famous historical figure. True belief includes submitting our lives and future to Jesus as King of the universe. Paul prayed to Jesus as the Lord over all, and Jesus intervened in history. Jesus empowered and guided Paul, and made Paul's teaching effective – so some of Paul's listeners came to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior too.

Paul chose to suffer the loss of some cherished objectives and possessions, because he looked ahead to someday becoming like Jesus in His death and resurrection from the dead. If we compare and contrast worldly goals to serving Jesus throughout eternity, we can comprehend why Paul called what he lost “rubbish.” — Copyright 2010 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Questions for Further Thought

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1. Today, when people become followers of Jesus Christ, do they consider what they will sacrifice in this life to follow Him, or do they think more about what they can gain in this life if they follow Him? How many make a “cost benefit analysis” before they become Christians? Would these questions be answered differently in countries where Christians suffer persecution and converts are murdered?
2. In order to win converts, do we sometimes “oversell” the “this worldly benefits” of becoming a Christian? How can we help people become Christians and at the same time encourage them to count the cost in this life, for their decision may lead to hardship and persecution, as happened to the Apostle Paul?
3. What is “the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus [your] Lord” (verse 8)? How would you describe to a nonbeliever what it means to you to follow Jesus Christ as your Lord?
4. What does it mean to you personally to remember, “Christ Jesus has made me his own”?
5. How easy is it for you to forget what lies behind, both the sins against you and the sins you have committed? As a Christian, what are you pressing on to achieve for Christ in this life? How can your letting go of the past help you achieve Christ’s goals for you in the future?

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