

Philippians (Part Seven)

Philippians 3:1-11

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Let us go back to Philippians just very briefly in chapter 2.

The first paragraph in that chapter, which goes from verse 1 through verse 4, has a general theme of, well, there is no reason why this problem cannot be resolved, that the powers are there to enable us to do it. The second paragraph, which begins in verse 5 and goes through verse 11, has a general theme showing that the humility that it takes to enable us to be unified is something that we have available to us, it is a choice. We have the knowledge and the Spirit to be able to do it.

The illustration that Paul uses is that of Jesus Christ and certainly shows that if He is able to humble Himself, surely we ought to be able to humble ourselves. Now there is a drive in every one of us to be exalted. But Paul is showing here toward the end of that paragraph, that true exaltation comes as a result of the exercise of godly humility. And it may be something that is delayed, but nonetheless, it will come. So there is a certainly a strongly implied promise from God through the apostle Paul that those who humble themselves are going to be exalted, even as Jesus Christ, who is our example, was.

And then in the third paragraph, which begins in verse 12 and runs through verse 18, he says in the light of this teaching that he gave on humility and exaltation, we have to pay attention now to working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Now we have to understand that this is not working *for* salvation but rather a working out of, that is, using the knowledge that God has given us to have experience in living the way of God. And I related this to something that I have mentioned to you several times, and that is that eternal life in the biblical sense is more than just length of days or length of time. It also includes a way of living. It is a quality of living. And so those who are living

this way are going to be those who are exalted. Those who humble themselves to live this way will be the ones who are exalted, and so Paul's exhortation is that we work out, that is, get experience in living this way. And that we are to do the things of God without murmuring and disputing, not like the Israelites at all, because grumbling complaints indicate to God a dissatisfaction with the way He is dealing with us. And God does not make mistakes. We have to understand that He is involved in our life. He is there, and our grumbling complaining is an indication to Him of a lack of faith, and dissatisfaction, disapproval with the way that He is treating us, and we need to understand that.

So if we do those things, then we are going to be blameless. We are going to be a light in this world.

The next paragraph, beginning in verse 19 and going through verse 24, deals with Timothy and Paul's promise to them that he was going to shortly send Timothy. Now one of the things that I extracted from this I feel is very important. That is, we have to recognize the power of personality in regard to understanding the truths of God.

Now Paul was dealing with a problem that was arising in the Philippian church and he could have just sent the letter, and the proper words would have been there. There is no doubt about it. They would have been these words that are in the book of Philippians. But Paul did not feel satisfied in merely dealing with the situation with a letter. And so he was going to send Timothy, you see, a personality to reinforce what was in the letter. So Paul stated his reasoning for sending Timothy, and that is that he was a man of proven character. And so it was someone that they could respect, someone that they already were familiar with.

This is a well established biblical approach to things. God could have merely given mankind His Word, but He did not. He gave His Word *and* prophets. He gave His Word *and* apostles. He gave His Word *and* preachers. Turn with me back to Romans 10 and in verse 14.

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

Well, they could read the words, could they not? Yes. But it is not as effective, nowhere near as effective as seeing a personality not only speaking but living that way. We are handicapped when we are limited to merely hearing the Word. It might be sufficient for many but not very many. It is very interesting that the apostle Paul himself, who undoubtedly was a very highly trained individual—yes, in a wrong system, but nonetheless highly educated, a man of great personality, intelligence, depth of understanding of things—but yet even with the apostle Paul, did he not say that Christ appeared to him for three years in the desert? You see, the personality that had taught the apostles, Peter and that group, and appeared to them also appeared to the apostle Paul. See, it was not enough just to give him His Word. The personality appeared.

Romans 10:15-17 How shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

And it is of course delivered by a personality.

Now, many of us have gotten into the habit of listening to Bible studies and sermons on tape. I am not going to say that that does not have value, but the value is limited. It has far greater, far more impact to something to see and hear somebody speak it than it is to listen secondhand, even though it is exactly the same words on a tape. It just does not have the same impact. And if you want to get the most impact possible, you are going to be present when things like this are going on.

That is what Paul did there with Timothy. He sent the personality to deal with the problem.

Then in verses 25 through 30, he is dealing with the circumstance surrounding Epaphroditus and witnessing to those people there in Philippi that Epaphroditus was in no way slack in performing his responsibilities. He indeed had been sick and in fact he had almost worked himself to death in

the service of the apostle Paul. But as I said, apparently the news got back that Epaphroditus, who was the one who bore the gift from the Philippian people to the apostle Paul, was shirking his responsibilities. But he was not. He was a very faithful man. And in fact, Epaphroditus was very concerned himself regarding what people were thinking about him and that what they were thinking was untrue.

Then we got into chapter 3. We just got into the first several verses here. And so let us get on beginning here in chapter 3 and verse 1. A very abrupt transition from the end of chapter 2 into chapter 3 and it begins with the word, "Finally," as though Paul was going to conclude the letter. And indeed, he may have. Because what is written there in the Greek is the common salutation at the end of a letter, a closing statement. So he could have been just about to close things off and then he remembered something. Maybe God inspired him and so he just quickly shifted gears and began writing about something that he previously had spoken to them about and something that they were indeed continuing to experience after he left, but he wanted to reinforce the things that he had told them before. And we find out that this had to do with Jews who were dogging the heels of the church there in Philippi. So Paul said that it was not difficult for him to do this, no problem at all. Repetition is the best form of emphasis, and so off he went.

Philippians 3:2 [he says] Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

A very interesting picture that he has here. He pictures these men as being like a hunting dog, almost like a bloodhound who have their nose to the ground, you know, sniffing out the trail that eventually leads to the Christians. Now, what he is thinking of is how much restless energy that these people have in continuing to pursue after their prey. Now their prey were the Christians, see, and these people would not give up. They just kept doggedly on the trail of them, bringing persecution on them and trying through all kinds of subtle and sometimes not so subtle means of weaning these people away from the truth of God.

And so there they were. Paul pictures them, nose to the ground like a dog, doggedly following after these people. They are evil workers. Again, an inference here of how much dedication and labor there was in these people,

and you might even reflect on the apostle Paul and how much labor *he* expended in persecuting the Christians. I mean, he was chasing them all the way up to Damascus. He got letters from the chief priests and the rabbis in order to persecute these people and throw them into prison. Well now, here these same types were dogging him the way he had dogged on the heels of the people there in the area of Palestine.

So he says to beware of the mutilation. Now he is referring to their circumcision but rather than looking upon it as though there was a neat, precise job done of the persons of the circumcision, you know, the surgery that takes place there, but rather somehow or another, the process had become mutilated and it was abhorrent.

Now, what he is getting at here is, of course, was that these people misunderstood God's intention for circumcision. They missed the point entirely. And so he says,

Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

There are two things here that I think are important in regard to understanding many of the things that the apostle Paul writes. One is his use of the word "circumcision." A circumcision was something that was commanded of God. It was not wrong for these people to be circumcised. However, they had a mutilated circumcision. They made the wrong application, they had the wrong understanding. They missed the intent of it. And so Paul uses the word circumcision in place of the application or to describe the application that the Jews made of it.

Now, the application that the Jews made of it was that their salvation hinged upon the faithful carrying out of external duty. Now these external duties are certainly moral requirements of God. But the Jews missed the point. Now when I say moral requirements, I am thinking of things like, let us say, tithing. That is, that can be an external ritual. That is, a person can do it without his heart, without his spirit, being involved in it. He may do that, that is, tithing, with the idea of being prospered in mind, and that is why he does it. Certainly God intends to prosper those who are tithing. But if a person is

tithing to *get* prosperity from God, can you see that his heart is in the wrong place? Yet he is tithing. He is carrying out the moral responsibility of doing it.

But that is not God's intent. His intent is that we willingly give of this in order that others may understand. It is a giving of the resources that God blesses us with so that others can have the truth of God as well. Therefore, tithing is not used to get, tithing is used to give, and it is given then in the right spirit. God will take care. It is then possible for a person to go through something like this without catching the spirit of God's intent for the law. What Paul means, then, by circumcision is that these people are going through the duty without their heart being changed.

Now you can keep the Sabbath. You can come for years without ever missing a Sabbath day. You see, you are carrying out the external responsibility, the duty to God, and indeed, one should do that. But you can do that and still have, at the same time, a heart that is filled with wrath, anger, hatred, malice, envy, jealousy. Is the Sabbath being kept in the right spirit? Is it being used for the right thing? Well, of course not.

See, the Sabbath is a time for one to improve his relationship with God. And one's relationship with God is improved by drawing closer to God. Now one draws closer to God when one renounces the hatred, malice, envy, jealousy, etc. that is in one's heart and the Sabbath gives one time to reflect on those things and get rid of those things through the relationship that is developed.

So you see, a person can go through the external of keeping it and what is he doing? He is doing or building, let us put it this way, a righteousness that is his own. Which is exactly what the Pharisees had. It is a selfish, self-made righteousness that comes entirely from the setting of one's own will. Is God's Spirit behind selfishness? Is selfishness of tithing as a duty? Is God's Spirit behind the keeping of the Sabbath in which malice and envy and jealousy and rage and all of those things are involved? Of course it is not.

And so what we begin to understand is that the only thing that will really satisfy God is a change of heart. *That* will produce the right keeping of the law.

So, on the outside, the righteousness which is produced by the kind of approach that the Jews had and the righteousness which is produced by the Spirit of God may seem to be the same. But I say *seem to be*. The difference is in the motivation. The motivation that comes from God's Spirit is always to glorify God. It is not to get things for the self. It is always to witness for God's way. We will get into more of this just a little bit later.

The other word that Paul uses that we need to understand is the word "flesh." You have to be a little bit careful with this one because you have to look at it in its context, because sometimes he really does mean flesh. That is, skin, meat. But when Paul uses it in this kind of situation, he is talking about all of the desires and appetites of the body and mind, coupled with human reason. A reasoning apart from God.

Now we have to be awfully careful with this because nothing human is ever quite right. I can prove that just by one scripture here. Let us go back to Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Human reasoning is always going to fall short, it is going to be inadequate. So there is reasoning that does not take God into consideration or relegates Him to being of lesser importance than our own reasoning. We tend to show that by the way we act and the attitudes that we have. Because we will not be corrected by the Word of God and the changes will not take place as they should. Because in many cases, without even realizing it, we are resisting God through our own reason. We come up with reasons why we cannot obey God. And usually at the bottom of this is, it is going to be painful to obey God and we do not like the pain of denying our body or our mind. And so, we may not say it this way, but we just refuse to submit to God.

So our appetites, whether it be in our stomach, or in our minds, or in our sex organs, or in our eyes, or our ears, or whatever, they get real unbalanced.

They get overdone, overworked, and we feed them to relieve the pressure that they are putting on us. Then we feel guilty and the whole round starts again as the pressure begins to build up.

I mentioned this thing about that nothing human is ever exactly right and this is going to play a part in what Paul is writing about here. You know, we can be quite wrong because we think we are quite right, which is really nothing more than a self-righteousness. I did not say that we absolutely were, I said that we could be quite wrong because we think we are quite right.

Now let us suppose that we were quite right but we were proud in the way that we were thinking. Has not pride destroyed the quality of what we were thinking, even reaching a right conclusion? I will tell you, this heart is really deceitful. It is tricky beyond belief. So here we can reach the right conclusion and be sinning in doing it. That is why I say that anything that is human is never going to be quite right. And you can see that what Paul is writing here is really a hangover from what he wrote in the previous chapter about humility.

At any rate, what happens whenever there is a disagreement? Whenever we think that somebody else, some other person, is quite right, we find out that *they* think that they are quite right. Usually this is what happens. We think they are wrong, but they think that they are right. Now, if we are accused, if we are the one who is accused of being wrong, we in turn feel very sure that *we* are right. The truth is that with humanity, nothing is ever quite right.

Now, are we going to have the humility to admit this into our thinking? I am talking here about spiritual things. I am not talking about things where we are dealing with the physical laws of science that can be discovered by the senses. I am talking here about things that are spiritual. So, do we have the humility to be able to admit that when we are involved in relationships with other people, that we do not see the situation exactly right, and neither do they? Does there not then, of necessity, have to be a willingness on the part of both to be able to humble themselves and submit to one another?

Now if we do not have that attitude, what is going to happen? You are going to have a collision between two different worlds, both of them sure that they are right. And both of them wrong, at least to some degree. And so you have

a war on a minor scale, maybe. In some cases in this world you have a war on a major scale because it may even reach the place where one kills the other because of imperfect human reason.

Can you understand why Paul wrote in Ephesians 5, I think it is verse 21, that in order for there to be unity, there has to be a submitting to one another? Are we able to renounce somehow or another, the conception that gets into our minds that problems have to be resolved right at this moment, and it has to be resolved our way? We are not talking here about moral issues necessarily. With Christians there has to be room for submitting to each other. There has to be room for compromise of position. There has to be the honesty to admit that it is *extremely likely* that we do not see this problem exactly right. We are not judging it correctly. And so with humility, there can be a submitting to one another. There is another part of this equation that I will eventually get to, but not right now.

Now does not our bias, our judgment tend to be biased toward our own interests? And then, because of the way human nature tends to reason, we do not see his point of view very clearly. And then human nature makes us insist on our own way. You see, in that kind of a condition very frequently is it necessary that there be counsel from others. Perhaps people who are not biased in exactly the same way that we are and they may be able to see the circumstance a great deal more clearly than we can.

But again, you see, there has to be a submission even to the mediation of that third party. So God says, in a multitude of counselors there is safety. In another place, He says, in a multitude of counselors there is peace, or wisdom.

You see, all this is growing out of this dispute that was going on in the Philippian church that was beginning to put cracks in their relationship and was beginning to divide them. All of this is pointing toward one thing and that is, Paul is showing why a circumcised heart is needed. It is a miracle that that God gives. You can see from the history of the world that what I have just said to you is impossible. Because human nature, human reason, the flesh, as Paul says, will not permit it to occur even though it is religious people who are adhering to a strict moral code are involved.

For example, there is hardly anybody stricter in their morality than the Puritans. They were not exactly right, doctrinally. But morally, they were a pretty pure people. Brethren, they could not get along with anybody! They could not get along with themselves, even within their own community. And mostly they could not get along with other people in the community who are not Puritan. Because there was not one iota of conciliatoriness or whatever you might call it, in their nature toward the weaknesses and foibles of other people. You see, their morality pushed them in the only direction it could possibly go.

And you see, this is what is wrong with this kind of circumcised morality that Paul is talking about here that the Jews had, and that is, it could not help but produce a superior mind. They had superiority complexes, which demanded that others submit to their moral superiority. And so then they exercised the force to control other people.

You see, the Spirit of God will never do that because it does not have that approach to morality. It is not trying to get other people to rule over and control because it recognizes it is having a hard enough time with itself. So who am I to insist that these people bow to my authority? That is why Paul is going through this description that he is going to go through.

Now, what did the Jews fall back on? What did the Pharisee fall back on when it came to stating his authority? Well, the very things that we see here. As Paul says,

Philippians 3:4 Though I also might have confidence in the flesh.

Remember, human reason, coupled with the appetites of the body, and what these factors are able to produce. Now, what did it produce in the apostle Paul? Think about this. What did it produce in the apostle Paul? You have that very clearly illustrated in the book of Acts. It produced a man who was fanatical in his devotion to the strict moral code of the Pharisees. And there is no doubt that according to that moral code, he was a blameless individual. What did he have in his heart? See, it was breathing murder, we might say, and anger and self-righteous indignation. I said self-righteous indignation against these people, these Christians. It bred in the apostle Paul such a superiority of thinking that he thought that he had the authority to be judge

and jury against these people. And he carried these things out and may have been responsible for the death of others.

Part of the basis of his thinking was, his and the other Pharisees, he says he was "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel." Now what he is going to give here is his pedigree. "Of the tribe of Benjamin." So here he was, an Israelite descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And not only that, he was of the tribe of Benjamin. The only tribe in Israel that voluntarily supported the family of David. They went with the Jews whenever the Jews seceded from Israel. Now, eventually, the Levites came over. But it was not like the way Benjamin did as a whole tribe, they volunteered to go with the tribe of Judah.

So he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." Every way you looked at him, he was of pure stock.

Philippians 3:5-6 concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Let us take a look at this in another direction. Paul is saying that he does not disparage these Jews that he calls the mutilation or the circumcision. He does not disparage them because he is jealous of their advantages, or we might say their supposed strengths. So for the sake of making a point that he does not have anything against them because he is equal to them in every way in the flesh. That is the point he wants to make. So for the sake of making a point, he accepts or adopts one of their approaches, that is, going through the pedigree. And it gives him, or them, the authority to do what they do. So what he is saying here then in verses 5 and 6 is that from their standpoint, he is on equal footing with them. So he does not have to give an inch in regard to that at all.

In verse 7, he begins to reach a conclusion.

Philippians 3:7 But what things were gain to me [his pedigree in verses 5 and 6, and I might include verse 4 about having confidence in the flesh], these I have counted loss for Christ.

Now here we have a statement of what made Paul so great in God's eyes. He renounced *everything* of his pedigree. There was nothing held back on which he could have reason to fall back on and glory in as far as the flesh was concerned. And so he may have in one sense here, literally had to give these things up. I mean, he could not give up the fact that he was a Benjamite or a Hebrew of the Hebrews. But he certainly gave up his prestige within the community of Jews, within the community of Pharisees, did he not? He gave up everything there and he became the chief target of their persecution. So he renounced that.

Have we done similarly in our sphere of influence, you see, with our family? I do not mean we have to throw these things in their face. But do they know that we have renounced what we formerly were? They should be able to see it by our conduct, by our attitudes and those kinds of things. Well Paul did.

Philippians 3:8 [He says that] Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

That experience that he had on the Damascus Road, and I might add here too, undoubtedly the years that he spent meditating in the desert on that occurrence and on the Scriptures, because now he was looking at the Scriptures in a way that he had never looked at them before. And in his meditation and in his prayers, and his study of God's Word, and the personal intervention of Christ in his life, sometimes appearing to him and teaching him personally, he began to see something about what he had been, that all of the merits that he formerly had were absolutely *nothing* compared to the relationship that he now had with Christ.

And that even though he had to renounce everything that formerly had been part of his pedigree and something that he had been quite proud of and used as his authority, you see, all of that had to be renounced, he began to see that not only were they rubbish, but they were actually rivals to his total trust in Christ. In other words, that as long as he held those things to be of any kind of value at all, it was very likely that he was going to put his trust in those things rather than God.

You see, he was getting rid of his human reason. God was helping him to understand these things and to put them in their proper place.

Was that not very similar to what Christ presented to the young nobleman who came to Him? And the young man said, "Look, I've kept the commandments all my life." That almost sounds like the apostle Paul. See, he was blameless before the law. Well, Christ turned right around and he stuck the sword of God's Word right in his gut. He said, "Oh yeah? Well, let's say you get rid of all your money." Uh oh. Now we found out what the young man really put his trust in. It was money. And when push came to shove, he would use his human reason to put his reliance in money rather than in God.

Now that was the same principle that Paul was faced here with his pedigree and the use of all of his intelligence to understand Pharisaism and the use of all of his zeal to pursue these things in a fanatical way. He began to see that those things were rivals to putting his faith in God. And so he gave them up. "I have suffered the loss of all things." Total self-renunciation of what he formerly held dear.

We know from other books that he did not give up everything because human nature was still there and it continued to exert its influence against the Spirit of Christ. You can see that very clearly in Romans 7. But he had yet to learn that. So he gave up all of those things that "I may gain Christ."

Now, this knowledge of Christ. He is really talking there about knowledge on a different level from what he had before. What he had before was a knowledge of God, I might say a knowledge of the Messiah. Now, what that would have been would have been the typical beliefs and approach and ideas and attitudes that a Pharisee would have had regarding the Messiah. But what God revealed to Paul was a knowledge that was focused on or centered on an intimate relationship with Christ. Now that is entirely different. But as far as I know the Jews never approached their ideas or whatever of the Messiah on a personal basis. You see, it was always the Messiah who was going to come as a conquering hero and throw off the shackles of the kind of political and military slavery that the Jews found themselves in.

But that is not what God was after. I mean, through the Messiah. What He wants to do is to bring every one of us into a very personal, intimate Family relationship with His Son and with Him. That is a different kind of knowledge altogether. Where you know Him as your Savior, something that He did personally for you. It is intimate. A brother-brother, brother-sister relationship. Do you understand that a brother or, let us say the sibling relationship, is closer than the relationship between parents and children. Genetically, you see, the children are more alike than parents are to their own children. It is a closer blood relationship. Well, that is what kind of illustrates what he is talking about here. That was not the way the Jews approached the Messiah, but yet that was the kind of knowledge that God wants to be in you and me. That our entering into the Kingdom of God hinges upon a relationship.

Now, let us get back to those simple things of study and prayer again. The big four: study, prayer, fasting, meditation. We might add obedience to it because these things are the factors that promote the relationship. It is getting to know one another, living with one another as part of one's life, experiencing life together.

Let me illustrate this in another way. Suppose two people marry, a fellow and girl. But let us say that both of them, it could be one or the other, but we will say both, really do not give themselves wholeheartedly to the marriage. And the reason that they do not give themselves wholeheartedly to the marriage is that before the marriage there were relationships with other fellows or girls that are still kept vividly alive in the mind, even while they are married to another person, to the one they are married to. What, pray tell, is that going to do to the relationship? I will tell you, it is not going to promote the relationship at all. It is going to work the other way toward destroying it.

This little scenario that I have just described to you is exactly, in principle, the same as our relationship to Christ. We enter into a covenant with Him, you see, to become His Bride. But what if there are other things in the background, our pedigree, whatever it might be, that we still have a fairly intimate relationship with and there is trust and reliance on those things. What is it going to do to our relationship to Christ? I will tell you, it is not

going to promote it. It is going to work towards breaking it. Well, that is the principle that he is getting at here, this self-renunciation of things and ties that we have to ideas and concepts. The attitude has to be there to jettison those things whenever we understand that they are wrong and impeding the development of the relationship with Christ.

Philippians 3:9 and to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

Paul undoubtedly is expressing here that he wants God's judgment of him to show unquestionably that his has been a living and growing relationship with Christ. Now, if this be so, then the righteousness which he has is *not* going to be his. Look, right in the context Paul shows that he was blameless before the law. That there was not anything that you could point to Paul and say, this man has a really serious problem. Now God can see many things wrong. But men, not having the mind of God or the thoughts of God, would not be able to do that. So looking at Paul with human reason, with a human perspective, you would be driven to the conclusion that this was one righteous, moral man.

But you see, Paul is showing that all of that morality, all of that righteousness was produced apart from God. It was produced apart from his relationship with the Messiah because he did not even know the Messiah until the Damascus Road incident took place. And so all of that righteousness was his own and *humanly* speaking, it was good. Now, in one sense, he was the kind of guy that you would love to live next door to because you knew he was not going to steal from you. He was going to be a pretty good neighbor. On the other hand, you might not want to live next door to him because he put you to shame and you would kind of feel guilty in his presence. And it is very likely that he would have had the attitude that would have led him to make you think that way.

Paul says that that righteousness he does not want to be found with. But rather, what he wants is a righteousness that develops out of or from the relationship that he had with his Savior. And he knew then that that righteousness would not be his own, but rather it would be a righteousness that was given to him by and through the relationship produced by the Spirit

of God. Now that kind of righteousness is acceptable to God because it is not tainted by its contact, as it were, with humanity. It is something that is given.

So you see, Paul's righteousness would be produced by conformity to law. But since things human are never quite right, it would never produce the perfection that God wants. Do you know why? Because it would always be tainted with things that we understand now are sins. Self-righteousness. Pride. See, those kind of things. Human righteousness cannot be produced without those things being a part of it so it does not cut the mustard with God. Because human righteousness is always going to be self-serving. That is its flaw. It is going to be done to *get*. That is not the Spirit of God. Regardless of how good that righteousness is, humanly speaking, it is always going to be done from a motivation of getting for the self. It cannot be helped because that is the way human nature is.

Now this righteousness of God is a righteousness acquired on the basis of faith. The righteousness was imputed to Abraham because he believed. Now Abraham kept the law. It says that very clearly. But the motivation was entirely different from the righteousness that Paul had before he was converted. Abraham had the righteousness of God and so that has a different motivation. It is the opposite of human works because it is a provision offered to those in Christ and it is a reception of the work of God within the individual. Remember what Paul said in Galatians 2:20. Nevertheless, not I, but Christ lives in me. And the faith that he lived by was by the faith *of* the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The major difference in this righteousness, let us say, in its source, is that human righteousness is (this may be somewhat misleading at first), obtained by trying. It is attained by the sheer setting of one's will. I say it is somewhat misleading because some of these elements are involved in the righteousness of God as well. But maybe one of the clearest examples of this was Benjamin Franklin. He set himself to attain to a certain degree of morality, a certain degree of righteousness. So he actually kept score on himself. He made a chart that had certain categories on it, the things that he wanted to do and did not want to do. And then every night before going to bed, he would go over the chart and say, "Well, I didn't lie today." Check mark. "I didn't use any swear words today." Check mark. "I didn't commit adultery today." Well, Ben had 17 children. I think that there was some dillydallying around.

Check mark. You know what? After he got done checking all the marks he thought, Yeah, I've been a pretty good guy today.

You see, that element of pride begins to seep back in. There is no escaping it because human nature is going to do that, and that kind of a righteousness God simply will not accept. You see, the righteousness of God is built on a basis through an individual who recognizes that he is *not* righteous! It is built in a human being who is able to very clearly see how weak and how filled with faults that he is. It is not how good he is, but rather it is done in a human being who clearly sees all the time that there is tremendous amount of room for more improvement regardless of how well he has done. That kind of approach can be very humble toward God and does not approach life at all from a standpoint of, "Boy, I'm a pretty good guy. Look at how much I've accomplished. How righteous I was today. Look at all the good works that I did." Well, these are not things that we say to other people, we say them to ourselves.

But the righteousness of God is built in a human being in a totally opposite approach. And that person knows that the will to do it, the power to do it, and the good work that was done were all produced *in spite* of the person. Because the person sees his humanity. Paul said, "O wretched man that I am!" Job said, "I abhore myself." Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Incurably ill, he said. Jeremiah said, "The way of man is not in himself." He said, "God, I can't put one foot in front of the other right." You understand that he meant spiritually. It was Isaiah who said that God's thoughts were not our thoughts.

You see, that kind of a mind, that kind of a spirit, God is willing to work with. That kind of a spirit, that kind of an attitude, that kind of a heart, God can perfect. You see, that kind of an attitude, that kind of a heart is open to endless creation. Because the righteousness that Paul was talking about here that he had which was of the law is eventually going to reach the place where it is satisfied with what it has done and then the development of morality or the creative effort ends right there. Because you see, that is another failing of human nature. It gets to the place where it is self-satisfied.

Can any of us, understanding these things, say that we will ever reach the perfection of God as a human being and really believe it? We will not, as

long as we are in the flesh. See, that kind of a heart, God can keep creating His righteousness in.

Now, if we have not done what Paul did, which was to renounce totally all of his former honors and his prestige, his righteousness which is of the law, those things would have hindered God's creative efforts. Because we would take solace, comfort, put trust in those things.

This is awesome teaching. It gives us all kinds of food for understanding why we have to go before God and ask Him for these things. Ask Him to work with us. Ask Him to clean us up. Ask Him to get rid of the imperfections. Ask Him to be merciful to us. Ask Him to help us to cooperate that His will might be done. We can really be somebody that He can use his creative powers in. God is a creator, and God is creating many sons to His glory. That is where He is expending His efforts. So Paul says that he wants to have the faith of Christ in him, and the righteousness.

One more thing here that I need to add, at least in regard to this. When Paul here talks about having the righteousness of Christ or the righteousness of God, which is by faith, he is talking about that which comes through the grace of God once again. And that righteousness, of course, is something that is imputed. Now, it is a cooperative effort between God and us. But part of God's part in this is to give us the education that we need so that we have the knowledge of God or the knowledge of Christ which we need to operate with. Because He leaves us as a free moral agent so that we can be free to decide which way we will go.

Now, if all that it took was knowledge, that might be one thing. But we all know that it does not take just knowledge. Now the reason I say that is because all of us have knowledge of what we should do. Not perfect knowledge, but we do have knowledge of what God requires of us and we do make choices to go in that direction. And then it becomes very apparent that knowledge often by itself is not enough. We also need the power to carry it out. And this is where we often fall down. We stumble around feeling that the power is not there to do it.

Brethren, that is not true. The truth of the matter is that we are failing to exercise the power, and there is usually something that holds us back. And

the things that hold us back are some of those things that Paul was talking about, his pedigree, in principle, or with the rich young ruler, it was his money that would be holding him back because his reliance would tend to shift in that direction. You see with us, the thing that tends to stop us is that we fall back on human reason. We fall back on human nature. We fall back on the powers of humanity to try to overcome and do things that God is requiring that really takes *spiritual* power to do.

Now why do we do this? Well, I would say that most of the time it is because we do not really want to pay the price. Another way of putting it is that we are unwilling to sacrifice. We are unwilling to go through the pain that we are fearful that God might require of us if we do obey Him to the extent that His Word seems to indicate. It may be that in order to go in His direction, we may really have to humble ourselves and our pride will be smashed.

You see, if I should have to go apologize to that other person for what I said, why, that would really be debasing and embarrassing to do that. So our pride would be damaged. Or maybe we gossiped or maybe we fibbed and we told somebody something that we should not, and we are faced with having to go see somebody and say, "I told you a lie." And that is hard to admit that. Or maybe it is a bodily appetite. We drink too much or we eat too much. And the old body is putting the twist on our arm and saying, satisfy me, satisfy me, feed me. And you know what humanity says. "Well, once more won't hurt. I can eat a little more. I can have this dessert." And so the body puts the pressure on, the bodily appetite, and human nature, human reason starts working and the first thing you know it convinces us to get relief.

You see, a person who has really renounced his trust in the flesh—human reason, bodily appetites, the works—he will not do that. He will sacrifice and he will suffer whatever pain God requires to go through that. And he does it by faith.

Luke 24:49 [Look at what Jesus said] "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you."

He is talking about the Holy Spirit which is the means, the conveyance of the grace of God, and all the gifts and all of the power that it takes to live God's

way, to be obedient to Him and submissive to Him. To love one another. The joy and peace. The power of self-control, the power of faithfulness. All of those fruits of the Spirit. And so He says that He is going to send that Promise.

Now go to Acts 1.

Acts 1:4-8 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."

God not only gives us the knowledge which enables us to have the will, but He also gives us the power to carry it out. That is part of His gift. He promises that He will never give us anything that is too great for us. And He keeps that promise.

When you are facing a problem you have failed to address many, many times because you have either backed away from it or been defeated by it, but then you really go on a campaign to exercise, to take advantage of this relationship with God that is made available for us through Jesus Christ. And you pray and pray and you fast and you study and you cry out to God and maybe along the way you fail a number of times. But you are sincerely and devotedly and devoutly seeking God to overcome this problem. And then one of those days, you make a breakthrough and you conquer it.

Now you will have a couple of feelings at the same time. Number one is that you will exalt. You see, you will be filled with joy that you have met the enemy and you conquered it. Of course, that enemy is yourself. It is human nature, it is Satan. But number two, you are also going to be tremendously humbled because you know you did not do it yourself. And there is no way that you can attribute that righteousness to yourself in honesty.

That process that I just described is what God wants us to do with every one of these things. Now is that ever going to lead to you being proud? You cannot possibly be proud under those circumstances. And even when you overcome it, maybe that first time, you are going to recognize that you still have a long way to go and you are going to know that you are not done. This is only a beginning. And you see, you are going to be open to more of the creative power of God to work in you. Just the opposite of the righteousness that man produces which reaches an end because man becomes satisfied with himself. And see, he will go so far and that is all. He gets tired of the process. He gets satisfied with what he is.

Let us finish this off in verse 10.

Philippians 3:10 that I may know Him [he means fully and completely] and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, . . .

Certainly an indication that Paul knew that in striving to live this way, it was very likely going to produce exactly the same things that it did in Christ's life: trouble. But that was all right with him. It was all right with him because he could see beyond the immediate. He had his eyes on eternal life. He had his eyes on glorifying God. He had his eyes on being glorified in the Kingdom of God. So Paul was willing to suffer the loss of everything in order to attain to that.

Philippians 3:11 . . . if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.