

Sermon Study Guide

11.29.2009 – Satisfaction part II



SATISFACTION, PART II

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 29, 2009

DISCUSSION: TOGETHER AS A GROUP

1. Last week's guide began by asking us to think about what we could receive that would make life more satisfying. Let's begin this week by turning that question radically in another direction. What do we have right now—career, possession, position, or relationship—that if lost somehow, would make life (almost or completely) not worth living? *This question, obviously, is very personal. So for now, to facilitate our discussion, let's each write down the answers on a slip of paper.*

SCRIPTURE READING: PHILIPPIANS 3:1-21

¹Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

²Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. ³For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

⁷But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³Brothers, I do

not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

¹⁷Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. ¹⁸For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Losses are an inevitable part of life in this world—temporarily ruled as it is by forces dominated by sin and death. Physical health inevitably breaks down. Careers once deemed secure and reliable abruptly come to an end. Relationships are broken. Good reputations are damaged by rumors and false accusations. Financial investments vaporize. Loved ones die, sometimes unexpectedly.
 - Probably everyone present has already experienced one (and probably several) of these types of losses. To have someone or something precious taken away from us can cause deep disappointment, depression, and even despair.
2. Let's return to our initial question. It may help time-wise to break into groups of 3 or 4 for this part of our time together.
- a. You have identified something(s) that, if lost, would make life very difficult—a relationship, a priceless possession, a meaningful position or status.
 - b. Now, imagine you could receive something in exchange for these. What would be a worthwhile trade for the most precious thing you currently possess? What qualities would make it worthwhile? Use your imagination—and be careful not to allow yourselves to resort to 'superficially' spiritual answers.

- c. When you come back together as a group, talk about the qualities you listed that you would require if you were to exchange your most precious asset(s).
 - Paul had quite a number of what people in his day would have considered to be valuable commodities. He had pedigree, education, important status, and what his peers would have seen as a very bright future. **Re-read verses 7 & 8** and note what he says about all of this.
 - The word “consider” (some translations may say “account” or “reckon”) is an accounting term. What Paul is saying is that what he used to count as his “assets” he has now ascribed as worthless! What he used to consider his greatest possessions he now regards as rubbish.
 - He didn’t *lose* these things or have them taken from him. Quite the opposite in fact, *he gave them away*. Whatever he previously considered profitable he now considers as loss (rubbish, even).
3. Let’s personalize the Apostle Paul’s thinking. Take your list from our first question and substitute the things you wrote down for Paul’s list in verses 5-6. Have someone volunteer to actually read the passage this way—read your list in place of verses 5-6, then keep reading verses 7-11 as they are in the text. As one reads his/her list aloud—follow along with your own individually.
 4. How do you feel as you read the text in this personalized way? Does it ring true? Are you really able to account your most precious possessions as garbage and exchange them the same way Paul did? Is it a little scary? Are some things harder to let go of than others? Take some time to honestly discuss how this thought affects you.
 - Paul did not make this exchange in a cavalier way. He says that he found something of “surpassing greatness”—knowing Christ Jesus as Lord.
 5. What is it that makes “knowing Christ as Lord,” having a “righteousness that comes from God and is by faith”, and “attaining to the resurrection of the dead” of surpassing value over possessions, relationships, positions, or other ambitions?
 6. Have someone read Mark 10:28-31. Take some time as you close to offer praise to God by acknowledging the ways that knowing Christ, possessing his righteousness, and the hope of a glorious resurrection surpass everything else we value.

KNOWLEDGE: STUDYING FOR GROWTH

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Perhaps the words of this timeless hymn can help you meditate on what the Apostle Paul is saying this week. As an aid in your devotions, read Philippians 3 followed by this hymn and reflect on the things you have listed as being of highest value to you.

When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
save in the cross of Christ my God:
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

--Isaac Watts, 1707. Public Domain.