

Joy in Loss and Gain

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Philippians 3:1-11

¹ Furthermore, my brothers and sisters, **rejoice in (the) Lord**. To write “the same things” to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. ² Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil workers, look out for “the excision.”

³ For we are “the circumcision,” who **worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Messiah Jesus and put no confidence in flesh** – ⁴ though I myself could have confidence even in flesh. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in flesh, I have more: ⁵ as to **circumcision**, an “eighth-day-er,” from the people of Israel, from the tribe of **Benjamin**, a **Hebrew of Hebrews**; as to **Law**, a **Pharisee**; ⁶ as to **zeal**, a persecutor of the church; as to **righteousness in Law**, blameless.

⁷ But whatever gains I had, I have considered as a loss because of the **Messiah**. ⁸ And what is more, I consider **everything** as a loss because of the **surpassing value of the knowledge of Messiah Jesus my Lord**.

Because of him I have **forfeited all things and count them as rubbish**, in order that I may have **the Messiah as my gain** ⁹ and be **found in him**, not having a **righteousness of my own** that is from **Law**, but that which is **through the Messiah’s faithfulness**, the **righteousness from God that depends on faith** – ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming shaped by his death, ¹¹ that by whatever path I may arrive at **the resurrection from the dead**.

Philippians 2:1-2, 5-11

¹ So if there is any encouragement in the **Messiah** ... ² fill up my joy that you think **the same thing**, having the **same love**, together in soul and thinking the **one thing**. ...

⁵ **Think this** among yourselves, which also means **in Messiah Jesus**, ⁶ who, though he was **in the form of God**, did not consider that **equality with God** a thing to be exploited, ⁷ rather he **emptied himself**, by taking the **form of a slave**, being born in **human likeness**. ⁸ And being found in **human shape**, he **humbled himself** by becoming **obedient to the point of death**, even **death on a cross**.

⁹ **Therefore God has highly exalted him** and graced him with **the name that is above every name**, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow**, of those in heaven and on earth and under earth, ¹¹ and **every tongue confess** that “**Jesus Messiah is LORD**,” to the **glory of God the Father**.

Philippians 1:9-10

⁹ And it is **my prayer** that **your love may abound** more and more, with **knowledge** and all **discernment**, ¹⁰ so that you may **approve** what is **excellent**, and so be **without pretense** and **blameless** for **Messiah’s day**, ¹¹ filled with the **fruit of righteousness** that comes through **Jesus Messiah**, to the **glory and praise of God**.

Philippians 1:29-30

²⁹ For **by grace it has been granted to you** that **for the sake of Christ/Messiah** you should not only **believe in him** but also **suffer for his sake**, ³⁰ engaged in **the same struggle** that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Galatians 2:19-21

¹⁹ For through **Law** I died to **Law**, so that I might live to **God**. ²⁰ **I have been crucified with Messiah/Christ**. I live, but it is no longer I; **Christ lives in me**. And the life I now live in flesh **I live in the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me**. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of **God**, for if **righteousness were through Law**, then the **Messiah died for no purpose**.

God Barges In Among Jews and Gentiles

Paul is a well trained Jewish Pharisee in Ephesus, an ancient Greek city, writing to Greek and Roman citizens living in a Roman city of Philippi. Everybody has or had an identity. They knew who they were. Jesus came, but Paul thought he knew him as a failed, false messiah, a deceiver, crucified as he deserved. Paul knew a lot: the line between Jews and Gentile dogs, the line between circumcision and pagan mutilation, the line between the practice of Torah/Law that defined God's people and the corrupt culture of pagans.

Then God barged in. Jesus knew Paul better than Paul knew Jesus. That resurrected Jesus appeared to Paul in a way he couldn't deny or mistake: God was in that crucified Messiah. Jesus' story was God's story. That Messiah Jesus embodied Israel and was now fulfilling God's ancient promise to Abraham to bless all nations by his descendants.

Paul took that news to Philippi, and God barged in again. Good Roman citizens found themselves children of Abraham, "in" the Lord/Messiah Jesus, with new life and hope. The message of Jesus re-wrote their identity, gave a new framework for every decision. They found themselves with new joy, but also with new conflicts with pagans and Jews.

What Jesus Did to Paul and the World

To us this all may seem long ago and far away, but it is the crucial power of the Gospel.

It does not simply prescribe good morals; Paul already had that. It redefines who I am.

It tells me the true, great narrative, in which my life finds its place. It clarifies everything.

But in that process it turns upside down my world's definitions of what matters in life. Why?

Because of who Jesus is and what he did. In the form of God, equal to God, but emptied himself. He came to us, took our form, humbled himself to our obedience, even our death.

In his resurrection and exaltation, God proclaimed him the same as himself, Lord of all.

Paul had a clear identity in Law/Torah. Much of it still true. A real, definable covenant righteousness in the Torah. But it didn't include the Messiah, God's story in Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection. It was out of date. God had gone further, creating a new reality defined by the presence of God in Jesus Messiah. It fill the words righteousness, temple, forgiveness with new meaning. The Messiah welcomed all nations/Gentiles into the people of God. Paul was still a "Hebrew" or a Roman citizen, but neither defined him.

Everything that had been on the "gains" side of the ledger was now considered a loss for the sake of the one, true defining "gain" – to be known by the Messiah and to know him.

What had happened to Paul was happening to the Philippians and must happen to all.

Only when the one true gain is in place, can other elements of identity have their role.

The Quest for a Gift Already Given

Anything, all my claims to standing before God or anyone else, all are forfeit. But that doesn't leave an empty blank. It is filled by what God has done in Jesus, a power, a standing, a hope, that I could not by myself imagine. Created by Jesus' faithful gift of himself, it is a standing that's unshakable because it depends not on me but on him.

God gives that rightness with God to all who trust/believe in Jesus and what he has done.

It is beyond our understanding, but we continually explore its meaning with our lives. It is being shaped by Jesus cross. It makes demands. It may involve suffering. It leads by the complex experiences and challenges of life to hope, true life, resurrection.

The path of the Philippians or us will be different from Paul's, but the same quest. Seeing the truth of Jesus gives us the basis for knowledge and discernment day by day.