

Christ-Centred Treasure

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 August 2020

Preacher: Kevin Murphy

[0 : 0 0] The scripture reading today comes from Philippians chapter 3. In Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.

Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law of Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss, because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own, that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, that depends on faith, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that, by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

[1 : 5 0] This is God's word. Thank you.

I was a cricket fan. I used to, often, if I'd finished my homework, I would jump on my bicycle after school, and go down to the shopping mall, and just walk through the sports stop, feeling the cricket bats, smelling the leather of the cricket balls, looking at the posters, and just sucking in the whole vibe of this sports shop.

I absolutely loved it. But there's one problem. On my journey towards the shopping mall, about 200 meters down the road from my house, there was another house with a big gate, and on this gate was a sign, warning, danger, and it was written in English, and Afrikaans, and Zulu, this warning sign, warning anybody that came near the gate.

And the reason for this warning, was Rottweilers. I don't know if you know Rottweilers. Rottweilers are the meanest looking, most aggressive dogs, that I, in my tender age, had ever come across.

And in this house, that I used to cycle past to get to the shops, they had these two monstrous Rottweilers, that would run up to the gate, put their paws on top of the gate, and bark like crazy, as if they hadn't been fed for a whole month, and I was their long-awaited meal, as I cycled past at my tender age, of 10 years old, on the bicycle.

[3 : 4 7] And then an hour later, I would cycle back again, past the Rottweiler house, on the way home. In this passage that we're looking at today, in Philippians chapter 3, Paul is hanging up a big warning sign.

Warning. Danger. Beware. And he is commanding the Philippians, to be on their guard. There's impending danger ahead. And what is the danger?

Well, look at what he says in verse 2. He says, Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

What's Paul talking about? Well, what's happened is that Paul goes to Philippi, he plants the church, he establishes the church. A couple of years later, he's in Rome, he's in jail there, and a man called Epaphroditus, comes and brings him a financial gift, from the church in Philippi.

He's very grateful for it. But Epaphroditus also brings him some other news. And part of the news that he brings, is that some other religious people, have come to Philippi, and are causing problems in the church.

[4 : 54] They are trying to water down the gospel, or distract people away from the gospel, and away from Jesus. And the way that they're doing this, is they're saying, Yes, Jesus is a good man.

He had some good things to say. His life is worth imitating. That's good. But if you really want confidence before God, if you really want to be assured of your salvation, if you really want to know that God loves you, and accepts you, and that you're a good person, and do what's pleasing in His sight, you've got to make sure that you obey, the teachings and the traditions, of the Jewish fathers.

You've got to make sure that you, meticulously obey the laws of Moses, in each and every step. And one of these in particular, was the law of circumcision. If you want to be known, that God loves you, and accepts you, you've got to make sure, that you've been circumcised, and all the males in your family.

Along with this other long list, of things to do, and things not to do. Now, in the Old Testament, circumcision, which is similar in some ways, to baptism in the New Testament, was an outward sign, of an inward reality.

It didn't ever save you, it was a sign, that because of your faith in God, you were part of the people of God, part of the covenant people of God. It was just an outward sign, of something that you had done, in your heart.

[6 : 17] But here these people, were coming and saying, no, no, no, this is the basis, for your confidence before God. Well, what does Paul think of this? He says, these teachers, are like rottweilers, those that are going to mutilate, not only your flesh, but your faith.

So he says, look out for these dogs, look out for these evil doers. Paul's concern here, is not so much circumcision, is where do you place your confidence, where does your assurance, and your hope lie, for God's favor, and blessing upon you.

Because for Paul, in the gospel, that confidence rests, in Christ's death, on the cross alone. That Jesus died, to take our sins. There's an old hymn, that says, nothing in my hands, do I bring, simply to the cross of Christ, do I cling.

My confidence, assurance is Paul, is not in, obeying the to-do list, the rules, and the regulations, not in following, the traditions of man, but in Christ, and his death, on the cross.

And so Paul warns them, be on your guard, warning, danger ahead. Well, if religious observance, isn't the basis, for our confidence, what is?

[7 : 24] Well look at what Paul says, in verse 3. He says, for we, are the real circumcision, the real covenant people of God, those who worship, by the spirit of God, in other words, those who worship, not by rules, and rituals, those for whom worship, is not a formula, or just a tradition, that you go through.

I go to church, I sing four songs, I listen to a sermon, and write a check. No, no, those for whom worship, is an encounter, with the living God, because God the spirit, resides within us, and we have genuine relationship, with him.

Those who worship, by the spirit of God, those who glory, in Christ Jesus, their confidence, is in Christ, and what he's done, on the cross, and those who, put no confidence, in the flesh, because their confidence, is in Christ, in the gospel.

That Paul says, is where we find, our confidence, our hope. This is what it means, to be the people of God. But some might not be convinced.

Some might say, oh that's just a new teaching. And so Paul says, well, let's think about this. And he gives his own life story, as a testimony. And Paul says, in verse 4, if anyone else, has reason for confidence, in what they have done, or haven't done, if anyone else, thinks that they've got, good reason, to be confident, in their human abilities, their achievements, they've done the to-do list, they've avoided, the not to-do list, well let's compare resumes.

[8 : 54] And so Paul pulls out, his resume, and his resume, is nothing less, than awesome. Look at what he says here. He says, as far as confidence, in human traditions, and religious observance go, let's consider my resume.

I was circumcised, on the eighth day. Now in the law of Moses, that was important. Not the seventh day, not the ninth day. Good Jewish people, you circumcise your children, on the eighth day.

So Paul's saying here, it's not like, you know, I went to college, and I had a bit of a spiritual epiphany, and I decided to follow, the laws of Moses. He's saying, from the day I was born, from as young as one week old, I've meticulously followed, the letter of the law.

There's nothing in my life, from an eight day old baby, I've been in strict accordance, with the law. He says, I'm of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews.

And what he's saying here is, I'm not like, fourth generation Jewish, my parents didn't move, and we nationalized. He's saying, no, no, you can trace my heritage, my lineage, thousands of years, all the way back to, the son, to Benjamin, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham.

[10 : 03] That's my lineage, you can trace us back. We are as thoroughbred, Israeli Jewish as it comes. Hebrew of Hebrews. Thousands of years, my family, have been the people of God.

As to the law, a Pharisee. And again, if you're a Christian this morning, Pharisees have got a bad rep, in our day, because Jesus takes them on quite a lot. But in Paul's day, the Pharisees were a select group within Judaism, that were the strictest observance of the law.

They absolutely feared God, and went out of their way, to make sure that there was nothing, according to God's standard, that they could be accused of breaking. They were the most devout, most dedicated followers, and devoted followers, of God's teaching.

Paul here says, the Pharisee. As to zeal and passion, well, I persecuted the church. So I heard, there was this new group of people, these Christians that came in, and I wasn't just going to sit by, and let them take over our faith.

I did what I could, to destroy them, to get rid of them. So, so, so strong was my passion, my zeal, for the things of God. Finally, he says, as to righteousness, right standing under the law, I was utterly blameless.

[11 : 19] Now remember, in Paul's day, in Paul's culture, one of the most important aspects, of society, was Judaism. What Paul's telling us here, is that he reached the top, not just of his industry, but of the top, of the very essence of society, the pillar of society.

Paul hadn't just got, to the top of his industry, it was the top of the industry, for society, for his culture. To be a follower, of the ways of Moses, was utterly respected.

Paul here, has smoked it. He's been mentored, by one of the most, respected leaders, of Judaism, and he has progressed, beyond the age of everyone else, beyond the status of others, his own age.

Paul is the top, of the top. Now in our culture, in our context, these things might not seem, super impressive. I don't know how many of us, go around, full of confidence, that we were circumcised, on the eighth day.

A Hebrew of Hebrews. But for many of us, we've got our own system, our own standard. Things that give us, a sense of confidence, of assurance. In Paul's day, it was, this was about, as impressive a resume, as you could get.

[12 : 34] I'm doing some studies, at the moment, and this week, I started a new course. And so, on Monday, we were meeting, the other classmates, online, and reading the various biographies.

And I came across, one lady in my class, she's in America somewhere, and she said, you know, I did my undergrad, your degree here, my postgraduate degree here, and I'm just doing, this master's course, just to supplement, my studies a little bit.

I am the global director, of an international, missions organization. I run the youth program, at our church, and I have seven children at home, and I homeschool them all.

And I just felt, so pathetic, after reading that. Who am I? What have I achieved? And then I was reading, my professor's biography, and he had three master's degrees, he's finished his PhD, he's just doing another PhD, just to complete that, as well as having four children at home, and having a full-time job, teaching at one school, and he does some supplementary teaching, on the side, at another school.

Here are these people, with these impressive resumes, Paul is doing that, in a sense he's pulling out his resume, and he's listing, his incredible achievements.

[13 : 47] But then look, at what he says in verse 7. Look at what he says, about this list of accomplishments. Verse 7, he says, rubbish here, is the word that was used, for a trash heap, a pile of garbage, but it's also the word, that was used for dung, or feces, for animal waste, human waste.

You know, when you're walking up the mountain, you're hiking, you're on a trail, and some dog, has done its business, and the owner hasn't cleaned up, and you step in it, you know how gross that is, and you have to clean it off your shoe, sometime, with a stick or something.

Paul is saying, here's my list of credentials, here's everything that, as a good Jew, I've taken confidence in, the things that give me, a sense of assurance, and confidence, the thing that, that tells me, I'm a good person, that God is pleased with me.

He says, this list, I consider it, to be as rubbish, as trash, as garbage, as dung, that you throw away, in the dog poop bin.

Why would Paul do that? Why is Paul saying this? Well, in this passage, we see three reasons, why Paul takes everything, that he had worked, his entire life to achieve, everything that he had hoped, and boasted in, and given him such confidence, and assurance, and why he takes these things, and they say, he says, they're nothing more, than rubbish to him.

[15 : 48] First thing is this, because confidence, in human effort, in self-earned effort, is insufficient. Look at verse nine with me.

Paul says this, I've disregarded, this long list, of my credentials, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, and then he says, not having a righteousness, of my own, that comes through, my observance of the law, but that which comes, through faith in Christ, a righteousness from God, that depends on faith.

Now, the word righteousness here, it's quite a, Christianese word, but what it really means, is right standing, to do what is right, and Paul says, if you consider the various ways, of gaining a right standing, or an assurance, a confidence, that you have a right standing, let's consider them.

The one, is to, for that sense of confidence, that by standing, that by standing before God, and within myself, and before society, is found in the things, that I do, the things I do, or I don't do, my list of achievements, my accomplishments, and in fact, that's what Paul's life, looked like.

He had spent his entire life, accumulating this list, of accomplishments, this, the sense of self-worth, and assurance, and confidence, but look at what he says, he says, as for righteousness, under this system, I was blameless, but now he says, I completely disregard that, I consider it to be like, done.

[17 : 17] Why? Because I found, that that is insufficient, to give me, what I actually need. It doesn't give me, the confidence, and the self-assurance, that I long for, and that I'm hoping for.

Human effort, confidence based on human effort, is insufficient, to actually deliver, what it promises. But I found another confidence, says Paul. It's the righteousness, a right standing, that isn't found, in my human effort.

It's not found, in that long list of things, that I thought I'd done. It's found, in a gift, a gift that is given, by God's grace. He says, I've given this up, in order to gain Christ, and to gain the righteousness, that is given to him, not based on me, and my track record, but based on him.

Now, some of us here, may feel like, yeah, I'm not so sure, about righteousness, my right standing. It's a Jewish thing. I don't know how many of us, feel proud of the fact, that we're Hebrews of Hebrews, Jews of Jews.

But in our modern day context, we actually have our own, system of righteousness. We've got our own, system of standing. Those that are regarded, and considered to be good, decent people.

[18 : 32] We've got our own systems, that we've come up with, that make us have a sense, of self-assurance, a sense of confidence, a sense that we're not failures, but that we're actually somebody. Maybe it's what school we went to, and how we did at school.

Maybe it's our careers, how well we've done at work, and how we've progressed, and the accolades, and the achievements, that we've achieved, and received, during our careers. Maybe it's how quickly, we've ascended through the ranks, and gained promotion.

For some of us, maybe it's our kids, how well our kids are doing, and what schools they've gotten to, and their career path. Friends, when our careers, and our kids are progressing well, when we're picking up the accolades, and the awards, and the promotions, are coming our way, we have a sense of self-assurance, a sense of confidence, a sense that I'm on the right track, I've got a good standing, with society, and with those, that are important.

Maybe you think that, the important things in life, are charity, or looking after our parents. As we think of ourselves, as good people, because we've taken good care, of our parents, we've provided for their needs.

We have a sense of good standing, and self-worth, within ourselves. Friends, you see that, whether you have, a religious worldview, or a secular worldview, we all have a system, of righteousness.

[19 : 52] A system that tells us, that we're in good standing, that we're good moral, and decent people. A confidence for our self-worth. But friends, both of these systems, whether religious, or secular, whether irreligious, or of the world, both of these systems, are built on your self-effort, on your accomplishments.

And both of them, are insufficient, at the end of the day, to really give you, the confidence, and the assurance, that you need. Because a day will come, that will undermine, you'll always meet somebody, that's better than you.

Somebody that's achieved, more than you. Somebody that's progressed, further than you. There'll always be somebody, that to look down on you, and undermine, your sense of assurance, and confidence. Paul writes this, and he says, my whole life, was based on that, but I've disregarded it, I've exchanged it, for a confidence, a righteousness, that isn't found, in myself, and my effort.

It's a gift, that's given to me, one that's not fallible, and fragile, one that I can build, and bank my life upon. A righteousness, that is given, by God.

Friends, human effort, confidence found in human effort, is always going to be insufficient. But secondly, he says this, confidence found in human effort, does not satisfy.

[21 : 11] What if you notice, the way that, Paul describes this here, he's talking about, this confidence, in matters of delight, in terms of pleasure.

Look at what he says here, having given this long resume, of his credentials, and you can, almost tell, that there's a sense of delight, a sense of pride, in his accomplishments.

He says, listen, if anyone else has, wants to boast, well look at me. And he lists, these things, that would have made, his parents proud. The things that would have made, society really regard him, and give him esteem.

The kind of things, that when Paul walked down the street, others would revere him, and look at him, and say, wow, do you notice that, look, there's the, there's Paul, the Pharisee. But look what he says, in verse seven.

Whatever gain, I had attained in myself, I counted as a loss, for the sake of gaining Christ. Paul's talking about, the time when he became, a follower of Jesus, and he regarded Christ, as infinitely more beautiful, infinitely more worthwhile, than everything, he had previously spent his life, trying to attain.

[22 : 21] Indeed, he continues, verse eight, I count everything as loss, because of the surpassing worth, of knowing Christ Jesus, as my Lord.

As we said earlier, the apostle Paul is somebody, that attained the very heights, of society's approval. Somebody that in many sense, had it all.

Paul, he's the rising star, within the Pharisee community. He tells us, in another book of the Bible, that he, had progressed quicker, than anybody else, his age, in his class.

He is, respected, and looked up, by those, who had trained him, and mentored him. At a young age, he is given authority, by the community. Paul achieved, ultimate success.

He's proud of his achievements, and he has every reason, to be proud of himself. Until he encounters, what he describes, as the all surpassing worth, of knowing, Christ Jesus.

[23 : 27] And friends, in that moment, all those accomplishments, all those achievements, everything that he had spent his life, worth looking for, became vain, and worthless.

It became like, paper money. You know when, people burn paper money, what do you call it? Yum-tzi-tzi, is that right? Something like that. You know that paper money, people build houses, and cars, and shoes, and they make these idols, but they're all burned, it's all meaningless, it's all pointless.

Paul says that, his whole life, was like a, paper mache card, it was this fancy thing, that looked so impressive, but compared to the, infinite worth of Christ, he saw how utterly, meaningless, and pointless it was.

It was like, the worthless paper. He says, I've suffered, the loss of all things, and indeed, I count them as rubbish, as dung, in order that I may gain Christ, the greatest treasure, and I may be found in him, and may know him, and the power of his resurrection, even sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him, in his death, that by all means possible, I may attain the resurrection, from the dead.

Friends, we sang it earlier, in that great song, Behold I God. Paul, God's invitation, is not just to know him, it's not just to trust him, God's invitation, is not just to believe in him, it's come let us adore him, come let us be moved by him, come let us revel, and treasure, the infinite worth of Jesus.

[25 : 01] And that's what Paul says, he says, I have attained everything, but I've come to see it as worthless, why? Compared to the infinite, surpassing worth, of who Jesus is, the treasure of Christ.

Friends, I wonder if you know him like that. Charles Spurgeon, was a preacher many years ago, and he had an amazing way with words, and listen to how he describes it.

He says, the saints of Christ, those that are followers of Jesus, have given Christ their all, and when they've given all, they have felt that they were richer, for their poverty, and happier for their sorrows.

To have Christ, at whatever price, will make a good bargain. I charge you, my dear hearers, if it should come to this, if you should have to sell your house, and your home, if your spouse, should become your enemy, if your children, should refuse to know you, as their father, or their mother, if you should be banished, from your country, if you should have to wear, a prisoner's chain, around your neck, and have no grave, for your body, you would still, have a good bargain, in taking up the Lord Jesus Christ.

For oh, he will claim you, in the day, when men disown you, and in the day, when he comes, there will be none, so bright, as those, who had suffered for him.

[26 : 29] Friends, the gospel, the good news of Jesus, is not just that, one day, when we get to die, we will not be in hell, we will be in heaven. The good news of the gospel, is that you get to be in God, with God, known by him, loved by him, found by him, and found in him, to know him, and his resurrection life, that all the treasures, and the accolades, of this world, could offer you, will seem rubbish, seem like trash, like animal done, compared to the, all surpassing, beauty, and glory, and wonder, that is Lord Jesus Christ, to know the Father, and to experience, the power of the Holy Spirit, this is what God promises, in the gospel.

Friends, do you know him, like this? Do you know, the all surpassing worth, of Jesus? Friends, have you, come to the place, where every treasure, every delight, that this world, could offer you, is insignificant, because of the wonder, of who Christ is?

Friends, you know Jesus Christ, not just as the Lord, that the Bible says, but as your Lord. Paul says, I consider it, worthless, as compared to, the all surpassing worth, of knowing Christ Jesus, as my Lord, of knowing him, not just knowing about him, of walking with him, in the midst of the storms, and the trials of life, when the fires, seem overwhelming, when the waves, seem to be, buffeting us, to know the peace, and the joy, and the incredible, tenderness of God.

Friends, do you know him, like this? There's an old hymn, says, when I surveyed, the wondrous cross, on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain, I count as loss, and poor contempt, and all my pride.

As of what goes on, he says, if we're, if we're the whole realm, of nature were mine, it would be far too small, an offering to bring, love so amazing, so divine, demands my love, my soul, my all.

[28 : 41] Friends, it's true, that if you were given, or offered, the whole realm, of all the world, every fantastic gift, every holiday, every beautiful home, every delicacy, you could taste, eating at the best restaurants, all the money in the world, friends, it's true, that would be too small, an offering to bring to Christ, but it's also true, it would be too simple, too dull, too insignificant, a treasure, to trade, for the beauty of Jesus.

Compared to the all surpassing worth, of knowing the majesty, and the mercy of Christ. Friends, I want to ask you again, do you know him? Do you know him like that?

If you're not a follower of Jesus, this morning, I want to invite you, but I want to do more than that, I want to implore you, to come and find Christ, to come and find the beauty of Jesus, to have your heart saturated, and filled with who he is, to come and taste of the wonder of Jesus, to delight, and to put your confidence, in the treasure that is Christ.

Friends, if you don't know Jesus this morning, all the promotions, and the wealth, and the accolades, and every treasure, this world can offer you, will still taste like sand in your mouth, compared to the beauty of Jesus.

Christ comes and invites you, and implores you, to delight in him, to worship him, to rejoice in him. Friends, for those of us that are watermarkers, for those of us maybe, that do know Jesus, is this true of us?

[30 : 13] Do we live as if this is true? Friends, has the wonder of Jesus, the all-surpassing worth of Christ, somehow faded into the background? Friends, have we become more saturated, and more confident, in the things of this world, our resumes, and our CVs, our accolades, and our achievements?

Friends, is Christ still precious to us today? Christ invites us, to come back to him, and how do we do that?

We do that maybe, through confession, we do that through repentance, we come and ask him, to make himself first, in our hearts again. This week, as I've been preparing for that, it's been deeply challenging, as I've asked myself, is Christ glorious, and precious to my heart still?

Have I become so familiar to him, that I've forgotten the wonder, the all-surpassing worth, of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord? Almost, last point, we're almost done here.

There's one other thing, that's interesting about this passage here. We're still on our second point, the insufficiency, of confidence in human efforts, the unsatisfactory nature, of putting on confidence, in human effort.

[31 : 28] But look at, what happens here. Paul, talks about both his conversion, but also his ongoing pursuit of Christ. In verse 7, he's talking about the day, that he came to know Jesus.

And he says here, whatever gain I had, accomplished in my life, I gave it all up. I counted it, as a loss, for the sake of Christ. He encounters God, he sees the truth of Jesus, and the wonder of Jesus, he does the calculus in his mind, and he realized, all of this is rubbish, compared to what I'm going to get in Jesus.

And so he considers this loss, compared to the worst, worth of taking hold of Jesus. But then look at what he says in verse 8. It wasn't just a once-off decision, this is a continuous, ongoing pursuit, to avoid, to take hold of Christ.

He says, Indeed, I presently, count everything as loss, because of the surpassing worth, of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. So day by day, he's living in this reality, where he's pursuing Christ, and he's realizing, human effort is dead in the water.

Confidence in what I've achieved, is insignificant. Christ is glorious, and he pursues Christ. But not only that, he continues to do so, in the joyful expectation, of what it will lead to.

[32 : 46] Verse 8. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things. I count them rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, in order that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, in order that I may share in his sufferings, and become like him in his death, in order that I may, by all means possible, attain the resurrection from the dead.

Friends, Paul starts off this passage saying, Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write these same things to you again, is easy for me, and it's safe for you. What's he doing there?

He doesn't just want the Christians, to have one day, once upon a time, many years ago, put their hope in Christ. He's saying, Today, this week, rejoice in Christ. Not in yourself, not in your accomplishments.

Don't take any confidence, in what you've achieved, or your standing, or your self-righteousness. This day, rejoice in Christ. For me to write these things to you, is easy for me, and it's safe for you.

Friends, for followers of Jesus, it's easy, as the years go by, to become so familiar with Jesus, that we forget the wonder. Paul writes, and he says, again, and again, and again, and again, I'm going to write to you.

[34 : 01] Watch out for the dogs. Watch out for the danger of self-confidence. Put your trust in Christ, and Christ alone. He alone is sufficient.

Christ alone, is a sufficient foundation, to build and bank your life, and your confidence, and your assurance. Finally, he says this, Confidence in human effort, is insufficient.

Confidence in human effort, is unsatisfactory. Confidence in human effort, is obstructive. It stops us finding Christ. The way Paul talking here, it's a zero-sum game.

He's saying, either your confidence is in Christ, and who he is, and what he's done on the cross, or your confidence is in yourself. But you can't have it both ways. Paul writes, and he says, I've given all this up, in order to gain Christ.

I've disregarded, I've counted it as a loss, I've written it off, in order to gain Christ, and have Christ alone. Friends, at times, we may deceive ourselves, in thinking that Christ, is a kind of insurance policy, for when life gets tough, when the economy falters, when COVID comes, when life gets difficult, well, at least we've got Jesus, that we can fall back on.

[35 : 14] At least he'll help us, get through the economy, get through COVID. At least Jesus will, help things not to get so bad. But what Paul is saying here, is it's either Christ, it's either all of Christ, or nothing.

Actually, the problem here, is that when we place our confidence, in ourselves, or our work, or our children, or our accolades, it stops us, it hinders us, from discovering Christ.

It actually becomes a block, from discovering Christ. In Galatians, Paul writes this, he says, look, I, Paul, say to you, if you accept Christ, self-earned confidence, if you accept circumcision, in other words, if you accept self-earned confidence, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified, by the law. You have fallen away from Christ, fallen away from grace. You can't have it both ways. And so, confidence based on human efforts, actually stops us, from discovering the grace of Christ.

The book of Jonah, says it like this, those who pursue worthless idols, those who trust, or put confidence in worthless idols, forfeit the grace, that could have been theirs.

[36 : 27] Friends, friends, in this passage, Paul is giving us a warning. He's putting up a warning sign. Danger, beware, warning. Watch out for the dogs of self-confidence.

Watch out for the dogs of glorifying the flesh. Watch out for trusting in your own accomplishments. Friends, to trust in yourself is one sure way, to go to hell, and to suffer on the way there.

But Paul comes and he offers us, an alternative. Christ invites us and implores us, to abandon self-confidence, and to find our confidence in Christ, and Christ alone, what Jesus has accomplished on the cross.

To find our confidence in Jesus, and what he's done. Friends, abandon all false and self-efforts. Abandon your hope in yourself. Trust in Jesus, and him alone.

He alone is a worthy treasure. He's a worthy reward. He is worth banking your life on. And to know him, and to be found in him, is more beautiful, more satisfying, more rewarding, than any other treasure, this world could offer.

[37 : 34] Let's pray together. Lord Jesus Christ, we come before you this morning, and we get on our knees, and we say, God, we, we need you, God, to open the eyes of our hearts, and to, see you once again, for who you are.

Father, we want to take a few minutes, just to confess, that our hearts, are so often prone to wonder. So often, to find our confidence, our assurance, our sense of self-worth, God, in ourself.

And the things that we achieve, the things that we've done. God, you've reminded us this morning, from your word, from Paul's own life, that, those things are a worthless, and a useless, useless endeavor, God.

Christ, we're so sorry. Come and have your way, we pray. Come and lead us back to yourself. Come and help us find our confidence, in the gospel again.

We pray these things, in your name. Amen.