

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Wallace
Sheila
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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This Week's Question:

What king killed himself by falling on his own sword?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Nibbaz and Tartak - 2 Kings 17:31

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The Worth of Christ L. A. Mott, Jr.

Philippians 3:4-7

Paul has denied the name "Circumcision" to the Judaizers. The Christians are the real "Circumcision," the only ones worthy of the name. Paul's description of these genuinely circumcised ones concludes by characterizing them as having "no confidence in the flesh" (verse 3). But Paul was not vulnerable to the charge that he only made light of the flesh because he himself had no fleshly advantages (i.e., someone without the ability to earn a "Ph.D." degree making light of such degrees). To the contrary, Paul could meet the Judaizers on their own ground and outdo them at their own game: "though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more" (verse 4).

The first part of this verse is not translated literally, and the translation is a bit misleading. What Paul actually says is, "though I myself having confidence even in the flesh." He actually had such confidence. I think, however, the NIV may be on the right track in putting "reasons for confidence" in

place of “confidence.” The next two verses indicate what Paul had in mind.

For a moment Paul abandons his higher Christian standpoint and stands on the same ground as his opponents. “If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more” (NIV). If such fleshly advantages really amounted to anything, Paul would have been far out ahead of the pack. He did not make light of such things because he did not have them.

Consider Paul’s reasons for confidence in the flesh as he ticks them off one after another: (1) He had been “circumcised the eighth day,” strictly according to the law (Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3)—not in maturity as a proselyte. (2) He was no proselyte, but descended from “the stock of Israel.” (3) He was “of the tribe of Benjamin”—that tribe which, along with Judah, had remained loyal to the house of David at the time of the division of the kingdom; he was not a remnant of the “ten lost tribes,” but belonged to one of the two tribes that basically constituted the nation following the Babylonian captivity. (4) He was a Hebrew himself and descended from Hebrew parents.

All these points related to inherited privilege. The following were matters of personal choice and accomplishment: (5) “As touching the law,” Paul was “a Pharisee,” belonging, therefore, to “the strictest sect” of the Jewish religion (Acts 26:5) and “instructed according to the strict manner of the law” (Acts 22:3). (6) “As touching zeal,” he was a persecutor of the church. His zeal far exceeded that of the Judaizers who only endeavored to make proselytes of the Christians. (7) “As touching the righteousness which is in the law,” that righteousness which is expressed in the law and belongs to one who lives according to the law, Paul was “found blameless”—not absolutely, of course; not in the sight of God;

but human judgment could find no fault in him. “In all the phrases the Apostle is, evidently, speaking of himself from the Jewish standpoint. He was blameless as viewed from the same standpoint, i.e. in the more external sense, and according to the ordinary manner of human judging” (Timothy Dwight in H. A. W. Meyer).

So when Paul classes himself among those who “have no confidence in the flesh,” he does not despise the flesh because fleshly advantage was unknown to him or beyond him, unattained and unattainable. He had it all. But he renounced it all because it stood in the way of attaining something else, something greater: “Howbeit what things were gains [Greek plural] to me, these have I counted loss for Christ” (verse 7). Jesus Christ had worked a radical change in Paul’s bookkeeping. The things that had once seemed such great assets, he now regarded as one gigantic loss “for the sake of Christ.” As he further explains in verses 8–11, the gaining of Christ, the knowing of Christ, was now a treasure of such surpassing worth that a new light was cast on all the fleshly advantages he had formerly valued, and his estimate of all of it had been drastically revised. His former gains were now counted a loss. They were about like counterfeit money or worthless stock.

Reflection: What do you have in the way of human “gains?” What does it all really amount to? How do you see it? What is it worth in comparison to what you have found in Christ Jesus? What is Christ Jesus worth to you?

And finally: Does your life reflect the scale of values you set forth in answer to such questions?