

"HIS"  
PHILIPPIANS 3:7-12, 17  
NINETEENTH S. A. PENTECOST  
MESSIAH, BOERNE  
OCTOBER 8, 2023

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY  
SPIRIT. AMEN.

TEXT: PHIL 3:7-12, 17

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST:

ONE DAY DURING A READINESS EXERCISE IN THE AIR FORCE,  
TWO SECURITY GUARDS WERE WATCHING THE ENTRANCE TO A HANGER  
WHERE AIRCRAFT WERE KEPT. WHEN A PILOT ABOUT TO DO A  
PREFLIGHT CHECK APPROACHED THE GUARDS WITHOUT HIS  
IDENTIFICATION IN FULL VIEW, ONE OF THE GUARDS ORDERED HIM  
TO STOP AND SHOW HIS I.D. "I DON'T SEE WHY I HAVE TO SHOW  
MY I.D.," THE PILOT REPLIED. "AFTER ALL, IT'S MY PLANE."  
"SIR," THE OTHER GUARD REPLIED, "WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, IT  
MAY BE YOUR PLANE, BUT IT'S SITTING IN UNCLE SAM'S GARAGE."  
YOU SEE, THE PILOT SEEMED TO BE A BIT CONFUSED ABOUT HIS  
RELATIONSHIP TO THE PLANE HE FLEW AND THE HANGER IN WHICH  
IT WAS KEPT. THE FACT WAS THAT *BOTH* THE HANGER *AND* THE  
PLANE WERE THE GOVERNMENT'S, NOT HIS. HE ONLY HAD THE  
PRIVILEGE OF USING THEM WHILE SERVING IN THE AIR FORCE.

WE, TOO, SOMETIMES GET CONFUSED ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP  
TO THE THINGS IN THE WORLD WE SO OFTEN CALL "OURS"—"OUR"  
HOUSES, "OUR" CARS, "OUR" JOBS, "OUR" CHILDREN AND

GRANDCHILDREN, "OUR" CHURCH. WE OFTEN CALL THINGS "OURS" WHEN ACTUALLY THEY'RE ALL "HIS," OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S. HE CREATED THEM ALL. THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, HE REDEEMED THEM ALL. THE FACT IS, WE OURSELVES ARE "HIS." HE PUT "HIS" STAMP OF OWNERSHIP ON US WHEN WE WERE BAPTIZED AND BECAME "HIS" BELOVED CHILDREN. WE ARE "HIS" DISCIPLES, AND HE HAS GIVEN EACH OF US AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE GLORIOUS TASK OF DECLARING THE WONDERS OF "HIS" LOVE TO ALL PEOPLE.

OF COURSE, YOU AND I AREN'T THE ONLY ONES WHO SOMETIMES GET CONFUSED ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OURSELVES AND THE COUNTLESS BLESSINGS GOD *HAS* GIVEN—AND *CONTINUES* TO GIVE—US. PEOPLE ALL AROUND US STRUGGLE WITH THE SAME QUESTION CONCERNING THE SAME DISTINCTION. FOR EXAMPLE, I WAS IN A CONVENIENCE STORE ONE SUNDAY MORNING GETTING A CUP OF COFFEE AND HEARD A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN BOASTING ABOUT HER EIGHT-DAY OLD GRANDSON AND HOW SHE WAS GOING TO DO THIS AND THAT FOR HIM. I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, "IF SHE'S SO CONCERNED ABOUT ALL THESE THINGS, I WONDER IF SHE'S GOING TO GET HIM BAPTIZED?" YOU SEE, OF ALL THE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORLD, THERE'S *NONE* MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND US—THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH AND FORGIVENESS ESTABLISHED WITH US IN HOLY BAPTISM—AND WE DO WELL TO FOCUS ON IT ABOVE ALL OTHERS AND "SEEK FIRST *HIS* KINGDOM."

IN OUR TEXT FOR TODAY ST. PAUL CONFESSES THAT HE, TOO, HAD BEEN CONFUSED ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WHAT WAS HIS AND WHAT WAS GOD'S. JUST PRIOR TO OUR TEXT HE HAD BEEN BOASTING ABOUT WHAT HE ONCE HAD THOUGHT WAS HIS OWN—HIS HEREDITY, HIS RELIGIOSITY, AND HIS PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS. HE PUT CONFIDENCE IN THESE THINGS TO MAINTAIN A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. "IF ANYONE THINKS HE HAS REASON TO PUT CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH," PAUL WRITES CONCERNING HIS HUMAN NATURE,

I HAVE MORE: CIRCUMCISED ON THE EIGHT DAY, OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, OF THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN, A HEBREW OF HEBREWS; IN REGARD TO THE LAW, A PHARISEE; AS FOR ZEAL, PERSECUTING THE CHURCH; AS FOR LEGALISTIC RIGHTEOUSNESS, FAULTLESS. (VV 3:4b-6)

PAUL CERTAINLY SEEMS TO HAVE HAD A LOT TO BOAST ABOUT—BUT NOT BEFORE GOD. IN THE FOLLOWING VERSES FROM OUR TEXT, HE TESTIFIES TO A GREAT REVERSAL IN HIS UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WAS HIS AND WHAT WAS GOD'S. HE SAYS,

BUT WHATEVER WAS TO MY PROFIT I NOW CONSIDER LOSS FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST. WHAT 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. (VV 7-8b)

PAUL KNEW FROM THE INSPIRED SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT THAT THERE WAS A GOD, AND HE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS SERVING GOD WHEN HE TRAVELED TO DAMASCUS IN ORDER TO ARREST THE CHRISTIANS THERE AND BRING THEM BACK TO JERUSALEM FOR TRIAL. BUT WHEN HE ENCOUNTERED THE LORD JESUS ON THE WAY

TO DAMASCUS AND WAS CONVERTED TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, HE CAME TO UNDERSTAND THAT HE WAS NOT IN CONTROL OF HIS LIFE—GOD WAS. HE HAD NO RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HIS OWN TO PUT THINGS RIGHT WITH GOD, BUT GOD HAD PUT THINGS RIGHT WITH HIM THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES THROUGH FAITH IN HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST.

CONCERNING HIS PAST LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS, PAUL WRITES:

I CONSIDER THEM RUBBISH, 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 IS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST—THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES FROM GOD AND IS BY FAITH. (VV 8c-9)

FOR PAUL, AS FOR US, TO BE FOUND IN "HIM," CHRIST JESUS, IS WHAT'S *TRULY* IMPORTANT IN LIFE.

WHEN A PERSON WHO IS DRUG DEPENDENT OR AN ALCOHOLIC COMES TO A COUNSELOR FOR HELP, THE MAJOR REALIZATION THE ABUSER NEEDS TO MAKE BEFORE RECOVERY CAN BEGIN IS: "I'VE GOT A PROBLEM. IT'S ME. I'M AN ALCOHOLIC," OR "I'M A DRUG ABUSER." SO IT IS WITH THE SINNER. HE OR SHE MUST REALIZE, LIKE THE PRODIGAL SON WHO FINALLY CAME TO HIS SENSES IN THE PIG PEN, AND CONFESS, "I'VE GOT A PROBLEM. IT'S ME. I'M A SINNER." ONLY THEN CAN THE PERSON HEAR JESUS SAY, "I'VE GOT THE ANSWER. IT'S ME. I'M YOUR DELIVERER."

PAUL HEARD THE VOICE OF JESUS CALLING HIM, OFFERING HIM THE ANSWER TO HIS PROBLEM AND MEANING FOR HIS LIFE, AND

HE RESPONDED. PAUL CONSIDERED ALL THAT HAD GONE BEFORE IN HIS LIFE AS LOSS COMPARED TO THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF KNOWING JESUS CHRIST AS HIS LORD AND SAVIOR. PAUL THEN DEVOTED THE REST OF HIS LIFE TO SERVING THE LORD JESUS, THAT HE MIGHT THEREBY COME "TO KNOW CHRIST," NOT MERELY FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE, BUT ALSO THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION POWER IN HIS LIFE AND OF SUFFERING WITH AND FOR HIM, EVEN TO THE POINT OF DEATH. PAUL NO LONGER RELIED ON HIS ABILITY TO PERFORM FOR GOD, BUT RATHER ON GOD'S ABILITY TO PROVIDE ALL THINGS FOR HIM THROUGH CHRIST JESUS.

NOW, WE MAY NOT HAVE HAD A CONVERSION EXPERIENCE LIKE PAUL'S, BUT CHRIST JESUS TAKES HOLD OF EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US THROUGH HIS WORD AND IN THE WATERS OF HOLY BAPTISM. IN BAPTISM GOD PUTS HIS STAMP AND SEAL OF APPROVAL ON US, MARKING US AS HIS VERY OWN DEARLY BELOVED CHILDREN. IN COLOSSIANS SCRIPTURE CALLS BAPTISM THE "CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST" (COL 2:11 ESV), THAT IS, THE SEAL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT IS OURS BY FAITH IN JESUS AS OUR LORD AND SAVIOR. AS THOSE WHO TRUST IN JESUS FOR OUR SALVATION, WE DEMONSTRATE OUR FAITH BY RELYING ON HIS ABILITY TO PROVIDE FOR OUR EVERY NEED IN LIFE.

IN GENESIS 22 ABRAHAM, THE FATHER OF OUR FAITH (ROM 4:11-12), TOOK HIS SON, ISAAC, TO MOUNT MORIAH TO OFFER HIM AS A SACRIFICE TO THE LORD. ALONG WITH TWO OF HIS

SERVANTS, ABRAHAM TRAVELED FOR THREE DAYS, AND THEN WITH ISAAC, WOOD, FIRE, AND A KNIFE, ABRAHAM WENT ON TO THE PLACE OF SACRIFICE. HIS SON ISAAC SAID, "THE FIRE AND WOOD ARE HERE, BUT WHERE IS THE LAMB FOR THE BURNT OFFERING?" ABRAHAM ANSWERED, "GOD WILL PROVIDE THE LAMB FOR THE BURNT OFFERING, MY SON," AND THE TWO OF THEM WENT ON TOGETHER (VV 3-8).

GOD HAD TOLD ABRAHAM TO OFFER ISAAC AS THE SACRIFICE, AND ABRAHAM OBEYED THE LORD IN FAITH, TRUSTING AND RELYING ON THE LORD TO PROVIDE WHAT HE NEEDED. *AND HE DID!* AT THE MOMENT ABRAHAM WAS ABOUT TO SACRIFICE HIS SON, GOD CALLED TO HIM, "ABRAHAM! ABRAHAM! DO NOT LAY A HAND ON THE BOY. DO NOT DO ANYTHING TO HIM. NOW I KNOW THAT YOU FEAR GOD, BECAUSE YOU HAVE NOT WITHHELD FROM ME YOUR ONLY SON," AND GOD PROVIDED A RAM CAUGHT BY ITS HORNS IN A THICKET IN ISAAC'S PLACE.

GOD PROMISES TO PROVIDE YOU AND ME WITH ALL WE NEED AS WELL. A FAVORITE PSALM OF SO MANY PEOPLE IS PSALM 23 WHERE WE READ, "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT" (V 1 ESV), THAT IS, "I SHALL NOT BE IN WANT" (NIV). IN THIS EARTHLY LIFE THERE ARE SO MANY WANTS OF BODY, MIND, SOUL, AND SPIRIT—SOME GOD-PLEASING, SOME NOT-SO-GOD-PLEASING BUT RATHER SELFISH AND SELF-CENTERED. NOWHERE IN SCRIPTURE DOES GOD SAY THAT HE WILL PROVIDE EVERYTHING WE WANT.

GOD'S WORD SAYS, "THE LORD WILL PROVIDE," AND PROMISES THAT WE WILL NOT BE IN NEED, NEITHER OF EARTHLY NOR OF HEAVENLY BLESSINGS. ASSURED OF THAT, WE ARE SET FREE TO USE WHAT IS "HIS" FOR OUR OWN WELFARE AND THE WELFARE OF THOSE HE BRINGS INTO OUR LIVES. *EVERYTHING* WE RECEIVE IS "HIS," SO LET'S USE WHAT IS "HIS" UNDER "HIS" CONTROL AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH "HIS" WORD.

SO, WHAT IS "YOURS" AND WHAT IS "HIS"? IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY PICKED UP YOUR LETTER AND PLEDGE CARD, PLEASE DO SO AFTER THE SERVICE. OTHERWISE, YOU SHOULD BE RECEIVING THEM BY "SNAIL MAIL" IN THE COMING WEEK, AND YOU WILL BE CHALLENGED TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION—WHAT IS "MINE" AND WHAT IS "HIS.". IF YOU COME TO THE SAME CONCLUSION THAT ST. PAUL, I, AND MILLIONS OF OTHER CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES HAVE—THAT *NOTHING'S* "MINE;" THAT IT'S *ALL* "HIS"—THEN THE QUESTION REALLY BECOMES A MATTER OF HOW MUCH YOU THINK YOU NEED TO KEEP FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES, SINCE GOD PROMISES HE WILL PROVIDE FOR *ALL* YOUR NEEDS. DO YOU NEED TO KEEP 80%, 90%, 95%, 99% OR MORE? ISN'T THE PROPORTION YOU DECIDE TO RETURN TO THE LORD SOMEHOW RELATED TO YOUR *TRUST* IN GOD AND HIS WORD AND YOUR *RELIANCE* ON HIM IN YOUR DAILY LIFE? AS JESUS SAYS, "GIVE TO CAESAR WHAT IS CAESAR'S, AND TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S" (MT 22:21).

DEAR FRIENDS, IT'S EASY FOR US TO GET LOST IN THE SIN OF INGRATITUDE FOR THE INNUMERABLE GIFTS OF TIME, TALENTS, TISSUES, AND TREASURES WITH WHICH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER BLESSES US. AT TIMES WE MAY EVEN *MISUSE* THESE BLESSINGS ON THINGS THAT ONE DAY WILL BE BURNED UP WITH UNQUENCHABLE FIRE. REMEMBER WHERE YOUR BLESSINGS COME FROM AND JOYFULLY RETURN TO THE LORD A GENEROUS AND SACRIFICIAL PORTION OF WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY "HIS," THAT THESE BLESSINGS MAY BE USED TO "HIS" GLORY AND FOR THE FURTHERANCE OF "HIS" KINGDOM ON EARTH; IN "HIS" PRECIOUS NAME WE PRAY. AMEN.