

## ***“Rubbish”***

Some living in Philippi were playing a dangerous game of pious “one-ups-manship” – trying to prove to others that they were better Christians than others. Some, with Jewish backgrounds, claimed that the Christians had no place in God’s kingdom – that they couldn’t really be children of God unless they were obedient to the laws of Moses.

“We’re circumcised (as Moses commands) and you’re not! We’re in – you’re not!” That’s why the Apostle Paul warns the Philippians (and us) about putting their “confidence in the flesh.” Being circumcised, or not, didn’t determine whether you were a child of God. Anyone who says that you **MUST**, has put their confidence in their flesh.

“If that’s the game you want to play,” Paul says, “then I’ll out-Moses you.” “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, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”

You want to talk about a killer resume – that ought to do it! That ought to shut up these troublers of God’s children. That ought to put them – and anyone else who wants to give it a try – to shame. But Paul’s not done. Now he drops the bomb on them – “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”

Paul, an apostle sent by God, says they can’t have it both ways. You can’t use the law to wrack up points with God – and at the same time – trust in the grace of God that is in Christ Jesus. You can’t boast of your holy living, your accomplishments – and then depend on Jesus’ righteousness for your standing before God.

The bottom line is this – you cannot put your confidence in “the flesh” – not yours, or anyone else’s – and also believe that Jesus Christ alone has given HIS FLESH into death as the atoning sacrifice for all sin, which is the only source of your salvation.

WHATEVER you put in the salvation column, apart from Christ – is “rubbish,” Paul says. That’s a polite way of saying that it’s dung, manure – a big old pile of ... rubbish!

So throw it out. Flush it all away. OR ... are you going to put your confidence this rubbish? Are you going to pile it all up before God, thinking that He will be pleased with it – that your rubbish is going to count towards your salvation?

Any righteousness of your own – anything that would lead you to say, “God said to ‘do this’ and I did it, so mark one up for me” – OR – “Hey, God, take a look at this, watch me” ..... is dung, manure, rubbish.

Instead of that ..... “rubbish” ..... there is a righteousness that counts before God – a sweet smelling fragrance in the nostrils of the Lord – a righteousness that does not come from YOUR flesh, but FROM GOD! Jesus Christ is that righteousness. He is your righteousness. The Father looks at Christ and what HE has done – and He credits Jesus’ righteousness to you.

Christ alone counts before God. All else is “rubbish” – so count it all as loss. Your number of years in the church – your faithful service as a Sunday School teacher – your gifts to the church --- count it all as loss. Why? “Because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus,” the Apostle Paul says.

Christ alone is pleasing to the Father – and you are united to Christ through the waters of Holy Baptism. His suffering, death and resurrection – which alone washes away all your sin – is most pleasing to the Father. To you, who trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation – the Father declares, YOU are my beloved child.

Like Paul, you are not yet “perfect” – that is, you have not been brought to the end or goal of this faith and righteousness. For now, you still live in the cesspool of this world – and add to that stench daily with your own sin.

Your goal in life is not to redouble your efforts to clean yourself up and make yourself presentable to God – but to consider all efforts to save yourself as “rubbish” – to lose it, confessing your sin and unworthiness – and clinging in faith to Jesus Christ alone – who alone takes your sin away – and in whom you are forgiven – and in whom you have life and salvation.

To know Christ Jesus and the power of His resurrection (like Paul) – is to believe Jesus who says – “I’ve given my flesh, shed my blood, to atone for the sin of the whole world ... you are forgiven.”

With that forgiveness comes a resurrection. Today you are resurrected to a new life. No need to go about the old life of looking for confidence in your own flesh, in your good works – because Christ alone is your confidence, the certainty of your salvation and a life that knows no end.

In this life your “press on” – living by faith – counting everything as rubbish, except for Jesus and His righteousness.

You come to His Table naked – nothing in your hand your bring – and He clothes your sinful flesh with His own Body and Blood so that you are righteous in God’s sight. You live in that blessed communion – coming to the Holy Communion – to be resurrected from sin and death to a new life, and a life everlasting.

Dearly beloved, your flesh, like mine – will always fail you – but not the Son of God who has come into the flesh for you and your salvation. That’s where your confidence lies – in Jesus Christ, God who has come in the flesh – who redeems you, cleanses you, and makes you to be a new creation.

You stand before God today, confident, because of Jesus. And you will stand before Him on the Last Day, holy and righteous, and confident, because of Jesus – who will resurrect your flesh, to live with Him in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.