

Our second feature of this passage is to look at what Paul thought was so important that in comparison with it all the things that were gain to him he counted them but loss, but refuse in comparison. He said, For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. That I may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Here we have the heart of the gospel. Here we have that which ~~is most important~~, should be most important in the life of every one of us. No matter how much there may be that is valuable, that is excellent in the glorious, lovely things that God has given us in His creation, if they fill our hearts to the point we do not learn how to receive the righteousness which is of Christ through faith, if we do not receive this righteousness it all is nothing but refuse and has no abiding value to it.

Here we have this one definite step which is so vital in the life of every Christian and yet a step which has various facets and portions. We stepped, as Paul says, out of darkness into light. We stepped from the power of Satan to the power of God. A step no human being could take in his own strength, but a step we take because God enables us through His Holy Spirit to grasp the faith through Christ to be saved by virtue of what Christ did on the cross. No man can win eternal life. No man can earn eternal life.

No man can change himself from a creature of wickedness to a creature of righteousness. It is done through faith in Christ. It is a righteousness which God gives us. It is a righteousness which is available to every man. It is a righteousness which God provides and uses men as His instruments in extending the invitation, in calling people to come, and making clear to them, it is a gift which God gives to them and which no man can give. You cannot save anybody but you can show them how to be saved. You cannot make them willing to be saved. You cannot make them understand. But you can be God's instrument, God's way-marker, God's tool. God uses means. God desires to use each one of us for this purpose. In eternity He will be more interested in what == how much we were used for this purpose than in anything else we accomplished or did in our whole life.

While the righteousness which is of God by faith comes with one step, when the step has been made, there is a complete change and we are either in the kingdom of darkness or in the kingdom of light. Yet if we are in this kingdom, there is an ongoing progress which has been initiated. There is an ongoing progress which has various steps, and it is these steps which Paul felt were so important that they were worth counting everything else refuse in order that he might take these steps that were made available to him through Christ.

You notice how he sums all of these up in v. 10. "That I may know Him." You don't really know any human being. You know some things about them. You know certain aspects of their character. You have a certain amount of understanding about them, but you don't really know them. I've often had people say to me, they had been engaged for maybe five years. They had been together constantly, and they had discussed everything, and yet after they were married it seemed like meeting an entirely new person, they said.