

# Count It Loss

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Philippians, we're going to just go back one verse in Philippians 3:3, Philippians 3:3. For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. For though I also might have confidence in the flesh, if anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I, I more so circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews concerning the law, a Pharisee concerning zeal, persecuting the church concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me these I have counted loss for Christ. Indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ.

Let's ask God a blessing on this and pray together before we start. O Father, Lord, I believe that through this section of this chapter we Lord, that you are relating, Lord, revealing areas in our life that are self trusting, Lord, that aren't dependent or rely on or receive the benefit that comes from that relationship we have with Jesus Christ through adoption. And so Lord, I do pray that by your grace, by your extreme kindness, Lord, that you would allow us to see things that we trust in. In Jesus name. Amen.

So we're talking about this circumcision in chapter three we're given Chapter three, verse three we're given three different things that are descriptive of the circumcision that is made without hands, right? There was that circumcision which was made with hands and it was a gruesome spectacle. So much so that when Moses came down from that place where he was in hiding and had not circumcised his children and the angel

met him and that his wife Zipha was forced to circumcise their children with a sharp rock. That was not a pleasant experience for her. She called him, you are a man of blood to me.

Not a pleasant thing to go through, in case you have any desire to find out. Just don't be deceived. It's not a pleasant thing, a bloody spectacle to take children and to circumcise them in that way. But this circumcision that Christians get to take part of is not a physical one, it is a spiritual one. It's not the cutting off of a portion of our flesh, but a spiritual work in our lives.

That physical circumcision gave individuals the right to participate in temple worship, any uncircumcised individual, whether native born or a proselyte, from the Gentiles to the Jewish religion, could not worship in the temple without the rite of circumcision being applied to them. So much so that when Paul, it was supposed, brought a Gentile into the temple, that the whole city was thrown into a riotous confusion at the thought that an uncircumcised individual made it into that holy place. Circumcision physically was a necessary part of the spiritual worship in the nation at the temple, in the similar way that spiritual circumcision, which a believer has done to them not with hands, but spiritually, enables an individual to worship at the real temple and to worship God Spirit spiritually. It is similar to that scripture in Ephesians that says, we have an altar that those who partake of sacrifices have no right to eat of. Those priests who were ordained, who went through all different types of service, had on the special clothes and this and that and hats and all the things happened to them.

They got to partake of that meat of the sacrifices they offered on the altar. But this is saying, hey, look, Christians who follow Christ have a right to eat of a spiritual meal that even those who wear all those fancy clothes can't eat of.

We're able to partake of something so much better than the physical meat. We get to take part in that sacrifice of Jesus Christ. So this spiritual spirit circumcision is very important. It is given. We have three different areas that describe individuals who have been circumcised spiritually.

If you've been circumcised spiritually, these effects are evident in your life. Just as physical circumcision has some effects on an individual, so also spiritual circumcision affects an individual and every individual a certain way. These are what it does to them. It says, who worship God in the Spirit. They worship God not as a physical place or through physical things, but it is a spiritual worship they offer to God.

Number one. We talked about this a couple weeks ago. They rejoice in Christ Jesus. Their focus is that work which Christ has accomplished on the cross. It is the very height and culmination.

It is the only thing that has accomplished a spiritual benefit in the life of people is that work of Jesus Christ. And he is the object of their worship. They rejoice in his work. And the third thing is they have no confidence in their own flesh. Those physical things that you and I may have taken part of, that no longer have any spiritual value to Us.

Those three things are evident in the life of individuals who have been spiritually circumcised. Stacy, did someone get me water? I'm sorry. I drank some strong tea and I'm going to be struggling. Okay, okay.

But Paul is going to bring out areas in his life by which he attempts to show us that there are areas that you and I are tempted to hold onto as valuable. There are areas, as Americans, there is a tendency, as universally as people, there is a tendency to hold on to physical things and attempt to succor something from them, to gather something. We hold things up and believe that they represent a certain amount of value to us. When we do this, there is a lack in trusting Christ in that area of our life. So he's going to attempt to show these things to us, even though we would all be of the kind of thing that say we don't have any confidence in our flesh.

The absolute truth is, is we all depend upon our flesh way more than we realize. And the derogatory effects of depending on our flesh is much more in our lives than we understand. It has an effect upon us. So Paul is going to take step by step the thank you us through the things that people. Thank you very much.

That people tend to lean upon our flesh is like that broken staff of Egypt upon which if a man leans into it, pierces into his hand. The nation of Israel was encouraged to lean upon the Lord their God, for when they leaned upon Egypt, they were expecting some benefit from it, but instead only received harm. When we depend on our flesh or lean upon the natural aspects of our life, we are the ones who ultimately suffer spiritual harm as a result. There are things that when we lean upon are like thin ice that result in a breakthrough against us. Paul is saying that spiritually in verse four, there is no reason to lean upon our flesh.

Verse 4, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh and I more so. He's not necessarily trying to get into a tit for tat who has the better background. He's not trying to undermine the experiences you have, but he's saying, from a biblical perspective, that which I lean upon is more valuable than what another person leans upon. You and I do lean upon our flesh, but to lean upon a fleshly perspective that was given by God in the Old Testament should carry more weight than whatever other people lean upon.

And we're going to look at that. So he's not trying to say that I have the right to lean upon my flesh, but mainly saying, look, if these things aren't worthy to be leaned upon, then what you're leaning upon is also not worthy to be leaned upon. If I lean upon the things that were given by God by commandment through Moses, and they're worth nothing, then what you lean upon also should be considered untrustworthy to lean upon. Okay, all right. So we're not trying to get into who's better here, but to give us the opportunity to gauge, step by step, whether there's things in our life where we're leaning upon that broken staff, Egypt, and as a result, unfortunately, are being pierced through with many sorrows as a result.

So let's start in chapter four, spiritually speaking, or from a biblical perspective, in verse four. Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so he's going to show by example that the way his background, the way he lived his life, had more of a right to be considered leanable than other people because it was given by revelation to Moses. So these are the things that he's going to look at. We're going to start in verse 5.

I am thirsty guy. This is. Just be prepared. Okay.

Might be a long one.

Okay. All right. So the first thing we're going to look at in chapter three, verse five, circumcised on the eighth day, Paul gives the first reasoning by which there would be an indication to lean upon his flesh as something valuable is that he was circumcised on the eighth day. If you remember those individuals who came after Paul preaching a doctrine of circumcision, that they must, in order to be saved, they must be circumcised. And to keep the law of Moses, that the Jews felt that circumcision was of the highest value, it was of higher value than the Sabbath.

It was given before the Sabbath and had preference or trumped even the Sabbath, where an individual who would not even work on the Sabbath, would not lift their hands up, would still, because being circumcised was so valuable. And to be circumcised on the eighth day was so valuable that they would not take, in effect, the commandment of Moses, you shall not work on the Sabbath.

To be circumcised was important, but to be circumcised on the eighth day was even more important. If you remember, Abraham took his sons, both Ishmael and Isaac, and he himself, and they were all circumcised on the same day, but only one of them was circumcised on the eighth day of their life. And so that carried a preference, a stigma, that, yes, those are proselytes. And when they come into the nation of Israel, they might be circumcised, but they do not carry near the same value as an individual who on the eighth day of their life, even more important than those 10 Commandments given to Abraham, the founder of the faith, circumcised on the eighth day. Now, you and I may think that, hey, that circumcision really has no value in my life.

But the truth is, if you is there are physical, spiritual things that we go through that we hold up as a spiritual value in our lives, that people hold onto something that happened to them as a child. And because of what happened to them as a child, they view themselves in a certain way. Individuals, especially from older denominations, view something in their life as very important. What is that? Infant baptism.

Even though that was something that was just happened to them, it still carries a very strong amount of value in the lives of many people. Here Paul is saying, look, I was and fulfilled and followed that commandment which is given to Abraham and was circumcised on the eighth day. If that holds no spiritual value for me, then also those rites, those rituals, those things in your past, also have no value spiritually. The truth is we need to be willing to consider if those things that we hold onto as spiritual value actually have any value. He is enabling us to see by his obedience whether or not you and I are trusting in something physically putting confidence in fleshly things when it's not meant to hold that.

The second thing he looks at after he brings out his circumcision of the stock of Israel, he describes himself of the nation of Israel. I sometimes look at a news site, it's called All Israel News, and it kind of describes things that are going on in Israel. But in the comments, it seems as if the people that go on that site are trying to prove who is the most hardcore Zionists by saying awful things about people. But one of the things that come up is they want to know whether you are really Jewish, whether you were born Jewish and not just a messianic Jew, whether you're a Gentile. They want to know whether you are really Jewish.

And Paul here is saying, hey, look, I am of Israel. I am a descendant of that nation of Israel, that nation that was called by God out of Ur of the Chaldeans, where I took Abraham, brought him, and from him established a nation of people. Paul is saying, here, look if this is no value to me, then also is your own pedigree which you depend on of any value. If being from the nation of Israel, that nation that was called by God, separated by him for his own purposes, if that carries no spiritual value for me, then we need to be careful whether or not those things which we lean on have any value. I know for me there is some comfort in least having a little bit of discernible background from a certain source.

At least I can trace a little bit of my, my lineage back to somewhere it's not completely muddish, right? There's a portion of just a little bit of something here that I can trace back to a nation, right? Being a little bit of finish left in me, right? And sometimes there's a pride in that, isn't there, that I came from this kind of person or this kind of

background. I used to have a shirt and it said sisu on it, right?

And it exemplified my pride in being what, an eighth or an eighth finish, right? Sisu, right. I was proud of the fact that I'm not completely just a mutt. And so I'd wear this shirt basically. Sisu, the strength of being finished, right?

But we all that and I would. I love the thing that, you know, that came up in this. Fins have more steam, right? But there is. We tend to draw a certain amount of pride from our background.

Paul is saying, look here. If I was a part of that nation which God chose out of all of the nations of the earth, separated for myself, if that doesn't bring a spiritual benefit for me, then you and I need to consider what. Whether what we lean upon has any spiritual value. And if it doesn't, then being ready to abandon that source of trust on that particular thing.

Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, he said he is the tribe from the tribe of Benjamin. Now he is not just part of the nation of Israel, but he is of the tribe of Benjamin in Israel right now there are many people who cannot trace their lineage, right? They say they are Jewish people, individuals from Africa and such, but when they're brought to the nation of Israel, they're not treated the same as the individual who can really trace their ancestry back somewhere here Paul is talking about being of the tribe of Benjamin. That tribe which had grown so powerful but then in a conflict with the rest of of Israel had been demolished from a group of about 50,000 fighting men in a matter of weeks decimated to a tribe in the low hundreds of people that had been Completely wiped out. It was a tribe that was surrounded on all sides by another tribe on every side.

Judah was just threatening to envelop Benjamin, take their identity from them. But from that tribe of Benjamin, the first king came. They were acknowledged as being super skillful men, left handed men, men who could do mighty acts of valor. And here Paul traces his ancestry back through the ages, through the removal of the nation of Israel into Babylon, through all of these things, still holds on to his identity as a

Benjaminite. Right?

And you and I also hold on to physical things. We want to demonstrate our power, our accomplishments, the things that we did in the past or maybe our ancestors have done. I am astonished to think that sometimes I am getting close to 50 years old. But do you know, I still hold on to things I did in high school. Oh Lord, Really?

Are you serious? We are like had a school like it has like 30 people in our class and still holding on to the mighty axe. Oh Lord. But it is true that we want to hold on to things that we have done or our ancestors. And spiritually we lean upon those acts, but they are like that broken staff of Egypt that when we lean upon it, it ends up piercing our flesh.

It ends up harming that spiritual benefit that we have from following Christ. Paul says, hey look, if I can't lean upon that heritage I have upon belonging to this mighty tribe of Benjamin, then what right do you have to lean upon your past accomplishments for spiritual benefit? If it's no benefit for me, surely it's no right for you. He is called a Hebrew of the Hebrews. The descendants of Jacob were first called the Hebrews when they went into the nation of Egypt.

And there they were distinguished as a culture apart from every other culture. A culture that though living in the midst of other cultures, never mixed with the other cultures. This culture was separate from the others. And throughout history that is how it has always been. They have always lived in every other culture, but always managed to have a distinct identity as people.

Paul here describes that then identity that everyone else had. He rose to the top in that view of himself. And he was always distinguished. We go to Israel today. There are groups of people who love to be seen as the most Hebrew of Hebrew, right?

And they demonstrate publicly just what kind of Hebrews they are by how they dress, how they cut their hair, the places they visit, what they eat. Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews in the way he lived. Also you and I, in our lives we tend to display what or try to bring about something that distinguishes us from the People around us that makes



us special, that draws attention to ourselves, that brings us or makes us feel that we have some sort of value in society, that we're distinct from the rest of people, right? And sometimes we tend to lean upon ourselves as an individual who still tries to play basketball. That's a part of my identity, right?

And someone said yesterday that they played basketball. And my first thought is, I do too, right? This is who I am as a person, right? We try to draw our identity from something. But Paul is saying, hey, look, if there was no spiritual value or benefit from me being part of a group of people that was called by God given ordinances and divine service, then what right do you have as a person to draw spiritual nourishment from something physical?

Also, I think, if you're honest, that some of these things are beginning to expose an area of our life that shows that there is a part of us that leans upon spiritual things for sustenance.

But that sustenance we're going to see has consequences. It says concerning the law. He was a Pharisee. He was a part of the group of people who had devoted themselves to obeying all forms of law in a zealous way. That he had taken even the minutest type of things in his spiritual religion and committed to following those to the highest example.

The truth is, you and I sometimes look upon how we do things, how much we serve or what we take part of, how far we go, and we lean on that for our own goodness.

In verse 6, we see another one concerning zeal persecuting the church. Paul, in his desire to. He says, according to the law of his fathers and a desire to uphold that tradition went so far as to persecute by jailing and seeing individuals put to death. Our culture today, we're told that it doesn't matter what you believe. It only matters how zealous you are for what you believe.

Now, I'm not sure if Paul would be included in that, but his zealousness was so far for the tradition of his fathers. He went far enough to see individuals who oppose, opposed his viewpoint put to death, publicly shamed and imprisoned. Sometimes we

believe a point of view that says it's not about what you believe, but how far you will go, how much effort you will put into it, how many hours of this or that, what you will do for what you believe. And we tend to lean upon how strongly we believed it rather than what we believe in, how much we will do. We look upon our record of service or how often or how much instead of looking at what we believe in.

In verse 6, it says, persecuting the church concerning the righteousness which is in the law. Blameless from his perspective, he went so far as to fulfilling that law which was put over the nation of Israel, and he devoted himself to keeping that law. He was like that young man who came to Jesus and he asked Jesus about which commandments. The guy was of an opinion that he had kept all the law. If you would ask many of us in America or even ourselves, are you a good person?

And a lot of people would say that they are good people, but the reason they can call themselves a good person is they feel they have kept a bank or an amount of statutes that seals their position as a good person. Paul is saying, hey, look, that level or that group of laws that I keep were divinely inspired, given to God on the mountain in the Ten Commandments. I kept them. If they were no benefit to me, then why would you as an individual trust in ordinances that of your own making? You and I sometimes think that we're good people when we pay for the person behind us at McDonald's.

That wasn't written on the stones. Everyone understand. We tend to think, you know, I helped a stray dog. Well, that's beautiful. It's a wonderful thing to do.

But it is not near as powerful as that which was written and inscribed on the stones by God. We claim oftentimes the things we've done as a reason to trust in our flesh. Paul's saying, hey, look, even though I was blameless according to the law of God, it is not worthy to be trusted in. Okay, that was a lot. Verse 7.

But what things were gain to me? These I have counted loss for Christ. Those things which may have been the stilts or the foundation upon which a person could stand on. Paul is saying, I laid them down that I might have something else. It was not both at the same time.

You could only lean upon one or the other. You can only draw sustenance from one or the other. Either you lean upon physical acts and characteristics, or you lean upon Christ.

Either you draw your nourishment from one thing or you draw it from the other. Paul is saying of himself, those things which I could have drawn nourishment from spiritually are of no value to me. The things that would have been gained to me, these I have counted loss that I might partake of something else. Verse 8. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ.

Those things which might have been in the world's eyes, a foundation worth standing on. Paul willingly lays down that he might gain something of superior nature. Those things, though we couldn't compare it one by one for sake of time. But every one of these things, if we could accurately look at what Christ gives us in place of these things, those things which are physical in nature pale in comparison to that thing which Christ gives spiritually. That spiritual circumcision that we take part in could not or should not even be compared with a brutish physical act of cutting off a person, a part of a person's body.

And every one of those things, the adoption into Christ's family cannot that heritage and inheritance we take part of as children of God, it cannot be compared with that little bit of pride we get from our own physical inheritance. Those things which Christ offers are of tremendously more value than all the physical things that we might trust in. He says, I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ as a Christian. We are not the kind of individuals who are trying to shoe horn or push people into a certain kind of living, but rather of individual presenting an opportunity, an option that is so, so far superior to what we have ever experienced before and that is taking part of the righteousness which of Christ Jesus. I want to just close by asking if we would take a careful stock of the areas that we hold dear in our life.

One of the ways or a few of the ways just really quickly that we do it. How can we say, see whether or not we hold these things up unduly in our lives? Do we lean upon physical things? Are you an angry person? Do you make excuses for yourself?

Do you blame other people? The reason we do these things is because we put undue confidence in our flesh. Do we hold ourselves up higher than other people judge them? The only reason we do that is because we feel our flesh allows us a position of judgment. But when we come to Jesus Christ, there is no judgment because we cannot put any value on the flesh.

We are all sinners at the feet of a merciful high God. How could I judge someone who is of the same level? It says that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew or Greek, there is no barbarian Scythian free or slave, there is no man or woman that all before the throne of Jesus Christ are absolutely inherently by nature the same. They have the same corrupt flesh and need to come to Jesus for all things spiritual. So if you're an individual of a nature of this, it is my strong desire and push that if you are holding on to your flesh, lifting it up high, that you would confess the name of Jesus and call him Lord.

Because what you are holding onto is a rotten piece of wood. It is that piece that needs to be ripped out. Like when we come to houses and they ask you if they can fix it. I just want to patch on it, just put some paint on it, a little bit of something good to cover over the rot. It needs to be ripped out.

It's not worth building on. Tear it out, rip it. Let's get down to something real and build up something spiritual and holy. That flesh which we learn to trust in from birth is by nature rotten. It cannot hold pressure to repent and to call Jesus.

Lord, come under that kingdom authority, that inheritance and adoption which only Christ can offer. Let's pray. Father, we do come to you. Lord, I don't see it very clearly, but I trust in my flesh, Lord. I'm an individual who leans on my.