

/// Loss for the Excellency

Philippians 3:7 – 14

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~ What would you give up in order to have Christ in your life? Would you sell all of your worldly possessions? Would you give up a promising career? What if God asked you to leave a life of comfort and ease to continue the cause of Christ? What if all your peers and colleagues would despise and abandon you for following Jesus? Well, as our Spiritual Safari lingers with Paul in the madman Nero's Roman Mamertine prison cell, we're seeing that Paul gave up all of those things in his life.

There is so much spiritual sensationalism going on today and it *always* — sooner or later — leads to wild and weird statements of malignant prophetic interpretation. In our computer age, we have been reduced to a cold number anywhere and everywhere we go, for example. Prophecy has a definite number, too, to be sure; but we're not at the mark of the beast just yet. As it turns out, the mark of the beast, number six, six, six, has been around for a long, long time.

Naturally, us rock-ribbed fundamental conservatives believe the rapture of the church out of the world must take place next in the prophetic plan and program of God; followed by the Great Tribulation period. During that time, antichrist will somehow use the number six, six, six in a specific way. We aren't told the meaning in Scripture; and we don't need to know what it is — because if you are a part of the True and Living church — you won't be around when it appears and is utilized. We must arrive at a one-world dictator before this number becomes applicable, too.

Wrath on this world begins when the first seal is opened in Revelation chapter six; and it is the Lamb of God — the Lord Jesus Christ — opening the seals. The church body of Christ isn't appointed to wrath. The church is not Israel; and the final seven years - called the Great Tribulation - is a completion of the seventy weeks prophecy given to Daniel in Daniel chapter nine; which involves Israel - not the church. God set Israel aside in the book of Acts and picked up the church. When the age of grace is over,

God will remove the church and pick Israel back up to begin the final seven years of His dealings with them. A basic study into the identity of the twenty-four Elders in Revelation chapters four and five reveals that they are wearing white raiment; which is the robe of righteousness we receive for being in Christ. The elders are wearing crowns, too. Only one group of people in the entire Word of God is promised crowns, and that is the church. Also, Revelation chapter four specifically states that the elders are sitting on seats. In Ephesians chapter two, we learned that we have been raised to SIT together with Christ in Heavenly places. Finally, they praise the Lord Jesus for redeeming them with His blood – all of which only fits the church; as angels are not redeemed. The twenty-four elders absolutely and unmistakably represent the church.

The elders are seen in Heaven with Christ before the first seal is opened beginning the Great Tribulation period. In other words: *RAPTURED* before the Tribulation Period begins. Paul said, “.... *much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him*” – that’s Romans chapter five verse nine. The Great Tribulation period is specifically called the “*great day of wrath*” by all of the prophets. That’s also in Revelation chapter six verse seventeen. The serious student of Scripture will embrace no other theory of eschatology aside from the Futurist Theory; as none of the other three theories - Preterist, Historical or Historical-Spiritual - can even be remotely supported with Scripture.

Now, I recognize I am rather dogmatic about our safari spiritual prophetic interpretation. Frankly, those who do not believe in the rapture cause me to question their relationship with Christ. I’m just going to leave it at that. I hope this helps orient you to prophecy somewhat in a meaningful way – because this is where prophecy really starts – with the Lord Jesus Christ. May God bring you all wisdom, judgment and discernment in His Word forevermore....

We need to get rid of falsely inflated religious sensationalism and get back to the Word of God; and remember that the church is not looking for signs – we’re listening for a voice! The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout like the voice of the archangel. That’s our Blessed Hope, friends - Christ! Christians aren’t told to seek signs; we’re told to *beware of*

signs. Naturally, the sensational entertainment Hollywood promotes — and denominations emote — draws huge crowds. They have a hive mentality for Jesus that usually centers around some queen until it's over. Then, they all go home and die alone spiritually. They purport to know all about God when they literally know nothing. Let's be real: I think it's kind of important to remember these things and remain focused on the Lord Jesus Christ in the Word of God....

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

~ Well, verse eight sums up the account of what happened to Paul on the Damascus Road. If you haven't read our last several reports, I suggest you go back and do so now. This is a revolution on a very human plane as Saul's personal life, credit, and debit ledger all mysteriously invert! Gain became loss and loss became gain. The Bible will get you inside out and outside in; and in an altogether different position than this world dictates. If that type of conversion hasn't happened in your life, then it just hasn't happened. The changes in Saul of Tarsus' life weren't just a reaction to a momentary emotion. Having a vision that carries you to the heights in the night, but then you wake up, is no good; true conversion is something that stays with us at all times. It may happen in a moment, but it continues to sanctify as we walk the sidewalks of reality down here on earth. Is the Lord Jesus Christ uppermost in your thinking? As a Pharisee, Paul flushed his religion down the drain. There are a whole bunch of people that need to do exactly the same thing today — right now. Multitudes need to lose their religion and learn of the Lord Jesus Christ....

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

~ When we turn to Christ, we do so as sinners. We have nothing God can use. God has everything we need; and it starts with the gift of faith. God

gives us faith; we can't get it any other way. We have so much self-congratulated talent and pretentious professionalism today performed by attractive people who have everything, humanly speaking – but who have *no* substantive testimony for God whatsoever – and they, of course, offer nothing to the work of the Lord. They seem to think they are going to take their wonderful talent and bestow a blessing on the world with it. Generally, these people honestly seem to think God couldn't run His universe without them. Well, I have bad news: mankind isn't attractive. God will not even look upon man outside of Christ....

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

~ Paul's perspective on the past has changed; and his plan and purpose for the present and future is altogether different now, too. There are no more pious, religious false fronts in Paul's life anymore. Today, we have to get serious about taking the entire Word of God to the entire world; that's how we get busy as Christians. That was Paul's mission. That was Timothy's mission. That was Epaphroditus' mission. Once we are saved, we will want to do good works of faith. If you do not feel the need to exercise your good works of faith, then a good work likely has not been begun in you, my friends; it's really as simple as that. A genuine conversion is going to have a new lifestyle and a new purpose. If faith in Christ has not changed you, then you haven't been changed. Whatever exists in your life is going to produce a life of its own....

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

~ The one thing I need in my life more than anything else is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. I suspect Christ is what you need, too. We need the reality of fellowship in Christ's suffering on the cross for us. Very few people enter into His suffering with Him during their lifetimes; and even fewer enter into His death with Him. Few people truly understand the redemptive work of Christ in their lives. Paul is leaving the past behind now in order to grow and develop. Some people have told me they aren't interested in eternal life. Well, today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday. Either way, if you aren't interested in eternity now, then you wouldn't be very happy in Heaven; because all they do there is praise His Name continuously. God is not begging you to believe in Jesus and accept Him; salvation is a gift He offers. Take it or leave it. You're not doing God a favor by accepting Him on your team, friends. If you don't want to be with the Lord in eternity, then He has made a place you can go be without Him. This reveals practical sanctification. It's real. The choice is ours ~

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