

My Dear Child of the Cross,

Isn't it amazing that if we put all the self-righteous religious activity we've ever done together in one place, the things we once thought to be so profitable for godliness, that all we would really have is one huge pile of utterly worthless junk? (And my pile would be bigger than your pile!) Isn't it also a great relief to know that while there is no value at all in my "doings", there is immeasurable value in Christ's?

In fact, when I compare the temporary worth of such deeds to the eternal value of Jesus Christ and His deeds, I am more than ready to count it all as worthless - worth less than nothing - it is more like garbage! My way of being righteous - garbage! My way of being holy - garbage! My way of getting closer to God - garbage! To realize all this is to be ever ready to "take out the garbage" - to disentangle myself from anything that is keeping me from personally knowing Jesus the Messiah as my Lord, my Love, my Liberty, my very Life! (I want His activity and the fragrant aroma of His life to follow me all the days of my life, not the stench of all that garbage!)

So, no more choosing that inferior, rotten type of righteousness for me... you know... that rule keeping, trying hard, self-generated stuff. We both know how frustrating, how fatiguing, how unfulfilling that approach is! From now on, it's True Righteousness or no righteousness. I want only God-graced, God-made righteousness - the kind that comes from God and is wholly acceptable to God, the only kind that can put us right and keep us right with Him. We freely receive this personal righteousness from Christ and His activity at the cross - or we do without righteousness altogether.

You see, all I want is Christ - I want to know Him first hand and to be fully known by Him, missing out on nothing. I want everything that comes from His crucified, risen Life - the inflow and outflow of His power which alone is adequate to face our every enemy. If it takes suffering or loss of status for identifying with Him, if it takes a resounding daily "No!" to privileges and rights in order to be shaped according to His likeness, then I'll take that, too. I want it all - all the spirit, soul, body life that comes with my birthright as a new creation. I want to walk fully and freely, as a living one among the dead. And for that to happen, I may not by-pass the work of His cross at any point.

Now don't misunderstand me - even though I have fully received every bit of His crucified, risen Life, I've not yet fully experienced every bit of it. I'm sure much is yet to come! There is certainly a "Christ expression" of me, but still a fair amount of me not yet fully and experientially formed to Him. (We may have each received by faith the finished work of Christ and His cross and yet, not be fully conversant in all His ways. He is not finished outwardly perfecting everything about us to fully match what He has already inwardly deposited in us.) Nevertheless, I am learning by faith to make the fullness of His reality mine in each day. I'm increasingly finding that it takes a "this one thing" mentality - a daily mindset, a mind singly set to pursue and press on into the full and perfect expression of my full and perfect possession. I must keep my eyes constantly on the prize - an ever enlarging awareness of Christ - Who He is, where He is, what He's done, what He's doing. That's the key for me to keep pressing onward and upward. No maintenance mentality, no resting on past revelations, no passivity will cut it. If I want to keep moving on His highway of holiness, this journey of perfection, if I want to actually experience the work and way of His cross (and not just talk about it), my heart and mind must be set on Christ, and Christ alone. (If there is any confusion of aims or mixture of motives about all this, trust me, God will make it clear in due time!)

So my beloved one, let us continue to make our home in the One Who delivered us, staying focused on our full and perfect Savior. Let His word, His work, His witness, His way be our standard. Let His cross be our rule. Let us each daily cooperate with His ongoing operation so that He may transform us fully by the power He has to make all things new.

Your Brother in the Word, the Work, the Witness, and the Way of the Cross!

Philippians 3:3-16