

**MESSAGE TITLE:** Would You Rather?

**SCRIPTURE:** Philippians 3:4-9

**KEY TRUTH**

Whether we realize it or not, all of life represents a choice between pursuing Jesus or lesser things. So, the question remains: Would you rather have Jesus?

**GETTING STARTED**

You would be hard pressed to find a more forceful refutation of human effort to please God than what Paul presented here. Four Greek participles (*alla menoun ge kai*) are translated 'what is more' and introduce the strong statements of verse 8. Paul considered as loss not only the things already listed in verses 5 and 6 but everything. In exchange for confidence in the flesh, Paul gained the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord. The bottom line is this: Paul found that choosing Christ over status, pedigree, national heritage and religious tradition was a good trade – a really good trade indeed!

**OBSERVATION**

*What superior credentials did Paul cite that would give him bragging rights in the flesh over others?*

*Which two of these perceived advantages did Paul have by virtue of his birth?*

*Which advantages listed in verses 5 and 6 did he willfully choose? Why do you think he cited circumcision first?*

*Paul's parents were both Jewish, a claim that no doubt not all the Judaizers could make. He could trace his lineage all the way back to Abraham. How might true lineage be seen as an advantage by religious leaders?*

*How did Paul esteem his religious advantages? How do you think the Judaizers received his estimation?*

*How would Paul define success? How would he describe a life well lived?*

**APPLICATION**

*Take some time to silently consider your answer to this question: Would you rather have popularity, financial security and worldly possessions more than Christ?*

*Have you reached the conclusion, as Paul did, that knowing and serving Jesus is more valuable than any other pursuit on earth? How can someone arrive at that conclusion? Is it possible to do so on your own?*

*Ask God to stir in your soul a Spirit-led craving for God Himself, above all else. Read Psalm 63:1-8. Notice how the psalmist's desire for God eclipses all other longings.*

## **PRAYER**

*Dear God, please open my eyes, my ears and my mind to perceive your eternal worth. Cause my soul to crave you more than food, the approval of man, success and physical pleasures. Lead me to worship you alone and to be willing to trade all I have to know you more. Please do a gracious work within me to conclude at the deepest part of my heart that knowing You is worth the pain and suffering that may come my way for being a Christ follower.*

## **SHARE POINT**

Read and review the application questions. Share with someone in your life how God's Word is changing you into a growing disciple. Encourage that person to do the same. That person could be a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbor.

## **COMMENTARY NOTES**

Paul begins this section by calling the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord and then warns them about the Judaizing opponents of the Gospel. In contrast, Paul has renounced his spiritual and ethnic privileges for the sake of knowing Christ. Paul's righteousness comes through Jesus, not by observing the law. He then calls the Philippians to follow his example of commitment to Jesus as Lord. Some interpreters suppose that the abrupt transition after verse 1 indicates that chapter 3 is a later interpolation in to the letter. But there is no need for such a theory. The vocabulary of chapter 3 is reflected in the rest of the letter and its themes of progress and example are central to Paul's overarching purposes. While the Judaizers hold out a promise of spiritual progress through adherence to the rules of the old covenant, Paul holds himself out as an example of someone who knows that real progress consists only in being increasingly conformed to the image of Christ's death and resurrection. The teaching that Gentiles must first become Jews and obey all the OT laws to be saved was abhorrent to Paul. Not only did it show a lack of welcome; it also sought in effect to divert Gentiles away from Christ into a covenant that could never save them. While the law might be 'holy and righteous and good', the old covenant pertained to the age before the giving of the Spirit, and thus inevitably brought curse rather than blessing since human beings were unable to keep it. The righteousness it offered could only be an incomplete, superficial righteousness, in contrast to the perfect righteousness given as a gift to believers by the life and death of Christ. Paul thanked God that He delivered him from such an endless treadmill of performance based 'righteousness'.

## **SOURCES CONSULTED**

ESV Study Bible

Serendipity Group Bible for Leaders

The Bible Knowledge Commentary (NT)

