

## GARBAGE

**“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.” (Phil. 3:7 – 9)**

Everybody knows what garbage is. It is the worthless stuff left over that nobody wants. The word translated as “garbage” is “skubalon”. The primary meaning of this word is “excrement”, and is translated as “dung” in the KJV. The word for “manure” is “koprion” but this word is a bit more crude. The translators struggled with how shocking Paul meant it to be. The contrast is clear, however, between the righteousness of Christ and earthly honors. One has lasting value, and the other will soon be garbage.

The late Galyn Farnsworth would frequently point to a rusted out car in the junk yard and say: “Just think, someone once drove that car off the show room floor when it was brand new.” It isn’t hard to apply this same reasoning to everything on earth. A delicious meal smells good when it is served, but the next day it stinks. A new suit will someday be a rag. The new born baby will someday be stooped and withered. Popularity is often described as “fifteen minutes of fame”. Paul obviously knew the difference and chose the worth of knowing Christ to the garbage of this world.

Esau is famous for sacrificing his birthright for a single meal. How long did that meal satisfy him? The book of Hebrews associates this infamous “single meal” with sexual immorality (Heb. 12:16). How long does a sexual encounter last? Amnon fell madly in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom. When he raped her, however, he immediately hated her more than he loved her (2 Sam. 13:1 – 20). Judas hanged himself within 24 hours after receiving his precious 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 27:1 – 5). No wonder Paul considered earthly honors as garbage.

Over the three doorways of the Milan Cathedral are three inscriptions. Above one door is carved a wreath of roses, with the words, “All that pleases is but for a moment.” Over the second is a cross, with the words, “All that troubles is but for a moment.” Over the great central entrance is inscribed: “That only is important which is eternal.” Paul obviously understood this, but do we? In the final analysis his honors didn’t matter, and his persecutions didn’t matter. In the final analysis the only thing that mattered was the righteousness of God that comes by faith.

Many years ago I read of a Canadian who devised a unique way of getting rid of garbage. He used colored ribbons and paper left over from Christmas and wrapped his garbage like a present. When he set the package by the road, invariably someone would slam on the brakes, throw the car into reverse, and take the garbage. The devil, of course, did this long before the Canadian thought of it.

There is an old joke about a man on his death bed. He was supposed to have said that his only regret was that he didn’t spend more time at the office. In a way the joke is more instructive than it is funny. When Sir Isaac Newton died, he was humble to the very end and said, “*I don’t know what I may seem to the world. But as to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself now and then in finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than the ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.*” Paul said it best: **“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (2 Tim. 4:6, 7).**

**“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and perfecter of our faith (Heb.12:1, 2).**