

Paul regards his human accomplishments as “Skubala”

So far in our study of Philippians chapter 3 we have in verses 1-8; **“Finally, my brethren, keep on having inner happiness in the Lord. On the one hand, to be writing the same doctrines to you is not troublesome to me, while on the other hand, it is a safeguard or a basis of security for you. Beware of those dogs, beware of those evil workers, beware of the mutilation. For we [adult spiritual believers] and only we keep on being the true circumcision [the true circumcision in the Church-age], who keep on worshipping in the Spirit of God and glory or boast in Christ Jesus and we put no confidence in the flesh. Even though I myself might be having confidence even in the flesh. If anyone of the same category [Judaizers] assumes to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, [born] out from the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews [an outstanding Hebrew]; with reference to the Law, a Pharisee; with reference to zeal, constantly persecuting the church; with reference to the self-righteousness which is in the Law, having become blameless. But whatever quality of things were gains to me, those things [gains] I have concluded as an expert as loss for the sake of Christ. Not only this but more than this, I conclude as an expert all things to be loss because of the surpassing greatness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have forfeited all things, also, I keep on concluding as an expert them to be piles of dung in order that I may win for Christ.**

The first part of Phi 3:8 really draws our attention to what the apostle desires for us to understand **ajllaV menou'nge kaiV**

It means that something different is coming up and it can be translated “indeed” or “in fact”. So we will translate it; “Not only this but more than this.” The next phrase “I count” means that Paul can conclude on the basis of being an expert in a subject. When he uses this phrase in the power of the Spirit, (not in arrogance), it is a total confidence that comes from authority, study, and spiritual growth. He is concluding something about his old and new destiny. Paul has broken the maturity barrier and has taken a giant step in his spiritual life and he wants to take the Philippians with him.

Paul was an unbeliever celebrity with a false personal sense of destiny. Famous in the field of Judaism, trained in Hellenistic culture and as a citizen of the Roman Empire, he became great as a Pharisee at a young age. However, the pre-salvation celebrityship of Paul was the basis for a false sense of destiny. When he finally understood a true sense of destiny, he went back under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit to explain the things that determine happiness in life: volition, decisions and priorities in life. It is very difficult for individuals who are successful in life to put their success aside and humble themselves before God. LUK 18:18-27.

LUK 18:25-27 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And they who heard it said, Then who can be saved? But He said, The things impossible with men are possible with God."

Phi 3:8 “Not only this but more than this, I conclude all things, [a reference to Paul's presalvation celebrityship],” **The** next phrase literally says “to keep on being loss”. By application it refers to any human celebrityship or achievement, success, talent, approbation, fame or standards of attainments of any kind. When you enter into spiritual maturity, your priorities change, your scale of values change completely. Paul is now free from any form of human achievement making him feel superior. He realized that a personal sense of destiny avoids the arrogant solution to the problems of life, which include the function of the three arrogant skills; self-justification, self-deception, and self-absorption. Losers are always justifying themselves, and then they end up in self-deception.

JAM 1:22 “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.” (Also see ISA 44:20, OBA 1:3, 1CO 3:18) Then there is self-absorption, which is the total antithesis of a personal sense of destiny.

PHI 2:21 “For they all keep seeking their own interests, not the interest of Christ Jesus.”

Paul goes on to say in Phi 3:8 **“Not only this but more than this, I conclude all things to be loss because of the surpassing greatness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, because of whom I have suffered the loss of all things,”**

Paul has concluded as an expert the vanity of human achievement and human celebrityship. Once you reach the status quo of spiritual maturity, there never will be a time when these things are not anything "but loss" as a part of the viewpoint of those in spiritual maturity. He is not talking about the fact these things were taken away from him, He is talking about the fact that in following his personal sense of destiny, he has given up certain things that the world treasures. Things like reputation and success, etc. However, Paul realized that it is *not* being popular with your friends or your peers or people that is important. He knew what our Lord said **LUK 16:15, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God."**

It is our reputation before God not before men that is important. What others see and perceive, as truth often is not.

Men said in MAT 9:34 that our Lord was of the devil. In MAT 11:19, they said He was a glutton, a drunk and hung out with prostitutes. In MAT 26:65, they said that He blasphemed. In MAT 26:66, they said that He deserved to be dead. In MAR 3:21, our Lord was accused of being insane. In MAR 3:22, they said He was demon possessed. In MAR 3:30, they said our Lord has an unclean spirit. In LUK 23:2, they accused Him of being unpatriotic. In LUK 23:5, they accused Him of always stirring up trouble. In JOH 7:12, they said He was a cult leader.

Our Lord's reputation before men was of no value to Him, just as our reputation before men is not important, but our reputation before God is. Finally Paul says in Phi 3:8, **also, I keep on concluding them piles of dung in order that I may gain Christ,"**

The word ***dung*** in the Greek is the word "skubala", and here it should be translated piles of dung or piles of excrement. This word "skubala" is a hapax legomena, which means that it occurs only once in the New Testament. This one word points out and allows Paul to tell us how his priorities changed. How all of Paul's previous human priorities and accomplishments were viewed when compared to his life and his destiny realized in Christ. This is a one-word metaphor that opens up the whole realm of volition and values in your spiritual life. This word has become an embarrassment to countless preachers and born again believers involved in legalism or asceticism.

Many translators try to skirt the issue by calling this word mere garbage, refuse, rubbish, worthless things or even nothing. The King James Bible should be given credit here, for it triumphs when it says "dung". This word needs to be understood. This one word describes a "dramatic change" of priorities in the greatest believer of all time. The basis of this dramatic change is that he could identify all of his fantastic successes as "skubala, dung, and excrement." This word shouldn't be translated rubbish or refuse or nothing, or scraps on the table; it should be translated "dung". All other translations weaken the meaning and the impact that Paul is trying to make. The Word of God in the original language is alive and powerful and doesn't obscure what God desires to say.

Dr. Fredrick Lang, an excellent German scholar, says that; "Skubala means excrement or dung" and then he quotes the Septuagint where "skubala" occurs only once and he said **"It is used for lumps of manure remaining in the sieve to illustrate the refuse, impurity, and wickedness in the mind of man"**.

The choice of this word used by the apostle stresses the force and totality of this change in his life, and tells us what Paul thought of his celebrityship, his education, his genius, his power, plans and his ability. Our plans and the human ability we possess is "skubala" when it comes to the plan of God. Skubala is what human power, celebrityship, ability and talent is, when we try to use it to worship or impress God.

Paul never backed off when it came to communicating doctrine. He didn't worry about offending people with his vocabulary! If God the Holy Spirit told the apostle Paul to use a word that describes dung, and Paul used "skubala", then it was the perfect word to use. So, this word "skubala" or dung or human excrement is a

great description of human greatness, which represents human power and human dynamics. Human greatness represents a lot of things, but one thing it does not represent is advance or advantage in the predesigned plan of God. Not one step forward in the spiritual life comes from human power. All human success, human ability, human power and human plans, Paul regarded as "skubala."

There is no place for human power in God's plan. There is no place for human celebrityship, no place for bragimomies on stage from celebrities in the world. Believers are constantly using Madison Ave techniques to try and make the Christian life more appealing. Associating success with bodies, the more bodies you have in your ministry, the greater the ministry, of course that is not true.

God has seen fit in His grace to take us who are nothing and make something out of it in order to resolve the angelic conflict. What is our obligation or responsibility?

1CO 4:1-2 "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found faithful."

We learn this from the apostle Paul. Bible doctrine is more important than anything in life. You don't need gimmicks, you need to be faithful to the word! You don't need human success stories. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are still living on this earth after salvation as imperfect and helpless persons when it comes to the fulfillment of God's plan. And, if we do not think we are helpless, God will quickly show us just how helpless we really are. Helpless people are the ones who fulfill God's plan. All the limitations in God's plan come from us, not from God. God has designed a solution to every problem in life for every believer. This solution was provided in eternity past and is recorded in the Word of God.

However, divine solutions can only become human solutions through cognition and inculcation of Bible doctrine under the teaching ministry of God the Holy Spirit. So when Paul says I consider all of my areas of human celebrityship and achievement as piles of excrement, he has arrived at a high point of the spiritual life. The same is true of us, when we reach this same conclusion, reach out and begin to grasp hold of our true destiny, we too will make this giant step in our spiritual life. Stay tuned to the doctrine of dung.