

He is talking here about the advantages that he had, about his training, his education, about his zeal, about his standing for what he thought was right. He is talking about the good things of this life. And there are many good things in this world. We should not think that the good things are evil; God does not want us to think that the good things are evil. The good things are here for people to use, to be a blessing to us. We can rejoice when we have advantages in life. We do not turn our back on them or try to get rid of them. God wants His people to enjoy the good things of this world.

Paul is giving us not an attack upon these things, but a statement of their relative importance. "What things were gain to me these I counted loss for Christ." There are wonderful things in the world, the beauties of nature, the glories of the wonderful things in life God makes available to us. The great blessings that even the wicked can enjoy, and which God's people certainly should enjoy. There are these good things in life God wants us to have. But He wants us to realize their relative importance. What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ. These things are fine things, valuable things, but compared with what we can have in Christ they are absolutely nothing.

Elsewhere in Scripture we find elaboration of this theme. Why are these wonderful things of life to be counted as nothing in comparison with Christ? For many reasons.

For one, everything in this world apart from Christ is ~~tainted~~ tainted with evil. We noticed this list of definitely evil attitudes that were described. But all these things that are good we do not find in their pure state in this world. In this world every one of them is tainted with evil. It is only Christ who is absolutely pure and free from that which is evil. We should realize their relative importance.

In addition, these good things of life don't last. There are many things which in our youth give us tremendous pleasure and seem so important that nothing else is worth thinking of in comparison with the joy and pleasure we get from these things and then in time we get tired of them. In time they satiate us. In time we find that our appetite for them has disappeared. The good things of this world, fine as many of them are, do not last. It is only Christ that lasts through all eternity. The good things of this life are all mixed with evil except Christ. All of them are not lasting. They come to an end. All of them can become means of evil if they take up so much of our attention, so much of our time, that they distract our attention from that which is most important of all.

A few years ago I made a little walking trip in Norway and there I rode down one of those great fiords in a boat and then I came up one of the side fiords and up to a dock where the boats stopped and I got off the boat, and I walked up the valley and up the side of a hill along a very interesting road. I saw the remains from WW II. The Germans had had their outposts at the different points. I met a group of Australians who were traveling through and heard their comments. I had a very interesting time