

(Philippians 3:1-11, NIV84)

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh- though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, 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 and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Last Friday I took a drive through the downtown area of Kenosha, Wisconsin where the riots of last week took place. Several buildings had been burned.

But a few of those buildings, instead of remaining as flame-gutted structures, were reduced to nothing more than heaps of rubble -- twisted metal and piles of crumbled bricks.

Take that mental image and apply it to what you and I were by nature. In our pre-born-again-selves we were natural-born enemies of God, without salvation, without knowledge of our Savior, and without a relationship with God. But God the Holy Spirit in His mercy called us by the gospel, enlightened us with His gifts and kept us in the true faith. What we were before is irrelevant; only what we are now by faith matters. God has cleared away the debris of our former life -- the sin, the unbelief, the rebellion -- and has build us into a spiritual house, forgiven and holy, loved and at peace with the Lord.

While the business and property owners of Kenosha are mourning the loss of what once was, you and I don't ever need to mourn or regret the loss of our way of life before being brought into God's family. With the Apostle Paul we can consider our former way of life to be nothing more than rubbish that God has bulldozed out of the way to make room for what we are now as new creations in Christ. In light of that, rejoice in the Lord!

Made new with you in Christ,  
Pastor Golm

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August 31

Who Am I

I have redeemed thee . . . thou art mine. Isaiah 43:1

A distressed young man had just poured out his heart to his pastor. "If only I could find myself! Sometimes I actually wonder who I am or where I fit in!" The pastor thought a moment, then reached for an old worn catechism.

While doing so, he said: "John, there are times when I feel the same way, wondering who I am, and how I could possibly fit into God's scheme of things. When I begin feeling that way, I always reach for my catechism and read Martin Luther's explanation of the three articles of the Apostles' Creed."

And then he began to read slowly: I believe that God has made me. ...I believe that Jesus Christ ... has redeemed me ... that I may be His own ... and serve Him.... I believe that ... the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel ... and will at the Last Day raise up me ... and give unto me ... eternal life. This is most certainly true.

As they continued to converse, the young man began to see himself not as a lonely speck floating in the universe, but as a unique creation of God, a God who was interested in him, who knew him, who loved him, who had sent his Son into the world to make him one of His very own. He became aware of a definite relationship between himself and the Lord who was not only his Creator, but also his personal Redeemer and Comforter. More and more, he saw who he was-God's own! God's own-with a purpose!

It may seem the height of naivete to point a person who is undergoing an identity crisis to the Apostles' Creed for mental and spiritual therapy. But is it really? A careful, prayerful study of the creed will tell us who we are, what we are here for, and where we are going. Try it!

Lord, You have made me, redeemed me, called and sanctified me. You have told me who I am-Your child, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Use me to the glory of Your name and to the welfare of my fellowmen. May I be forever Yours, and may You be forever mine. In Jesus' name. Amen.

(Devotion from: Daily Walk With God - Meditations for Every Day, by Herman W. Gockel)