

Losing It All to Gain It All: The Foolishness of Clinging to Rubbish

Introduction: The Treasure Hunt Gone Wron

We humans have an incredible knack for clinging to the wrong things. Like the child who insists their broken toy is more precious than the shiny new one in your hand. Or the teenager who hoards junk food wrappers under their bed like some twisted archaeological project. And adults? We're worse. We cling to our pride, our grudges, our anxieties, and, of course, our stuff.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians (*Philippians 3:8-14*), seems to be on a mission to shock his audience into perspective. He calls all his previous accomplishments, privileges, and accolades "*rubbish*"—a nice, polite translation of a word that actually means something closer to, well, dung. And why? Because he's found something far better—*Christ*.

Now, let's be honest. How many of us have something—some title, reputation, comfort, or pride—that we treat as if it's more valuable than Christ? St. Paul would say, "*Congratulations, you're hoarding garbage!*" It's like discovering gold but insisting on clinging to plastic beads.

I. Rubbish vs. Treasure: A Battle of Attachments

St. Paul's words might sound extreme, but the Fathers of the Church echo his sentiment. St. Augustine, who once clung dearly to his own intellectual pride and sinful habits, confessed: "*You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.*"

Augustine knew what it meant to cling to *rubbish*. His *Confessions* are one long testimony of how he tried to find fulfillment in everything but God. It was only when he *let go* of all the worldly things he thought he needed that he found the true treasure.

And speaking of clinging to the wrong things, St. Jerome famously quipped, "*If Christ is worth anything, He is worth everything.*" Yet, how often do we treat faith like a side dish rather than the main course? It's like saying, "Yes, Lord, you can be part of my life, but only on Sundays between 9 and 10 AM—unless the game is on."

II. The Moral Principle Under Attack: Detachment

The virtue most often denied today is *detachment*. The world tells us that "*You are what you own, what you achieve, what you can brag about on social media.*" But the Christian faith turns that upside down. Detachment is not about rejecting the good things of the world; it's about refusing to make them ultimate things.

St. John Chrysostom said, "*The rich man is not one who has much but one who gives much. For what he gives away remains his forever.*" In other words, the things we try so desperately to cling to are often the very things that slip through our fingers.

Our world glorifies accumulation. People hoard wealth, status, social validation, and approval. And worst of all, we hoard *resentments*. St. Teresa of Avila warned, "*There is no greater wretchedness than a soul dissatisfied with God.*"

But why are we so attached to these things? Because they feel real. They feel tangible. We prefer the broken toy to the promise of eternal joy because the toy is here *now*. It's like preferring a moldy sandwich over a banquet because you can hold it in your hands.

III. Practical Lessons for Today

Now, let's get practical. What does detachment look like for us today?

1. Letting Go of the Past:

St. Paul says, "*Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.*" (*Philippians 3:13*). Are we holding on to past failures or even past successes as if they define us? St. Francis de Sales taught, "*Have patience with all things, but first of all with yourself.*" God is not as interested in your past as He is in your future.

2. Prioritizing Christ Over Comfort:

Too many of us want to be saints without sacrificing our comforts. It's like wanting to lose weight while clutching a bucket of fried chicken. St. Augustine said, "*God wants to give us something, but cannot, because our hands are full—there's nowhere for Him to put it.*" What do we need to let go of to make room for God?

3. Releasing Control:

St. Paul's declaration is a statement of humility. He acknowledges that he has not yet reached perfection, but he continues to "*press on toward the goal.*" (*Philippians 3:14*). The Fathers would say, "Let God be God." Our constant striving for control is like a child insisting on driving the car—dangerous, ridiculous, and definitely headed for a crash.

IV. Laughter from the Saints

The saints weren't always serious. In fact, their humor often reflected their detachment. When St. Lawrence was being roasted alive, he famously quipped, "*Turn me over, I'm done on this side.*" Now, there's someone who understood the meaning of detachment!

And St. Philip Neri, the Apostle of Rome, once shaved off half his beard before preaching just to avoid taking himself too seriously. His joy was rooted in knowing where his real treasure lay.

The point is, those who are most detached from worldly concerns are often the most joyful. When you have nothing to lose, you are free.

V. Conclusion: Pressing On Toward the Goal

St. Paul's call is not just a critique of our attachment to worldly things; it's a challenge to pursue something greater. As he says, "*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" (*Philippians 3:14*).

The world says, "*Cling, collect, consume.*" Christ says, "*Let go, give, receive.*" The world says, "*Play it safe.*" Christ says, "*Take up your cross and follow Me.*"

So, are we willing to drop the rubbish and reach for the treasure? Or will we go on clutching our plastic beads, refusing the gold? The Fathers and saints have made their choice. The question is, will we?

