

In today's passage, we see Paul's dramatic story of conversion.

Paul used himself as an example, so he gave a personal testimony, which is the story of "before and after."

Well, I am not against this story of "before and after," and even I have also experienced "before and after" in some way. However, Paul's story of "before and after" is a quite different one than we have had. Well, Paul gave up only good stuff to gain and become like Christ Jesus.

Let's imagine of putting ourselves in Paul's shoes. His identity, his genealogy, his family tree, his connection, and his standing in his community—Paul was so proud of all those things. However, Paul counted all that he had and achieved as garbage. Paul tossed it, and he took it to the dump.

Paul's invitation for throwing away the good stuff in the passage reminds me of this story.

Let's think of traveling on a cruise as our faith journey. Some people may be able to buy the ticket for the first class or the business class, some don't. Depends on the class, maybe, some may have a little bit wider, larger, and cozier space.

As passengers on a cruise ship, some people may load more cargo—precious and good cargo including fine clothes and luxurious jewelry.

You know what? Regardless of the size of their bed, all passengers have the same destination and the same captain for the cruise.

What is more, all may have the same fear when the cruise ship might be tossed by strong wind and a storm. Suppose, though, if a cruise ship had a tiny hole at the bottom, all passengers should throw away all kinds of cargos to lighten the ship for them. In view of the crisis, even that which is seemingly good and precious has to go.

Probably, we are not ready, or do not even imagine that we need to throw away the good stuff even if the ship we are taking is tossed by a heavy storm.

Yet, Paul's invitation to be like Jesus still challenges us to love, to care, to give, to serve, to suffer, and to sacrifice like Jesus did. And the passage reminds us we are not alone for this race, but rather we need each other to get the prize of heaven.

Let's keep running toward the goal, a goal of becoming like Jesus and imitating Jesus. Let's keep running toward the downward mobility, not the upward mobility.

Let's keep running toward not just imitators of Christ, but fellow imitators of Christ.

Amen.