

NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH

In Philippians 3, Paul shares what happened in his heart in relation to his conversion. Here we essentially have Paul giving us his spiritual biography. We see where he was (his past); where he is at (his present); and where he is going (his future). This chapter shows us what was involved in Paul's thinking (repentance = change of mind) as he moved from confidence in "RELIGION" to a saving-faith "RELATIONSHIP" with Christ.

In the mix of sharing his testimony, Paul interfaces with the views of those espousing error – both in regard to JUSTIFICATION (3:2) and SANCTIFICATION (3:18-19). Philippians chapter 3 is one of the **CLEAREST** texts in the New Testament on the **NATURE OF SAVING FAITH** as illustrated by Paul via his personal testimony. This is extremely significant because Paul becomes a **PATTERN** of what is involved in saving faith (cf. 1 Tim. 1:16).

Paul writes repetitiously to "safeguard" the reader from error (3:1). His initial concern is "legalists" often referred to as "Judaizers". They professed to believe in Christ but also insisted on elements of the law for salvation, and in particular circumcision. They held to Jesus PLUS religion for salvation versus faith in Jesus alone for salvation. In Philippians 3:2 Paul holds back nothing in exposing the seriousness of their error.

- Beware of dogs (their character – filthy and defiled).
- Beware of evil workers (their conduct – promotion of error).
- Beware of the mutilation (their defining creed – salvation by cutting).

In contrast to the errant legalists are **TRUE BELIEVERS** as described by Paul in Phil. 3:3.

Philippians 3:3 (NKJV)

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

- Worship God in the spirit (their character – true-heart worshipers).
- Rejoice in Christ Jesus (their conduct – brag on Jesus).
- Have no confidence in the flesh (their defining creed – salvation is not based on human credentials).

The phrase "have no confidence in the flesh" is KEY! It marks the essential contrast between false-teaching legalizers and true-worshipping believers! It is an essential identifying trait of true saving faith. It also introduces

Paul's extended testimony of how he used to have confidence in the flesh (meaning his religious credentials -cf. v. 4-6), in contrast to his present faith in Christ. His religious credentials were impressive in terms of 1) religious rite/ritual; 2) religious heritage; 3) religious law-keeping; 4) religious zeal. He had all the "religious" credentials that a devout Jew could ever hope to have. No wonder Paul was a proud Pharisee!

Yet, Paul came to see (as he was humbled in conversion) that all of these supposed credits were useless for salvation. Not all these credentials were in and of themselves bad or wrong, but if one trusts them (has confidence in them) for salvation, that will damn your soul. Paul came to COUNT all his religious credentials as LOSS so that he might GAIN Christ. This is the essence of saving faith. Note the two KEY phrases in 3:1-7 related to the nature of saving faith.

- "no confidence in the flesh" – v. 3
- "what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ." – v. 7

The word "counted" is an accounting term. It speaks of spiritual calculation. It denotes a definite CHOICE where one COUNTS all religious credentials, efforts, status, etc., as nothing and Christ as everything in terms of being made right with God. What are you counting on to get to heaven? If you are counting on religious rituals (such as sacraments, baptism, etc.), religious efforts, religious heritage, etc., then I can assure you that you ARE NOT SAVED.

You need to lose faith in your "RELIGION" and put ALL your faith (confidence/trust) in JESUS ALONE for salvation. As Savior, He died for all your sins – as Lord over all, He rose again the third day (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3, 15:1-4). Put all your confidence in Him alone as Savior and Lord! This is the essence of SAVING FAITH.

It's either trust in "Religion" or Christ; you can hold to one or the other – but not both at the same time!