

## READ

Philippians 3:1-3

<sup>1</sup>“Further, my brothers and sisters, 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. <sup>2</sup> Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.

## NOTES

Paul is referring to religious teachers who claim that in order to be acceptable to God we must not only have faith in Jesus, but we must adopt specific cultural and religious practices as well. The equation these people were selling was “Jesus + my religious works = God’s acceptance”

## REFLECT

What are some aspects of your upbringing that might lead you to adopt a similar view of God’s love, that it is in some part dependent on your works?

What do you think “putting no confidence in the flesh” looks like in your life?

## READ

Philippians 3:4-7

<sup>4</sup>“though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> 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; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. <sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.”

## NOTES

Paul moves away from religious symbols of success or acceptance by God and into cultural symbols. Paul had a spotless pedigree as a Jewish leader. On top of the things he lists here he was also a Roman citizen, highly educated, and most likely from a fairly well to do family. Paul studied under one of the greatest Jewish teachers of his day. Paul’s main point in this passage is that his successes were not something he looked at to define who he was at his core. Paul considered all of these things to be deficits when compared with the reality of knowing Jesus in a personal way.

In this passage the equation to success might translate to today as “Jesus + my social standing = success” or “Jesus + my career status = success”

## REFLECT

Has success or material blessing in you life ever hindered your walk with God, if so, how?

While recognizing the blessing of a good job, a good education, even good works - how do you think you can consistently live out the reality that your true identity is in who Jesus is and what Jesus has done?

## READ

Philippians 3:8-11

<sup>8</sup>“What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> 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 on the basis of faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”

## NOTES

Paul obviously had a lot to boast about when it came to his religious and cultural accolades. Yet at the same time, he understood that he wasn't comparing himself with other people, but with God. When Paul compared what he could accomplish, with what God had accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus it didn't seem very impressive. In fact, his good deeds became less than worthless in comparison.

Paul has made similar arguments throughout his letters, including this statement about the possibility that Abraham, the founder of the Jewish people, might have done enough good works to be acceptable to God. He says in Romans 4:3 "If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God." Paul's argument here is profound! Even if we could live a completely perfect life before God, we've only met the minimum requirement, we don't get a pat on the back, or any accolades from God.

One of the best tools that we have to turn away from ourselves and our accomplishments as the primary voice that tells us who we are, is the reality of our sin and standing before God apart from Jesus. Paul recognizes that there is nothing in himself that makes him worthy of God's love, in fact, God's offer of a relationship through Jesus is the very thing that gives Paul's life and accomplishments any value at all! This might be difficult for us to accept, but as we see over and over again in the Scripture, we're sunk without Jesus, and with Him we

have infinitely more than we could have every hoped for or imagined.

Paul's equation for success was "Jesus + Nothing = Everything" - We don't need to add anything to Jesus to realize success or joy. If we have Jesus, we have the primary goal of life in our possession, everything else from that point is secondary.

## REFLECT

What areas of success or failure in your life have tended to dominate your view of yourself and your beliefs about God's love for you?

Everyone has hopes and fears they live with every day. If some of your hopes were never realized, or if some of your fears came true, how do you think this would effect your relationship with God? How does that line up with Paul's testimony in this passage?

What role does the hope of heaven play in your relationship with God today? Does the reality of God making all things right in the future help you endure hardships or suffering right now? If so, how?

When have you most seen God's power in your life, in times of great success, or in times of great trial? Why do you think this is?

## OTHER RESOURCES...

Check out our companion book on Philippians in the book store

Read this recent blog post by Pastor Wes Furlong at <http://www.wesleyfurlong.com/how-to-find-the-secret-place-of-joy/>

Catch up on previous messages in the book of Philippians at [www.capechristian.com/media](http://www.capechristian.com/media)