

Message #17

Philippians 3:4-9

Many years ago someone I knew applied for a job at a major corporation. He had learned about the opening from the head of the company and he decided to apply and send in his resume. The position that he was after was one that not only would bring him great remuneration, but great security for the company was known for its stability.

My friend put together an impressive resume. His resume included his multiple college degrees, as he did well academically. His resume included a list of different jobs he had done in the course of his life.

A couple of weeks passed and then one day a letter came in the mail. The letter was from the company and it basically said this: "Dear ____, we appreciate your interest in our company and we thank you for applying for a position. You have an outstanding resume and your lists of accomplishments are impressive. However, you lack one key element we are looking for in filling this position and that is experience. We believe it is in our best interest to fill this opening with someone who has experience in our particular industry."

My friend had impressive credentials, but he lacked the one quality the company was looking for that could have given him the job. That lack of one quality prevented him from entrance into that particular organization.

If you ask most people whether or not they want to go to heaven when they die, most will say "Yes, of course." There is no greater eternal place to be. It is a wonderful place. When you look at some people they seem to be very impressive and they seem to have some very impressive credentials. 1) They are good people; 2) They have been good citizens; 3) They have been good church goers; 4) They have been somewhat generous and giving with their money; 5) They have served on committees; 6) They have been in Bible Studies; 7) They have visited the sick.

They have never done anything that we would say is really bad. They have never done anything that most would say you would classify as major sin and if you look at their spiritual resume, it looks impressive. They aren't like the sleazy people. They aren't like the bar-hopping group that gets drunk on Saturday night. They don't sleep around and they don't ever get thrown in jail. They are the good people. They have quite a resume.

But the place they are applying for is heaven; God's home and God is the one examining the individual to determine who gets into His home and **in order to get into His home, you don't need an impressive religious resume; you need the righteousness of God found in Jesus Christ.**

That message is the one the Apostle Paul never got tired of presenting. He was living in a world of religious dogs (Philip. 3:23), who stressed works and law. He was in prison, not knowing whether he would live or die. This is a man who had done a lot in his life. If anyone deserved to go to heaven, by a resume, certainly it would be Paul.

But he wanted the church to know that he did not trust his religious resume to take him to heaven. He believed one thing could take him there and he wanted the church to understand the same thing:

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THAT ENABLES ONE TO GO TO HEAVEN IS FOUND BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AND NOT BY ANY RELIGIOUS HERITAGE, WORKS OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Paul wanted to make certain that the people of this church knew that. He loved these people and he wanted them to know you do not go to heaven by your religious works, your law-keeping, your morality, or your church membership. **To go to heaven you need one credential, the righteousness of God that is found by faith in Jesus Christ.**

Now in this section, Paul uses himself as an example in order to establish this point. He uses himself in a type of logical syllogism in order to establish the truth to these Philippians. He presents three syllogistic conclusions:

SYLLOGISTIC CONCLUSION #1 – If religious heritage and religious works could make anyone right with God, Paul had that more than any other person. **3:4-6**

If any person on earth could have been guaranteed heaven by religious things, it would have been Paul. But Paul put no confidence in any of that.

That verb “confidence” which shows up at the end of **verse 3** and twice in **verse 4**, are all perfect tense. What that means is from a specific point of time in the past in the present and on in to the future, Paul did not trust in or put his confidence in anything he did in his flesh to make him right with God. The Greek word “confidence” (πειθω) is a word that means to be fully won over or persuaded to trust in something or have confidence in something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 351).

If there would have been a person on earth who could have trusted in his religious upbringing or religious works to make him right with God, it would have been Paul, but he did not trust in any of that.

Now in these verses, he gives a specific list of seven impressive qualities of his own life that certainly would seem impressive to most people.

Category #1 - The qualities that Paul inherited from his parents. **3:5a-d**

There are four qualities that Paul inherited from his parents which are impressive and do have great religious connotations:

(Quality #1) - Paul was circumcised the 8th Day. **3:5a**

That certainly was an impressive religious thing to do. What a way to begin life. The Jews put a lot of stress on this fleshly rite of circumcision. In fact, the 8th day was the day God said a baby should be circumcised. God said that to Abraham (Gen. 17:12). This was a day that He specifically put in His law (Lev. 12:3). Although a baby who was 8 days old had no say in this, his parents did and Paul's parents made certain their baby son was circumcised the 8th day. This baby is off to a good start if you can be right with God by keeping the law.

By the way, I knew of a family who believed they needed to have their son circumcised to be right with God in order to keep the law. I asked them what day did they do it and they said day 2, which means you broke the O.T. law. This is like someone saying I was baptized as an infant and I have my ticket to heaven. Paul says, "I put no confidence in any of that."

(Quality #2) - Paul was from the nation Israel. **3:5b**

That word "nation" refers to Paul's race. Paul was not a proselyte Jew, he was the real thing. He was a full-blooded Jewish member of the covenant family nation. He was not some proselyte "goyim" (gentile), he was a full-blooded Jew. God's program is with Israel.

(Quality #3) - Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin. **3:5c**

The Jews considered the tribe of Benjamin to be the most honored tribe. Moses referred to this tribe as "beloved of the LORD" (Deut. 33:12). This is the tribe that gave Israel her first King, Saul. Actually Paul was named after King Saul (I Sam. 9:1-2). The tribe of Benjamin had remained faithful to King David when the kingdom was being split (II Sam. 3:19-20; 19:16-17; I Kings 12:21). To be from the tribe of Benjamin was an elite honor. From a heritage standpoint, Paul hit the jackpot when he was born into this tribe.

(Quality #4) - Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews. **3:5d**

What this means is that Paul was a pure Jew in his birth and in his upbringing. Both of his parents were pure Jewish and he was given a pure Jewish upbringing. There was no substituting the Greek language and culture as a replacement to his Jewish education. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews.

These are impressive qualities that Paul inherited from his parents. If any person had a right to boast in his religious past, it would have been Paul. If anyone could go to heaven by pedigree it was Paul. Perhaps you are a lot like that.

Perhaps your parents were very faithful religious parents. You come from of a family where you went to church every week. You may have been involved in all sorts of religious stuff growing up. You were baptized, circumcised and catechized. None of that will take you to heaven.

Category #2 - The qualities that Paul earned by himself. **3:5e-6**

Not only did Paul have a great religious upbringing, but he himself took it to another level on his own. The final three qualities are qualities Paul earned himself. They were very impressive to the religious world:

(Quality #5) - Paul was a strict Pharisee according to the law. **3:5e**

The word Pharisee means separatist. Paul was a separatist from all the separatists. Paul kept all of the Pharisaical code laws. Based upon their system of interpretation of the law, Paul measured up. As far as other Pharisees were concerned, Paul was a perfect law-keeper.

(Quality #6) - Paul was a zealous persecutor of the church. **3:6a**

Paul had been the number #1 persecutor of the church of God. No one had more energy in going after Christians. He was not a half-hearted Judaizer. He was a zealous bounty hunter, who literally would track Christians down (Acts 9:1-2). No other Jew was in his league as being so zealous for his religious cause.

(Quality #7) - Paul was blameless according to law righteousness. **3:6b**

That word “blameless” means free from fault. As far as any man alive could expect to keep the law, Paul was at the top of the class. He was a strict legalist when it came to O.T. law. Pharisees taught people they could be right with God by keeping the law and as far as religious man was concerned, Paul was the best.

Before Paul came to faith in Jesus Christ, his Jewish background and religious practices meant everything to him. But all of that changed when he met Jesus Christ in Acts 9. He saw it all worth nothing. They could not take him to heaven.

Let's face it, these are impressive credentials. Maybe it is kind of like you. Many of you have an impressive list of religious credentials. You have been baptized and you come from a Christian family and you have raised your hand and walked down aisles. Maybe you have been an active church member and have gone to all kinds of Bible classes. None of that will take us to heaven. It could not take Paul and it won't take us.

SYLLOGISTIC CONCLUSION #2 – Since religious heritage and religious works cannot make anyone Right with God, Paul considered all of it as loss, except for Jesus Christ. **3:7-8**

The verb “I have counted” (ηγεομαι), which shows up once in **verse 7** and twice in **verse 8**, is a word that emphasizes mental thought that guides, rules and leads you (*Ibid.*, p. 198). The word stresses what a person believes, considers and thinks about that guides them.

Now Paul says I am guided by the thought that all that religious stuff that was in my life is nothing compared to Jesus Christ. It is all loss. What that means is it all useless and damaged. It is nothing but rubbish and dung.

Paul says you take that entire religious heritage and all of my law works and all of my religious activity and stack it up against Jesus Christ and it means nothing. In fact, at the end of **verse 8**, Paul says you must think this way because you have to think this way to “gain Christ.”

Notice how Paul qualifies this “**I count ALL THINGS to be loss.**” If you want to know Jesus Christ, this is the way you must think about yourself and all your religious accomplishments. They mean nothing. Jesus Christ means everything.

Jesus Christ left the splendor of heaven to come to this earth and why do you think He did that? He did that in order to make it possible for sinners to go to heaven by believing on Him. If our works or religious activity or religion could take us to heaven, He would never have come to this earth and gone through what He did. The way we win is through Jesus Christ; not through anything we are or do.

I used to be an avid runner. I used to run marathons. I used to run in the Chicago gold cup series and have a few trophies from some races in which I fared pretty well. But no matter how well I fared, when I got in a race with a world class runner, I wasn't even close.

There are people running to all kinds of religious things and they think they are in good religious shape; but to get to the finish line they need the righteousness of Jesus Christ and they aren't even close. That is exactly what Paul realized.

SYLLOGISTIC CONCLUSION #3 – Since religious heritage and religious works cannot make anyone Right with God, Paul only wanted Christ's righteousness found by faith in Him. **3:9**

Take a good honest look at **verse 9**. When we stand before God, we will either be found in Christ or in ourselves. We will have either trusted in Jesus Christ to save us or we will have trusted in ourselves and our works and our religion and our law-keeping to save us. This is either or.

When we get before God, the only righteousness that matters is that which comes from Jesus Christ through faith. Any other kind of righteousness is worthless dung.

Paul's desire was to totally focus on the righteousness he received by faith in Jesus Christ. He did not consider himself to be anything.

You will not earn heaven by your works. You will not earn heaven by your religious pedigree. You will not earn heaven by trying to keep the O.T. law. You will not earn heaven by your circumcision, catechism or baptism. There is only one credential you need on your resume to get into heaven and it is a righteousness credential that comes by faith in Jesus Christ. Believe on Him and you will be saved.