

Philippians 3:4b-14 ESV

# Where Is Our Confidence?

Services: Sunday, 10/8 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, 10/9 at 7 PM

Church Year: 18<sup>th</sup> Sun. after Pentecost / 17<sup>th</sup> Sun. after Trinity – 2017

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: Today we focus on part of the letter written by Paul to the believers living in Philippi, *which is located today in Greece*. As we proceed, notice how Paul told them about himself and his actions, then, how he – *by God’s grace* – had **all of his confidence in Christ!**

1. **In Self:** Paul wrote: <sup>4b</sup> **If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: //**

Then Paul explained what he meant:

- a. <sup>5</sup> **circumcised on the eighth day** – *as commanded by the LORD in Leviticus 12:3.*
- b. **of the people of Israel** – *so of the people chosen by God, through whom the Messiah came.*
- c. **of the tribe of Benjamin** – *the same tribe as Saul, who was the first king of Israel.*
- d. **a Hebrew of Hebrews** – *so both of his parents were Hebrew, thus descendants of Abraham.*
- e. **as to the law, a Pharisee** – *thus “a member of the strictest sect [group] among the Jews” (Kretzman, NT II:309).*
- f. <sup>6</sup> **as to zeal, a persecutor of the church** – *since Paul thought Christ and all Christians were perverting the OT laws, he took very strong action against them.*

- g. **as to righteousness under the law, blameless** – so – in his eyes – he followed ALL the rules.

What about us, do we have our own lists? ▶ I was baptized as an infant, ▶ I have relatives who are pastors, ▶ I attend Divine Service, ▶ I go to Bible class, ▶ I give money, ▶ I serve the Lord, and ▶ I try to follow the Bible. What stands out to you in that list? Seven times I used the word “I” to describe why “I” think “I” might be okay in the eyes of God, **BUT** the Bible says:

- “...by the works of the Law **no** flesh will be justified in His sight...” (Rom 3:20 NAS).
- “...a person is **not** justified by works of the law...” (Gal 2:16 ESV).

**Nevertheless**, consider this very sad☹ information from a recent Pew Research poll<sup>1</sup>:

- 52% of U.S. Protestants believe that **both** faith **and** good works are necessary for salvation☹, but that does **NOT** agree with God’s Word!
- Only 30% of U.S. Protestants believe in **both** faith alone **and** Scripture alone; those are true teachings, but – sadly☹ – most do **NOT** agree!

2. **In Christ**: Paul continued: <sup>7</sup> **But whatever gain I had [from all of my amazing qualifications], I counted [regarded, considered] as loss for the sake of Christ.** <sup>8</sup> **Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.** // Imagine having a good grip on \$1,000 cash; then imagine someone wanting to make a trade with you: *Your*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/08/31/poll-most-protestants-and-catholics-believe-faith-and-works-are-necessary>

*\$1,000 for his \$100,000; would you quickly let go of yours for his? **By all means!** That is what Paul did *spiritually and by grace!* The Formula of Concord (*the tenth document in our Lutheran Confessions*) says that “a person’s works are not only useless and a hindrance, but are also harmful. This is not the fault of the good work themselves, but of **the false confidence placed in the works, contrary to God’s clear Word**” (SD IV 37).*

- a. Paul’s righteousness: **For his sake** [*the sake of Christ*] **I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish** [*garbage, dung*], **in order 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** [*thus from my unsuccessful attempts to perfectly keep the law*], **but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith...** // The Lord opened Paul’s eyes to see that what *he WAS holding on to for heaven was actually worthless*; then, by God’s grace, *he let go and embraced Christ!*
- b. Paul’s life in Christ:<sup>10</sup> **that I may know him** [*thus, Christ*] **and the power of his resurrection** [*which assures my resurrection*], **and may share his sufferings** [*thus all kinds of abuse from unbelievers*], **becoming like him in his death** [*by showing much love to others*],<sup>11</sup> **that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.** // **Now, since Paul knew Christ AND was saved through Him,** ♣ *he knew this life was not the end,* ♣ *he was willing to suffer as a follower of Christ,* and ♣ *he wanted to love others in the name of Christ! May such things also be true in our lives!*

- c. Paul's present reality: <sup>12</sup> **Not that I have already obtained this** *[the resurrection from the dead]* **or am already perfect** *[thus living without sin]*, **but I press on** *[as I am empowered by the Spirit of God]* **to make it** *[the resurrection from the dead]* **my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.** // Paul had the gift of salvation, *but he was indicating that he did not yet have the fullness of salvation – which will start for all believers when Jesus' returns!*
- d. Paul's strong desire: <sup>13</sup> **Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind** *[my former worldly things – which used to be important]* **and straining** *[stretching]* **forward to what lies ahead,** <sup>14</sup> **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** // As people who know Jesus, we live in a constant tension – *fighting the forces of evil and yet at peace in Christ!* Consider this Lutheran Study Bible quote: **“We strain against our own sinful nature and against the world and the devil, even while our soul is at peace under God’s promises and grace”** (2037). We are certainly blessed now in Christ, ***BUT THE GREATEST BLESSINGS ARE YET TO COME!***

**Conclusion:** Let us pray: Dear Holy Spirit, we thank You for the precious gifts of ♦spiritual sight, ♦full forgiveness, and the ♦promise of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord!