

Ln 9 Stress-free Salvation

[Philippians 3:1-6](#)

Salvation causes stress in many believers' lives because they don't understand salvation in Christ is stress-free. They are all stressed out because they are frantically trying to work their way to heaven. In this passage Paul reveals the principles of **stress-free salvation**.

Salvation is based on Christ [3:1-3](#)

Paul writes: *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord* ([3:1a](#)). We should **rejoice** because we have been forgiven of all our sin and have eternal life **in the Lord**. The context in which we *rejoice* is not our own character or our good works but in our salvation **in the Lord**. Salvation that causes us to rejoice is based on a relationship with Jesus Christ that produces a firm confidence in God's purpose and power.

What other reason does [Psalm 13:5](#) give for having a salvation that should cause us to rejoice?

Paul continues: *To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe* ([3:1b](#)).

To have a **stress-free salvation**, we must be able to discern false teachings and understand the basics of the faith. Thus, Paul warns the Philippian believers: *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision* ([3:2](#)). Paul is referring to the Judaizers who were trying to convince the Philippian believers to trust in a religion of rites, rituals, and regulations rather than a **stress-free salvation** based on their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Paul uses three words to describe the Judaizers. First, he calls them *dogs*. Today when we think of *dogs* we visualize cute, cuddly pets. But in biblical times *dogs* were dirty, disease-carrying, vicious animals that roamed the streets in packs and attacked passersby. The word *dogs* was a very uncomplimentary term (see [Rev. 22:15](#)).

Another example is in [Proverbs 26:11](#). Write it below:

Like repulsive, vicious *dogs*, the Judaizers attacked new converts with their false, legalistic teaching. Like dangerous *dogs*, all false teachers who teach salvation by works are to be avoided.

A little boy had a dog he claimed was a pure-bred police dog. However, it was obvious his pet was just an ordinary, mongrel dog. One day a man questioned the boy's claim by saying, "That dog just looks like an ordinary alley dog to me." The little boy replied, "He works undercover."

Next, Paul calls these false teachers *evil workers* ([3:2](#)). The word translated **evil** (*kakos, kock-os'*) means injurious or harmful. Thus, the Judaizers were hurting the Philippians by substituting legalism for a relationship with Christ. Paul also says to *beware of the concision* ([3:2](#)) because these Judaizers taught

circumcision was essential to salvation. Therefore, Paul writes: *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit (3:3a)*. *Worship God in the spirit* involves much more than going to worship services on Sunday, singing, and listening to a sermon. The word translated **worship (latreuō, lat-roo'-oh)** means to render religious service or to serve. **True worship is living a life of service to God.**

How is this kind of worship described in [Hebrews 13:16](#)?

As we worship God by serving Him, we can have *no confidence in the flesh (3:3b)*. To have **stress-free salvation**, we must abandon all efforts of saving ourselves and place our faith in salvation by grace alone, which cannot be mixed with works or self-effort.

Why, according to [Romans 11:6](#)?

When it comes to salvation, grace says "done!" Legalism says "do!" We are not saved because of what we do but by *grace* because of what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross. That's why **stress-free salvation is based on Christ** and...

Salvation is not based on character [3:4-6](#)

Prior to becoming a Christian, Paul was a pure-blooded super star in Judaism. He writes: *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more (3:4)*. If anyone had reason to trust in works or character to get them to heaven, it was Paul. In this passage Paul gives us **four** examples of what will not save us.

1. We are not saved by rituals. Paul was *circumcised the eighth day (3:5a)*. This means Paul was born a Jew; he was not a proselyte Jew. People today still trust in rituals. You can take communion until you turn grape-purple and still not be saved. You can be baptized until your skin looks like a prune and still not know the Savior. If you are trusting in any ritual to get you to heaven, you are in big trouble.

Why, according to [Titus 3:5a](#)?

2. We are not saved by relatives. Another of Paul's impressive credentials is being *of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews (3:5b)*. Paul was born a member of God's chosen people, the Israelites. He was born into *the tribe of Benjamin*, one of the most prominent and respected tribes. When the nation of Israel divided at the death of Solomon, only the tribe of Benjamin was faithful to the tribe of Judah, the royal tribe of David and the tribe through which the Messiah would be born. Mordecai, who saved the Jews from genocide during the time of Esther, was of the tribe of Benjamin ([Est. 2:5](#)).

The Jews of Jesus' day thought they would go to heaven because they were the children, or descendants, of Abraham. In the same way, some people today think they will go to heaven because their parents were Christians. What did Jesus say to the Jews who thought they would get into heaven because they were the children of Abraham ([John 8:39b](#))?

Abraham **believed** God's promises and **acted** upon them ([Gen. 15:6](#)). Today, the true children of Abraham follow his example. Just because you grew up in a Christian home doesn't make you a Christian anymore than being born in a garage would make you a BMW or being born in a kitchen would make you a biscuit.

3. We are not saved by religion. Paul was also a *Pharisee* ([Philip. 3:5c](#)). The Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jews and were the most zealous observers of the Law. Because Jesus often criticized the Pharisees' hypocrisy, many of us have the wrong impression of them. The average Pharisee was sincerely religious; he fasted twice a week, prayed three times a day, believed the Bible, tithed, and was totally faithful to his wife and family. Even in our day, any church would be glad to have such a member and would probably make him a teacher or a deacon.

Paul writes of his pre-Christian life: *concerning zeal, persecuting the church* ([3:6a](#)). This means Paul was so sincere about his religion he persecuted people he believed were heretics. When it comes to religion some say, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere." However, sincerity is no substitute for believing the truth. If you go to your medicine cabinet in the middle of the night and in the darkness take some deadly poison by mistake, even though you sincerely believe it is medicine, the next morning you will be sincerely dead. You can sincerely believe 2 plus 2 equals 5, but no matter how sincerely you believe it, you are still wrong.

Sincere religion is the most dangerous thing in the world because the false assurance of religion causes a person not to see himself or herself as a sinner who needs a savior. The Pharisees were sincerely religious, but what does Jesus tell them in [Matthew 21:31c](#)?

Jesus is not glorifying dishonesty and immorality. He is saying sinful people who admit their sin will go to heaven before those who are self-righteous because of some religion that blinds them to their sinfulness.

4. We are not saved by right living. Paul writes: *touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless* ([Philip. 3:6b](#)). This doesn't mean Paul thought he was perfect, but no one could fault him for not keeping any part of the Law. In other words, Paul lived right or as righteously as he knew how. But trying to be saved by right living is like trying to jump the Grand Canyon. Oh, you might jump further than most, but you will still fall to your death.

You may live better than most people and may be a good moral person, but what does the Bible say in [Isaiah 64:6b](#)?

Filthy rags were used to wipe puss from the sores of lepers, and they were also used as menstrual rags. Compared to the righteousness Christ offers us, the best day of our lives is like a *filthy* rag.

Knowing how we are saved will take a lot of stress out of life. We are not saved by **rituals, relatives, religion, or right living**. We are saved by a **Redeemer**.

How does [Romans 10:4](#) express this truth?

Stress-free salvation is based on Christ *not* character, which means your salvation is not based on what you do but what Jesus did for you on the cross.