

## Philippians 3:4-8

*Confidence in the Flesh – Versus - Confidence in Christ*

### Verses 3 - 6

*I myself might have confidence even in the flesh* – For the sake of argument Paul adopts the Judaizers' attitude of confidence in the flesh. He did not reject the Jewish advantages because he lacked them. On the contrary he excelled in them.

Seven advantages of Paul in the flesh – Four by inheritance and three by choice:

- 1 – *Circumcised the eighth day* – Just as the Law prescribed (Lev. 12:3).
- 2 – *Of the nation of Israel* – He was pure Jew by race and descent.
- 3 – *Of the tribe of Benjamin* – The second son of Jacob's favorite wife.
- 4 – *Hebrew of Hebrews* – He was brought up as a strict observer of Jewish customs.
- 5 – *As to the Law, a Pharisee* – The most orthodox of the sects within Judaism.
- 6 – *As to zeal, a persecutor of the church* – He was totally committed to Judaism.
- 7 – *As to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless* – Paul was sincere in his understanding of God's will. He followed the Law's requirements to perfection.

*It was not bad things that kept Paul away from Jesus—it was good things! He had to lose his "religion" to find salvation.*<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe

### Verses 7-8

*...whatever things were gain... I have counted loss* - Paul had a great reputation as a scholar and leader in Judaism. He willingly gave up his standing before

men when he met his Savior. He also knew that he would be persecuted because of his faith in Christ (2 Timothy 2:12).

- ...for the sake of Christ* – Paul realized that his own reputation brought him glory but it did not bring glory to God. Paul moved from "religion" to "relationship". He understood that his relationship with Christ had far greater eternal value than his temporal "confidence in the flesh".
- ...the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord* – To "know" Christ is to have a personal relationship with Him through faith. Paul knew the Law. He even knew about Jesus Christ. When he met Him personally it changed his life.
- ...I count them but rubbish* – The Greek word means "dung" or "refuse". It is used in extrabiblical Greek of a half-eaten corpse and lumps of manure. Paul put all his former spiritual prized possessions in the garbage can.
- ...that I may gain Christ* – His favor and fellowship as opposed to the *gain* of verse 7.

Why do we put confidence in the flesh?

It is because we find *strength* in our *structure*. Structure, in and of itself, is not bad. The question is what is the structure built upon? Note carefully Matthew 7:24-27 and 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

Consider the *crayfish* – It has no bones. Its shell is its skeleton. The hardness of its shell becomes its chief defense. For the legalist, his rules and laws become his exoskeleton.

Three questions-

- 1 – *Why should I not be confident in my flesh?*
- 2 – *Is what Paul says about confidence in the flesh really true?*
- 3 – *So what? What does this mean for me?*

<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Php 3:1–11). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.