

How To Be Right With God

Philippians 3:1-9

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The question I want to open with tonight is, if you were to die and stand before God in Heaven, and He were to ask you, “Why should I let you into Heaven?” what would be your answer? Based on your answer would determine, in my mind biblically, whether or not you go to Heaven. What is it you’re trusting in? What is it you’re hoping in? What is your confidence in? And—listen carefully—are you sure that when you die and do stand before God that you have trusted in the right thing to be saved? Are you truly putting your faith in Jesus Christ or that you know what it is that constitutes salvation and how you get to Heaven?

I don’t know of any more important doctrine than the doctrine of ‘what must I do to be saved?’ Remember the Philippian jailer asked Paul the Apostle, “...what must I do to be saved?” and he said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” It’s important that we know the answer to that question. What am I trusting in, what is my confidence in, why should God allow me to go to Heaven when I die, and can I be sure of my eternal destination?

In Philippians 3, Paul discusses the subject of salvation. He teaches us how to be right with God and uses three verbal concepts to teach us the threefold aspect of salvation. Now, he’s going to say in this chapter, “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” I kind of chuckle a little bit because I’m going to repeat things tonight that I’ve said over and over and over. If you’ve listened to me preach or teach very often, in just a few weeks you probably are going to hear a lot of repetition because it’s important to really solidify it in our minds and also to defend us against the false teachings of those that would come to oppose the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I find this threefold aspect of Philippians 3 fascinating and want to point out that in verse 9 Paul first uses a phrase, “found in him.” This is the doctrine of justification, and that’s our text tonight, verses 1-9. Secondly, in Philippians 3, he’ll use the phrase, verse 10, “know him.” This is the doctrine of sanctification, and we’ll be looking at that next Wednesday night. In verse 20, we’ll find the phrase, “look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the doctrine of glorification. I’ve always wanted to take those three texts and preach that as a three-point sermon—justification, sanctification, and glorification. We want to be found in Him, declared righteous; we want to know Him, made righteous; we want to look for Him, transformed when we see Him face to face. This is the doctrine of justification, sanctification, and glorification. The repetition for me tonight is that salvation has three tenses. We have been saved, justified; we’re being saved, sanctified; and we will be saved, glorified—past, present, and future—and what begins with God’s grace in justification, I am convinced it ends in God’s glory, glorification. It’s so marvelous!

Tonight I want to look at the subject of justification, verses 1-9. Let me just give you a quick definition of what that word means. It means that God declares a believing sinner to be righteous. Now, we could break down that definition a little further and expand it a little bit, but I

think it's important for you to understand Bible words. What does it mean? It's a forensic term, a legal term. It's used in the law courts where you're declared to be righteous. God declares the believing sinner to be righteous, and He does it based on the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross. This is what's known as the doctrine of justification—how we can be just and righteous before God. The whole epistle of Romans is about that one subject of how we can be right before God, and it's clearly taught there that we're justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The background and setting is so important in these verses, before we begin to unpack them. Why did Paul begin to speak about this subject in Philippians 3, especially in verses 1-9? Here's the answer: He wanted to warn the believers in Philippi against false teachers. The false teachers, most likely, we can't be absolutely dogmatic but it's pretty clear from the text, it's implied, were what are known as Judaizers, a Jew who was professing to be a Christian but was a legalist in that he was telling Gentiles, non-Jews, that in order to be a Christian, they had to proselytize into Judaism by the rite of circumcision, by keeping Mosaic laws, and following dietary standards. They were Judaizing Gentiles. Most of us here tonight, I'm assuming, are Gentiles, so if they were here they'd say, "Look, you can't be a Christian unless you become a Jew. You have to proselytize into Judaism," which involved the rite of circumcision, the rite of keeping the Mosaic law, and keeping dietary laws and regulations. They were on a Judaizing mission.

If you make a note of Acts 15, you can read that the early church in dealing with this problem gathered together with all of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem to determine what the Gentiles' relationship had to be to the law of God in order to be saved. The early Christians were Jews. As God began to save Gentiles, they believed that they had to become Jews in order to be saved, so the Christian movement in the early years was in danger of being a Jewish sect. Paul the Apostle has to stand up very, very powerfully against this doctrine and this legalistic teaching.

Judaizers aren't dead, they're still with us today. They may not be called Judaizers, but they are legalists, "You can't be a Christian unless you are baptized," and that's one of the most clear carryovers of what Paul's talking about here. "You can't be a Christian unless you abstain from eating certain foods," or "You can't be a Christian unless you worship on special days," or "You can't be a Christian unless you get a haircut." When I got saved I had long hair and a big beard. I went to work for Campus Crusade for Christ. It's kind of a conservative ministry, and I had a big beard and long hair. I was a hippie. They didn't think I was saved because of the way I looked. I actually said, "Well, I think I look more like Jesus than you do." They were always, "When are you going to cut your hair? When are you going to get saved, hippie boy?" They thought because of the length of my hair that I could not be a Christian, and really that's kind of another subtle form of legalism. We have dress codes and other regulations and standards we develop that we want to impose on others that we feel like, "This is what's necessary in order to be saved." Legalism is not dead, it is with us to this day.

There are two main divisions to verses 1-9. In verses 1-6, Paul is going to talk about salvation

by pointing out negatively you cannot be saved by good works or by the keeping of the law; in verses 7-9, he's going to say, "But we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ." It's very simple, but not simplistic. It's simple but simply profound. In verses 1-6, we're not saved by the law or by legalism; and we're going to see, verses 7-9, we're saved by faith in Jesus Christ by faith and faith alone.

The first thing Paul does is tell us we're not saved by works of the law. Let's read verses 1-6. Paul says, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 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," and then he lists his spiritual pedigree, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Paul uses his own life to show them though he had all the things going for him as far as his religious pedigree is concerned, that could not save or justify him before a holy God.

Let me break these six verses down. First of all, verses 1-3, Paul warns against false teachers. Go back with me and notice verse 1 is the necessity of the warning. "Finally, my brethren," he uses the word "finally," but it doesn't mean he's ending his letter. It actually is the phrase that he would use for "for the rest," or "for the conclusion," but it's not coming to an end because in Philippians 4:8 he used the same word again.

I sometimes tell pastors that when you're preaching, be careful. Don't say, "For my final point," and not make it your final point. One time I was preaching years ago and said, "For my last point," and then went onto three other points. Believe it or not, someone came up really mad at me. He said, "You lied!" I said, "I lied? What did I say?" "You said your final point and did two more after that." It really cured me. I try my best not to tell people when I'm going to close, I just close—you'll find out when it happens. Don't you hate it when you're flying in an airplane and the pilot says, "Prepare for landing," and you put your seat back up and your stuff away and you don't land for another 45 minutes? It's like, "Would you please land this thing? I could've been sleeping this whole time." When a preacher says, "I'm going to stop," he needs to stop so he doesn't lose the people.

Paul says, "Finally, my brethren," he's speaking to the believers in Philippi which were near and dear to his heart and then makes this amazing statement, "rejoice in the Lord." We know that in Philippians that's the theme—rejoicing in the Lord or the joy of the Lord—but in the context here of Philippians 3, Paul is saying it, and I don't think we very often discover this, in light of the contrast with the legalists or Judaizers which rejoice in themselves. We're rejoicing in the Lord as opposed to not rejoicing in our righteousness or our good deeds or our legalistic works or our religion. Our joy is not in circumstances, Philippians 1, our joy is not in people, Philippians 2, our joy is in Jesus, Philippians 3. Amen? Our rejoicing is always in the Lord. That's in opposition to rejoicing in my rites or my rituals or my religious works or my religious deeds or

my righteous acts. I'm rejoicing in what Jesus has done for me in saving me by His grace.

Paul says, "To wrote the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous." The word "grievous" means burdensome or irksome. As a pastor, it wasn't a problem, burden, or chore for Paul to repeat the warning against false teachers because he says, "...but for you it is safe." In verse 2, we see the nature of the warning, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." That is a warning three times, "...beware...beware...beware," against false teachers.

I've been preaching a long time and it hasn't changed. It's actually gotten worse. Whenever a pastor warns about false teachers, someone gets upset. "You shouldn't name other religions," "You shouldn't name people you don't like," or "You shouldn't say that," or "That's critical," or "That's judgmental. We should love and accept everyone," but Jesus said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." He used the phrase in a sense of critical, fault-finding, censorious, judgmental attitude. I could never judge a person's motive, but we are also to be discerning about truth.

One of the primary jobs of a pastor is not only positively teach the truth of God's Word but to warn God's people about false doctrine. A shepherd, which is what the word pastor means, not only feeds the sheep, but he protects the sheep. One of the ways he protects the sheep is by protecting them from the wolves. The false prophets come on the scene, they are to be exposed and revealed as that. Again, I can't judge their motive, but we can discern doctrine. Jesus said, "...neither cast ye your pearls before swine," how can we know to do that or not to do that if we don't make a decision or a judgment, "Are they pigs or are they sheep?" We need to be discerning, so we need to be able to warn against false doctrine, against false teachers.

When Paul met with the elders at Ephesus in Miletus, Acts 20, he said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in...not sparing the flock," they'll devour the church, and some "...of your own selves shall men arise." There's a constant need for a pastor to both preach the positive truths of God's Word and to also warn against the false teachers. Some pastors only warn about false teachings and never teach the truth of God's Word. That's a big mistake. Some preachers just teach the truth of God's Word and never warn, a big mistake. It's interesting in the book of Nehemiah that when they were building the walls and battling against Sanballat and Tobiah, the enemies of God who tried to hinder the wall being built, that Nehemiah actually had the builders have a trowel in one hand, as they would lay in the mortar and brick in building the wall, and in the other hand they had a sword. We are to build and we're to battle, that's the job; and you as well, speaking the truth in love, need to warn people about false doctrine and teachings.

Notice Paul calls them "dogs." The word "beware" means to be on the lookout. In the grammar of the Greek there, it's constantly, continually, ongoingly looking out. It's an imperative which is a command, and it's in the present tense, which means you're commanded to be constantly aware and be looking. The word "beware" means lookout for these three things: dogs, evil workers, and the concision. Some feel that Paul is talking about three different groups of false teachers, but most likely he's talking about one group and gives them three different descriptions. The word "dogs" speaks of their character. It's interesting that these were Jews

telling Gentiles, "You have to become Jews in order to be saved," and why that's interesting is because the Jews actually called Gentiles dogs. You talk about racial prejudice. No racial prejudice that I can determine in history was any greater than the hatred of Jews for Gentiles, and even Gentiles for the Jews, but the Jews hated Gentiles. They actually believed that God only created Gentiles for fuel for the fires of hell, that they're only made to fodder the fires of hell and cannot be saved, so they were called dogs.

Dogs in the Bible...this is not saying, "Beware of dogs. Go home and get rid of your dogs tonight." Oh, no. I love my dog. Dogs in Bible days were just a term used for evil people or for people who weren't saved or people who were opposing God. Dogs in Bible days were not domesticated. They were wild scavengers that were despised. Their character is described there. It's interesting because they're Jews telling Gentiles to become Jews in order to be saved is watch out for these dogs.

I detect a little bit of sarcasm here, and I have to admit there have been times I've used a little sarcasm. Whenever I do, that's when I really get in trouble. It's bad enough to warn about false teachers, but if I get a little sarcastic, people come unglued with that. I think it's seen in the prophets in the Old Testament when Elijah mocked the prophets of Baal. That was prophetic sanctified sarcasm, and it was awesome. I loved it. I'll stop there. I won't tell you what he said, it's pretty cool.

Verse 2, "...beware of evil workers," that's their conduct. Their number one thing was circumcision. Paul says they run around with a big sharp knife. That's all they want to think about, talk about, and do in order to bring you into Judaism, rather than finding your salvation in Christ through faith alone. Beware of them. They're doing an evil work. There are evil workers today. As I've said, I'll mention it a few times. They try to tell you, "You're not saved. You haven't been baptized," or "You're not saved because you haven't been baptized in Jesus' name only," or "You've been baptized with the wrong formula," or "...baptized by the wrong person," or "You're not saved because you worship on the wrong day," or "You're not saved because you eat certain foods." They are evil workers.

Also in verse 2, "...beware of the concision." Here's where Paul really gets down. The word "concision" means the mutilators. It literally means those who mutilate the flesh, and it's an allusion to the circumcision that they were so adamant about. That is their creed. Their character, they're dogs; their conduct, they're evil workers; their creed, it's not Christ, it's circumcision. They're called the concision or the mutilators.

In verse 3, notice the reason for the warning. Paul says, "For we are," now what this is is a contrast between verses 2 and 3, the false teachers, "...dogs...evil workers...concision," with the genuine, the real or the authentic. I've always thought it was a beautiful description of a true Christian in verse 3, "For we are the circumcision," he just mentions that they're of the concision or the mutilators of the flesh, but "...we are the circumcision." What he's saying there is that we're the true children of God and that circumcision is a spiritual work that God does on the heart. The Bible speaks about circumcising your heart. When you are born again, there's a

sense in which this is a spiritual surgery that God does on your heart, and that's a description of a true Christian. We're not physically Jews, we're not the children of Abraham in that sense, but we are spiritually in a sense that we are the true circumcision. It's another way of saying, simply stated, that we're the true Christians.

Now, look at this description. It's threefold. We, "...worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus," that's why he said in verse 1, "...rejoice in the Lord," and we "...have no confidence in the flesh." Again, this is a great description of a true Christian. Let's look at it. We, "...worship God in the spirit." This is opposed to ceremonialism and external religion. We don't necessarily have to worship God with rites or rituals or big cathedrals. We worship God in spirit. Now "the spirit," there can either be the Holy Spirit or the human spirit. Most good Bible scholars believe, and I do as well, that it's a reference to both—we worship in the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, and then we worship in the human spirit as opposed to physical, external, emotional worship. Remember Jesus when He met with the woman at the well in John 4? He said, "...the true worshipers shall worship...in spirit and in truth." A true Christian has spiritual worship to God not just rites and rituals.

Secondly, "...and rejoice in Christ Jesus," again, it's so simple. If you believe that you're going to go to Heaven or you're saved by religious rites or rituals or ordinances or sacraments, then you're rejoicing in your own righteousness or your self or your flesh. You're not rejoicing in Jesus. If you believe that you're a sinner saved by grace, it's all the work of God's grace, then to Him be all the praise, glory, and honor to God because He saves you by grace, so you're worshipping, you're rejoicing in Christ Jesus as opposed to your own achievements. This is reinforced in the third statement, "...and have no confidence in the flesh." Isn't that beautiful? That is a three-fold description of a Christian. He worships God in spirit, rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh.

Paul now warns against false confidence. He says, "...have no confidence in the flesh," and what he does in verses 4-6 is uses himself as an example of, "If you could trust in yourself to get to Heaven, I'm your boy." This is the way I like to paraphrase this section. Have you ever tried to witness to somebody that's really religious? You say, "Hey, you need Jesus." "What do you mean I need Jesus, I've been baptized." "Are you saved?" "Yes, I'm saved. I go to certain church here, I go to certain church there." Billy Graham once asked somebody, "Are you a Christian?" He replied, "No, thank God, I'm a Baptist." I've asked people before, "Are you a Christian?" I think of one lady I asked, "Are you a Christian?" She said, "I'm Roman Catholic." I said, "I didn't ask if you were a Roman Catholic or what religious affiliation or denomination, are you a Christian?" "I'm a Catholic." People don't always even understand what it means to be a Christian.

Paul says, "If anyone can be saved by their religion, I'm your boy." When you're talking to somebody that's very religious, someone that thinks their good deeds, their religion, their righteous works, their rites or rituals are going to get them to Heaven, this is a great passage because Paul is basically saying, "If anyone could get to Heaven by being good, if anyone could get to Heaven by being religious, if anyone could get to Heaven by being a religious individual, I

would be it," but he's going to go on to say, "None of it has any avail for righteousness or salvation." He says, verse 4, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh," here's what I was trying to point out, "I more." In other words, "If anyone could get to Heaven by being good, I'm your boy. I'm your man," "I more." Then, he lists for us what he had going. You think you're righteous? You think you're religious? You think you're good enough to go to Heaven? Listen to what Paul had going for him.

Verse 5, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." If the Jews were listening to that, they'd start clapping, "Wow!" Paul could take a bow, "Thank you. Thank you very much. I'm pretty amazing." We run into people like this all the time, "I've been this," I've been that." I do this. I do that. I have this going for me. I'm this race. I'm this religion. I do these rites. I do these rituals," and they're boasting in themselves. That's what Paul is saying here, "If anyone could get to Heaven by being good, it would be me." Paul talks about that so clearly in the passage.

Let me break it down. Paul says, "I was proud of my ritual," "Circumcised the eighth day," what does he mean by that? The Judaizers were circumcising men as adults proselyting them into Judaism. Paul says, "I was born Jewish," because at eight days old the little boys would be circumcised. That's the rite of the Jew. He says, "I was born into this religion." Secondly, verse 5, he was proud of his relationship, "...of the stock of Israel." In the Old Testament we have the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, but not the God of Esau, so he was of the stock of Israel who would be his father, Jacob. He was pure.

Thirdly, verse 5, Paul was proud of his respectabilities. He had ritual, he had right relationship, he was of the stock of Israel, he was respectable, "...of the tribe of Benjamin." Benjamin was considered the most respectable tribe of all the twelve tribes of Israel. It was the last of the twelve sons born to Jacob through his beloved wife Rachel, Benjamin. Israel's first king, Saul, was a Benjamite. Paul was named after him. Jerusalem was located in the tribal area assigned to the tribe of Benjamin, and when the nation of Israel would go out in battle, Benjamin had the place of honor by being in the front of the battle, Judges 5. In the divided kingdom, Benjamin stayed loyal to King David and to the tribe of Judah. Basically, it means, "I'm of a respectable tribe, the Benjamite tribe."

Fourthly, verse 5, notice Paul was proud of his race. There's a lot of that going around today. "...an Hebrew of the Hebrews." What does that mean? The Jews could either follow Hebrew culture or they could follow Greek culture. They were ethnically Jews, racially Jews, but they could be hellenized because of the Greek influence of the world and they weren't Jewish. They were Jews who weren't Jewish. We have people like that today. They're racially Jews, but they were Hellenistic Jews, hellenized by the Greek culture. If you were a super Jew, you were a "...Hebrew of the Hebrews," in other words you're hard core, "I'm a full-on Hebrew. I don't mess around with this other stuff." It's so very clear that Paul was proud of his race.

Fifthly, Paul was proud of his religion, "...a Pharisee." Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jewish religion. No one more religious, no one more holy, no one more devoted to keeping every jot and tittle of the law—the moral law, the ceremonial law—than a Pharisee. The word "Pharisee" literally means separate ones. They separated themselves from everyone else and lived only to keep the law. In Galatians 1:14, Paul says, "And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." Paul had religion. He's talking about his Saul of Tarsus days. This would be like Nicodemus, John 3, who was a very religious teacher of the Jews that needed to be born again.

Notice, verse 6, Paul was proud of his reputation, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church," I used to persecute Christians. He was zealous. He was proud of his righteousness as well, "...touching the righteousness which is in the law," this is pretty mind-blowing, "blameless." We know from Romans that eventually he realized that the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," is what convicted and slew him, that attitude sin. "As far as keeping the law," he says, "Man, I'm your boy. If anyone could get to Heaven, I'd be it." Paul's going to go on to make it clear that these things according to the flesh could not save, so it is confidence in the flesh, which is to be repudiated.

In verses 7-9, Paul wraps it up. He talks about how we have to have faith in Jesus Christ, "But what things were gain to me," he just listed them, the Jewish pedigree according to the flesh, verses 5-6. Those were the things that were gain to him. Those were on his "plus" column of his ledger. "...those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung," refuse, "that I may win Christ," and I love it, verse 9, "And be found in him," there's our term for justification, "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law," which he just described in verses 5 and 6, "but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Every time I read these words, I just want to praise the Lord that God has made salvation available to anyone because it's faith in Christ. I don't have to be born a Jew. I don't have to have certain rites and rituals. I don't have to perform perfectly. I don't have to have kept the law perfectly. All I have to do is look to Jesus and be saved—put my faith and trust in Him who died for me and His finished work upon the cross.

Paul now tells us how to be right with God. First of all, if you're taking notes, it's by rejecting self-righteousness. Notice in verse 7 he esteemed his gains as loss. He says, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Notice the phrase "gain," "counted," and "loss." Paul is opening the books of his life. He's a financial fellow here, and he's looking at the "plus" column and the "negative" column. To the "plus" side he says, "Now, I put them over into the "negative" side. Those things that were according to the flesh, which I thought were so important, where I put all my faith, where I put all my stock, now I have to transfer over to my "loss" column." He's kind of being an accountant here, these are financial terms, when he actually looks at his life and adds up the books of his life.

Notice also that Paul esteemed his gains as refuse. I'm going to bounce around just a bit and then come back. Notice verse 8, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things," and this is what Paul counted his religious pedigree, "and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." I don't know what translation of the Bible you have, I'm reading from the King James. He uses the word "dung." I think that's pretty clear, but some translations have "refuse," garbage, and some free modern translations have manure. That's what he's talking about. He says, "That religious pedigree, as far as God is concerned, is a pile of manure." Wow! That's pretty radical, yet people are trusting in that to get them to Heaven. They're trusting in their righteousness. How sad. How tragic.

Notice, Paul also rejected his own righteousness. I love it, verse 9, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law," you either trust in your righteousness or you trust in the righteousness of Christ given to you as a free gift by faith. There's only two ways to get to Heaven, and only one will get you to Heaven. Either you get yourself there by your own works, it's a religion of works; or you get to Heaven by Christ who saves you and redeems you by His grace and by His mercy. Either God saves us or we save ourselves. We don't save ourselves with the help of God, working together.

Notice Paul also accepted Christ's righteousness. Look at verse 8. He wanted to know Christ. It says, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss," and notice this phrase, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He wanted to know Jesus as Lord. Someone said, "He did not exchange one religion for another, he exchanged religion for relationship with Jesus Christ." Christianity is a person, it's not a religion. Paul wasn't a religious Jew who became a religious Christian, he abandoned his religion for a relationship, "That I may know him." In the next chapter he's going to go on to say, "That I might know him and be found in him, and I want to pursue him. I want to know Him in sanctification." Here it's a personal relationship, and that's the basis of our justification—we know Him.

Remember when Paul, who was Saul, was converted on the road to Damascus and the Lord struck him to the earth and he saw the great light and the voice from Heaven, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" What did Saul say? "Who art thou, Lord?" He knew that he was encountering the Lord. He wanted a relationship with Christ. It wasn't a religion. He won Christ, verse 8, "...that I may win Christ." The reason for the rejection of self-righteousness was to win Christ in salvation. You don't just get things from Christ, you get Christ. When you become a Christian, you are given the righteousness of Christ. Christ is in your heart. Christ is your righteousness. "For in him we live, and move, and have our being," it's all Jesus Christ. That's why we fall in love with Jesus, right? That's why we worship Him, serve Him, and live for Him. It's all Jesus.

People trying to be religious and good enough to go to Heaven and Paul says, "I came to find out that it's all about Christ." He wanted to be found in Christ, I love that, verse 9, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He won Christ, was found in Christ,

and he possessed the righteousness of Christ.

This is like many other verses in the New Testament but so clear. The clear teaching of Scripture that our only hope of righteousness is by faith in Christ alone. This is why we use the expression that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. It's by God's grace, it's by your faith in Christ. "In Christ," that's the key. It's not your religion, not your water baptism, not circumcision, religious deeds, church attendance, righteous acts, communion, confirmation, or catechism. It's Christ. Christ, and Christ alone, can save you from sin.

Notice how clear it is when Paul says, "...but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Whoever believes in Him, that's faith. Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." So, it's not religious rites, verses 1-3; it's not self-confidence, verses 4-6; it's faith in Christ alone.

Remember when Jesus told the parable in Luke 18? It's called the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. Do you know why He told that parable? Because there were people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and they despised others, which is one of the tragic outgrowths of legalism. Do you know what happens to a legalist? He begins to look down his nose at other people. "Why, if you were as righteous as me, you wouldn't drink that, you wouldn't eat that, you wouldn't do that, you wouldn't listen to that music, you wouldn't do this or do that," and we have our legalistic sins. When you are putting yourself up, you actually put other people down to make yourself look good.

Jesus said, "Let me tell you a story. There were two men that went to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee," like Paul, "the other was a publican," not a republican, a publican. They're sinners, too. "The Pharisee started to pray. He said, 'God, I thank You that I'm not like other men,'" what a great way to start your prayer. How'd you like to be in church on Sunday and the person sitting next to you says, "God, I thank You that I'm not like this sinner next to me right now, wicked, vile, wretched, horrible sinner!" That's what he was doing, and probably the publican, which was the tax collector, they were synonymous as sinners, could hear the dude pray, "I thank You that I'm not like this wicked sinner. I give tithes of all that I possess. I fast twice a week," and probably thought people were clapping, "Wooo! You're awesome! Somebody get that guy a brownie button." He was boasting about his righteousness, and then Jesus said, "The other guy who was the publican would not even look up but beat on his chest," and started beating on his chest and said these words, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." That's all he said.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That word "poor" means abject poverty. It was used of a beggar that was so contrite that he would beg by reaching out his hand, covering his face, and looking down, asking for alms, he was so ashamed. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." He just said, "God, be

merciful to me a sinner.” Then, Jesus said, “Which of those two men left church that day justified?” He made it clear that it was the man who confessed his sin, the humble man. Don’t boast on your righteousness or your goodness or your good works, but cry out like the penitent publican, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” Let’s pray.