

What Is Your Confidence In ?

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Date: 27 September 2020

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- [0 : 0 0] Thank you for having me back again. It's been a pleasure to fellowship with you the last few Sundays. And now that I'm back from London, it's good to be plugged into a church.
- I've not been in six months. I came back on the 23rd of March, so it's been a long time since I've been in church. So, yeah, it's great to be coming and to be sharing the Word of God with you.
- I wonder if we can read, I believe it will be on the screen, Philippians chapter 3. Philippians chapter 3, I'm reading from the ESV. Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.
- To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh.
- For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ. And put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also.
- [1 : 0 6] If anyone else thinks that he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.
- But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss, because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.
- For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, in order that I might gain Christ. And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.
- That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.
- Can we just pray for God's word? Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that it is a two-edged sword, that it separates bones and sinew, that it separates what we think we are, from what we actually are, Lord.
- [2 : 3 6] And Father, I pray you would give me words, that what I would say is what you would say, and that Lord, you would come, and by your spirit move among us, as we think of next week, Lord, that the people were cut to the heart, when they heard the word.
- Lord, we pray that that same power, would come in today, cutting, healing, and restoring. And Lord, we do pray that, your word would be mighty and powerful, in Jesus' name, amen.
- I want to start with a question this morning. What do you put your confidence in? In times like these, we're asked to put our confidence in quite a lot of things, actually.
- We're asked to put our confidence in our government, that they've got their best interest in mind, that, you know, we're confident that what they're doing is the right thing for us. We're asked to put our confidence in the media, to say that what they're reporting is the right thing, what they're reporting is true and reliable.

In fact, the Inverness Courier had an article on the 11th of May this year, just after the virus had started to spread, and it says, it was an article called, The News You Can Trust.

[3 : 51] Essentially, it was an article going through all the reasons why you should be sceptical of an article, obviously looking at the headline, looking at the content, looking who wrote it, where did it come from, all of those sort of things, just to make sure that you didn't get duped.

But I'm sure they wouldn't want you to do that to their newspaper, would they? And the idea of fake news has been around even a lot longer than that. The idea of fake news has been around for years now, that what we're being told is not always what is true.

But even in that sense, you know, being confident in a world power or being confident in a newspaper, the pale in comparison to eternal things, to things of an eternal nature and things about heaven.

And then the big questions of where do you put your confidence when it comes to heaven? When it comes to eternal life, not just physical life, eternal life, where do you put your confidence?

Imagine the scene, as it were, if you were to stand before God, if you were to get before God and God was to turn to you and to say, so tell me, why should I let you in here?

[5 : 08] Why should I allow you through these doors into my heaven? What would your response be? What would you think and then what would you actually say if God asked you that question?

And that's what I want to think about from our passage this morning. I want to think about three areas that we can find in our passage. Being good is no good.

Instead, be found in Christ. And then thirdly, beware and believe. So in verse four, we're going to start in the middle of our passage, in verse four of Philipians chapter three, being good is no good.

When it comes to thinking about getting into heaven, a lot of people have that idea in their head. They have the scales and on one side, it's all the good things they've done, all the things that they've done for charity, all the things they've done for the homeless, all the things that they've done for their families.

You know, I've done good things. And on the other side, there's bad things, the things when they've done that were selfish, the things that they've done that were mean, the things that they said that were mean. And then they say, well, I've probably done significantly more good things than I have done bad things.

[6 : 26] So in that sense, I should get into heaven, right? I should get into heaven because my good things outweigh my bad things. And, you know, I don't want to say anything about people being altruistic or people who have good, moral, upstanding behaviour.

You know, being a member of a growing community and a place, an urban community like Bellsill, it's essential that we have people who are willing to do good, who are willing to be good citizens and obey the law and those sort of things.

If not, we would have total anarchy. But is that enough for heaven? Is being good enough for heaven? In verse 4 of our passage, Paul is ready to challenge anyone that thinks they can get into heaven by their good behaviour.

In fact, he even says if anyone even thinks they have a reason for confidence in the flesh, which is to say that they can do it themselves, then Paul, I have more.

So let's just go through some of his credentials, as it were, his CV, and let's examine Paul's claim that if someone says I'm good enough for heaven, Paul says I'm even better in that respect.

- [7 : 45] So first of all, he says he was circumcised the eighth day. Now circumcision is obviously something that we know of from Judaism. It's something that Abraham was asked to do.
- We'll come back to that in a wee minute. But it says that he was circumcised the eighth day. Now, I'm pretty sure as great as the Apostle Paul was, he wasn't walking by eight days old.
- What I can say is that he came from a faithful family. He came from a family that took him to the temple or the synagogue and got him circumcised on the eighth day, the day that it was supposed to take place, the day that it was meant to take place.
- He was circumcised according to the law. Jesus was the same. Jesus was taken up to the temple. He was circumcised according to the law.
- But that's not enough. He may be saying, you know, my mum and dad were believers. They did the correct rituals at the right time.
- [8 : 51] They did the right things that I was supposed to do for religious ceremony. Perhaps we could think that's similar to maybe a Roman Catholic family.
- You know, they have the rituals of baptism. They have the rituals of their first confession, their first communion. They do them all at exactly the right time. They do them all in exactly the right place.
- But Paul says, it's not enough to do things, to have a good family upbringing and to do things in the right place. It's not enough. Then next, Paul says, I'm of the people of Israel.
- Now, we may say, well, you know, I was born in the right country. I was born in a country which gives me opportunities, which gives me comfort and support.
- But for Paul to say, I'm of the people of Israel, was something even more. It was saying, I'm of God's people. I'm of the people of Israel that were chosen by God from all the nations back in Deuteronomy.
- [9 : 58] When God looked at the nations and he says, I'm going to choose Israel, even though they've not got the biggest army, even though they've not got the greatest weapons, even though they're not the best people, I'm going to choose Israel.
- And so, Paul is saying, I was born an Israelite. I was born in God's country. And we may be proud and we may say, well, I was born in Scotland. You know, I was born in a country with a great heritage of the gospel.
- But, again, it's not enough. Even to be born into God's country, even to be born into the elect people of God, it's not enough for heaven.
- He then goes on even further. He narrows it down. He says, I was of the tribe of Benjamin. Now, if you know your Old Testament, you'll know after Solomon ruled as king, then the kingdom of Israel was split in two.
- In the top end, you had the ten tribes of Israel, who was the broken off Israel. And in the bottom, you had Judah. And now in Judah, you have two tribes.
- [11 : 09] Ten plus two, you're twelve. That's your full twelve tribes of Israel. And you had Judah, who were the namesake, and you had Benjamin. Now, in the top end, you had Israel, who were full of idolatry.
- They had never once had a good king. And that's obviously quite evident from even Ahab, Jezebel, and the like. And yet, in the southern kingdom, they had David.
- They had, they could draw their line back to David. They could say that we had Josiah. They could say that we had Jeroboam. We had Jehoshaphat. They could draw back to these good kings, these people who were of upstanding moral fibre.

And he's saying, I come from that line. I don't come from the idolatrous Israelites. I don't come from the Israelites that get taken off into Assyria. I came from the good Israelites, the ones that worship God.

But even then, that's not enough to say, okay, I came from the right family. You know, my family's been Christians for generations. My family has not. I'm the first Christian in my family.

[12 : 17] But if you say, well, my family's been Christians for generations and generations. I come from the right stock. It's still not enough. And then he goes on again and he says, I'm a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

The first Hebrew in the Bible was Abraham. Abraham was called a Hebrew. He was the father of faith. But to be a Hebrew of the Hebrews is to say, both my mum and dad were Hebrews.

They were both of the stock of Israel. We know from Timothy's situation that his mother was a Hebrew but his father was a Greek. There was intermarriage there. Again, he's saying, I came from a strong family, a good family, a family with strong roots to Abraham, to the very father of our faith.

As to the law, a Pharisee, you know, the Pharisees were the people who were uncompromising in their religion, in their practice of the law. In the intertestamental period between Malachi and Matthew, that's when the Pharisees started to come about because there was a lot of Greek thought getting into Jewish thought.

And the Pharisees were the separatists. They said, we're not having anything to do with this Greek stuff. We're going to stick to the Jewish stuff and we're going to make sure that we stick to it. We're going to put laws around about the Torah and around about the laws.

[13 : 36] These were people who were upstanding members of the community on the outside. Even Jesus recognises this. In Matthew 5, verse 20, he says, for I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

These guys looked good on the outside. They said all the right things. They were at the right places. They were doing some of the right things. But as we know from the Gospels, they were all right outwardly, but inwardly, they were dead.

And we must keep that in mind when we think of righteousness. Righteousness is not just something which is outward. Because Paul would again then go on to say, with zeal, I persecuted the church.

I did the right things. You may think about, you know, sharing the right Facebook pages, you know, liking the right posts, saying the right things, standing on the right corners with the right placards.

I was in the right place at the right time. Paul could say that. Paul says, I persecuted the church. The church was a break-off, as he originally saw it, from Judaism. It was going the wrong way.

[14 : 51] It was proclaiming Jesus as God, which was blasphemous. So, he was doing the right thing. And then finally, according to the righteousness of the law, blameless.

No one had any dirt on Paul. He was a model citizen as far as the law went. He was not one who was going to be dragged up and says, well, here's something, here's something, here's something.

It didn't happen. Paul was an upstanding member of the Jewish community. He was a Pharisee. He had all this going for him. a clean sheet, if you like.

You know, there's another gentleman that came to Jesus and he said the same thing about the law. He said to Jesus, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus says to him, have you kept the law?

And he says, from my youth. You know, all the way up, not even a parking fine, as it were, in regards to the law. And so, we've got this CV, if you like, from Paul.

[15 : 58] Here's all the things that he's got that he could say, well, there's what I'm good at, there's what I'm good at, there's what I'm good at. And all this extra brownie points that we could say, well, Paul's got it.

Paul's got everything in place. And now, imagine back in a scene where you've got me and Paul or yourself and Paul and you're standing there before God and God says, only one can get in, the one with the best resume.

And he takes both of us and he looks down and he says, you've done this, this, this, this and this. Oh, no, no, you're Scottish, you're not Israeli. And then he goes down, Paul's. Now, he's going to choose Paul every day over me.

He's going to choose Paul every day and twice on a Sunday over me. And yet, what is Paul's reaction to this?

Is Paul going in there flashing his CV as you like and saying, look how much I've done for Jesus? No. In verse number seven, he says, whatever gain I had, I counted it as loss for the sake of Christ.

[17 : 17] All of these extra brownie points, all of these things that Paul could have stood on and had confidence in, he says, no, whatever gain, whatever profit I made from those things, I counted in the lost column.

I counted in the deficits so that I might have Christ. And that's where he moves to. He moves from this, the works things to being found in Christ.

And he says, I count everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. For his sake, I suffer the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.

He gives up all of this prestige, he gives up all of these elaborate things that would say, you know, Paul's got it and he says, I just want to know Jesus. And this isn't just about knowing about Jesus, this isn't knowing facts that Jesus lived sometime around about zero, or this isn't knowing about who Jesus even was, like, you know, what he did and the things that he went about and said.

In fact, this is knowing Jesus in a very intimate sense. It goes all the way back to Eden. In fact, it says that Adam knew his wife and they bore a son.

[18 : 44] There's a very intimate sense in which knowing Jesus is being connected to Jesus, it's being in relationship with Jesus. And Paul says, I gave up all of that in order to have relationship with Jesus.

Not only does he give it up, but he gives it a value. He gives a value judgment on what he has given up. He says, I count them as rubbish. Now, that word in rubbish has been sanitized for us because it actually means sewage, feces, something of that ilk.

Now, I don't know which one of us is going to take some sewage and put it in our trophy cabinet, but that's what Paul is essentially saying. All these things that would have went in my trophy cabinet, all these things that would have been held up as being the things that I should look to and be confident in, I count as sewage.

They're nothing compared to knowing Jesus. So why is Paul leaving all this behind to be found in Jesus?

Why is he leaving all of his good works? Because by only being found in Jesus, can he have a righteousness which is not of his own, but a righteousness by faith.

[20 : 09] Now, remember that passage I quoted from Matthew, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, you by no means will enter heaven. This is the righteousness that is talked about.

It's not an outward righteousness, it's not about just doing the right things, it's not just about being in the right place at the right time, this is an inner righteousness, this is something which comes in and changes us from the inside out.

And it's only possible because of Jesus, you know, even Paul himself would say that he who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God, that we might have a right standing before God, not based on anything that we've done, but based on the work of Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ lived a perfect life, and because he died on the cross as a sacrifice, we can have faith in him, our confidence can be in him, and by knowing him, we can have eternal life.

Because that's what Paul goes on to say, he goes on to say that because of this righteousness, because I know Jesus, and I'm found in Jesus, that I may share in the power of his resurrection.

We know that Jesus was risen from the dead after three days, he was crucified, buried, and rose again according to the scriptures. But Paul is saying because of Jesus' righteousness, because I am found in Jesus, because I know Jesus on that intimate level, I am able to partake in the resurrection from the dead.

[22 : 01] Death is not the end for me. Death is not the end for my life, because I have life in Jesus. And that I may know, that I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

now that word attain almost sounds again like Paul saying, I earned it, I attained this, I got my resurrection because of something I done. In fact, if we were to look at the word in its Greek language, we would see that it actually means arrived.

It's used quite a lot in Acts to talk about Paul arriving somewhere at a port or in a form of transport, Paul arrived in the city. And so Paul is actually saying he is waiting, he is hoping, he is longing, for when the resurrection appears, when Christ who has his life, he would say in another letter, appears and he shall be like him.

And this is the reason that Paul discounts all of the things that he has. This is the reason that Paul puts them all to the side and says, I just want Jesus.

Because only by having Jesus and by having faith in Jesus, can we know true everlasting life? Can we know what it's like to have fullness of life?

[23 : 28] And can we know what it's like to have eternal life with God in heaven? And so why would Paul be saying all of this?

We started in the middle of our passage in verse four. Let's go back to the start then and look at the reason why Paul is being so adamant about that we need to have faith in Christ, not in our works.

Back at the start we have in verse two, look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. Now these were people who were the Judaizers they were called, and they were adding things to the gospel.

We find them in Acts chapter 15 they wanted to say that in order to be saved, in order to get into heaven and have the righteousness of God, you had to believe in Jesus but you also had to keep the laws, you had to be circumcised, you had to do all the things that the law prescribed in order to get into heaven.

And Paul is saying beware of these people, beware of those who come and add things to the gospel, beware of those who come and say you need to believe in Jesus, and do this, and join our church, and keep away from this thing, or and read this thing.

[24 : 55] There is nothing we have to add to Jesus because it's righteousness that is more full than doing all the things. Beware lest anyone take you captive, he would say to the Colossians.

Beware unless anyone would dupe you into thinking that you need to do this in order to know Jesus. In fact, he would say to the Galatians, why has it been so soon that you're believing another gospel?

The Galatians were taken into this consideration that they had to get circumcised, they had to keep the law of Moses. And in fact, Paul goes, this is another gospel, this isn't from God, this isn't about Jesus, this is about someone else, that you're keeping the law, that you're doing the things in order to be saved.

This is another gospel. And we need to beware of those people who would come in, who would say to us, if you want to get to heaven, you need to be a good person, if you want to get to heaven, you need to do this, you need to do that.

No, Paul would say no, God would say no, in order to get into heaven, in order to be saved and have life eternal, you need to put your faith in the Lord Jesus and know him and have faith in him because he is the only one who will give you enough righteousness to get into heaven.

[26 : 28] And then to sum up, he says we are the circumcision who worship God by the spirit, glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

We are the circumcision. We've already thought about circumcision as removing flesh from the body, but in fact, the idea of circumcision is a circumcision of the heart.

God would say that in Deuteronomy through Moses that circumcision is not something that is done to the physical flesh, but instead is done to our hearts. It's something that God takes something away from our hearts, and that's our sin.

He removes it through faith in Christ. In fact, Colossians would again say that this is something which is not done with hands. This is something which is not done in the physical, but in fact, God does it.

I would put this in the same category and actually say it is the thing of regeneration. God enlivening us, making us alive again through the power of Christ.

[27 : 37] And it also means that we're able to live for God. It means that we're able to do the good things, not just out of trying to get to heaven, but because we can do them through a sincere heart, a good conscience.

We can be God's people in God's place and do the right things, but we do them for the right reasons. We do them because God has saved us. We do them because Jesus Christ has died for us, not in order so that these things might happen.

And we do them by the Spirit of God. We don't do it in our own power. We don't do it by the things that are mustering up these good works. We do it by the Spirit of God because the Spirit of God comes in and dwells us.

He comes and lives inside us and abides with us as Jesus promised. That if we are in Christ, then Christ is in us. If we abide in the vine, then we are the branches and we bear fruit.

glory in Christ Jesus. Let him who glories glory in the Lord. We put no thing on us that says we are saved because of something we did.

[28 : 42] We are saved because we are great, because God had to choose us because of something that we are. No, we glory in the Lord Jesus. We glory in Jesus Christ because he's the only one who's worthy of glory.

He's the only one who's worthy of praise. And then finally, the sum up of the whole thing, put no confidence in the flesh. There is nothing in this body that can do anything for God.

There is nothing in this body that can be anything for God apart from God himself, apart from God coming in and changing me, God coming in and giving me new life.

There is nothing that I can do to get myself into heaven. There's nothing I can do to save myself. I fall solely on the grace and the mercy of God.

So we've looked at being good is no good. We've considered that we need to be found in Christ and we need to beware and we need to believe that Jesus is the only thing that will get us into heaven.

[29 : 50] He is our confidence. Our confidence is on him, not on us. I want to show you