

/// Confidence in the Flesh

Philippians 3:2 – 6

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~ Many people believe if they are good people, who do and say good things, then they are going to Heaven. Most people would say that having a good attitude, feeding the hungry, and having a rightly motivated heart are the basis for their salvation. Others believe that we improve ourselves just by trying to be better people. Well, that self-help type of blah is an erroneous philosophy. The road of being a do-gooder with best intentions leads straight to hell. Not everyone will go to Heaven. Good works are not part of the determining factor of whether we go to Heaven. And, further, we will never improve ourselves by trying harder to be better people. So, what are we to do?

The greatest revolution that ever took place on the face of the earth — the conversion of the apostle Paul on the Damascus Road — is our example for that answer. Prior to his conversion, Paul had been a Pharisee, he would have been very rich — as all Pharisees were, he was as religious as any other man in the temple, he hated and wanted to kill and eliminate anyone who infringed on the Mosaic System of Jewish religion and called themselves a Christian. Well, it was in that moment Jesus appeared to Paul and changed Paul's bookkeeping system forever. Those things that had once edified Paul's life as a Judaeizer and religious ruler — and it was a very big total, friends — were suddenly of no value — all of Paul's assets instantly became liabilities. Revolution doesn't get any more revolutionary than that....

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

~ In the Old Testament, dogs were false shepherds and false prophets who neglected to warn the flock. A dog spoke of those who claimed to be of God, but failed to feed the flock a proper, correct and complete diet. As a result, the flocks died. Isaiah warned the people against false prophets in his day. The false prophets were constantly comforting the children of Israel instead of giving them the warning about going into captivity. Isaiah said the watchmen were blind, they were all ignorant dumb dogs. That's

Isaiah chapter fifty-six verse ten, by the way. That was the danger then, and it is the danger in our affluent society today. Comfort is the last word with the saints today; and, apparently, everyone votes that we all deserve to be comforted and have peace – although few are able to deliver it. Well, some people don't need messages of comfort – some need the alarming message of a dire warning.

Jesus said, *“give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you....”* This is strong teaching, friends. You might want to read this report again after you complete it. This is very important for any genuine saint to comprehend succinctly. Don't you want to hear the truth; because this condemnation accounts categorically for denominations, versions of the Bible and all manner of religious interpretation. This is critical to understand....

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:

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.

~ How much confidence do you have in your flesh, friends? What would happen if your flesh didn't cooperate and refused to get up and go to work? Paul had not done anything wrong, and he didn't deserve to be in prison. I pray the Holy Spirit will reveal the gravity of this last passage to everyone. Some sections of Scripture don't need much commentary, and some go beyond being explained. This is one of them; so, I'm keeping it short. Paul had parents who were faithful to the Mosaic Law, and they had raised him as such. That was the right thing to do at that time, of course. Paul, or Saul of Tarsus, had been circumcised on the eighth day according

to law; he was a full-blooded Israelite – not some half breed. Saul of Tarsus was from the tribe of Benjamin – as was King Saul – and I am sure Paul was named after King Saul. I think you could have checked Saul of Tarsus' genealogy in the temple and found him right in the lineage of King Saul.

Moreover, "*Hebrew of Hebrews*" in verse five means that Saul of Tarsus was amongst the "*in crowd*" of the highest strata of Jewish religious society. He represented the best-of-the-best amongst the who's-who top ten most popular lists of most influential leaders. No one questioned him around the Sanhedrin, you may be absolutely sure. Persecuting the church was Paul's bragging rights. Murder and mayhem gave him tremendous political clout. Remember, the Pharisees were a religio-politico party. They were fundamental in the religion and extremely nationalistic in their politics. When the "*Christians*" had been run out of Jerusalem, most Pharisees celebrated – but not Paul. No, Paul ran them down and killed them. Saul of Tarsus was planning to ferret Christian's out from every part the world and destroy the cause of Christ.

So, our Spiritual Safari ends another comparably short leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God. I urge you to pray for wisdom, judgment and discernment, and then read the epistle to the Philippians again in it's entirety. If you go rob a bank, you may leave fingerprints behind. If you go kill someone, you will have a corpus delicti on your hands. I'm told they're difficult to get rid of. But, see, you can covet and have jealousy and envy in your heart, and no one would have any earthly idea. Most people will applaud your pride. If Paul had just kept quiet, I might have begun to think Paul had reached sinless perfection. But Paul said, "*... the law slew me.*" That means he brought the proper sacrifice for sin in a burnt offering to the temple. That sin offering spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ dying on the cross; and that realization is where we'll pick up with an incarcerated Paul the apostle in our next report. Come with us ~

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