

LESSON EIGHT
RIGHT STANDING WITH GOD
(Philippians 3:1-11 NKJV)

REFLECTION

Take a few minutes to compose a brief spiritual resume. Don't be bashful. What are your spiritual gifts and your God-given abilities? What are some of your most meaningful spiritual experiences? How would you summarize your goal and objectives?

DRAWING NEAR

The Bible insists there is a huge difference in the behavior of believers and that of "make-believers." How can we tell we are truly saved?

SITUATION

Paul has previously stated that if the believers in Philippi are able to follow the example of Jesus and unite with one another in humility, he will be able to "boast on the day Christ" that he "did not run or labour in vain" (**Philippians 2:16**). For Paul, any such "boasting" or confidence that believers have in their relationship with God is based solely on the work of Christ, and not on any acts or works that we have done. As support for this claim, Paul draws on the example of his own former life as a Pharisee to show how right adherence to the law does not result in righteousness. We are saved by grace—and life, the Christian life is by grace though faith.

OBSERVATION

Read **Philippians 3:1-11** (New King James Version)

EXPLORATION

1. How does Paul indicate joy is a choice rather than a feeling that comes and goes?

Answer: Paul tells the Philippians to "rejoice in the Lord" (**3:1**). It is a command, an imperative, a choice that they can control. As we read the Bible it alerts us to corrections we need to make in our thoughts, attitudes and actions. Chose to rejoice in the Lord.

2. The so-called "Judaizers" were trying to get Gentile converts to submit to the Jewish rite of circumcision and other legalistic rituals in order to be saved. Why did this bother Paul?

Answer: The "Judaizers" trying to get Gentile believers to go back to Old Testament laws bothered Paul because they were looking at Christianity backwards—thinking what they did (circumcision) made them believers rather than the free gift of grace given by Christ.

3. What was Paul's purpose for sharing his impressive spiritual resume as a devoted Jew?

Answer: Paul was not sharing his spiritual resume to boast or brag, but to say that if works and the keeping of the law could save a person, he had a lot going for himself. If others had confidence in flesh, he had more to be confidence about (see **verses 5-6**).

4. How does Paul describe the monumental change that took place in his own religious attitudes and actions after meeting Christ?

Answer: After meeting Christ, Paul counted all those other things mention worthless or lost for Christ.

5. What is the difference between trying to adhere to a religious system and trusting in the person of Christ?

Answer: The difference between trying to adhere to a religious system and trusting the person of Christ is that keeping religious rites and rituals to be save would mean that salvation could be earned based on works. But trusting Christ for salvation is an act of faith. A person trying to keep religious rules, traditions, and rites is bound to miss something along the way. This can be a source of grief. But God's grace is available in spite of our short-comings.

No amount of law keeping, self-improvement, discipline, or religious effort can make us right with God. Righteousness comes only through God. We can't buy, win, impress, or manipulate our way into salvation or justification. Only through, in, with, and by Christ can we have salvation and justification!

6. Why do you think Paul said he wanted to participate in Jesus' sufferings? What had he learned during the course of his life about what it meant to truly follow Christ?

Answer: Paul felt that if he experienced suffering like Jesus, he would also experience the power that raised Christ from the dead (**v. 10**)

God gives us the power to work through our sufferings and circumstances. He is not only a God that can deliver us out of things, but He can also enlarge our endurance to go through.

Before we can walk in the newness of life, we have to die to sin. It is an on-going process and we need the power of God to overcome sin in our lives. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us through Christ.

INSPIRATION

Paul had blood on his hands and religious diplomas on his wall. But then came the Damascus road moment. Jesus appeared. And once Paul saw Jesus, he couldn't see any more.

He couldn't see value in his resume anymore. He couldn't see merit in his merits or worth in his good works anymore. He couldn't see reasons to boost about anything he had done anymore. And he couldn't see any option except to spend the rest of his life talking less about himself and more about Jesus.

Life Lessons from Philipians, Max Lucado, Author, Thomas Nelson, Inc; Philipians, MacArthur Bibles Studies, John MacArthur, Author, Thomas Nelson, Inc; King James Open Bible, Thomas Nelson, Inc.

He became the great poet of grace. “I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done” (**Philippians 3:7 NLT**). In exchange for self-salvation, God gave Paul righteousness: “I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God’s way of making us right with himself depends on faith” (**v. 9 NLT**). Paul gave his guilt to Jesus. Period. He *didn’t numb it, hide it, deny it, offset it, or punish it*. He simply **surrendered it to Jesus**...

What would the apostle say to a guilt-laden teenager? Simply this: “Rejoice in the Lord’s mercy. Trust in his ability to forgive. Abandon any attempt at self-salvation or justification. No more hiding behind fig leaves. Cast yourself upon the grace of Christ and Christ alone.”

A happy saint is one who, at the same time, is aware of the severity of sin and the immensity of grace. Sin is not diminished, nor is God’s ability to forgive it. The saint dwells in grace, not guilt. This is the tranquil soul. (From *Anxious for nothing* by Lucado)

REACTION

7. Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus after meeting Christ (see **Acts 9:8-9**). But how did this encounter serve to remove his spiritual blindness?
8. Paul speaks of formerly having “confidence in the flesh” (**Philippians 3:3-4**). What exactly does he mean by this phrase?
9. Paul says that because of Christ, the values and practices that were previously so important to him are now like “rubbish” or “garbage” (**verse 8**). How has this been your experience? Have we counted anything as lost for the experience of knowing Christ?
10. Paul’s one great passion in life was to know Christ. How does one actually practice this?
11. How can you help your fellow believers in Christ understand that right standing with God doesn’t depend on what we do but on what Christ has done on our behalf?
12. Paul not only longed for the power of Christ but also wanted to share in his sufferings. What does it mean to become like Christ in his death (see **verse 10**).

LIFE LESSONS

Remember the story Jesus told in **Luke 18:9-14** about two men who went into the temple to pray? He described the first man, a Pharisee, as praying “with himself” (verse **11 NKJV**). Interesting. This proud man proceeded to rattle off all his religious achievements. It was less a prayer and more a

self-congratulatory speech! Meanwhile, the other man, a dishonest tax collector, stood at a distance—broken and very much in touch with his own unworthiness. He humbly cried out to God for mercy. And, how did heaven respond? Only the tax collector left the temple on right terms with God. Here in this short story is the simple gospel. We are made right with God not by our own efforts, but by simply relying on God's grace.

DEVOTION

Father, thank you for the powerful reminder that salvation is a free gift. We can't earn it or deserve it. We can only receive it. Like Paul, give us an all-consuming passion for Christ. In the words of the hymn, may the things of earth grow dim, in light of his glory and grace.

JOURNALING

How would you explain to a highly moral friend that a person does not make it to heaven on the basis of living a "good" life?

Next Week: Lesson Nine: Eternal Focus—**Philippians 3:12-21.**