

Sermon or Lesson: Philippians 3:4b-9 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Rejected Or Accepted

INTRO: Do you remember when you were applying for acceptance into college? You compiled documents to establish your credentials: past history; medical records; academic records; test scores; letters of reference. You submitted your credential documents because you wanted to measure up to this college's standards and be accepted into this college.

What about the day when you die and want to be accepted into heaven? Will your credentials be good enough to get you into heaven? Or will you be rejected by God and be condemned to eternal punishment?

The apostle Paul talks about this very issue of being accepted by God in Philippians chapter 3. Let's examine what Paul writes to see what God's standards are, what credentials are acceptable before God.

READ: Philippians 3:4b-9

[Lesson Question: What was Paul previously confident in, and for what purpose?]

SECTION POINT: Paul previously had confidence in his own standards for qualifications, credentials, and righteousness, that they would earn him right-standing with God.

v.4b - READ

-- Self-assessment - Paul was very confident he was most qualified to be accepted by God - "If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more".

v.5 - READ

-- Ceremony - Paul had successfully completed the important religious ceremony - "circumcised on the eighth day".

-- Birthright - Paul had the credible ancestral line - "of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews".

-- Religious rank - Paul had attained the credible high religious rank - "in regard to the law, a Pharisee".

v.6 - READ

-- Personality - Paul naturally possessed the credible personality characteristics - "as for zeal, persecuting the church"; i.e. extreme zeal and enthusiasm.

-- Devotion - Paul had steadfast intense comprehensive devotion - "as for legalistic righteousness, faultless".

TRANSITION:

-- By human standards, Paul met and exceeded the presumed qualifications necessary to deserve and acquire acceptance and right-standing with God.

- - However, for acquiring acceptance and right-standing with God, human standards are actually quite different from and completely incompatible with God's requirements.

[Lesson Question: What did Paul come to realize and understand about his outstanding credentials?]

SECTION POINT: Paul realized that all of his qualifications, credentials, accomplishments, and righteousness are a loss, worthless, and rubbish because of the surpassing greatness of acquiring a personal knowledge of Christ Jesus as Lord.

v.7 - READ

- - In the past, Paul regarded all of his accomplishments, credentials, and qualifications to be of profit or gain to him, and to his religious pursuits.
- - But now that he knows Christ Jesus as his Lord (v.8), Paul considers all of his accomplishments, credentials, and qualifications to be of "loss for the sake of Christ" - of no value for the pursuit of and promoting of Christ as Lord.

v.8 - READ

- - Paul has further determined that his outstanding credentials are worthless and a "detriment" "because" of the "excellency" and "superiority" of knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord. (from Strong's #2209, #1223, #5242)
- - Paul is also declaring that the excellency and superiority of knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord is worthy for Paul to suffer the loss of all of his outstanding credentials he possesses and previously highly valued.
- - And going even further beyond considering his outstanding credentials to be worthless and a detriment, Paul additionally considers his outstanding credentials to be rubbish or "garbage, to be thrown away" so that he may gain Christ. (Strong's #4657)

To summarize in respect to Paul's outstanding credentials:

- - What once was thought to be highly valued is now realized to actually be worthless.
- - What once was thought to be an effective means to achieve outstanding religious accomplishments and credibility before God is now realized to actually be a hindrance to achieving right-standing with God.

Philosophically:

- - What once was gain is now loss.
- - What now is loss has actually cleared the way for authentic gain.

[Lesson Question: So, what are God's requirements for achieving acceptance and right-standing with Him?]

SECTION POINT: God requires each person to personally have faith in Christ Jesus, through whom comes the perfect righteousness we need for acceptance and permanent right-standing with God.

vv.8b-9 - READ

The following are requirements of each person to individually attain right-standing with God:

- - "**May gain Christ**" (v.8b) - is to acquire enough knowledge about Christ for faith in Christ that is sufficient for the achieving of permanent right-standing with God, i.e. eternal salvation.
- - "**And be found in him**" - is the subsequent resolute placing and committing of one's faith in Christ for eternal salvation.
- - "**Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law**" - is a deliberate acknowledgement that one's own righteousness that comes from adhering to the law is completely rejected by God as being totally inadequate to attain right-standing with Him.
- - "**But that which is through faith in Christ**" - is a deliberate acknowledgement that only through faith in Christ can a person acquire the perfect righteousness needed for right-standing with God.
- - "**The righteousness that comes from God and is by faith**" - is a deliberate acknowledgement that the righteousness needed for right-standing with God has to come from God; i.e. God grants or gives a person the needed perfect righteousness, and that perfect righteousness comes from Christ, which is acquired only by the means of or through one's faith in Christ for that righteousness. (cf. Romans 3:20-22; Hebrews 10:12-14)
- - This perfect righteousness that comes from God through faith in Christ is sufficient for permanent right-standing with God and eternal salvation because this believing person is "found in him" or permanently established positionally and judicially in Christ's perfect righteousness.

BIG IDEA: To God, the only acceptable righteousness to gain right-standing with Him and get into heaven comes from God through faith in Christ Jesus as your Lord.

APPLICATION:

- - The ultimate problem to think about is this:
On that day when you present your credentials to God for acceptance into heaven, upon whom or what will your credentials, your right for admittance into heaven be based? Will it be based on yourself and your own credentials? Or will it be based on the perfect righteousness that comes from God through your faith in Christ Jesus, your knowing Jesus as your Lord? Will God reject you or will God accept you? This is the accountability situation we all must face.
- - Additionally, we all will face accountability and deserved eternal punishment for every sin we have committed in our entire lifetime.
- - God says in Romans 3:23,25 that we "fall short of the glory of God" or fail to attain right-standing before Him also because we "all have sinned", which deserves eternal "punishment".

- - Our righteousness is not good enough and our sinfulness deserves eternal punishment. These are critical reasons why we need the righteousness of Christ.
- - So because God loves us, He provided a solution for our problems of sinfulness and inadequate righteousness by sending His Son Jesus, being both fully God and fully human, perfectly sinless, to die on the cross to take the punishment we deserve for our sins and then raise from the dead on the third day. (John 3:16; 1:1; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4)
- - And when you personally and genuinely place your "faith in Christ" Jesus to pay the penalty for your sins when He died on the cross, God will forgive your sins with a full pardon from eternal punishment and give you the needed perfect righteousness of Christ - "that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith". (Philippians 3:9; Colossians 1:14)

- - If you are interested in participating in the "surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus [as your] Lord" (v.8) and thereby acquire His righteousness for permanent right-standing with God, then would you like to place your faith in Jesus as your Lord? Right now?

If so, then you can express this in prayer to God right now - and really mean it:

Dear Lord, I know that I am a sinner - please forgive me. I know that my righteousness and credentials fall short of your requirement for complete sinless perfection. Therefore, I believe in you Jesus, that you died on the cross to take the punishment for my sins, and that you rose from the dead. I want to know you Christ Jesus as my Lord right now. And I want to receive the perfect righteousness that comes from you God through Christ for permanent acceptance and right-standing with you for eternal life. Thank you. Amen.

Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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