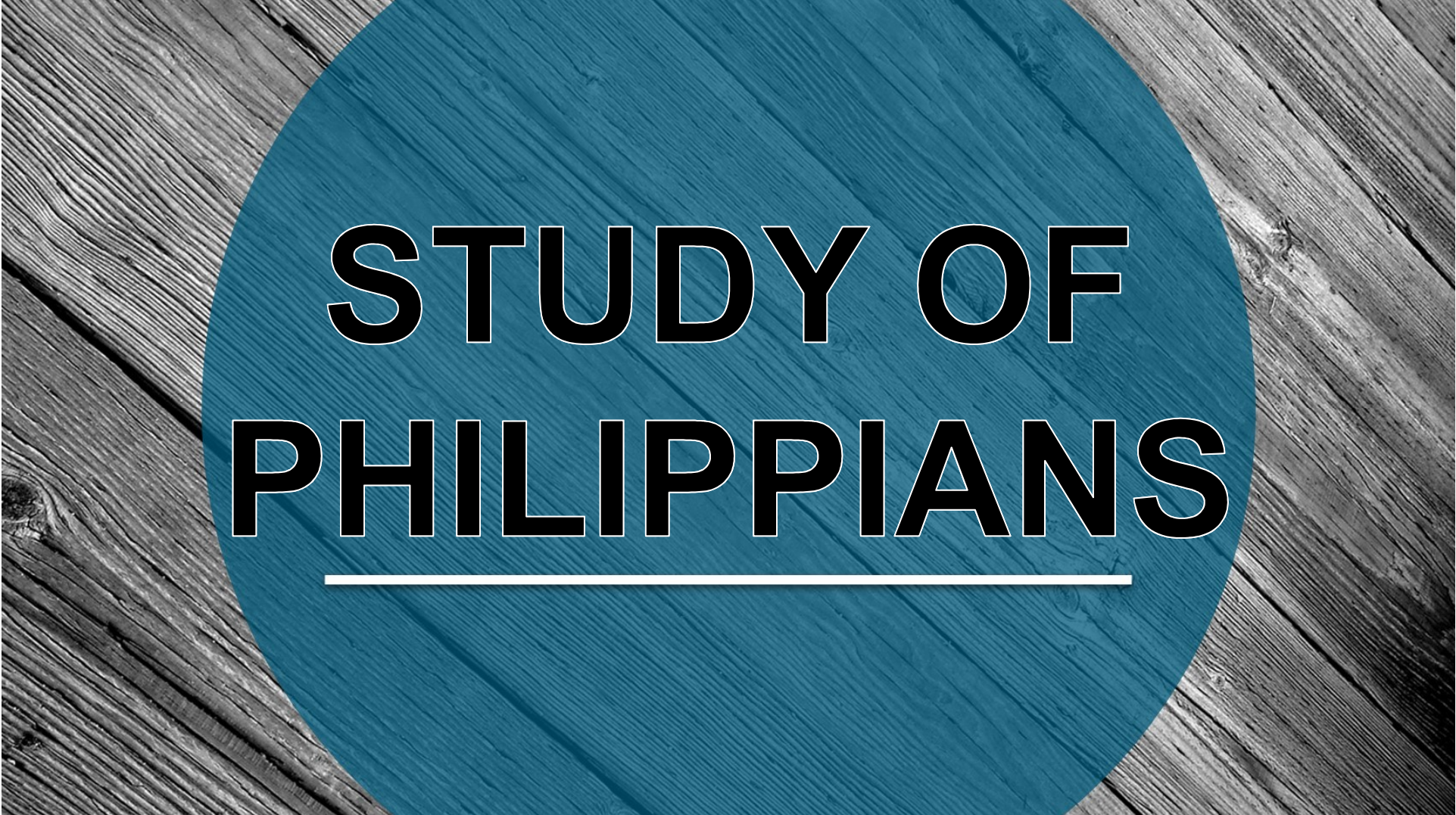


Memory Verse

Philippians 3:7

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

GRACELIFE  CHURCH



**STUDY OF
PHILIPPIANS**

PHILIPPIANS

Part 13

Religious or Righteous?

Philippians 3:4b-7

We have learned...

- Paul founded this assembly about 49AD
- Paul has talked about love, the gospel, thankfulness, joy, persecution and what a humble servant looks like, using Jesus, Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples
- He changed topics in chapter 3 and gave warnings about those who depended on works and wanted Gentiles circumcised

Philippians 3:3-4 "As a final addendum to the description in Philippians 3:3, but also as a lead-in to the personal word that follows, Paul appends *though I myself have reasons for such confidence* - although he actually says it a little more starkly: "though I myself have confidence even in the flesh." What this means will be clarified in the following sentence (vv. 4b-6). We who serve *by the Spirit*, Paul says, who boast *in Christ Jesus*, have thus abandoned altogether

putting *confidence in the flesh* - which by implication is what the Judaizers are bringing Gentiles to by urging circumcision. But, he now concedes, if they want to play that game, then I win there as well, since I excel on their turf, "having [grounds for] confidence even in the flesh." Again "flesh" refers first to the rite of circumcision but now carries all the theological overtones of trying to have grounds for boasting before God in human achievement, the ultimate

self-centered expression of life. And with that he turns to offer, first, the evidence for such a bold statement (vv. 4b-6) and, second, the zero net worth of such achievement in light of having come to know Christ and being found in him (vv. 7-9)." *IVP New Testament Commentary*

One reference said those *Paul mentioned here were not Jewish*, but zealous Gentiles who followed the Law and wanted others to do the same.

If there a contest to see who *followed the Law more*, **Paul would win!** He said this to point out that he was the most religious person anyone could know before his conversion to Christ.

Philippians 3:4b-7

If anyone else thinks ["has a mind" - NASB] he has a 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 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.

A. 3:4b – Paul's Potential Confidence

The second part of *verse 4* reiterates the earlier part, like *verse 3*, repeating "*look out*" or "*beware*." This was a style of writing in *Hebrew poetry*, where ideas were repeated or restated for emphasis. Sometimes they were **complimentary**, saying the *same thing in a different way* as we have here.

A. 3:4b – Paul's Potential Confidence

Proverbs 1:24-27

Verse 24 - called - stretched out my hand / refused - no one paid attention;

25 - neglected - did not want / counsel - reproof;

26 - laugh - mock/ calamity - dread;

27 - dread comes like a storm - calamity comes like a whirlwind / distress - anguish.

Another example is a **contrast**.

A. 3:4b – Paul's Potential Confidence

If there was a contest between this group and Paul to see who would have *scored more points* by following the Law, Paul would have won! Remember, the *flesh* refers to *depending on entire system of life under the Mosaic Law for righteousness*.

B. 3:5-6 – Paul's Past Confidence

Now we see Paul's spiritual resume.

Circumcised the 8th day - This was **THE** issue, because this was the *sign of the Abrahamic covenant* that signified being Jewish and the blessings associated with it, and being **God's people**.

Genesis 17:9-14

B. 3:5-6 – Paul's Past Confidence

This is where *circumcision began for Israel*. Abraham lived about 2100BC, so this has been going on **now** for *about 4000 years!* In the time of Christ and Paul, it was a 2100-year-old tradition. In addition, God reiterated the *importance of circumcision* in the Mosaic Law.

Leviticus 12:3 - On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

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B. 3:5-6 – Paul's Past Confidence

People [nation - NASB] of Israel - Though Paul was from Tarsus, he was an *ethnic Israelite*. The *covenantal promises* God gave Israel were passed on to him. This would be cause to boast and *was for the nation*. If Judaizers were Jewish, so was Paul, descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Some may **not** have descended from Abraham.

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B. 3:5-6 – Paul's Past Confidence

Tribe of Benjamin - Paul was an Israelite, and knew which tribe he was from. *Benjamin* was where the first King of Israel came from, also named *Saul*.

Even if some were Jewish, Paul includes which tribe he was from.

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B. 3:5-6 – Paul's Past Confidence

Hebrew of Hebrews - This is probably a summary of all he is *talking about*. He was Jewish! His *parents were Jewish, as were his ancestors!* He spoke Aramaic (*Acts 21:40*), the language of the nation, and Hebrew, and Greek.

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B. 3:5-6 – Paul's Past Confidence

As to the Law, a Pharisee - He steps away from his heritage to his works. Pharisees began in the 2nd Century BC. Some say their name means, "separated ones." This group grew out of a desire for the Jewish people to learn, keep and pass on the Law and traditions, and resist Greek influence into Judaism. They were bi-vocational. Paul was a leather worker, making tents...

B. 3:5-6 – Paul's Past Confidence

NET Bible: "A Pharisee was a member of one of the most important and influential religious and political parties of Judaism in the time of Jesus. There were more Pharisees than Sadducees (according to Josephus, Ant. 17.2.4 [17.42] there were more than 6,000 Pharisees at about this time). Pharisees differed with Sadducees on certain doctrines and patterns of behavior. The Pharisees were strict and zealous adherents to the laws of the OT and to numerous additional traditions such as angels and bodily resurrection."

B. 3:5-6 – Paul's Past Confidence

Paul was a Pharisee, taught under one of the *most important and influential Pharisees* of his day - *Gamaliel* (Acts 5:34, 22:3)! In Acts 23:6, Paul said he was a *son of Pharisees*, which may indicate his father was a Pharisee. While some *Judaizers were Pharisees*, most could not boast in *being trained by Gamaliel*, or that their *father was a Pharisee*, if that is his meaning.

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B. 3:5-6 – Paul's Past Confidence

*As to zeal - a persecutor of the assembly/church - Being zealous or putting your whole heart into something can be good, if it is a good thing for the right reasons. In Acts 8:1-3, 9:1-2, we find Paul was at the **stoning of Stephen** and went to persecute believers.*

You can read: Acts 9:13, 21 and Galatians 1:13.

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B. 3:5-6 – Paul's Past Confidence

As to righteousness under the Law – blameless or faultless - There was a righteousness according to the Law. Observing the external regulations and rituals of the Law led one to the standing of being blameless. Bible.org states: "What Paul means here is that by the standard of external Law-keeping he was without fault. He had invested enormous energy in keeping the details of the Law and was, in the eyes of his Jewish colleagues, without fault."

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And the
winner is:
PAUL!!!

C. 3:7 – Paul's Present Confidence

It is important to point out that Paul does not demean or deny the blessings and benefits of what he mentioned. It was and is a good thing to be born Jewish, if someone is Jewish. It is a good thing to have God's promises to the Fathers *as part of your heritage*, and as a moral man, he was someone to be respected.

C. 3:7 – Paul's Present Confidence

There is a contrast in *verse 7*. It's also our memory verse... But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

The word "*whatever*" refers back to the **7 points** he referred to. Those things were **good**, but in light of knowing Christ, they *faded into the night*.

C. 3:7 – Paul's Present Confidence

Bible.org: "The new point of view initiated at his conversion included the repudiation of the idea that his background somehow gave him special standing with God. That mentality was completely rejected. Any approach to life in the future with that kind of mentality was to be completely rejected. Such a point of view was disastrous to the cross of Christ and thus regarded by the apostle as pure and complete loss (zemian).

C. 3:7 – Paul’s Present Confidence

Paul’s “considered judgment” (hegemai) was that his perception of those things had indeed turned them into one huge loss for him. They were a stumbling block to the reception of the grace of God in his life. We note that Paul did not spurn or repudiate his background as such, since much of his Pharisaical exegetical training shows up in his letters, he exploited his background as Jew in his missionary efforts, and he continued to be a man

C. 3:7 – Paul's Present Confidence

of great zeal. Again, it was his *perception of his background and its place before God* that had changed."

The *NET translation* uses the word "*liabilities*." These things Paul mentions were *stumbling blocks to the grace of God*. **Not** because they were bad in themselves, but *because he was depending on them to be righteous in God's eyes*.

Prayer

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Philipians 4:6

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