

## Finding Acceptance Before God Philippians 3:1-9

### Introduction:

1. Many people fear dying. They fear dying because of the uncertainty that comes with it. They have enough sense to know that there is a God and that when they die they will ultimately have to face Him.
  - Will God accept me? Will He welcome me into heaven? Will He reject me? Will He cast me off because of sins and failures in my life?
2. Many people long to have that peace of knowing that God fully accepts them and that they are in a right relationship with God.
3. There is a way you can **know** that you are accepted by God (**1 John 5:13**), but Satan has a multitude of lies that he propagates to people.
4. The man who wrote this book (Paul) was a man that was feverishly trying to gain acceptance before God, but couldn't find it. Then one day he met Jesus and his life was forever changed.
5. Here in this text Paul reveals to us this struggle that he went through, and he reveals to us how he found acceptance before God and how we can also.

### Acceptance cannot come through fleshly accomplishment. vs. 3-5

1. Paul said in verse 3 that he had no confidence in the flesh, but this wasn't always the case. In verse 4, Paul shares with us that if any man had a reason to trust in the flesh, he did.
  - In verse 5, we find that Paul was born into a very religious home and had a great religious heritage. He was born into a Hebrew family and had been through the religious ritual of circumcision when he was a baby.
  - Paul was a member of the nation of Israel, God's covenant people.
  - Not only this, we also learn that Paul was brought up in the city of Jerusalem with teaching and training from a famous member of the Jewish Sanhedrin by the name of Gamaliel. **Acts 22:3**
2. But, Paul said that all these fleshly accomplishments were "*loss*." They could not give him peace with God and acceptance before God.
3. Did you know that our fleshly accomplishments on this earth do not impress God one bit? No matter what we accomplish monetarily, socially, positionally, religiously, etc., will not bring acceptance before God. **Revelation 20:12** states that one day every person will stand before God, "*small and great*."
4. The rich and famous won't get a free pass into heaven because of their position on earth.

### Acceptance cannot come through religious effort. vs. 5

1. In verse 5, we learn that Paul had excelled so much in the religion of Judaism that he had worked his way up to the position of Pharisee, a strict religious sect of the Jews.
2. Paul was very zealous of his religion, to the point that he persecuted Christianity and brought persecution to believers in Christ. vs. 6

3. Yet Paul said that the day came that he realized that all his religious efforts were "*loss*." They counted as absolutely nothing when it came to finding acceptance before God (vs. 9). Paul takes all his religious accomplishments and uses the descriptive word "*dung*" to describe them.
4. Allow me to dispel one of Satan's greatest myths. Satan has convinced many people that "religious people" go to heaven. Satan says, "If you are religious enough and do enough religious things, God will surely welcome you into heaven."
5. Paul said that he profited in the Jews' religion above his equals (**Galatians 1:14**), he was zealous towards God (**Acts 22:3**) yet he was considered to be the enemy of God and the chief of sinners.
6. Religious effort cannot save you and cleanse you of your sin, no matter how hard you try. It cannot bring acceptance before God.

#### **Acceptance cannot come through law-keeping. vs. 6**

1. God's law was given to the nation of Israel, including the Ten Commandments. Paul diligently tried to follow every law and outwardly appeared to do so.
2. He thought, "If I just try hard enough and if I am good enough, God will accept me." Then one day Paul realized that all his law-keeping was "*loss*" in the eyes of God.
3. Many people are under the same delusion. They think, "If I try hard enough, if I am good enough, if my good works outweigh my bad works, God will surely accept me."
4. The Bible, though, is clear that law-keeping won't bring acceptance (justification) before God. **Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:20**
5. Even man, at his best, at the end of the day still falls short of God's holy law and God's standard of righteousness. **Romans 3:23**

#### **Acceptance can only come one way - through Christ alone. vs. 7-9**

1. In verses 7-9, we no longer see a man boasting about his religious achievements, yet we see a man at total peace. Paul's entire focus had changed. What was the difference?
2. The last two words of verse 7 give us insight. "*But what things **were** gain to me (all his fleshly and religious works), those I counted loss **for Christ**.*"
3. In other words, there came a day when Paul abandoned all confidence in his own religious efforts, fleshly achievements, and law-keeping.
4. He realized that Christ had made a full and complete sacrifice for sin on the cross and that He, in fact, rose from the dead and was alive!
5. When I compare Christ's perfection and absolute righteousness with my fleshly and religious achievements, it truly makes them look like dung.
6. But praise God, I can still be counted righteous in the eyes of God and gain total acceptance before Him. Even though I have come up short of God's righteousness, Christ didn't! You may ask, "But how does that help me?"
7. God is making an offer to you and me. Here it is: if we will simply admit that we have come up short, and that we need Christ's righteousness, the moment we place our total faith and trust in Christ to save us, God takes the righteousness of His Son and puts that on our account.

8. This is what he means when he says that he is now found in Him (Christ). No longer was Paul sporting his own self-righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. How did he get it? What are the last two words of verse 9? By faith!  
**cf. Romans 3:28, 5:1**
9. Do you know that you have total acceptance before God Almighty? God has made provision for you through His Son. Will you trust Him today?