

# Philippians 3:4-7

## Paul's Resume in the Flesh: Tooting Your Own Horn

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## Philippians 3:4-7

*4 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. 7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

## Do you know who I am?

*although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:*

- Paul has just contrasted the “pagan multilaterals” (the Judaizers) with the “true circumcision”.
- 3:3–We boast in Christ, and do not rely on the flesh
- Paul shows that he has plenty of earthly basis to rely on the flesh, according to the Law.
- How does Paul’s teaching on grace have more impact since he was such a good Law-follower?

## Over-qualified for the position

*although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:*

- The first “confidence”: *to rely on; reliance*
  - What evidences our reliance?
- The second “confidence” is same word used in verse 3.
  - *To allow one to be persuaded; a settled persuasion*
  - The Judaizers have been persuaded that righteousness through the Law is possible
- Paul will show that he is not simply making up for his failure to follow the Law.
  - He was the epitome of a Law-follower.

## Be like Mikowitz

*although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:*

- The problem with the Judaizers:
  - They were relying on their fleshly deeds
  - They were relying on their Hebrew heritage
  - They were stuck with earthly metrics
- Paul takes apart their spiritual argument piece-by-piece.
  - He met all the requirements of the Law
  - He had the proper geneology

## Breaking the mold

*circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews;*

- Paul had an impeccable Hebrew pedigree:
  - *Circumcised the eighth day*: raised in the tradition of the Law; kept the Law from the very beginning
  - *of the nation of Israel*: born a Hebrew; not a later proselytite
  - *of the tribe of Benjamin*: a member of the most faithful tribe
  - *a Hebrew of Hebrews*: the most Jewish of Jews; his face was in the dictionary
- Is there an analogous description in the modern age?

## Crème de la crème

*as to the Law, a Pharisee;*

- Who were the Pharisees?
  - Ultimate Law students
  - Held in high regard by the Hebrews
  - Leaders in the community
  - Leaders in Hebrew religious tradition
- Paul (as Saul) was in the high ranks of the Pharisees
  - Trained by Gamaliel
  - In line to become a part of the Sanhedrin
  - No one knew the Law better than him

# A Zealot

*as to zeal, a persecutor of the church;*

- It is one thing to know the Law; it is something else entirely to be passionate about it.
- How do you measure passion/zeal?
  - Paul was a significant persecuter of the church
  - He fervently maintained the “integrity” of the Law
  - He went so far as to kill those who stood against his understanding of the Law
- How would this translate into modern Christianese?
- Should believers be zealous? Of what?



## I'm also a customer

*as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.*

- Paul knew the Law, enforced the Law, and followed every aspect of it
- What does it mean to be “blameless” regarding the Law?
  - He kept every aspect of the Law
  - He followed every point, even the extra ones
  - One could find no fault when they held up Paul's life to the standards in the Law
- What was Paul's standing in human eyes?
- Whose eyes matter? What mirror should we look in?
  - Matthew 23:27-28

## Profit margin

*But whatever things were gain to me,*

Greek (kerdos)

*gain; advantage; profit*

- The word is plural
- Used in monetary terms (see Titus 1:11)
- Same word used in Philippians 1:21
- Did Paul's accomplishments have any earthly value?
- What is true gain?
  - Does our spiritual walk have earthly value?

## Gone in 60 seconds

*those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

Greek (zēmia)

*damage; loss;*

- Same word used in Acts 27:10
- Wuest: *“Loss” is singular. The various gains are all counted as one loss.*
- All the work is gone in one action
- All the works turned out to be of little value
  - Like a Ph.D. in Philosophy

## On second thought

*those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

Greek (hēgeomai)

*to consider, deem, account, think*

- Same word used in Philippians 2:3, 6, 25
- Vern: *This word communicates a conclusion carefully considered, with a full understanding of the consequences & import of the decision.*
- Paul did not arrive at this quickly
- How do we place a value on spiritual things?

## The X factor

*those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

- Interlinear: *But what to me was gain, these I esteemed through the Christ as loss*
- Darby's translation: *but what things were gain to me these I counted, on account of Christ, loss.*
- Young's literal translation: *But what things were to me gains, these I have counted, because of the Christ, loss;*

## The proper framework

- What does it mean to consider things “through the Christ”?
- What is the basis for our value system?
- What “things” do we value?
- What was Paul’s “self-image”?
  - What should be the self-image of a believer?
- How does all this relate to “Rejoicing” in verse 1?

## Expanded and explained: Philippians 3:4-5

4 although I, Paul, could overwhelm the credentials of the Judaizers, if I had any confidence in human credentials. If anyone else, such as any of the Judaizers, has a perspective such as to put confidence in human credentials, I have far more impressive human credentials than any of them: 5 I was circumcised on the eighth day in accordance with Mosaic Law, so I am born into the nation of Israel through Law abiding parents, and I am not a Gentile convert, as many of the Judaizers are; I am born of the bloodline of the tribe of Benjamin, which is the kingly lineage of Saul, Benjamin being the only son of Jacob actually born in the land of Israel; I am in every way the very epitome of all that makes one a Hebrew; as to the Law given through Moses, I am in every regard a leader in the party of the Pharisees;

## Expanded and explained: Philippians 3:6-7

6 *as to measuring my human qualifications by the degree of zeal for the Law, I was the foremost and most aggressive persecutor of those who claim salvation through faith in Christ alone, even pursuing them to the point of death; as to the righteousness which can be established by external obedience to the Mosaic Law and all its extensions and convolutions through tradition, I was repeatedly found blameless in the estimation of my peers, the Pharisees* 7 *But whatever things were in the past entered in my personal ledger being valued as gain from my perspective [being my Jewish lineage, heritage and accomplishments as measured by Mosaic Law and the tradition of the Pharisees], those things I have now after careful consideration completely valued as and entered in my personal ledger as a total loss for the sake of Christ.*