



# 'Back to Basics for Believers Series'

## Sermons in the Epistle to the Philippians

### Message 14 – 'Fleshly Focus...Definite Disaster' Philippians 3: 4 - 7a

Paul had been dealing with the threat of the Judaizers, and in the verses we consider here (v4-6), Paul points to his own example, and the need for Christ, not confidence in the flesh. We can see of Paul that:

- 1. He had the Birth** - 'Circumcised the Eight Day'; Paul was saying very clearly here that he had the right birth, he was born into the right situation. Paul was saying very clearly that goodness and righteousness are not found in birth, nor in religious ceremonies or rituals. Yet, think of today, how many people think that they have acceptance in God's sight because of their circumstances. As Paul says, what a thing to have on your side, to give you confidence in the flesh, but they cannot bring acceptance with God.
- 2. He had the Heritage** - 'Of the stock of Israel'; Paul was saying here that he had the right national heritage. This would instantly give him a special relationship with God. He was born in the right nation, among the right people. Paul was saying that goodness and righteousness are not found in ancestors or in social superiority.
- 3. He had Social Status** - 'Of the tribe of Benjamin'; Why does he mention this? Well, in the history of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin was considered the aristocratic tribe (if one can put it like that) because of the tribes loyalty when so many others were disloyal (1 Kings 12:1). Also, the tribe of Benjamin had done many courageous things throughout the history of Israel. (Judges 5:14; Hos. 5:8). Benjamin and Joseph were Jacob's favourite sons. So Paul is saying through this, that goodness and righteousness are not found in social status or even religious status.
- 4. He had Faithfulness and Knowledge** - 'A Hebrew of the Hebrews'; Paul claimed to have the right language and the right customs. Whilst Paul remained steadfast in this, he also had knowledge of other languages as well. Yet, his loyalty remained to the elect race of God and he was not swayed by other philosophies. Paul is making it very clear that goodness and righteousness are not found in religious faithfulness, and certainly not in a spiritual language, knowing certain religious terms.
- 5. He had the Religion** - 'A Pharisee'; Paul claimed to have the right religion, he was a Pharisee. The Pharisees were incredibly strict religionists. In fact, the title Pharisee actually meant the 'Separated Ones'. Paul was saying that it's not religion that will save you. Religion cannot give you righteousness or goodness. Yet, how many feel that if they have religion they are ok?
- 6. He had the Religious Zeal** - 'Zeal'; Paul had zealously stood and fought for his religion. So much so that he had persecuted others and pursued apparent 'enemies' of his religion with great delight. Paul had such a zeal for his religion that he sought to wipe out any cause that differed from his. Paul was as zealous as a person could be in trying to convert to his religion and to keep them in it. Paul was full of zeal, but it could not save him, it could not make him acceptable in the presence of God.
- 7. He had the Morality** - 'Blameless'; Paul claimed he had sought to keep the law and he had kept it – completely and fully. This certainly does not mean that Paul was saying that he was sinless, it means that when he did transgress he took his sacrifice to the temple. He was blameless – ritually and ceremonially – in the righteousness of the law. He was a proud and lost legalist. Outwardly he was blameless, yet inwardly sin scarred his life, and all the external ceremonies could not cleanse him. When Christ met with him, his sin was revealed, and the futility of his religion exposed. Paul was saying that goodness and righteousness are not found in keeping all the rituals and ceremonies of religion.



## Penzance Baptist Church

'Upholding the Ordinary Means of Grace'

Pastor Jonathan Stobbs