

A Life Worth Living
Session 6 June 2 2024 New Confidence
Philippians 3:1-11

Resource: 'A Life worth Living' video 6, 6/2 New Confidence
(All videos can be found at www.woodside-church.org under the sermons tab)

Icebreaker: What things make the biggest difference to your level of personal confidence?

Read Philippians 3:1-11 together.

Over and Under-confidence can both cause real problems for people. Many struggle with feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, or are driven by a desire to prove or gain acceptance.

Background

The Philippian Christians are under attack from a group Paul describes as “filthy (or wild) dogs” (v.2). They have infiltrated the church and are preaching that all the new Gentile Christians should be circumcised in order to become ‘real’ Christians. For them, faith in Jesus isn’t enough. Paul’s view of this teaching is clear! He insists it is unnecessary since Christians are already circumcised in the only place that matters – the heart (v.3, also see Romans 2:29).

True Christians worship in their hearts “by the Spirit of God” – the outward forms of that worship are an expression of it, not pre-conditions. True Christians “glory in Christ Jesus” (v.3) alone and put “no confidence in the flesh”. There is nothing we can do to earn or add to that achieved by Jesus for us on the cross. So Christians put “no confidence in the flesh”. Paul argues that if the “flesh” could give us confidence, he would have more reason than most to be confident because of it. But it doesn’t and he wasn’t (v.7-8)!

1. False Confidence (Philippians 3:1-6)

Read v.4b-6. Identify Paul’s reasons for confidence from things he has inherited from birth, or from his personal achievements. How might these be similar for us?

- The outward marks of religion
- National privilege
- Family background
- Race
- Being religious
- Being utterly sincere in belief
- Having led a good life

Paul’s eye of faith gives him a new perspective on his achievements that used to give him the “profit” of confidence (v.7). But now when he adds them up, he sees they only leave him with a heavy “loss” (v.7). So he rejects all those things with disgust (v.8).

- **How confident are we? Do we suffer from lack of confidence and assurance because we still place too much of our trust in “rubbish”?**
- **What do we say to friends who think or argue that they don’t really need forgiveness because they lead a basically good life, which they feel should give them confidence before God (i.e. they are self-righteous)?**

2. True Confidence (Philippians 3:7-9)

Paul views his former reasons for confidence as “loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus” (v.8). Paul’s new relationship with Jesus is based on a new righteousness that his former accomplishments could not attain (v.8-9, also see Romans 3:20).

What is this righteousness – the foundation for our new, true confidence – and how do we get it? Theologian Professor Gordon Fee says righteousness means “to have a right relationship with a righteous God demonstrated in right living that reflects the character of God”. We can’t achieve this or earn it, but only received as a gift (v.9). It is made possible by what Christ achieved on the cross (Romans 3:21-26). How do we receive this gift? Paul says “through faith...by faith” (v.9). It’s like getting a present – we can hardly say we’ve earned it, but we do have to receive it, unwrap it and enjoy it.

• Share a personal experience of how your faith has impacted your self-esteem, confidence, significance, or sense of value. Is Paul’s theology backed up by our experience?

• In what areas is your self-esteem or confidence is still a “building site under construction?”

This righteousness gave Paul a new confidence before God and other people. Read 2 Corinthians 5:6 and Ephesians 3:12. These verses depict the great difference between true and false confidence. The insight that God justifies us by faith is our objective ground of confidence before God and boldness before other people.

In practice, this confidence may take time to grow. It is something we all grow in as our relationship with Christ deepens throughout our lives. Our confidence and self-esteem will grow as we realize more and more of what is already ours in Christ.

• How does this plant of faith grow?

Prayer and Ministry

• Pray for one another in those areas identified

• Pray for friends or family who are struggling to understand the Christian faith, or struggling with self-esteem issues that are robbing them of the full life Jesus longs us to live.

After today’s discussion, what is one action you will take this week?