



+ **YOU**

Fall 2023

Confident in the Face of Hard Questions

**Sermon Title:** The Miracle of a Changed Life

**To be used with Session #2:** Are Miracles Relevant?

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:2-11

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the Bible study *Are Miracles Relevant?* this sermon expounds upon the personal testimony of the Apostle Paul. Prior to coming to Christ, his focus was self and personal accomplishment. After a personal encounter with the risen Savior, Paul was miraculously changed, and his life was testimony of this change.

**Introduction:** Those both inside and outside the church can wonder as to why the miracles like we see in the Bible do not happen today. Some may say that they would believe God existed if they were able to observe miracles like the ones taught in the Bible.

While we may not be able to see a miracle like the parting of the Red Sea or feeding the multitudes with a few fish and some bread, we can see the miracle of a changed life. Today's message highlights the miraculous changes in the life of Paul. Jesus changed him from someone who persecuted the church to someone who wrote portions of the New Testament.

**1. A life before Christ puts confidence . . .**

- A. ... in the flesh (Phil. 3:2-4).** Placing one's confidence in the flesh is placing the hope of eternity into one's own actions. Paul stated that if anyone could have done this, he would be the one to do this. Starting in verse 4, he shared his resume of all his accomplishments of things he believed he had done for God. We will see later in this sermon that he would come to count these accomplishments as nothing more than rubbish.

Those who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus can find themselves in a similar trap. We tell ourselves that we are good people, and we are not as bad as others within our society. We tell ourselves that going to church occasionally is good enough and we should be OK from an eternal perspective. When we do this, we are behaving similarly to Paul prior to coming to faith in Christ.

- B. ... in one's heritage (Phil. 3:5).** One of the things that Paul placed his confidence in was his personal heritage. He claimed his religious upbringing in that he was Jewish. He also claimed his current religious activity in that he was a Pharisee. The Pharisees were the

**Lifeway**

so-called religious elite in that they created various laws for others to follow and they were the one's responsible for interpreting the laws.

We can once again see this philosophy lived out in today's world. All too many people trust in their church attendance as a child for their eternal security. Others may be trusting in their knowledge of God's Word as their hope. While neither of these things are bad in and of themselves, these are not replacements for a relationship with Jesus Christ. One's hope need not be in their heritage. One's hope needs to be in Christ and Christ only.

- C. **... in one's self-righteousness (Phil. 3:6).** The culmination of Paul's confidence was in his own self-righteousness. A biblical definition of the word righteous means to be in right relationship with another. Prior to Paul coming to faith in Jesus, he placed his righteousness in his own actions. He went so far as to say that he considered himself blameless.

## 2. A miraculously changed life values . . .

- A. **... knowing Christ personally (Phil. 3:7-8).** The miraculous change in Paul's life occurred when he was traveling to Damascus, and he encountered the risen Lord (Acts 9:1-9). The result of this change was he realized everything that was a gain to him, he considered to be a loss because of knowing Christ. He set aside his earthly accomplishments to gain an eternal relationship with Jesus.

In setting aside his worldly accomplishments, Paul's values experienced significant changes. First, he placed greater value on knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord. The word "knowing" is not simply head knowledge about a certain topic. Instead, the word means to knowing something or someone on a deep and intimate level. We also see the personal nature of the relationship in that Paul knew Christ as "my Lord" and not someone else's Lord.

- B. **... righteousness in Christ (Phil. 3:9).** Next, we see that Paul's righteousness was no longer found in himself or his personal accomplishments. Instead, his righteousness was found through faith in Christ, His completed work on the cross, and an empty tomb. When Paul came to realize that there was nothing good in him apart from Christ, he knew that his self-righteousness was woefully short of what he needed. This resulted in a miraculous change in his personal values because he had to set aside everything that he had hoped in. His faith was now in Christ who alone is our hope for eternity.
- C. **... being conformed to Christ (Phil. 3:10-11).** Most of us have goals. Some may want to drop a few pounds; others may want to earn a promotion. Paul's goal, after coming to faith in Jesus, was to know Christ more and to be conformed into this image. The way Paul accomplished this was to better understand the resurrection of Jesus and join in

the fellowship of Christ's suffering. This is nothing short of a miracle in that Paul was now going in the exact opposite direction from his old way of life apart from Christ.

**Conclusion:** Some may say that if they could see a miracle, then they would know that Jesus is real and place their faith in Him. The drastic change in the life of Paul was nothing short of miraculous. Paul was going in one direction and then after meeting the risen Lord, he started walking in the exact opposite direction.

The amazing thing is that Jesus is still working miracles today. I am sure that we all know someone who had previously placed their hope for eternity in their own self-righteousness. Then, upon coming to faith in Christ, they were changed. This change became evident in their lives. This is the work of Christ in someone, and the good news is that He wants to complete this work in each of us even today. If you need Jesus to change you from the inside out, then do not leave here today without a relationship with Him.

#### **Author Bio**

*Tod Tanner has degrees from Texas A&M University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has pastored churches in Texas and Tennessee. He and his family reside in Wartrace, Tennessee, and he serves as the Vice President of the Tennessee Baptist Foundation.*