

# When Your Best Is Not Enough

Philippians 3:3-9 *For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so; <sup>5</sup> circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup> But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup> Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith...*(NKJ)

## INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul illustrates the futility of trying to achieve righteous before God by human merit. With his impressive Pharasaical resume he demonstrates that his own righteousness is insufficient for salvation.

Fifteen hundred years later, Martin Luther demonstrates that an impressive monastic resume is of no worth in gaining salvation. The lives of both men underscore the truth that salvation requires a righteousness that comes from God through faith in Christ alone.



### The “Best Effort” Fallacy

Fallen humanity tends to “trust in one’s own righteousness,” an arrogant fable of personal merit and self-reliance that arises from original sin. Human beings do not want to trust God. They would rather believe there is something they can do to earn, at least some portion of their salvation.

- *While accepting someone’s best is all we can expect among men, it is not sufficient for God.*
- *Since God is holy and we are not, our best efforts are woefully inadequate to obtain His favor.*

### Luther’s Journey

As a young man, Luther became increasingly aware of his own sinfulness and his deserving of God’s wrath. He became a monk to obtain salvation.

- *Luther’s angst (anfechtung) kept him in continual torment.*
- *Luther lived in constant fear of divine wrath.*

### The Via Moderna (Modern Way)

In Luther’s day, medieval scholasticism taught that God made a choice, without reference to His character, to accept a person’s best effort.

- *Luther came to question his best efforts.*
- *The Scripture eventually convinced Luther that this doctrine was not biblical.*

*“I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and ... I was angry with God, and said, ‘As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!’”*

~ Martin Luther

### The Just Shall Live By Faith

From the Word of God (Ps 143:2, 130:3, Is 64:6, Rom 1:17), Luther became convinced that our best would never be enough. The Gospel is that God, by the gift of faith, credits Christ’s righteousness to us that we are accepted in Him. Those who live by faith are made righteous.