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Philippians 3.1-11  
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When it comes to life with God, are we ever tempted to work a little on the side to cover our bases? Where does our confidence lie? In this passage Paul points firmly to Jesus and his work on the cross.

#### 3.1-2

- Paul has two problems with what the false teachers are doing. He is concerned with their message (to be a true Christian you must be circumcised) and method (they are preying on people).
- He therefore calls these people dogs (not an endearing term at the time) and mutilators, or cutters. What they are doing is of no benefit, in fact, it is harmful.

#### 3.3-4

- Paul uses a compare and contrast method.
- Paul shows how he places no weight on his own efforts and speaks of the spiritual circumcision of the heart rather than an outward appearance. This is not about checking boxes, this is about God's inner work.
- This means Paul does not talk about what he has done, but what Christ has done. We should follow the same pattern.

#### 3.5-7

- Paul shares his resume. He has done well according to his own religion, and lists his accomplishments and pedigree.

#### 3.8-9

- Using strong language Paul considers all this "worthless", literally "garbage" (or a crass word for "dung" in the Greek). Works based religion does not save.
- "Knowing Christ" is what Paul is concerned with. To know Christ is to be "found in him" (KJV). We find this language of "being in him" leads us beyond a simply hope of fire insurance, that we'll escape and go to heaven one day, but that we'd find the abundant life Jesus mentions in John 10.10.

#### 3.10-11

- To truly know Christ is to have our lives shaped. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us today.
- To fully identify with Christ means also to suffer with him. This is a death to sin and selfishness – and nothing purifies like suffering. We must therefore "die" in order to know this new life.
- When we position ourselves to live a cruciform life, we also experience a resurrection life.

- Matthew 10 – give up your life and you will find it.

Two responses:

- Lose the religion.
  - Where does your confidence lie? In being a good person? In being better than the next? In your purity of living?
  - There is a place for the fruit of the Spirit (Godly works) in our lives. If we are full of God and are in Christ we will live like him. But this is not an earning, it's an overflow.
  - We must quit trying to earn God's favour. We already have it.
- Embrace the relationship.
  - We aren't called to a theology, a membership or a denomination. We belong first to Christ. He surpasses all.
  - "Nothing compares to knowing Christ."

### **Discussion Questions:**

- What kinds of things do we tend to put our confidence in? Think out of the box – there are easy answers, but consider what you cling to that deep down you believe brings hope and fulfillment. This "religion" might not be what you expect.
- What has "knowing Christ" or "being in Christ" meant for you? What have you experienced? This is a mystical kind of phrase, but can we put examples to the experience?
- If we belong to Christ, how do we become aware to this? What does a life look like that is "hidden in Christ?" Who do you know who lives this way?