



**Icebreaker: looking round your homegroup, who do you think of as the confident one(s)? Do they agree? St Paul has a lot to say about confidence and where it comes from ..... Read Philippians 3 verses 1 – 11.**

### **The Good Enough Culture. 21<sup>st</sup> Century UK.**

From a very young age we are brought up to try hard to win badges of attainment: in Scouts and Guides; for swimming 5 meters or winning 'star of the week' for maths. Later, we find that achievement in exams, tests, sports and community volunteering are used to prove we're likely to become a 'good' person with a Good Job and a Good Life and who, crucially, is in favour with God - because He likes Good people.

Achievement, goals and rewards are fine – until my 'record of achievement' becomes fused with my 'worth': with my value as a person. Then, spiritual confidence comes from believing that I am good enough for God – or at least not as bad as 'that person over there'! Eventually I realise that all the certificates in the world don't really reveal my true character, or reach my soul – the sometimes beautiful and sometimes ugly truth of who I really am. And I begin to wonder, 'How good do I need to be to be good enough for God'?

### **The Good Enough Culture. 1st Century Israel.**

The Jews were asking Jesus the same question: 'Have I done enough to be good enough for God'? **Matthew 19: 16-22.** After feeding the 5,000 Jesus' followers asked, 'What must we do, to do the works God requires'? **John 6: 28.** The Pharisees and Sadducees were answering with complex sets of rules to obey. In both centuries people are trying to work out how to be in relationship with a holy, righteous and pure God.

### **Paul's Credentials, Conversion and new Confidence.**

- Paul had the most amazing credentials for being better than anyone else and right with God. **vv. 4-6**
- But Paul had an encounter with the risen Jesus which trashed his self-righteousness. (**Acts 9: 1-19**)
- He realised that everything he had relied on to win him favour with God was 'rubbish' (Gk sku-balon: horse manure). An impolite word because he hates the way self-righteousness severs us from God.
- He is angry the Philippians are being told that in addition their faith, they have to be circumcised to be sure of favour from God. **vv. 1-3.** There is nothing you have to do except simply to trust in Jesus.
- Jesus has lived a sinless, perfect righteous life and when he died, he took upon Himself the consequences of our selfishness and pride and paid for them with His death. **vv 7-9.** He lives for ever to offer us all the free gift of His righteousness, in exchange for our sin. This is the GRACE of God in which we are invited to live and in which we can have complete confidence.

### **Christian Confidence in Salvation by faith.**

- In 1517 Martin Luther had his 'Damascus Road' experience and subsequently led the Protestant Reformation which majored on Salvation by faith rather than works. Later he wrote: 'Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace. So sure and certain that a man can stake his whole life on it'.
- Many in England did lose their lives because of this revelation about the nature of faith and grace.
- Now – 500 years later – it seems we could do with a new movement of God's grace in our churches, which are not meant to be seen as places where good people meet God, but are meant to be offering the lavish, scandalous and ridiculously inclusive grace of God to all sorts and conditions of people.

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### **Questions for Discussion:**

- 1. Do we find it difficult to rid ourselves of the idea that we must do something to earn God's favour?**
- 2. What would the modern-day gold standard spiritual CV look like?**
- 3. What things do we find ourselves 'adding on' to simple trust in Jesus for our salvation?**
- 4. Ruth likened living under grace to living with a different currency. What did she mean?**
- 5. 'It costs nothing to become a Christian, but everything to live as one'. What are the joys and challenges of knowing Christ and living for Him? (Clues in verses 10 and 11)**
- 6. 'Receiving God's grace is not a one-off event'. It's like having access to a continually-flowing pure waterfall – but we must learn to keep stepping under it to keep receiving this precious gift.**