

We Are the Circumcision

Philippians 3:2

Big Idea: The danger of self-confidence is that we find our standing before God and our power to overcome the flesh in the things we do instead of who we are in Christ.

Question 2: What is our greatest enemy to our joy in the Lord?

Answer: Self-confidence.

Self-Confidence: Finding your _____ of _____ before a holy God or your _____ to _____ the sin-filled nature in anything other than Christ.

1. The _____ Self-Confidence

Philippians 3:2 (ESV) — **2** Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

a. Dogs

‘The dogs’. This [label], which the apostle employs nowhere else, has been given all kinds of pejorative connotations, including impurity, shamelessness, greed, cunning, insolence, intrusiveness, ferocity in attack, and wandering about.⁴⁹ It evoked for the Jew the image of uncleanness, for dogs were ‘well known for feeding on [decaying flesh], filth and garbage’. According to the Mishnah these animals were mentioned with reference to matters of unclean food.⁵¹ The term was an apt description of those who did not submit to Jewish dietary laws and thus were regarded as unholy.⁵³ ‘Dogs’ and Gentiles in some contexts were almost synonymous... As a religious term it was applied by Jews to Gentiles or lapsed Jews who were ritually unclean and thus outside the covenant (cf. Mt. 7:6; 15:26–27).¹

Matthew 15:21-28

Unless we see ourselves as _____, unless we see ourselves as _____, unless we see ourselves as _____, we cannot receive the blessing of the scrapes from the Lord’s table.

¹ O’Brien, P. T. (1991). *The Epistle to the Philippians: a commentary on the Greek text* (pp. 354–355). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

b. Evil-doers

Luke 18:9-14

The biggest issue with taking confidence in self is we view our works as the measure of God’s acceptance of us instead of his grace.

c. Mutilators

For the Israelites circumcision was not merely a surgical procedure. It was above all a symbol of God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants... to the Hebrew nation it symbolized the physical and spiritual continuity of the Israelite generations. Through circumcision a person became a member of Israel’s community and received the right to participate in public worship.²

Acts 10:9-16

Galatians 3:28–29 (ESV) — **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

Questions to Consider

- What is the danger of finding our confidence in fleshly attainments?
- How does our culture encourage self-confidence? Is this right or wrong?
- What are some things you tend to put your confidence (for assurance/deliverance) in other than Christ?
- What does the world tend to put their confidence in? How does this influence our own behavior? What are some ways we can fight against these temptations?
- How might we hold each other accountable to Christ as our only confidence?

² Myers, A. C. (1987). In *The Eerdmans Bible dictionary* (p. 218). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.