

## THE RESURRECTION AND OUR MANY CONVERSIONS

Philippians 3:4b-14

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**WATCH/LISTEN:** <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/the-resurrection-and-our-many-conversions/>

Those of you who know me know that I love books, especially biography and autobiography. I love to hear people's stories, how life has happened for them. This passage of scripture is among the most concise and honest autobiographical glimpses of the Apostle Paul that we have anywhere in scripture.

Verses 5-6 offer clear insight into this character before he met Christ. It isn't pretty. He is very honest and transparent: focused on appearances, very competitive, always measuring himself against others, always wanting to finish first, be the best at everything. More than a little OCD, dotting all I's, crossing all T's, finding his value in his performance and effort, focusing on externals while inside he was full of pride and hate. Prone to violence and bullying. Caught up in self-love, self-promotion and self-trust.

But then he met the Messiah and everything changed. I mean everything! When I was a little boy, I had a very short career as a piano student. My mom tried to teach me that you always begin by finding middle C. Find that, and everything else falls into place. But if you begin at the wrong place, everything else will be off. So it was for Paul. Once he met Christ, he realized how out-of-whack his whole life had been.

Philosopher Peter Anthony Bertocci once wrote that two things are required to keep our faith in touch with real life: we must keep critiquing our assumptions of what self-fulfillment means; we have to keep reviewing and revising our emotional attachments [*Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*].

In vv. 7-8, he tells how he moved from a theory about Christ to a personal relationship with Christ. We have to pause here and deal with our own defective evangelical view of salvation as a one-and-done event. Accepting Jesus to get our fire insurance. In reality, to know him is to keep on knowing him.

When I was eight years old, I made my profession of faith in Christ and was baptized. While I believe that was a genuine beginning, it was only a beginning. By the time I reached age 14, my walk with Christ had not kept up with the rest of my life. This passage of scripture began to have a profound effect on me. I began to see that Jesus laid claim to all parts of my life, not just my Sunday habits. When that began to sink in, life began to change.

Consider the resurrection and Paul's many conversions: from self-salvation to trust in Christ; from nationalism and ethnic pride to the Kingdom of God; from selfishness to servanthood. From hate to forgiveness; from control/power/being in charge to suffering/weakness/vulnerability ("I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the partnership of his suffering" v. 10).; from his agenda to God's; from competition to mutuality. Have you noticed? Perhaps one good thing we have learned during the pandemic: we don't have to

compete. We can be in mutual relationships, each serving the other. From violence to love. Which of these conversions are you being called to?

In just a few brief verses, we see Paul move from a frantic need to feel significant to an awareness of being loved mightily, captured by Christ, arrested, overwhelmed. Today, I invite you to entrust the one life you have to God's Messiah, the Christ. And then open your heart to the many conversions in store for you.