

2026 1Q Christ in Philippians and Colossians

Lesson 6 Confidence Only in Christ

by Russell Atkins

SABBATH

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10, 11, NKJV).

Why do we have "confidence only in Christ"?

Is it because He's sovereign?
Is it because He's "The Creator"?
Is it because He knows our thoughts?
Is it because He's powerful?
Is it all of the above?
Is it something else?

From the Lesson:

There's something about us that remains suspicious about salvation by faith alone, apart from the works of the law. That is, for some reason, we all tend to lean on our works, as if they could add to our salvation. In a rather striking way, Paul deals with this point in a vigorous polemic against those who insist that circumcision is necessary for salvation.

To guard against the possibility that some might consider their works, such as circumcision, as contributing to their salvation, Paul makes it clear that righteousness is from Christ as a gift that comes by faith, not by the law. Though circumcision might not be an issue today, the principle it deals with certainly is.

The Protestant Reformation itself started over this very issue: the role of faith and works in the experience of a follower of Christ. In the end, Christ is everything to us, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). If our priorities are in the right place, we will live with the assurance of God's love and enjoy the promise, even now, of salvation, all while placing "no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). — *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, pg 72.

What makes us "suspicious about salvation by faith alone, apart from the works of the law" ?
The belief that God's Law functions like human laws.

What was the point of "circumcision"? The process had no inherent saving benefit at all - it was a SIGN of a covenant Abraham entered into with God. It also functions as a metaphor for the cutting away of the worldly attachments from our hearts.

Thought experiment: Why were only the men circumcised?

SUNDAY

Rejoicing in the Lord.

What does it mean to "rejoice in the Lord"? Does it matter which "Lord"? Are we to rejoice in a "Lord" with Satan's character? Do we rejoice in a "Lord" who paid our penalty to placate His angry father?

From the lesson:

Most important, we are to have confidence in Christ, not in ourselves: "We . . . rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). Who among us has, in one way or another, learned the hard way about not putting confidence in the flesh? — *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, pg 73.

How do we get to the point of having "no confidence in the flesh", and how does this relate to rejoicing?

Again, from the lesson:

Anything we rejoice about brings us joy (as in English, the two Greek words for these ideas are related). God wants us to be joyful, and His Word is a kind of instruction manual for true happiness and lasting joy. These include receiving God's mercy (Ps. 31:7); placing our trust in Him (Ps. 5:11); receiving the blessings of salvation (Ps. 9:14); adopting God's law as our way of life (Ps. 119:14), including the Sabbath (Isa. 58:13, 14); believing His Word (Ps. 119:162); and raising godly children (Prov. 23:24, 25). — *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, pg 73.

I like the sequencing of the above texts. We are won to repentance by God's kindness / mercy, leading to a heart change from distrust to trust. We open our hearts to the blessings of salvation and begin to function in harmony with his Design for Life [aka Law], producing fruit and passing along to future generations. Well said.

MONDAY

Paul's Past Life

From the lesson:

It is a common experience for Christian converts to think of their lives in terms of before they accepted Jesus and after, just as Paul does in Philippians 3. Nevertheless, rightly or wrongly, we sometimes speak of those who are not Christians as being “good people,” and, at least according to the world’s standards, many indeed are. In contrast, compared to God’s standards, no one is, not even Christians. . — *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, pg 74.

Is it a source of pain or comfort for you to think of your life prior to conversion? Can it be a stumbling block of pride or shame? Does it matter which Law lens you view things through?

From the 2nd paragraph:

Paul makes an implicit contrast between believing Jews who are spreading false doctrine and uncircumcised believers who rely fully on Christ for their salvation and put no confidence in mere human works such as circumcision (see Heb. 6:1, Heb. 9:14; compare Rom. 2:25–29). Even though Paul’s past life and pedigree would have been quite impressive to his fellow Jews, none of these things contributed to his salvation. In fact, they actually hindered it because they blinded him for a while to his need of Christ. — *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, pg 74.

Are there any Adventists that rely on their "pedigree" of being raised in a multi-generational SDA family, attending SDA schools, marrying a SDA spouse, raising SDA children, attending church/VBS/camp meetings consistently, paying tithe, guarding the edges of the Sabbath [wading - never swimming], and trusting that their debt has been paid and Jesus's magic blood has erased their sins from books in Heaven for their salvation?

From the EGW notes:

Human beings frame laws, and are very zealous for their enactment. At the same time they transgress the highest law from the mightiest Sovereign. This they attempt to make null and void. They exalt the human above the divine. “Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord of hosts” (Jeremiah 5:9). Yes, God will reward every man according to his works. — *This Day With God*, pg 220.

TUESDAY

The Things that Matter.

From the lesson:

As yesterday's study pointed out, the things that previously made Paul proud were actually hindrances to faith because they blinded him to his need of Christ. Paul uses the language of commerce, gain and loss, to describe his spiritual ledger prior to faith. Although we don't like to think about it much, every human being has a "spiritual ledger." Previously, Paul's ledger was measured by the Jewish values of the time rather than by the biblical values as taught by Jesus. — *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, pg 75.

He who came down from heaven can speak of heaven, and rightly present the things which form the currency of heaven, on which he has stamped his image and superscription. He knows the danger in which those are placed whom he came to uplift from degradation, and to exalt to a place beside himself upon his throne. He points out their peril in lavishing affection upon useless and dangerous objects. He seeks to draw the mind away from the earthly to the heavenly, that we may not waste time, talent, and opportunity, upon things that are altogether vanity. — Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 1, 1890.

What is the main "earthly" thing Christ seeks to draw our minds away from? Is it not the distinction between the laws of men and The Law of God?

It is only by a clear discernment of spiritual things that the original apostasy can be understood. The controversy in heaven began with selfish strife for position, a desire on the part of Lucifer to be equal with God. The disaffection of Satan in entertaining the thought that he should stand as head of the heavenly order at first seemed a small thing, but by dwelling upon this thought, it was strengthened. Step by step he miscalculated the position that had been assigned him by God, to be maintained only in God, until he finally came to look with enmity upon everything coming from Jesus Christ. Satan rebelled against the laws governing the heavenly intelligences; and by representing these in a deceptive light, by his unbelief and complaints, he drew others with him into rebellion. — *Review & Herald*, May 30, 1899

Satan's policy in this final conflict with God's people is the same that he employed in the opening of the great controversy in heaven. He professed to be seeking to promote the stability of the divine government, while secretly bending every effort to secure its overthrow. And the very work which he was thus endeavoring to accomplish he charged upon the loyal angels. The same policy of deception has marked the history of the Roman Church. It has professed to act as the vicegerent of Heaven, while seeking to exalt itself above God and to change His law. Under the rule of Rome, those who suffered death for their fidelity to the gospel were denounced as evildoers; they were declared to be in league with Satan; and every possible means was employed to cover them with reproach, to cause them to appear in the eyes of the people and even to themselves as the vilest of criminals. So it will be now. While Satan seeks

to destroy those who honor God's law, he will cause them to be accused as lawbreakers, as men who are dishonoring God and bringing judgments upon the world. — *Darknes Before Dawn*, pg 34.

WEDNESDAY

The Faith of Christ

What does it mean to have "the faith of Christ"? How did Christ function in faith? Thoughts?

From the lesson:

Being "in Christ" comprehends everything that the plan of salvation encompasses, from the dawning of our spiritual intelligence (wisdom), to justification by faith (righteousness), to preparation for heaven (sanctification), and finally to glorification at the Second Advent (redemption). Salvation is Christ's work from start to finish—for us and in us. Thus, by gaining Christ, we have everything we need. — *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, pg 76.

Well said. I want to note that Christ cannot accomplish His work without our permission and cooperation.

The lesson references:

...and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith. — *Philippians 3:9*

Derived from "which Law"?

From the last paragraph:

As Paul came to realize, having one's "own righteousness" is not real righteousness because the law cannot give life (see Gal. 3:21, 22); only Christ can, through faith. And not just any faith. After all, the devils believe and tremble (James 2:19). The only saving faith is "the faith of Christ." Only His faith has obeyed fully and can obey. (The Greek word for faith, *pistis*, also means faithfulness.) So, if we are in Christ and He lives in us (Gal. 2:20), then we live by His faith through our faith in Him. — *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, pg 76.

A willing compliance with God's Design Law is the source of Life. Only Christ can empower us to that end.

THURSDAY

Just One Thing - Knowing Christ.

From the Lesson:

Surely there is nothing more important than knowing Christ, which guarantees in the end that He will know us and acknowledge us before the Father (see Matt. 7:21–23; Matt. 10:32, 33). How do we know Him? Through His Written Word—reading it and living it. We cannot know Him face-to-face as the disciples did. But interestingly, despite that knowledge, they still failed to comprehend His words, underscoring our need of the Holy Spirit to guide us (see John 16:13). The more we know Him, the closer we come to Him, because we experience “the power of His resurrection” (Phil. 3:10), which raises us to “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4, NKJV). — *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, pg 77.

Again, well said. "Knowing" implies more than just knowledge or belief [the devils believe and tremble]-- it's an intimate union of the human and divine [Marriage metaphor]

From the EGW comments:

Christ is a perfect revelation of God. “No man hath seen God at any time,” He says; “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Only by knowing Christ can we know God. And as we behold Him, we shall be changed into His image, prepared to meet Him at His coming...

Now is the time to prepare for the coming of our Lord. Readiness to meet Him cannot be attained in a moment’s time. Preparatory to that solemn scene there must be vigilant waiting and watching, combined with earnest work. So God’s children glorify Him. Amid the busy scenes of life their voices will be heard speaking words of encouragement, hope, and faith. All they have and are is consecrated to the Master’s service. Thus they prepare to meet their Lord; and when He comes, they will say, with joy, “This is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us...” We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. — *Maranatha*, pg 76.