

## PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

# A MIND OF RIGHT VALUES

Paul counted everything as being loss for Christ (3:8). His superb ancestry and training was regarded as refuse that he might gain Christ. He devoted himself to one thing, to stretching forward unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded." (3:15).

### 1. *Right values about the law-keepers— beware!* (3:2-16)

1. Lawkeepers are not the people of God; 3:2-3.
  - a. They are dogs, evil workers, concision.
  - b. Christians are the true Israel.
2. Paul could glory in the law more than they, but he did not; 3:4-16.
  - a. Paul's many grounds for confidence under the law; 3:4-6
  - b. Paul's attitudes; 3:6-16
    - (1) He counted gains under the law as loss; 3:7
    - (2) He counted all things loss for Christ; 3:8a
    - (3) He desired only Christ; 3:8b-11
    - (4) He did not consider himself perfect; 3:12a, 13a
    - (5) He pressed on; 3:12b, 13b-16

### 2. *Right values about Paul—be imitators!* (3:17-21)

1. Imitate Paul; 3:17.
2. Reasons for imitating Paul; 3:18-21
  - a. Many are enemies of the cross; 3:18-19
  - b. Our citizenship is in heaven; 3:20-21

CHAPTER THREE

Outline of 3:1-21

Rejoice; 3:1

F. False teachers contrasted with Paul's example; 3:2—4:1

1. Why beware of the law-keepers; 3:2-16

a. Because they are not the true people of God; 3:2-3

(1) They are dogs, evil workers, concision; 3:2

(2) We are the circumcision; 3:3

(a) We who worship by the Spirit of God

(b) We who glory in Christ Jesus

(c) We who have no confidence in the flesh

b. Because Paul had more to place confidence in than they, but he sought only Christ; 3:4-16

(1) What Paul could have placed confidence in; 3:4-6

(a) Being circumcised eighth day

(b) Being of the stock of Israel

(c) Being of the tribe of Benjamin

(d) Being a Hebrew of Hebrews

(e) Being a Pharisee

(f) Being zealous unto persecuting

(g) Being blameless according to the law

(2) Paul's attitudes; 3:7-15

(a) Counted gains under the law as loss; 3:7

(b) Counted all things loss for Christ; 3:8a

(c) Desired only Christ; 3:8b-11

—To gain Christ; 3:8b

—To be found in Him; 3:9

—To know Him; 3:10a

—To know the power of His resurrection;  
3:10b

—To know the fellowship of his sufferings;  
3:10b-11

(d) Did not consider that he was perfect; 3:12a, 13a

(e) He pressed on; 3:12b, 13b-16

—Let us all be thus minded; 3:15

—Let us walk as we have attained; 3:16

2. Why be imitators of Paul: 3:17-21

a. Command to imitate Paul; 3:17

b. Reasons for imitating Paul; 3:18b-21

(1) Because many are enemies of the cross; 3:18-19

(2) Because our citizenship is in heaven; 3:20-21

**3:1. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

3:1 (As for) the remaining (considerations), my brothers, (just continue to) rejoice in the Lord. (If it sounds repetitious for me to say this, well) to me it is not (at all) irksome to keep writing the same things to you (that I have declared in previous communications. I do not do it because I am lazy or have nothing else to say), and (furthermore) for you this is (the only) safe (course I can follow).

### *Notes*

- Chapter three opens with "Finally," although it is only about half way through the epistle. The word "Finally" does not here mean "In conclusion."  
This expression "Finally" (Gr. *to loipon*) is used frequently by Paul to begin some new subject in his writings. It is variously translated as "finally" (II Cor. 13:1), "henceforth" (Mark 14:41; I Cor. 7:29; Heb. 10:13; II Tim. 4:9), "For the rest," "besides," or "as to what remains." (I Thess. 4:1; II Thess 3:1).  
The "finally" in 3:1 is resumed, or perhaps repeated, at 4:8.
- The obligation to rejoice in the Lord is stated several times in this epistle. See Phil. 2:18; 4:4. Compare II Cor. 13:11; I Thess. 5:16.
- "Rejoice" is a present tense form, signifying continuous action: "Keep on rejoicing." The joy of Christians is continuous and indestructible because it is joy in the Lord. Our earthly circumstances may change, causing us to feel elated or sad, but the Lord never changes. We can always rejoice in Him. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. (Romans 8:35-39). So, no matter what your troubles, "Rejoice!"
- Christian joy is more often hindered by minor inconveniences than by major tragedies. Learn not to react to a five-cent annoyance by a five-dollar surge of adrenalin and anger.
- In this verse (3:1) Paul sets forth the necessity for repetition in our teachings. Preachers must not fear to repeat themselves. In the four gospels we find several identical statements by

Christ placed in different situations. Obviously Christ repeated himself frequently. After all we have only one message, and men cannot hear the old truths too often.

Paul did not therefore find it irksome, or grievous, to him to repeat himself. On the contrary he viewed repetition as the only safe course for the Philippians.

6. The "same things" that are referred to could be the things written earlier in this book (we prefer this view), or things spoken orally before, or a repetition of things written in some earlier letters. There is no real evidence that Paul ever wrote an earlier letter to the Philippians.
7. There is a sudden change of tone after 3:1. 3:2 begins a section that is harshly critical of certain men. However, we need not conclude, as some have, that the sudden change in tone indicates that our book of Philippians is a composite production, made of parts of two letters unskillfully combined by someone long after Paul's time. See introductory sections, page 12.

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**2. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

2. (Now, my brothers,) Beware of the dogs! Beware of the evil workers! Beware of the (flesh-) cutting, the slashing-cision!

### *Notes*

1. "Beware of the dogs; beware of the evil workers; beware of the concision." The "dogs" referred to here were the Judaizers, those who insisted that Christians must keep the law of Moses, with its laws about circumcision, not eating meats, etc.
2. The word *dog* had a very ugly connotation to ancient Jews. They did not think of dogs as we think of our prized household pets. To them the word *dog* brought to mind the unclean, half-wild, roaming, pack-running, scavenging pariah dogs of that part of the world.  
 "Dog" stands for a homosexual in Deut. 23:18. Dogs are outside of heaven. (Rev. 22:15). Give not what is holy to dogs. (Matt. 7:5). Gentiles are called "dogs" (Matt. 15:27).
3. Why should Paul call these Judaizers evil workers and dogs? They taught that people were saved by doing ceremonial works

like circumcision, and by keeping the law, and fulfilling the works of the law. By doing this they placed themselves completely at odds with God's will as revealed through Christ. Of course they would have denied this, but Paul's evaluation of them must be accepted as true. Therefore in our own time anyone who insists that we must keep the law of Moses, wholly or in part, must be included in Paul's condemnation.

4. The word *concision* (Gr. *katatome*) is a play on the word *circumcision* (Gr. *peritome*). In Old Testament times circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants, and was absolutely necessary. Under our Christian dispensation circumcision is of no importance at all. (Gal. 6:15) Paul uses the rather derisive name *concision* to refer to compulsory circumcision in our times. Concision means a cutting, a slashing, a pagan mutilation of the flesh which served no purpose. That which the Judaizers called circumcision—a mark of honor—was to Paul on a concision—a meaningless mutilation of the flesh. Compare Gal. 5:12 for a similar thought.
5. *Concision* is used in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) in several very unflattering connections;
  - Lev. 21:5—"Make not cuttings in their (the priests') flesh."
  - I Kings 18:28—The prophets of Baal slashed themselves as they prayed for Baal to send down fire upon his altar.
  - Isaiah 15:2—The Moabites cut their beards in grief.
6. How could Paul refer to these Judaizers as evil workers? Basically because they insisted upon forcing their false doctrine upon Gentile converts to Christ, and would not listen to Paul's message of truth. Paul truly loved his fleshly kinsmen the Jews (Romans 9:1-2); nonetheless they fiercely and fanatically opposed him everywhere he went. Even the Christian Jews showed antagonism toward Paul. In doing such actions they made themselves evil workers.
7. 3:2 begins a new section in our outline, which we entitle "False Teachers contrasted with Paul's example" (3:2-21). The first subtopic in this section is 3:2-17, which deals with the topic "Why beware of the law-keepers." Two reasons are developed for this: (1) Law-keepers are not the true people of God; and (2) Paul had more to place confidence in than they had, but he sought Christ only.

**3. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh:**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

3. For we (Christians) are the (people who are the true) circumcision, (we) who worship by (the guidance and instructions of) the Spirit of God (and not through the law of Moses), and (we who) rejoice in Christ Jesus (as our only hope), and do not put (our) trust in the flesh (like those who place their confidence in circumcision do);

*Notes*

1. In this verse Paul gives a reason why we must beware of those who try to force the law upon Christians: They are not the true people of God. Christians are the true people of God.
2. In the Old Testament God told Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nations, that he and every male with him must be circumcised. It was the token or sign of the covenant between God and Abraham. This was to be done by all of Abraham's descendants after him. The uncircumcised male was cut off from his people because he had broken God's covenant. Gen. 17:10-14.

Because of this command to Abraham, the Jews became a circumcised race, and the "The Circumcision" came to refer to the Jews.

3. Paul asserts that this has now been changed. The Jews who practice fleshly circumcision are no longer the true circumcision, the true people of God. We Christians who worship by the Spirit of God and place no confidence in the flesh (like the Jews did in this circumcised flesh) are now the real circumcision. A similar thought is given in Romans 2:25-29. Compare Gal. 6:15-16 and Col. 2:11-13.

Because Christians are the true circumcision it is proper to refer to the church as Israel. Romans 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:29; 6:16; Rev. 3:9.

4. The idea that fleshly circumcision is of no value unless it is accompanied by true faith and a godly life was not original with Paul. Deut. 10:16 and 30:6 speak of an uncircumcised heart, that is, a heart not yielded and obedient to God. Jer. 6:10 speaks of an uncircumcised ear, an ear not receptive

to God's commands. Ex. 6:20 speaks of uncircumcised lips, that is, unworthy lips. These references were all spoken about people who practiced fleshly circumcision. From these references it appears that circumcision had always been a matter of the heart, rather than of outward fleshly form. This is further confirmed by the fact that Abraham received the sign of circumcision AFTER he had already been declared righteous before God as a result of his faith. See Romans 4:9-11; Gen. 15:6; 17:11.

5. Three signs of the true circumcision: (Phil. 3:3).

(1) Worshipping by the Spirit of God.

(2) Boasting in Christ Jesus.

(3) Having no confidence in the flesh.

6. Worshipping by the Spirit of God involves several things:

It involves worshipping according to the new covenant laws, which were given by the Holy Spirit beginning on the day of Pentecost, when the church began. See II Cor. 3:3, 6; Acts 2:4, 16-17.

It involves worshipping with the righteousness, peace, and joy that is produced by the Holy Spirit within us. See Romans 14:17. We serve God in our spirits (Rom. 1:9), which have been made free from the law of sin and death by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2).

The Holy Spirit was not given to all men until after the death of Christ and His glorification. Therefore those under the law before Christ could not really have worshipped by the Spirit. Neither can those who now try to worship according to that system of law in force before the Holy Spirit was poured out upon all flesh. John 7:39; Gal. 3:2.

To relapse back to a pattern of life which followed the law of Moses after having once began to serve Christ would be the height of folly. Paul said to the Galatians, who were doing this, "O foolish Galatians . . . having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" (Gal. 3:1-3).

7. Christians, the true people of God, glory in Christ Jesus; that is, they have Christ as their basis for boasting (that is, glorying or confidence), and not the law. Paul gloried in nothing except the cross of Christ (with all that that involved). (Gal. 6:14; Compare II Cor. 1:31; 10:17).

Philippians chapter three elaborates at great length about how Paul had more grounds for glorying in fleshly distinctions than many Judaizers who gloried in them, and yet Paul counted all these things loss that he might gain Christ. (Phil. 3:7-8)

8. Christians, the true people of God, have no confidence in the flesh. The fact that they are negro or white, circumcised or uncircumcised gives them no confidence whatsoever. We know that God can, if He should desire, raise up circumcised children of Abraham from stones. (Luke 3:8). We put our trust in the living God and in His son, and not in our flesh.

Worship involves all of our lives. It is not limited to acts done in group assemblies. Worship involves the feelings in our hearts, toward God, our constant prayer contact with God, and the deeds and words that we do because we are God's

9. All the religious teachers in modern times who try to convert people to keep the law, wholly or in part, fall under Paul's condemnation here in Phil. 3:2-3. This includes all those who try to make us keep Saturday as a Sabbath day, to reject certain meats or foods, to keep the feasts of the law like the feast of Tabernacles, etc. See Col. 2:16-17.

It is odd that in our generation that is generally so lawless, that some should yet seek to bind an extreme and obsolete system of law upon us. While we are not without law before God, we are not under the law given through Moses. I Cor. 9:20-21.

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**4. though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: 5. circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6. as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

4. although I myself could have confidence in the flesh (if that were the source of confidence). (Indeed) if any other man thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I (have even) more (than he has).

5. (I was) circumcised when I was eight days old. (I was not some Ishmaelite or off-branch from Abraham.) (I am) of the race of Israel (not a proselyte). (I am) of the (distinguished!)



tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews (so completely Hebrew that I speak the Hebrew tongue). With regard to the law (I was) a Pharisee (holding their strict ideas about the law, and not the compromising position of many Hellenistic Jews).

6. With regard to zeal (I was) persecuting the church (of Christ); with regard to (the) righteousness (which) is (revealed) in the law, (I was) blameless.

### Notes

1. Phil. 2:4 introduces a second argument as to why we must beware of the law-keepers (those Judaizers who try to make Christians keep the law of Moses): These people had less grounds for confidence in their physical distinctions than Paul had, and yet he placed no confidence in such things. Paul could denounce the Jewish view, for he once shared it to the fullest.
2. To emphasize that he had more grounds for confidence in Jewish ancestry and Jewish honors than other people who gloried in such things, Paul itemized his own distinctions:

(1) He had been circumcised the eighth day of his life. (Cf. Luke 1:59). This distinguished him from Gentiles, or proselytes, or Ishmaelites (who performed circumcision at age thirteen). Paul had lived all of his previous life in the Jewish faith.

(2) He was of the stock of Israel, of pure racial ancestry. See II Cor. 11:22.

(3) He was of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1). This tribe was famous for its military prowess (Gen. 49:27; Judges 20), and for such honored names as King Saul and Mordecai (the cousin of Queen Esther). Paul was not from one of the ten renegade tribes.

(4) Paul was a Pharisee, as far as the law was concerned (Acts 23:6; 26:5). The Pharisees were a strict denomination of Jews. Their very name means "Separated." There were never more than 6000 of them. In spite of the hypocrisy of many of them, they were basically a strict, God-fearing group, accepting the entire Old Testament, and also the traditions which had developed around it. They refused to take part in the compromising life of many Jews of their time. Paul was not an apostate Hellenistic Jew (favorable to Greek culture) but a Pharisee.

(5) Paul was a persecutor as far as zeal was concerned. Details of Paul's (Saul's) persecutions of the church may be read in Acts 8:1, 3; 9:1-2, 13-14; 22:3-5, 19-20; 26:9-11.

Zeal for a correct cause is good. Phinehas the priest was commended for his zeal. (Numbers 25:11-13). Christ had such zeal that he drove the money changers from the temple. (Psalm 69:9; John 2:17). However, zeal for a false cause is useless, perhaps even deadly. See Rom. 10:2. Saul's zeal was like that.

(6) Paul was a blameless man, as far as the righteousness of the law was concerned. He had kept all the ceremonies and rituals of the law so faithfully that no one could find fault with his performance.

Strangely enough, however, Paul looked back upon this time when he was "blameless according to the law" as being a time when he was the chief of sinners. See II Tim. 1:13-15. This shows that people can be self-deceived about their standing before God. Also it shows that the law really made no one righteous (Hebrews 10:1-4).

3. These six descriptions of Paul's life and attainments were written to show that he could have claimed, if he had so desired, more honors from the Jewish point of view, than any of those who did place their confidence in Jewish background and attainments.

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**7. Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

7. Nevertheless (in spite of all the Jewish distinctions which I can legitimately claim), whatever things had been gain to me (that is, sources of honor and distinction) I have come to regard (these things) as (just so much) loss because of Christ (Jesus).

### *Notes*

1. When did Paul count all those things which had appeared to be gain to him as loss?
  - (1) at his conversion (3:7)
  - (2) continuously thereafter (3:8)

2. Note what all Paul counted loss:
  - (1) Fleshly honor (his noble ancestry); (3:5)
  - (2) Education (Ph.D. equivalent!); (3:5)
  - (3) His office (Pharisee); (3:5)
  - (4) His social respectability (blameless); (3:6)
3. Observe the past tense (Gr. perfect) of "I counted" in this verse, which contrasts with the present "I count" in 3:8. (The Gr. Perfect tense indicates a past action with present effects.)
4. Paul counted his past honors as *loss*. If a modern businessman should unintentionally buy a load of merchandise that he could neither sell nor send back, he would write it off as so much loss. Thus Paul wrote off as loss his past beliefs, and in his case with no regrets.
5. Paul had found the pearl of great price. (Matt. 13:45-46). It was Christ. For Christ's sake he was willing to give up all else he ever had or gloried in. "For Christ count everything but loss."

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**8. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

8. Indeed I verily (still) count all things (to be) loss for the overwhelming gain of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them as only (items of) refuse (dung, or filth), so that I may gain (or win) Christ.

### *Notes*

1. Paul's past decision (stated in 3:7) to count all things loss for Christ was still his present attitude, as stated in 3:8.
2. How shall we describe the excellent knowledge of Christ which so entranced Paul? It is extensive, useful, cheering, satisfying, profound, authoritative, uplifting, purifying, helpful, transforming! (The expression "the knowledge of Christ" includes both the knowledge about Christ and the knowledge we gain through fellowship with Him.)
3. What things did Paul gain in Christ?
  - (1) He gained the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. (3:8, 10a). "This is life eternal that they should *know* thee,

the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Christ Jesus." (John 17:3)

(2) The justification (or righteousness) that comes through faith. Compare Romans 1:17; 3:21-22.

(3) A knowledge (experimental knowledge) of the power of Christ's resurrection (3:10).

(4) Partnership in Christ's sufferings (3:10).

(5) Identification with Christ in his death (3:10).

(6) Assurance of the resurrection unto eternal life (3:11).

4. Paul surely suffered the loss of all things. He lost his job, his reputation, his safety, his former friends, and finally his life. However, he also gained many things that were worth far more to him than all he lost.
5. "Refuse" (Gr. *skubala*, pl. of *skubalon*) means dung, filth, refuse. (Lidell & Scott's Lexicon).
6. Paul's supreme wish now was to gain (or win) Christ as his own, and to be found in Christ. We should endeavor to make Paul's feelings our feelings. To gain Christ and be found in him involves much more than merely to receive Christ as savior. It seems to have meant to Paul that he wanted to be absorbed completely into the nature, work, fellowship, and presence of Christ. May God help us to desire to gain Christ to the degree that Paul desired him.

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9. and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10. that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; 11. if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

9. (I desire not only to gain, or win, Christ, but also that) I may be found in him (—found by God, and found by Christ himself, and by my brethren, and by those who oppose me—and when I am thus found that all may behold me,) not as (having) a righteousness of my own (which is) the (righteousness) based on (keeping) the law, but (as having) that (righteousness which comes) through Christ, the (righteousness) from God (which is given) upon the basis of faith.

10. (And I desire) to know him (that is, to know Christ—to know him in all the limitless experiences of fellowship available to us in the gospel), and (to know) the power of his resurrection (with that power working in my life), and (to know the) fellowship of his sufferings (to have a share in them, if need be, even to the point of) being made to conform to his death (along with him),

11. so that I may, if possible, attain unto the resurrection from the dead, (that is, unto the resurrection unto eternal life).

### Notes

- 3:9-11 expresses some of Paul's desires as they related to Christ. He desired to gain Christ, to be found in Christ, to know Christ, to know the power of Christ's resurrection, and to know the fellowship of His sufferings. All of these things involve Christ.
- Paul wanted to be *found* in Christ. (No secret discipleship for him!) He wanted anyone who might care to investigate him, or who might accidentally cross his path, to find that he Paul was *in Christ*.
- Paul desired that those who "found" him would find out quickly that his righteousness was not the righteousness commanded in the law—a righteousness which consisted of doing or not doing a long list of things that were contained in the law (Gal. 3:12)—but that his righteousness was that which is given through faith in Christ. This is a bestowed righteousness. God says, as it were, "I know that you have sinned, but because you believe in and desire to serve my Son, I declare you to be righteous, as righteous as if you had never sinned in your life." (Romans 1:17; 3:21-24). Out of the joy and inward peace that comes from this bestowed righteousness, we live lives of obedience, holiness, love, and good works, not because we are under the law of Moses, but because we desire to obey God's will and desire to do good unto all men to the utmost of our power. (Titus 3:8; Eph. 3:10).

A synonym for righteousness is *justification*, or acquittal. When God declares a man righteous, he is justified and acquitted of all guilt, just as if he had never sinned. Then he is furthermore aided by the Holy Spirit to live a life of true personal righteousness.

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 4. Our own righteousness—      | The righteousness from God. |
| a. Based on the law.           | a. Based on grace.          |
| b. Requires meritorious works. | b. Requires faith.          |
| c. Earned.                     | c. Free.                    |
| d. Brings glory to me.         | d. Brings glory to Christ.  |
| e. Impossible to attain        | e. Freely available.        |

(Romans 3:20)

5. Paul desired to *know* Christ. Compare Eph. 1:19. *Knowing* in Biblical usage, often means more than mere acquaintance. It signifies knowing intimately by experience and devoted association, (Eph. 4:13; John 17:3; Jer. 9:23-24). Sometimes *know* means to *approve*. (Matt. 7:23). Do you truly want to know Christ as Paul wanted to know him, or would you rather keep Christ off at a safe distance?

Paul seems to have come to feel in later years that he really did know Jesus. "I know him whom I have believed." (II Tim. 1:12).

6. Paul desired to know the power of Christ's resurrection. Compare Eph. 1:19-20. This power that brought Christ back from the dead is available to us as Christians. God will assist us with the same power with which he raised Christ. Romans 6:3-5 emphasizes that in baptism we are united with Christ in the likeness of his resurrection, as well as in the likeness of his death.
7. Paul desired to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, even to the point to becoming conformed to Christ's death.

Paul did not deliberately try to bring troubles upon himself; on several occasions in his life he took steps to prevent trouble from coming upon himself. But he accepted trouble and even death as a reality, and looked upon it as a means of identification with Christ.

Certainly Paul did experience a full fellowship (or share) in suffering for (and with) Christ. Acts 9:16; II Cor. 11:23-28. Paul has revealed to us that we enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations (Acts 14:22). Also that all who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (I Tim. 3:12).

But in all of these things Paul kept himself joyful and expectant. "If we died with him, we shall also live with him." (II Tim. 2:11-12). That which God appoints for us, though

it seems grievous for a moment, at last produces wonderful fruit in our lives.

8. Paul's statement in 3:11, in which he says, "if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead," is a bit hard to understand.

Paul cannot have meant that he needed to work for Christ to a certain point to be assured that his body would rise from the dead. This notion conflicts with Paul's own plain statements that he believed in a general resurrection of both the just and the unjust (I Cor. 15:23; Acts 24:15; 26:8). Christ also spoke of the coming general resurrection (John 5:28-29).

It would appear, then, that Paul meant that he hoped to live in such a way that he would be worthy of the honor of being raised from the dead, even though our worth has nothing to do with the certainty that we shall be raised. Or perhaps Paul meant that he wanted to be sure to be raised in the resurrection with the just. A resurrection unto eternal punishment is hardly an inviting "resurrection."

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**12. Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

12. (I certainly am) not (implying) that I have already taken (hold of my goals), or (that) I have already become fully grown (and perfect); but I am pursuing (the goals), so that I may lay hold (upon them, the same goal) for which I was also laid hold upon by Christ. (He laid hold upon me at the time of my conversion, and directed me toward the goal, which I now long for and labor to take hold of.)

### *Notes*

1. Paul here reveals yet more of the attitudes which he held, attitudes which distinguished him from the false teachers who gloried in their Jewish background.

Paul did not consider himself yet to have laid hold on the goals he had stated in 3:9-11. Compare 3:13a. He did not feel that he was yet perfect, even though Christ had given him that righteousness which comes through faith (3:9).

There was more he yet desired to attain. The word *attain* in 3:11 (Gr. *katantao*) is a different word from *obtained* in 3:12 (Gr. *lambano*), even though the KJV translates them as *attain* and *attained*. The former word means to arrive at; the latter means to take.

2. *Perfect* means full-grown, or mature in mind, complete. It does not suggest the idea of absolute sinlessness.
3. Though he did not feel that he was perfect, Paul nevertheless was always pressing on (Gr. *dioko*, pursue). This should be a lesson against letting down in our efforts, even in old age! Paul was no longer young when he wrote these words. Compare Philemon 9.
4. Paul sought to lay hold on the thing for which Christ had laid hold upon him and had directed him to seize. Christ had laid hold on Paul for a purpose, and now Paul sought to lay hold on that same purpose. We see here an illustration of the cooperation necessary between the divine will and the human will.

The idea that God and Christ lay hold on us, and direct our lives into certain paths for certain goals, is frequently found in the scripture. But in all such cases the human will and human effort had to cooperate with the divine directions, or the job did not get done. Note the cases of Moses (Ex. 3:10; 4:10-11), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-10). John the baptist (Luke 1:15-17), and Paul himself (Acts 26:19; Gal. 1:15-16). Compare Phil. 2:13. Perhaps God is laying hold on your life for a special service. Will you accept this direction, and strive to lay hold on the goal for which you were laid hold on?

5. R.S.V. translates 3:12b, "because Christ Jesus has made me his own." The Gr. prepositional phrase *epb' ho* (translated *for which in* KJV and ASV) does indeed sometimes mean *because* (Thayer's Lexicon), in accord with this reading. But most of the other principal versions (New English, Phillips, Amplified, New A.S.V., Confraternity, etc.) render the verse by a meaning similar to our familiar KJV and ASV. This would seem to be the preferred reading.

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13. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, 14. I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.



*Translation and Paraphrase*

13. Brothers, I do not count myself (yet) to have laid hold on (my goal). But one thing I (am doing): forgetting (disregarding) the things (that are) behind (in my past) and stretching forward (like a racer) to the things ahead,

14. I pursue (onward) toward the mark, unto the (great prize and) award of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus, (that prize which God, the great umpire, awards to all of those who press ever onward and upward—to all those who obey the calling of God, which comes to us in Christ, and leads us ever upward toward God.)

*Notes*

1. Paul repeats in 3:13 the thought first stated in 3:12, that he did not yet count himself to have laid hold (perf. infin. of *katalambano*, the word used also in 3:12, meaning to lay hold on so as to make one's own). The goals Paul desired to lay hold on were stated in 3:10-11.
2. Paul was dedicated to *one* thing. Neither past failures and persecutions, nor fears about the future kept him from seeking this. The *one thing* which Paul did was to keep reaching and stretching out further toward things ahead, toward his goal.
3. *Forgetting* is a present tense, indicating continuous linear action. *Forgetting* here expresses the idea of disregarding, or refusing to be influenced by something.
4. "I press toward the mark, the goal." A goal is an object upon which the eye is kept fixed, so that it can be attained through constant attention and effort.
5. "Unto the *prize*." The *prize* referred to here is an award such as is given to a victor in athletic competition. Paul here compares his attainment of the fullest fellowship with Christ and his reward in heaven to a trophy such as an athlete might win.

Do you really desire this heavenly prize, or do you prefer the decaying award of this world?

6. The prize is described as the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The term "high calling" may also be rendered as the "upward calling." Everything about the services of Christ leads us upward—upward in service to others, upward in kindness, upward in joy, upward in helpfulness, etc.

15. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you: 16. only whereunto we have attained, by that same rule let us walk.

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

15. Therefore let as many of us as are full-grown (mature, perfect, fully developed in Christian attitudes) think this same (way about our progress as Christians). And if any one (of you) think otherwise (about your Christian progress) God will reveal this (truth) to you (in due time, and convince you that I was right about it).

16. But (whatever your feelings about our goal for life may be, I urge) only (this, that we) live by the same (standard) unto which we have attained—(live in accordance with the best knowledge and feelings you have gained).

### *Notes*

1. Verses 15-16 form a concluding exhortation to the preceding material. Paul urged those who considered themselves spiritually perfect (mature, or full-grown) to realize that they had to continue pressing on toward the heavenly goal, even as he did. If there were some among Paul's readers who did not feel about this as Paul felt, and thought that they were already fully attained, Paul did not quarrel with them, but only urged them to live according to the best knowledge and best feelings they then had. He adds the mild, perhaps half-humorous, rebuke, that if in any respect they did not now agree with Paul's views about the Christian life, that God would in due time reveal to them the truthfulness of Paul's position.
2. Most of us would be much better Christians if we only lived fully up to the things we now know we should do. How much more would we be excellent servants of God if we had a dedication like Paul's, who said, "One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on . . ."

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17. Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an example.

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

17. Be ye (all of you) fellow-imitators (imitators together) of me, (my) brothers, and be keeping your gaze upon those who are

walking in this manner, according to (the manner which) ye have and see in us (as) a pattern.

### Notes

1. 3:17-21 forms a new subtopic in our outline, which we entitle "Why Be Imitators of Paul." This section further develops the topic of chapter three, "False Teachers Contrasted with Paul's example."

Two reasons in 3:18-21 are given for imitating Paul and marking (taking notice of) those who live by Paul's example:

- (1) Many people are enemies of the cross;
- (2) Our citizenship is in heaven.

We could say that 3:2-16 warns us to beware of the law-keepers, and 3:17-21 warns us to beware of the lawless.

2. The Philippians were urged—both as individuals and as a group—to imitate Paul. They were to be imitators *together* (KJV *followers*) of Paul. Paul could say what few preachers can: "Imitate me." Compare I Cor. 11:1; II Thess. 3:9.
3. They were furthermore to mark (that is, note, or observe, or behold) those who were walking (that is, living) according to the example of Paul.

We should be very selective about our friends and the people we imitate. This might seem to contradict Matt. 7:1, which says, "Judge not." However, Matt. 7:1 by no means forbids us to observe the conduct of people and to evaluate it. It only forbids us to form critical opinions of people on the basis of feelings and prejudice. Our instinctive emotional reactions toward people must be kept in check. However, observation of their deeds is necessary. "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7:16). "He that doeth righteousness is righteous. He that doeth sin is of the devil." (I John 3:7-8) Let us therefore mark (note) those who so walk as Paul walked for our example.

4. *Ensample* means a pattern, type, or example. *Ensample* and *example* are close synonyms.

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18. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19. whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

*Translation and Paraphrase*

18. For many are walking (that is, living—people of whom) I have spoken many times, and (of whom) I now speak even (with) weeping—(that they are) the enemies of the cross of Christ (and all that the cross stands for).

*Notes*

1. Paul warned his Christian converts about evil men. He warned them often (3:18), and repeatedly. The idea that we must be so polite that we never speak out against evil-doers is not found in the Holy Scriptures. Christ himself exposed the Pharisees; Peter and Jude wrote warnings about ungodly men (II Peter 2; book of Jude); Notice the warnings of Paul in II Tim. 4:14 and I Tim. 1:19-20. Such Old Testament prophets as Isaiah (22:15ff), Jeremiah (20:1-6), and Amos (7:14-17) spoke out against ungodly men.
2. The word *walk* in 3:18 means to live. Comparing the Christian life to a walk is very common in the New Testament. See Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:15.
3. According to Paul there were *many* who walked in such a way as to be enemies of the cross. Still today many are going down the broad way of life to destruction, but only few up the narrow road that leads unto life. (Matt. 7:13-14).

As to who these *many* people to whom Paul referred were, we frankly cannot say. It could be that they included the Judaizers, or the Gnostics (an ancient denomination which thought that salvation comes by knowing certain mystical knowledge), or the heathen, or even some professed Christians. It probably would have been obvious to the Philippians that the heathen were ungodly, but perhaps not so apparent that some professed Christians were.

4. The very act of thinking and speaking about these ungodly people affected Paul strongly: "I tell you (of them) even weeping." Although it is sometimes necessary, we should also find it painful to warn about ungodly people.

If we really feel grieved over the sins of people, they will be less likely to be offended when we warn them, than they will if we adopt a superior, "holier-than-thou" (Isaiah 65:5). One preacher lost his job because he told his church that if they did not repent they were going to hell. A later preacher

before the same church said the same things, and was graciously accepted. One of the church members said, "The new preacher said the same things the old preacher said, but he acted like he was sorry about it."

5. "Enemies of the cross of Christ." The cross is central in Christianity. See Gal. 6:14; 5:11; I Cor. 1:17-18; 2:2; Eph. 2:16. The word *cross* in 3:18 probably refers to all the doctrines of Christ, which focus upon the cross. (*Cross* is therefore a metonymy, a part used to refer to a whole.)

Even most unbelievers admire the teachings and the holy life of Jesus. But the cross is a stumbling-block to them. The cross tells us that we are unclean sinners, so foul that the perfect one had to die for us. It sweeps away all our pride in human wisdom and knowledge. The cross says, "All your knowledge and morality does not impress God a bit. You must come to the cross in sincere recognition of your utter sinfulness if you want to be saved." Such implications are foolishness to the worldly-wise, and are stumbling-blocks to those who place confidence in their religious ceremonialism (I Cor. 1:18, 23). But the cross is still the only approach to God.

6. Probably those who were the very enemies of the cross of Christ thought that they were good, educated, wise, and perhaps even godly people. It so often happens this way. The wolves in sheep's clothing do not realize that they are wolves. "He that killeth you thinks he does God a service!" (John 16:2). Sincerity is no proof of salvation.
7. "Whose end is perdition." *Perdition* (Gr. *apoleia*) means destruction or ruin. It refers to the eternal punishment of hell fire. (Matt. 25:46; Mark 9:43-48; Rev. 20:15; 14:11).
8. "Whose god is the belly." The Greek word translated "belly" may refer to the whole belly, upper and lower; or just the lower belly (including its back side; or to the gullet; or the womb. In the light of these definitions it would appear that any person whose major interests are eating, drinking, or sex makes his belly his god. (II Pet. 2:18-19).

Anything that habitually occupies our minds and vocabularies is a god to us.

9. "Whose glory is their shame." Many people glory in and boast of things of which they should be ashamed. They glory in

acts of fornication, in how much alcohol they can consume, in money gained by gambling, and such things.

The term *antinomian* is sometimes applied to those who refuse to live according to any law, including God's. Those who glory in their shame are antinomians in the worst sense.

10. "Who mind earthly things." Christians should set their hope completely upon the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (I Peter 1:13). We should be laying up treasures in heaven, not upon earth. (Matt. 6:19-21).

Some unbelievers (and even some church members!) deride Christians who have this attitude, as being too "otherworldly," or being "irrelevant" in this modern world. But the fact remains that the people who are most interested in the life to come live the present life in the best way. "Everyone that hath this hope (the hope of seeing God and being like God) set upon him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." (I John 3:3).

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20. For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21. who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself.

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

20. (We must not be like these,) for our state (wherein we have our citizenship) is in the heavens, from whence we also (steadfastly) look for a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

21. who (Christ) shall change our lowly (physical) body (so that it will be like in form to his glorious body), and this he will do (in a manner) in accord with the working which he powerfully exercises (all of the time), (even to the point of) subjecting all things to himself.

### *Notes*

1. "Our citizenship (KJV *conversation*) is in heaven." This is given as another reason for our imitating men like Paul (3:17). Paul lived by the laws of the kingdom of heaven; we are also citizens of heaven; therefore we should imitate Paul.

(The term *conversation*, as used in the KJV, does not mean speech. It has the meaning of conduct, or of turning to and fro in life's activities.)

2. The word *citizenship* (Gr. *politeuma*) means a system of laws governing a state, or the state or commonwealth itself. Thus the translations in R.S.V. and A.S.V.m. render it "commonwealth." Phillips' version, and the New English render it "We are citizens of heaven." James Moffatt has a famous translation of the verse: "We are a colony of heaven." Our citizenship is not to be in heaven in the future; it's there now.

3. The Philippians would find such terms as *citizenship* and *colony* meaningful, because Philippi was a Roman colony and the people there prided themselves on being Roman citizens.

As the Romans colonized and took over the world of their time, so Christians need to colonize and take over the cities and nations of the earth by gospel infiltration.

4. From heaven, where our citizenship is, we look for a savior to come back, the Lord Jesus Christ.

To the Christian Christ will come as a savior; to the world he will come as the judge.

The word *look* (*apekdechomai*) means to assiduously and patiently wait for.

5. The hope of Christ's second coming is a dominant theme in the New Testament. Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:13—5:2; Heb. 9:28; Titus 2:13. It should be the dominant hope of every Christian.

6. Christ "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation." "Fashion anew" (KJV "change;" Gr. *metaschematizo*) means to change the appearance of. (See p. 52). While the expression "fashion anew" does not in itself carry the idea of transforming the intrinsic nature of anything, it is here followed by the word "conformed" (KJV, "fashioned;" Gr. *summorphos*) which does indicate a basic transformation in the nature of the thing being referred to. Our bodies are to be thus changed.

Our bodies are now "vile" objects of humble character. (See note 7 below.) Christ will soon change them both externally and inwardly that they will become like his own glorious body. (See Rom. 8:29 and note 8 below). "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." (I Cor. 15:51-52).

7. Our "vile" body (KJV) is a description of our bodies as they now are, lowly and humble. This Biblical use of the word vile does not carry the connotation of evil that we now associate with it. It only means lowly.

Certainly our bodies now are lowly bodies of humiliation. They are subject to disease, to old age, to cancer, to infections, to allergies, to sores, to disfigurement, and to death. At the time of Christ's coming our bodies will become glorious, powerful, honorable, spiritual, and immortal. (I Cor. 5:42-44, 53-54).

8. Christ's own glorious body, which he now has, and which ours will be made like, is described (at least to a degree) in Rev. 1:13-16. He is no longer a disfigured root out of dry ground, with marred visage, and no beauty that we should desire him, the man of sorrows. (Isaiah 52:14—53:3).
9. The transformation that Christ will make in our bodies will be done easily and powerfully. It shall be done in a manner corresponding to the working which Christ customarily does as he subjects all things in the universe unto himself.

Therefore the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of human bodies need not surprise us. These acts will be in perfect harmony with the power that Christ is now using, and shall continue to us as he triumphantly subjects all things unto himself. (I Cor. 15:25-27; Heb. 2:6-9).

4:1 seems to be more of a conclusion to chapter three than an introduction to chapter four. Nevertheless, it will be discussed in the notes on the next chapter.

### Study and Review

#### Questions Over Philippians Chapter Three

1. What does *finally* in 3:1 mean?
2. What was Paul's final (?) exhortation in 3:1?
3. In what (or in whom) are we to rejoice?
4. To what things did Paul refer when he said, "To write the *same things* is not grievous"?
5. Did Paul mind repeating himself? What did he say about this?
6. Explain the expression, "For you it is safe".
7. Who were the *dogs* of whom the Philippians were to beware?
8. Is the term *dog* complimentary?
9. Explain the word *circumcision*. What is its relationship to *circumcision*?
10. What people are the true "Circumcision" at the present time?



## PHILIPPIANS

11. What do people do when they worship by the Spirit of God? (3:3)
12. Explain what Paul meant by saying that Christians have no confidence in the flesh.
13. How well could Paul have compared with other men in fleshly distinctions and honor?
14. From what Hebrew tribe had Paul descended?
15. Explain the phrase *a Hebrew of Hebrews*.
16. How did the Pharisees regard the law of Moses? (3:5)
17. How zealous was Saul (Paul) before his conversion? (3:6)
18. How righteous was Saul before his conversion? (Acts 23:1)
19. Harmonize Saul's righteousness under the law as described in 3:6 with I Tim. 1:15.
20. Define *count* in 3:7, 8.
21. How did Paul regard those things that were gain to him under the law?
22. How did Paul regard ALL things when he compared them to Christ?
23. What are the tenses of the verbs *counted* and *count* in 3:7-8? What do these tenses indicate about the times when Paul counted all things loss?
24. Explain the term *righteousness* in 3:9. Give a synonym for it.
25. Why is the righteousness of the law described as *mine own righteousness*? Is such righteousness really attainable?
26. Through what does the righteousness which Paul sought come?
27. Why should Paul have been seeking to *know* Christ when he was already a devoted follower of Christ? (3:10)
28. What is involved in knowing the power of Christ's resurrection? When may this power be known? (Compare Eph. 1:18-20)
29. Why did Paul desire to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings? What benefit would this have been to him? (3:10)
30. Why did Paul strive to attain unto the resurrection from the dead, when the resurrection is a certainty? (Compare Acts 24:15). Does the *resurrection from the dead* connote more than the resurrection of the fleshly body?
31. Had Paul attained his life's objectives? (Give scripture for your answer)
32. Who had apprehended (that is, laid hold on) Paul?
33. What did Paul seek to apprehend (lay hold on)?

### CHAPTER THREE

34. What was the *one thing* Paul sought to do? What did he constantly forget (disregard)? (3:13-14)
35. What is the prize of the high calling of God?
36. By what rule, or standard, must we walk (conduct ourselves)? (3:16)
37. Whom were the Philippians called upon to imitate? (3:17)
38. Define *ensample*.
39. Whom were the Philippians to mark (that is, take note of)?
40. Who, possibly, were the people who were enemies of the cross of Christ? (3:18)
41. How much emotion did the ungodly lives of some people stir up in Paul?
42. Why was the cross the focus of the enmity of the ungodly? (3:18)
43. Define *perdition*. (3:19)
44. How can a person's belly be his god?
45. What do people do when they "mind earthly things"?
46. Explain the phrase: "Whose glory is their shame."
47. Define *antinomian*.
48. Explain the word *conversation* in KJV 3:20.
49. Where is our *citizenship*?
50. How did the colonial status of Philippi illuminate the thought of 3:20.
51. What do we look for, or await, from heaven?
52. Explain the word *vile* in KJV 3:21.
53. What will Christ do with our bodies when he comes back again?
54. What will our bodies be made to be like?
55. What activity of his power will Christ use to change our bodies? (3:21)
56. What can Christ's working, or ability, do? (3:21)
57. Our expository outline of Phil. 3 on p. 68 calls the chapter "A mind of Right Values." Suggest another title for the entire chapter if you can.