



Paul's Epistle to the Philippians

CHAPTER THREE

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Outline

- Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)
- The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)
- Pressing On to Perfection (3:12-16)
- Enemies of the Cross (3:17-19)
- True Citizenship (3:20-4:1)

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)

1^a Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

- The Greek word for “**finally**” does not indicate that Paul is ending the letter. Instead, the word carries the meaning of “as far as the rest is concerned.”
 - Paul used the same Greek word in 1 Thess. 4:1 even though two more chapters remained.
- Paul again urged the Philippians to “**rejoice in the Lord.**”

“A solemn warning is about to be introduced, yet even in view of this, rejoicing is possible for those who are in spiritual union with Christ” (Harkrider, p.35).

“Considering the warning that immediately follows, Paul seems to be speaking about the strength we find in Him in not being led away (Neh. 8:10).

“The more we take of the comfort of our religion the more closely we shall cleave to it; the more we rejoice in Christ ... the less danger we shalt be in of being drawn away from him” (Henry, p.737).

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Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)

1^b For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

- Debate exists as to what are “**the same things**” Paul references here.

- Something he taught them in-person but would repeat here? (see Phil. 3:2-3)

“We are not told when this warning was given previously, but perhaps it would have been given on his visits to Philippi. Before Paul ever came there on his second journey the question had been raised by Judaizing teachers over whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15:1,5). Surely Paul must have anticipated the Philippians would be faced with that issue and thus dealt with that question earlier in person” (Harkrider, p.35).

“The same things refer to the things he taught them when present, which doubtless were the things concerning the circumcision of the Gentile converts. His first visit to them was when he delivered the apostolic decrees given at Jerusalem on the subject (Acts 15:19-20). This question had greatly subsided at the time this epistle was written, yet he thinks it is safe that he write it to them” (Lipscomb, p.199).

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Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)

1^b For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

- Debate exists as to what are “**the same things**” Paul references here.
 - Something he taught them in-person but would repeat here? (see Phil. 3:2-3)
 - Something he wrote in a previous letter that we do not have access to?
“It is doubtful what is referred to. Possibly previous letters, or the dissensions in the Church” (Vincent’s Word Studies)

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- Debate exists as to what are “**the same things**” Paul references here.
 - Something he taught them in-person but would repeat here? (see Phil. 3:2-3)
 - Something he wrote in a previous letter that we do not have access to?
 - Something he wrote to other churches that the Philippians already understood? Or something that Epaphroditus, Timothy, etc. already told them? (Col. 4:16; 1 Cor. 4:17)

“Which you have heard from me before, or which I have written to other churches, and which I have desired Epaphroditus to tell you” (MacLaren’s Expositions).

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Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)

1^b For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

- Debate exists as to what are “**the same things**” Paul references here.
 - Something he taught them in-person but would repeat here? (see Phil. 3:2-3)
 - Something he wrote in a previous letter that we do not have access to?
 - Something he wrote to other churches that the Philippians already understood? Or something that Epaphroditus, Timothy, etc. already told them? (Col. 4:16; 1 Cor. 4:17)
 - Something he already mentioned earlier in this letter? (see Phil. 1:27-30)

“In view of the warning that follows the most logical reference is to what he has already written ... He made a plea that they be united ... and be on their guard against those who would lead them astray. Just as ‘the adversaries’ he had discussed ... were a threat to their unity ... the Judaizers would only complicate the tendency of the Philippians to dissension. For this reason, Paul did not find it grievous ... to issue the same kind of warning more than once” (Weaver, p.136).

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Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)

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- Debate exists as to what are “**the same things**” Paul references here.
 - Something he taught them in-person but would repeat here? (see Phil. 3:2-3)
 - Something he wrote in a previous letter that we do not have access to?
 - Something he wrote to other churches that the Philippians already understood? Or something that Epaphroditus, Timothy, etc. already told them? (Col. 4:16; 1 Cor. 4:17)
 - Something he already mentioned earlier in this letter? (see Phil. 1:27-30)
 - Each position has merit. Personally, I find the last position to be the strongest, though I believe the first position is also quite strong.
 - Both positions essentially arrive at the same conclusion.
 - Whatever Paul was referring to, it was “**not tedious**” but, rather, “**safe**” and wise to remind them of what they already knew (2 Pet. 1:12-14; Heb. 2:1).

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Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

- The people described here clearly are not the teachers Paul described in Phil. 1:15-16.
 - The teachers in Phil. 1:15-16 had evil motives but they still preached Christ.
 - The teachers here did not preach Christ; they preached something else (Gal. 1:6-9).

**“Most” were emboldened to
“speak the word” (Phil. 1:14)**

Paul
(Phil. 1:17)

“Some” preached
“Christ” from
envy/strife, etc.
(Phil. 1:15a, 16)

“Some” preached
“Christ” from
goodwill and love
(Phil. 1:15b, 17)

**People who spoke something
other than “the word”**

Judaizing
teachers
(Phil. 3:1-2)

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Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)

² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

- The Philippians needed to “**beware**” of:

- “**Dogs.**”
 - This term was sometimes used by Jews in reference to Gentiles (Matt. 15:26).
 - Paul appears to flip this derisive term against the Judaizing teachers (Isa. 56:9-11).
- “**Evil workers**” (also consider Gal. 2:4).
 - They were active workers, but their work was evil and counterproductive (Matt. 23:15; Gal. 3:1-4, 10-14, 5:1-6).
- “**The mutilation.**”
 - They insisted on physical rather than spiritual circumcision (Acts 15:1, 5; Gal. 6:12-13; Col. 2:11-14).

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Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)

² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

“We may question from Paul’s use of this term [mutilation] whether he would be speaking merely of Jews in this way. It is doubtful that he saw the ordinary Jew in this light, even though it is true that many of the Jews had come to view circumcision as a merely outward act, a sign of being a Jew and no more ... Far too many of the Jews of Paul’s day who were circumcised were not truly devoted to God. But Paul had a great fondness for his own people according to the flesh (cf. Rom. 3: 3-5 with 9:1ff.; 10:1), and it is not likely that he would use such strong language as to call them ‘those who mutilate the flesh’ simply because they practiced circumcision ... But it was the Judaizers, that class of Jews Paul had to meet in the book of Galatians (see Gal. 5:1-12), even those who had been saved by God’s grace, but who by their teaching were setting aside the grace of God, that Paul calls the concision ... It was their insistence that the ordinance had special religious significance to Christians, and that salvation depended upon it, that Paul so strongly opposed. He never deprecated the act of circumcision itself, nor the special significance it served under the law; he only refused to give in to the Judaizers who would make it a requirement to salvation” (Weaver, p.138-139).

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Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)

³ For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

- “**The circumcision**” is a group, which includes Paul (“**we**”), contrasted with the mutilation.
 - Unlike the mutilation, this group is the true Israel of God (Rom. 2:25-29; Gal. 6:16).
- Those who are the true circumcision are people who:
 - “**Worship God in the Spirit**” (also consider John 4:1-4, 19-24).
 - There is a stark contrast between our service and Judaizing teachers’ emphasizing service which was dependent upon works of the Law (inward vs outward).
 - “**Rejoice in Christ Jesus.**”
 - Formerly, one could rejoice only if he perfectly kept the Law (Gal. 3:10-13). Now, we rejoice in Christ’s perfection (1 Pet. 1:18-21; Gal. 6:14; 1 Cor. 1:30-31).
 - “**Have no confidence in the flesh**” (also consider 2 Cor. 11:16-22).
 - Flesh is the antithesis both to the Spirit and Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1-4; Phil. 3:4-11).

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Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)

³ For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

“Flesh ... includes all that a Jew valued most, and all that was the source of his vaunted righteousness, all that led to the familiar contempt for those who stood outside the covenant, but with special emphasis on the thought that the Jewish confidence was primarily based on the fleshly act of circumcision which widened out into confidence founded on one’s own effort to attain righteousness as contrasted with that rooted in the consciousness that righteousness is only attainable in union with Christ and through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit” (Shepherd, p.200-201).

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

- Paul provides a spiritual autobiography in this section to emphasize the danger of falling prey to the Judaizing teachers described in the previous verses.
 - He used this same tactic when defending his apostleship to false brethren in Corinth (2 Cor. 11:18-22).
 - He used this same tactic when combatting Judaizers in Galatia (Gal. 1:13-14).
 - Sometimes the wisest thing we can do to combat certain sins among brethren is to discuss your personal experiences having once made the same mistakes (Psalm 51:12; Matt. 7:5).
 - While describing his spiritual background, Paul, as he did in most of his epistles, emphasized the superiority of Christ over the Law of Moses.

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

- Notice the shift in pronouns from “we” in the previous verse to “I” here. Paul shifts from talking about himself (a Jew) and the Philippians (primarily Gentiles) to himself alone to make an important point about **“confidence in the flesh.”**
- As devout Jew (Phil. 3:6), **“if anyone else”** (i.e. any follower of the Law) had reason to boast in the flesh it would be Paul because he was:
 - **“Circumcised the eighth day.”**
 - **“Of the stock of Israel.”**
 - **“Of the tribe of Benjamin.”**
 - **“A Hebrew of the Hebrews.”**
 - **“Concerning the law, a Pharisee.”**

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

- **“Circumcised the eighth day.”**

- The Law required that a Jewish males be circumcised the eighth day of his life (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3). Paul had been circumcised according to this requirement.
- Paul was not an Ishmaelite who was circumcised at 13 years old (Gen. 17:25), nor was he a proselyte who was circumcised later in life. This indicates that Paul was raised by a law-keeping Jewish family.

“The parents of such a child must have been zealous for the law, and careful that their son should be made fully a partaker of the Abrahamic covenant” (Shepherd, p.201).

“It is possible that some of the Judaizers were Gentiles, and if this was the case, they would not have been circumcised until a later age than that required in the law. Paul ... was a true Jew, and from this early age he bore the sign of the covenant (Gen. 17:13) that he was born a Jew” (Weaver, p.143).

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

- **“Of the stock [people, ESV] of Israel.”**

- Israel refers to Jacob (Gen. 32:28). Paul descended from the people to whom God formed His special nation and first gave the Law (Exod. 19:5-6; 2 Cor. 11:22).
- Not all Jews were of the stock of Israel.
 - Ishmaelites descended from Abraham & Hagar.
 - Edomites descended from Abraham & Sarah → Isaac & Rebekah → Esau & Adah, Aholibamah, and Anah.
 - Israelites descended from Abraham & Sarah → Isaac & Rebekah → Jacob & Rachel.

“To be of the stock of Israel meant that Paul was a descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. He was of the pure lineage” (Harkrider, p.37).

- Paul was in a select group who could boast in the flesh about this lineage.

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

- **“Of the tribe of Benjamin”** (Acts 13:21; Rom. 11:1).

- The tribe of Benjamin’s name is derived from one of the sons of Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 35:16-20).
 - Benjamin was a small tribe (1 Sam. 9:21; Psalm 68:27), but its impact was significant.
 - They gave Israel its first king, Saul (1 Sam. 9-10).
 - This might be why Paul’s birth name was Saul.
 - They were loyal to David over Saul (1 Chron. 12).
 - Together with Judah, Benjamin remained loyal to God and worship of Him during the divided kingdom (1 Kings 11-12).
 - Jerusalem and the temple were in the territory of Benjamin; members of the tribe helped rebuild the temple after returning from Babylonian captivity (Ezra 1:1-5).

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

- **“A Hebrew of the Hebrews.”**

“He was a Hebrew in both flesh, mind, and action” (Harkrider, p. 37).

- Flesh – Paul’s parents were Hebrew.
- Mind – Whereas Hellenistic Jews spoke Greek, Paul could speak the Hebrew language (likely Aramaic) (Acts 21:40, 22:1-2, 26:14).
- Action – Paul was born in Tarsus but grew up in Jerusalem under the training of a leading authority of the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:3, 26:4-5), a person who possessed great knowledge of the Law and emphasized strict law-keeping.

“In his formal training in Jerusalem, he was brought up in conservative or orthodox Judaism. He was a ‘purist’ in the fullest sense of the word. His thoroughly Hebraic background removed him from the more liberal Hellenistic orientation (a distinction is made between Hebrew and Hellenist Christians in Acts 6:1)” (Weaver, p.144).

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

- **“Concerning the law, a Pharisee.”**

- Paul was not merely a Pharisee (Acts 23:6); he was a zealous Pharisee (Gal. 1:14).
- The Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jewish religion (Acts 26:5).
- Many Pharisees were hypocrites who:
 - Did not fully practice what they preached (Matt. 23:1-11, 25-28; etc.).
 - Did not place equal emphasis on the letter and spirit of the Law (Matt. 23:16-19; etc.).
 - And focused on specific parts of the Law while ignoring other important parts (Matt. 23:23; Rom. 2:17-24; etc.).
 - Not all Pharisees were like this; many were righteous (Matt. 5:17-20).
 - While a Pharisee, Paul was a devout and sincere follower of the Law (Phil. 2:6; Acts 26:1-11).

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

- Paul was zealous before his conversion. His “**zeal**” was especially evident in his persecution of the early church (Acts 8:1-3, 9:1-2).
 - He persecuted the church truly believing he was doing the will of God (Acts 26:9-10, 23:1; John 16:2).
 - Very few, if any, could boast in the flesh about their loyalty to Judaism like Paul could.
- Paul was not only zealous; he was “**blameless**” according to the “**righteousness which is in**” the Law of Moses.
 - This does not mean Paul was perfectly sinless (Rom. 3:23). Instead, this indicates that he strictly followed the Law and no accusations of fault could be successfully charged against him.
 - Eventually, Paul realized that this righteousness is not true righteousness (Phil. 2:9; 1 Cor. 1:26-30; Gal. 2:19-21).

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

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

- Despite Paul's numerous reasons to possess confidence in the flesh, he was spiritually bankrupt before coming to the knowledge of Christ (1 Tim. 1:12-17).
- Everything listed in the previous verses which formerly gave Paul reason to boast in the flesh had no saving value. They were once “**gain**” to him, but became “**loss for Christ**.”

“All the profits and honors gained in the observance of the Jewish law, and in maintaining the traditions of the fathers, he counted loss – worse than nought for the sake of Christ. Instead of service to be recorded, and regarded worthy of honors, they were sins and crimes condemned, and sorrowed through life. All gains out of Christ are losses for Christ” (Lipscomb, p.203).

- All that Paul was once confident in (his lineage, his upbringing, his own personal righteousness) were proven worthless because of Christ.

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

8^a Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

- Not only did Paul count his various reasons for boasting in the flesh as nothing, he counted “**all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ.**”
 - The knowledge of Christ was of greater value to Paul than anything else.
 - Knowledge refers to more than mere understanding (John 8:32); it refers to faith (Phil. 3:9; Isa. 53:11) and personal experience (Phil. 3:9-10).
 - Paul gave up much when he came to the knowledge of Christ.

“His own family probably regarded him as a disgrace to Judaism. His Pharisaic fellow members considered him a deserter from the cause. The Jews in general regarded him as a renegade. He paid the price for Christ’s sake. But it was worth the price. He had no regrets”(Shepherd, p.204).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

8^a Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

- Paul counted all gains outside of knowing Christ as “**rubbish**” (also consider Mark 8:36).

“The word here translated ‘dung’ was often used ... as a vulgar term for fecal matter. As such it would most likely have had a certain shock value for the readers. This may well be Paul’s meaning here, especially since the context is about what the flesh produces” (NET Footnotes).

“He writes as if he has been the owner of a large treasure of glittering gems that he admired and rejoiced in possessing. He has been shown another prize of greater value, and with this in view he looks upon all his previous treasure as worthless rubbish” (Harkrider, p.40).

- Is knowing Christ as “**Lord**” not worth forsaking all (Matt. 19:16-29; Gal. 1:13-24)?

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

- Paul's aim in suffering loss based on the knowledge of Christ was to **“be found in Him.”**
 - This is spoken of in future-tense, indicating how gaining Christ is a continual process.
 - Paul gained Christ in baptism (Gal. 3:26-27).
 - This occurs through faith (Col. 2:11-12; etc.).
 - Paul gained Christ by allowing Him to live through him (Phil. 1:20-21).
 - This occurs through faith (Eph. 3:17).
 - Paul would gain Christ upon his death (Phil. 1:23).
 - This occurs through faith (Heb. 11:1-2, 13-16).

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

- Being found in Christ is accomplished “**through faith**,” not from one’s “**own righteousness**.”
 - Contextually, Paul is specifically referring to his righteousness that came “**from the law**” (Law of Moses).
 - Conforming to the Law of Moses rather than conforming to Christ (Phil. 1:10) prevents one from receiving the righteousness “**which is from God**” (Acts 13:38-39; Gal. 1:15-16, 5:1-6, 10).
 - Personal righteousness, no matter from where it is derived, will never cause a person to be found in Christ – only the righteousness of God will (Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 1:17).
 - The righteousness of God is found through the law of faith (Rom. 3:21-28).

NOTE: Faith *alone* will not cause one to be found in Christ (Rom. 1:5, 16:26; Gal. 3:11; James 2:24; etc.).

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

“No man could receive such righteousness from the law unless he perfectly kept the law (Gal. 3:10-13) ... In such a case a man’s salvation would be on the basis of merit rather than grace or favor (Rom. 4:4). Had a man perfectly kept the law he would have a righteousness of his own that came to him of (from, out of) the law. On the basis of his perfect works he would then have a right to boast but not before God (Rom. 3:27; 4:2). Paul knew that neither he nor any other man had met or would meet this requirement; his confidence therefore was not in such accomplishment of his own, but in Christ ... As good a Jew as Paul was, even able to claim ‘blamelessness’ in relation to the righteousness of the law (v. 6) ... he yet learned that he in fact had no righteousness that was really his that came to him out of the law. In spite of all the right things he did as a devout and faithful Jew under the law, he was still guilty before God, just like all the rest of mankind. In full knowledge of this fact he was led to declare that God’s righteousness is revealed ‘apart from the law . . . through faith in Jesus Christ’ (Rom. 3:21ff.)” (Weaver, p.151-152).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

- In order to be found in Christ, one must:

- **“Know Him and the power of His resurrection”** (also consider Eph. 1:15-20).
 - We must not merely know the power of Christ’s resurrection but also imitate it (Eph. 2:5-6; Rom. 6:1-11).
 - Paul did (Acts 22:16).

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

- In order to be found in Christ, one must:

- **“Know Him and the power of His resurrection.”**

- **“Know ... the fellowship of His sufferings.”**

- We must not merely know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings but also participate in them (Phil. 1:29; Rom. 8:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:12-13).

- Paul did (Phil. 1:30; etc.).

- Those who truly know the power of Christ’s resurrection should desire to share in His suffering (2 Cor. 4:8-14).

“Too many want to wear the crown of glory, but not the crown of thorns; they want to wear the white robe of righteousness, but not the scarlet robe of mockery; they want to reign with Christ, but are unwilling to suffer with Him. Suffering with Christ is a prerequisite of being glorified with him” (Blake, p.53).

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The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

- In order to be found in Christ, one must:

- **“Know Him and the power of His resurrection.”**
- **“Know ... the fellowship of His sufferings.”**
- Be **“conformed to His death.”**

- Notice that this is not spoken in past-tense (compare this to Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:3-4), indicating a continual process.

“Either in a spiritual sense dying daily unto sin (1 Corinthians 15:31), having the affections, with the lusts, crucified (Galatians 5:24), and the deeds of the body mortified (Romans 8:13), and so planted in the likeness of his death (Romans 6:5); or rather in a corporeal sense, bearing always in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:10), and being continually exposed to death for his sake, and ready to suffer it whenever called to it” (Gill).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)

11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- “**If by any means**” demonstrates Paul’s recognition that he could fall short of his goal, but he was determined not to fail (1 Cor. 9:24-27; also consider Heb. 3:12-14).
- The word “**if**” does not indicate doubt about “**the resurrection from the dead;**” Paul firmly believed that the dead would rise (see 1 Cor. 15).
- There is only one resurrection (“**the resurrection**”).
 - However, not all will receive the same type of resurrection (John 5:28-29).
 - Paul looked upon the resurrection confidently and positively (1 Thess. 4:13-18), while also recognizing it as something that we must prepare for (1 Thess. 5:1-11).
 - Only those who imitate Paul’s example in Phil. 3:7-10 will obtain the resurrection from the dead that he anticipated.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Pressing on to Perfection (3:12-16)

^{12a} Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected;

- Perfection is the goal of Christians in multiple senses:

- Spiritual maturity (Phil. 3:15; Heb. 6:1).
- Complete faith (Phil. 1:9-10; Matt. 5:48).
- Trying to abstain from sin (Phil. 1:10; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 John 1:5-7).

NOTE: No one will ever be perfect in this sense (Ecc. 7:20; James 3:2), but such must always be our goal.

- Resurrection of the dead (Phil. 3:20-21).
 - Contextually, this is what Paul has in mind here (Phil. 3:10-11).
 - He had not “**already attained**” his goal of fully knowing Christ and His resurrection.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Pressing on to Perfection (3:12-16)

^{12b} **but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.**

- But Paul had not yet arrived at his goal of fully knowing Christ and His resurrection. Therefore, he would “**press on**” in order to “**lay hold**” of His goal.
 - Since, Christ “**laid hold**” of Paul (Acts 9:15), Paul zealously desired to lay hold of what the Lord promises all who faithfully obey Him (1 Tim. 1:12-16; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

NOTE: Paul is an exception in that Christ personally laid hold of him. For the rest of us, the gospel message is what lays hold of us (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

NOTE: Though Christ personally laid hold of him, Paul still had to initially lay hold of Christ in the same way that all do – through obedience to His gospel (Acts 9:16, 22:16).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Pressing on to Perfection (3:12-16)

¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

“Paul’s humility in acknowledging his own vulnerability to temptation and his fear of falling short is never better expressed than by the statement, ‘not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.’ He knew he had not yet arrived at his life goal or achieved the state of perfection. He had been forgiven of his sins, he was in fellowship with Christ, he was commissioned with the ministry to the Gentiles, he was blessed by the grace of God to labor more than the other apostles (1 Cor. 15:10), but he had not yet risen from the dead to be with Christ in heaven. One can only imagine the longing in this apostle to again see the Lord to whom he had only briefly spoken on the road to Damascus. How he would love to sit in the glory of his presence and praise him for his salvation and love! Paul wanted to be with Christ, and as long as he was still in this world, he was not with the Lord (1:23). Therefore, in order to be with Christ, he was going to have to press forward to that goal for the rest of his life to have the assurance of achieving it” (Blake, p.53).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Pressing on to Perfection (3:12-16)

¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- Paul repeats his previous point (“**I do not count myself to have apprehended**”), then adds a key method to successfully living the Christian life:
 - **“Forgetting those things which are behind.”**
 - All the “good” in our past lives away from Christ (Phil. 3:5-11).
 - All the “bad” in our past lives away from Christ (1 Tim. 1:6; Eph. 3:17-24; Col. 3:1-11).
 - Both are left behind for the “better” (Matt. 19:27-29; 2 Cor. 5:14-17).
 - **“Reaching forward to those things [v.11-12] which are ahead.”**
 - The “**goal for the prize of the upward call**” must motivate us to “keep on keeping on” (Heb. 11:13-16, 24-26; 1 Pet. 1:3-9; 1 Cor. 9:24; Gal. 6:9).
 - To forget and reach forward demands a very specific singleness of mind (“**one thing I do**”) (Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Pressing on to Perfection (3:12-16)

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you (KJV)

Therefore let those of us who are “perfect” embrace this point of view. If you think otherwise, God will reveal to you the error of your ways (NET)

- Some scholars and commentators assume Paul is using sarcasm / wordplay / irony by using the word “**perfect**” (KJV, ASV, NET, etc.) again.

“The adjective ‘perfect’ comes from the same root as the verb ‘perfected’ in v. 12; Paul may well be employing a wordplay to draw in his opponents. Thus, perfect would then be in quotation marks and Paul would then argue that no one—neither they nor he—is in fact perfect” (NET Footnotes).

- However, this view ignores Paul that classifies himself (“**us**”) as a member of this group.
 - The word perfect here simply means “**mature**” (40+ translations).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Pressing on to Perfection (3:12-16)

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Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you (KJV)

Therefore let those of us who are “perfect” embrace this point of view. If you think otherwise, God will reveal to you the error of your ways (NET)

“He is addressing all who would be full-grown Christians. This cannot be a reference back to what Paul has said about not having been made perfect (v.12), because in the present verse he assumes that he and most of his readers are perfect in the sense of mature or full-grown. He used the verb in v.12 to speak of the perfection that comes at the time of the resurrection. Though he and many of his brethren at Philippi were not yet perfect, they were spiritually mature. It is not out of character with Paul for him to use the same word twice in a given context with different meanings. Those who are mature must press on to perfection. For one to fail to heed the admonition he is presently giving would be an indication that he had not yet reached the maturity Paul has in mind” (Weaver, p.165).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Pressing on to Perfection (3:12-16)

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you (NIV)

- Those who are mature should have the “**mind**” Paul described in the previous verses.
- If any Philippian differed on this or “**anything**” else, God would “**reveal even this**” to them.

“Paul has in mind thinking that is different from his own on some points other than the subject ... of winning the prize. The terms ‘and if in anything’ would point to this conclusion. ‘And if’ ... however, indicates that Paul supposes it is unlikely that such differences even on minor points actually exist. Paul does not expect that the mature Christians in Philippi will have a different mind from his own on other matters. If they do, however, Paul assures them that ‘God will reveal even this unto you’” (Weaver, p.166).

- God repeatedly promises that a sincere desire to know Him and do his will results in a correct understanding / application of truth (John 7:17; Heb.11:6; Matt. 5:6, 7:7).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Pressing on to Perfection (3:12-16)

¹⁶ Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

- Whatever the Philippians had already learned (“**attained**”) in accordance with truth, it was vitally important that they “**walk**” in that measure of maturity.
 - It is not to learn the truth; the truth must be lived (Phil. 4:9; James 1:22-25).
- The Philippians all needed to “**walk by the same rule**” and “**be of the same mind**.
 - Not all are at the same level of spiritual maturity (Phil. 3:15).
 - Those who are more mature have an obligation to uphold and guide the less mature among us (Rom. 15:1; 1 Thess. 5:14).
 - It takes work to achieve this unity! (Eph. 4:1-4, 13-16)

“Let each learn all the truth that he can, weigh all the difficulties, look upon every side of the question, teach to others what he learns, sacrifice no truth, but be patient and forbearing in teaching it ... Let us all, at all times, labor diligently ... and God will care for and direct us all into the oneness that existed between him and his Son” (Lipscomb, p.211)

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Enemies of the Cross (3:17-3:19)

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample (KJV).

- The Philippians were to “join” together in following Paul’s “example.” His example was worthy of imitation because of who he imitated (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 2:5-8).
 - Some argue that only apostolic examples are binding (see Phil. 4:9). Yet, this passage shows that all approved examples in scripture are binding, not just apostolic examples (“**note those who so walk, as you have for us a pattern**”) (2 Thess. 1:1, 3:7-9).

“The apostle and his colablers are examples to all others, for all time and in all countries” (Lipscomb, p. 211).

- Whereas those who do not “walk” (live) according to God’s approved examples must be negatively marked (Phil. 3:18; Rom. 16:17-18), those who do follow God’s approved examples should be positively marked.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Enemies of the Cross (3:17-3:19)

18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

- This warning was not new; Paul “**told**” the Philippians this “**often**” (see Phil. 3:1-3).
 - “**Many**” walked in such a way that made them “**enemies of the cross**.”
 - The majority usually walk opposite of how God requires (Matt. 7:13-14).
 - Specifically, the people Paul condemned here were enemies because they were Judaizers causing the cross to be of no effect (Gal. 2:21, 5:1-4).
- **NOTE:** The issue wasn’t just what they taught but also how they lived (“**walk**”).
- Paul found no joy in providing this warning. Rather, it was a source for “**weeping**.”
 - This shows the love Paul had for the Philippians and concern he had for their souls (2 Cor. 2:1-4; Acts 20:28-31).
 - This also shows the pain Paul felt for the Judaizers (consider Rom. 9:1-3) since he knew the end result of their false practices (see Phil. 3:19).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Enemies of the Cross (3:17-3:19)

**19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—
who set their mind on earthly things.**

- The Philippians needed to follow Paul's rather than the Judaizers' walk (Gal. 6:11-18) because:
 - Their "**end is destruction**" (also consider Matt. 7:13; 2 Pet. 3:4-7, ESV).
 - Compare to the end of those who follow Paul's example (Phil. 1:21-23, 27-28; 3:8-11).
 - Their "**god is their belly**" (also consider Rom. 16:17-18).
 - “*By serving their own selfish desires above the truth they practice a form of idolatry ... They do not serve the Lord but themselves*” (Harkrider, p.46).
 - They found "**glory in their shame**" (also consider Hosea 4:7).
 - They gloried in things they should have found shameful. This was caused by serving themselves and not setting their minds on heavenly things (Jer. 6:15, 8:12).
 - They "**set their mind on earthly things**" (also consider Col. 2:20-3:1-4).
 - “*To ‘mind’ something is descriptive of a state of mind and heart ... One can do this without being a sensualist, or a grossly immoral person. The Judaizers did*” (Weaver, p.176).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

Enemies of the Cross (3:17-3:19)

19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

- When one sets his mind on earthly things, that makes him an enemy of the cross. Are we enemies of the cross?

“This is mentioned as one of the characteristics of enmity to the cross of Christ; and if this be so, how many are there in the church now who are the real enemies of the cross! How many professing Christians are there who regard little else than worldly things! How many who live only to acquire wealth, to gain honor, or to enjoy the pleasures of the world! How many are there who have no interest in a prayer meeting, in a Sunday school, in religious conversation, and in the advancement of true religion on the earth! These are the real enemies of the cross. It is not so much those who deny the doctrines of the cross, as it is those who oppose its influence on their hearts; not so much those who live to scoff and deride religion, as it is those who ‘mind earthly things,’ that injure this holy cause in the world” (Barnes, p.205).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

True Citizenship (3:20-4:1)

20^a For our citizenship is in heaven,

But our commonwealth is in heaven (RSV)

- In contrast to the Judaizers whose minds were primarily focused on earthly matters, Paul and the Philippians counted themselves as having a heavenly “**citizenship**.”

“The verb form of this word was used in 1:27 ... with the meaning of ‘conduct of a citizen.’ The noun ... may mean either ‘citizenship’ (rights and duties of a citizen) or the ‘commonwealth’ itself. The form used here probably should be translated ‘commonwealth’ ... No doubt the fact that Philippi was a Roman colony had some bearing on Paul’s use of this word. Although not in Rome itself ... they shared all the rights and privileges of Roman citizenship. But more importantly, Paul reminds them, though not in heaven itself, they belong to a heavenly commonwealth ... The point Paul is making has to do with the heavenly character of this commonwealth and the attitude it produces” (Weaver, p. 177).

- This citizenship is made possible through Christ (Eph. 2:18-19), and points toward being with Christ (see B part of this verse) if we conduct ourselves as proper citizens (Eph. 4:1).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

True Citizenship (3:20-4:1)

^{20b} from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ^{21a} who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,

- Since Christians know we are pilgrims with a citizenship outside of this world, we “eagerly wait” the arrival of the King, our “**Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.**”
 - The reason for anticipating His return is due to the resurrection (Phil. 3:10-11; see also 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 50-58; 2 Cor. 5:1-4).
 - Christ will “**transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body**” (also consider 1 John 3:2).
 - Christians daily transform ourselves in order for Christ to fully transform us in the resurrection (Rom. 12:1-2, 8:18-23).
 - If we do not eagerly await this day, then this is a sign of a great problem! (2 Pet. 3:9-14)

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

True Citizenship (3:20-4:1)

^{21b} according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

- The subjection of “**all things**” to Christ is a common theme of Paul’s writings (Rom. 11:36; Eph. 1:10, 3:9; Col. 1:15-20).
- The point Paul is making here, however, is not that Christ will one day bring everything in subjection to Himself (1 Cor. 15:25-28), but that the transformation of our bodies will be “according to” the same power that enables Him to “**subdue all things to Himself**.”
 - “**who will transform the body of our lowly condition into conformity with His glorious body, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself**” (NASB).
 - “**who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself**” (ESV).
 - “**who will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body by means of that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself**” (NET).

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

True Citizenship (3:20-4:1)

21^b according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

“That is, such a change demands the exertion of vast power. No creature can do it. But there is One who has power entrusted to him over all things, and he can effect this great transformation in the bodies of people ... He can mould the mind and the heart to conformity to his own image, and thus also he can transform the body so that it shall resemble his. Everything he can make subject to his will ... And he that has this power can change our humbled and debased bodies, so that they shall put on the glorious appearance and form of that of the Son of God himself. What a contrast between our bodies here – frail, feeble, subject to sickness, decay, and corruption – and the body as it will be in heaven! And what a glorious prospect awaits the weak and dying believer, in the future world!” (Barnes, p.207)

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

True Citizenship (3:20-4:1)

4:1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

- Paul described the Philippians as his:
 - **“Beloved and longed-for brethren.”**
 - This serves as another demonstration of Paul’s deep love and earnest desire to be with them in the flesh (Phil. 1:3-8, 2:19-24).
 - **“Joy and crown.”**
 - They were Paul’s joy / crown at the time of writing (Phil. 1:3-7, 29-30; 2:12,17; 4:10,14; see also 3 John 4), but, more specifically, they would be his joy / crown on the last day (Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 2:19-20).
- Knowing Christ’s promises, we have an obligation to **“stand fast in the Lord.”**
 - Unless Christians remain steadfast, Christ’s promises will not come to fruition (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10).