

# Philippians Series

Lesson #063

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Dean Bible Ministries

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# Confidence: In the Flesh or the Spirit?

## Philippians 3:3–4



**Php. 1:27, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, [NKJV]**

**Php. 1:28, “and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.”**

**In ch. 3 the focus is on standing firm against error.**

**Two sources:**

- 1. The Judaizers: added human works to justification and/or spiritual growth (sanctification).**

**Php 3:1, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.” [NKJV]**

**Php. 3:1, “for the rest, my brothers, you all rejoice in the Lord. For me it is not tedious to continue to repeat what I am writing to you.”**

**1. Again he repeats rejoice (also in Php. 4:4).**

**Php. 2:18, “For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”**

**Php. 2:28, “Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.”**

**Php. 3:2, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!” [NKJV]**

**2. Three times he repeats: Beware! Watch out!**

**Alliteration: three times the Greek uses words beginning with *K*!**

**κύων *kuōn* (m) dog; (figurative) Gentile**

**κακός *kakos* evil**

**κατατομή *katatomē* mutilation (used 1×)**

**Php. 3:2, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!” [NKJV]**

**2. Three times he repeats: Beware! [Watch out for] “consider,” “look out for,” “pay attention to,” or “learn your lesson from” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26; 10:18; 2 Cor. 10:7; Col. 4:17)**

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**βλέπω *blepō***  
**2 plur pres act impera**  
**“to see” in this case, to**  
**watch out for something.**  
**“Watch out for dogs”**

**“dogs”**

**A derogatory term the Jews used for Gentiles.**

**Paul flips it on them, calling them dogs.**



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**“dogs”—unclean creatures with whom they would not associate if such association could be avoided (cf. Matt. 15:21–28)**

**“dogs”**

**A derogatory term the Jews used for Gentiles.**  
**Paul flips it on them, calling them dogs.**

**Isa. 56:10, “His watchmen *are* blind, They are all ignorant; They *are* all dumb dogs, They cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.”**

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**“evil workers”**

**Called the Judaizers**  
**“deceitful workers” (2 Cor. 11:13)**

**Matt. 23:25, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.”**

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**Because of their insistence on circumcision for salvation or sanctification**

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**Col. 2:11, “In Him you were also**  
**circumcised with the circumcision**  
**made without hands, by putting off**  
**the body of the sins of the flesh, by**  
**the circumcision of Christ,”**

**“dogs”**

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**Php. 3:3, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” [NKJV]**

# What the Bible Teaches About

# Circumcision



**1. Circumcision is the removal of the foreskin of the male's genital organ.**

**מול (mûl) II, v. circumcise, let oneself be circumcised, be cut off; v. used 31 ✕**

**מולָה (mûlâ) n. circumcision.**

**περιτέμνω (peritemno), v. to circumcise; 14 ✕ Acts–Jude**

**περιτομή (peritomē), n. circumcision; 34 ✕ from Acts–Jude**

## **2. First, circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant.**

**It was a sign of *separation* unto God.**

**Gen. 17:10, “This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;”**

**Gen. 17:11, “and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.”**



**4. Second, circumcision was commanded in the Mosaic Covenant. But the reason was different than the Abrahamic Covenant.**

**Lev. 12:3, “And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.”**

**Circumcision was a requirement for partaking of the Passover. Any non-Israelite, including servants or slaves, were prohibited from eating the Passover if they were not circumcised.**

**Ex. 12:48, “And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. (Ex. 12:44)**

**5. Circumcision in the Abrahamic Covenant was a sign of that covenant and thus a sign of being Jewish. This was mandatory for all Jewish males.**

**Under the Mosaic Covenant, circumcision was a sign of submission to the Law of Moses. Under the Mosaic Law it was mandatory for those [Jew or Gentile] who desired to be part of the nation, the commonwealth of Israel.**

**Circumcision had nothing to do with justification, eternal salvation, or spiritual life.**

## **6. Circumcision in post-Second Temple Judaism (after AD 70).**

## Comments on Ezek. 16:6

**Rabbi Matia ben Cheresh used to say, “... But as yet they had no commandments to perform, by virtue of which they might merit redemption. ...**

**“God therefore assigned them two commandments: the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, and circumcision, which they were to perform so as to merit being saved, One cannot obtain reward except by deeds.”**

*~Mekhilta Bo, Chap. 5*

**“As the Ezekiel exegesis demonstrates, the central symbol of the circumcision ritual was its blood. Regularly, therefore, we find reference not only to the salvific nature of the rite in general, but more specifically, to the saving merit of circumcision blood. Nowadays, a blessing accompanies the symbolic placing of wine on the lips of the baby boy just after the circumcision wound has been cauterized.”**

**~Jacob Neusner, et al ed., *Encyclopedia of Judaism*, 92**

**“At any rate, the symbolic value of circumcision as an act of salvation is evident throughout our second century sources. It is the sign of the covenant that saves. ...**

**“It is the paradigmatic salvific example of a good work, practiced in every generation from Abraham onward. As such, it has commanded the universal allegiance of Jews throughout history.”**

**~Jacob Neusner, et al ed., *Encyclopedia of Judaism*, 92**

**Lev. 26:41, “and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—”**

**Deut. 10:16, “Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart,  
and be stiff-necked no longer.”**



**Deut. 30:6, “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”**

**Jer. 9:24, “ ‘But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD.**

**Jer. 9:25, “ ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised—’ ”**

**מִןּוּל בְּעֶרְלָהּ literally, circumcised with the foreskin, i.e., “circumcised yet uncircumcised”**

**Acts 7:51, “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.**

**Acts 7:52, “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,**

**Acts 7:53, “who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”**

**11. Circumcision was a major distraction taught by the Judaizers, which Paul was correcting in “Galatians.”**

**Gal. 3:3, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” [NKJV]**

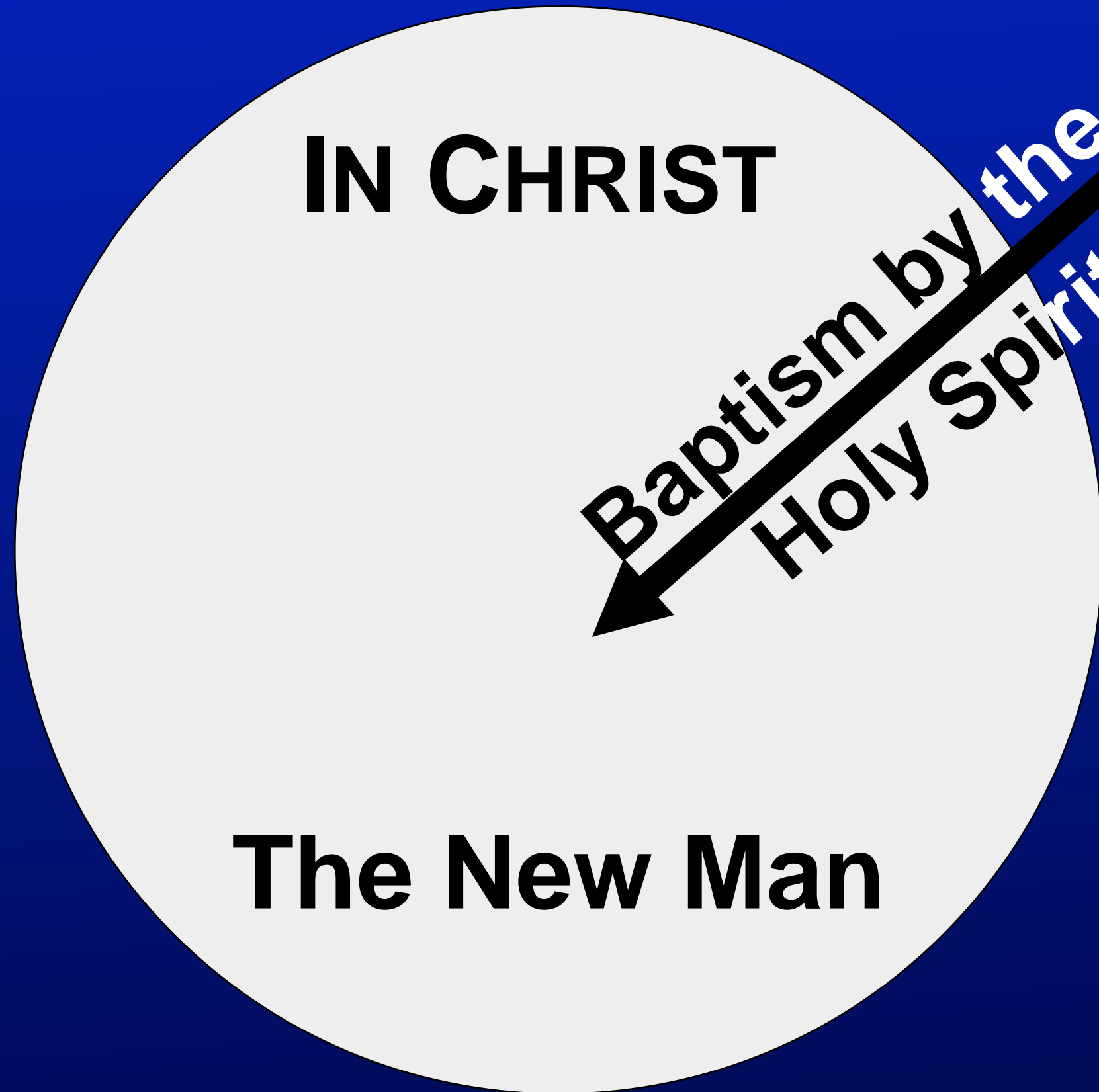
**Gal. 5:2, “Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.”**

**Eternal  
Realities**

**Temporal  
Realities**

**“POSITIONAL TRUTH”**

**ACTS 16:31**



**IN CHRIST**

**Baptism by the  
Holy Spirit**

**The New Man**

**Eternal  
Realities**

**Temporal  
Realities**

**“POSITIONAL TRUTH”**



**ACTS 16:31**

**IN CHRIST**

**Baptism by the  
Holy Spirit**

**The New Man**

**FILLED BY  
THE  
HOLY SPIRIT**

**“Walking by the  
Holy Spirit”  
“Walk as children  
of light”**

## **12. The true circumcision is that which is spiritual, in Christ.**

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

**Php. 3:4, “though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:”**

**Php. 3:3, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” [NKJV]**



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**Jer. 9:23, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches;**

**Jer. 9:24, “ ‘But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD.**

**Jer. 9:25, “ ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised—’ ”**

**Rom. 2:29, “but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”**

**Col. 2:11, “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,”**

**Php. 3:3, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” [NKJV]**

**1. worship God in the Spirit**

**For we are the circumcision who:**

**2. rejoice in Christ Jesus**

**3. AND have no confidence in the flesh**

# 1. Worship God in the Spirit.

**λατρεύω *latreuō* pres act part masc plur nom to serve, worship (Rom. 12:1), used as a relative substantival “those who are worshipping/serving by the Holy Spirit.”**

**John 4:19, “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.**

**John 4:20, “ ‘Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.’ ”**

**John 4:21, “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.**

**John 4:22, “ ‘You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.**

**John 4:23, “ ‘But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father by means of the Spirit and by means of truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.**

**John 4:24, “ ‘God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship by means of the Spirit and by means of truth.’ ”**

# 1. Worship God in the Spirit.

**λατρεύω *latreuō* pres act part masc plur nom to serve, worship (Rom. 12:1), used as a relative substantival “those who are worshipping/serving by means of the Holy Spirit.”**



## 2. Rejoice [glory] in Christ Jesus.

**καυχάομαι *καυχηομαι* present mid participle masc  
plur nom “to boast [HCSB], glory [ESV; NASB95]”**

### **3. AND have no confidence in the flesh.**

***πείθω* *peithō* perfect tense act part masc plur nom “to persuade; believe; trust; have confidence.”**

**Perfect tense: completed action in past time, with an emphasis on the present results of that completed past decision.**

**No trust, or no confidence in the flesh.**

# What is the “flesh”?

**1. Literal flesh, meaning the physical body.**

**John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, ...”**

**2. Refers to the sin nature, that which is the source of sins: mental, emotional, sins of the tongue, overt sins.**

**3. Physical human abilities [but ultimately these come from the sin nature].**

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**Pagan Kingdom of Man**

Based on WORKS

Man would save himself through his own ideas, efforts, or rituals

**Kingdom of God**

Based on GRACE

God would save man;  
total and exclusive  
dependence

**Gal. 5:16, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”**

**Gal. 5:17, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”**

**Gal. 5:18, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”**

**Gal. 5:19, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,**

**Gal. 5:20, “idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,**

**Gal. 5:21, “envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”**

**Gal. 5:22, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

**Gal. 5:23, “gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.**

**Gal. 5:24, “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

**Gal. 5:25, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”**

**The emphasis on circumcision was emphasizing a human idea, an action, a ritual that added to the work of Christ on the cross.**



**Gal. 1:6**, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, [ἕτερος, *heteros* another, but not the same]

**Gal. 1:7**, “which is not another [ἄλλος *allos* another, but the same]; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

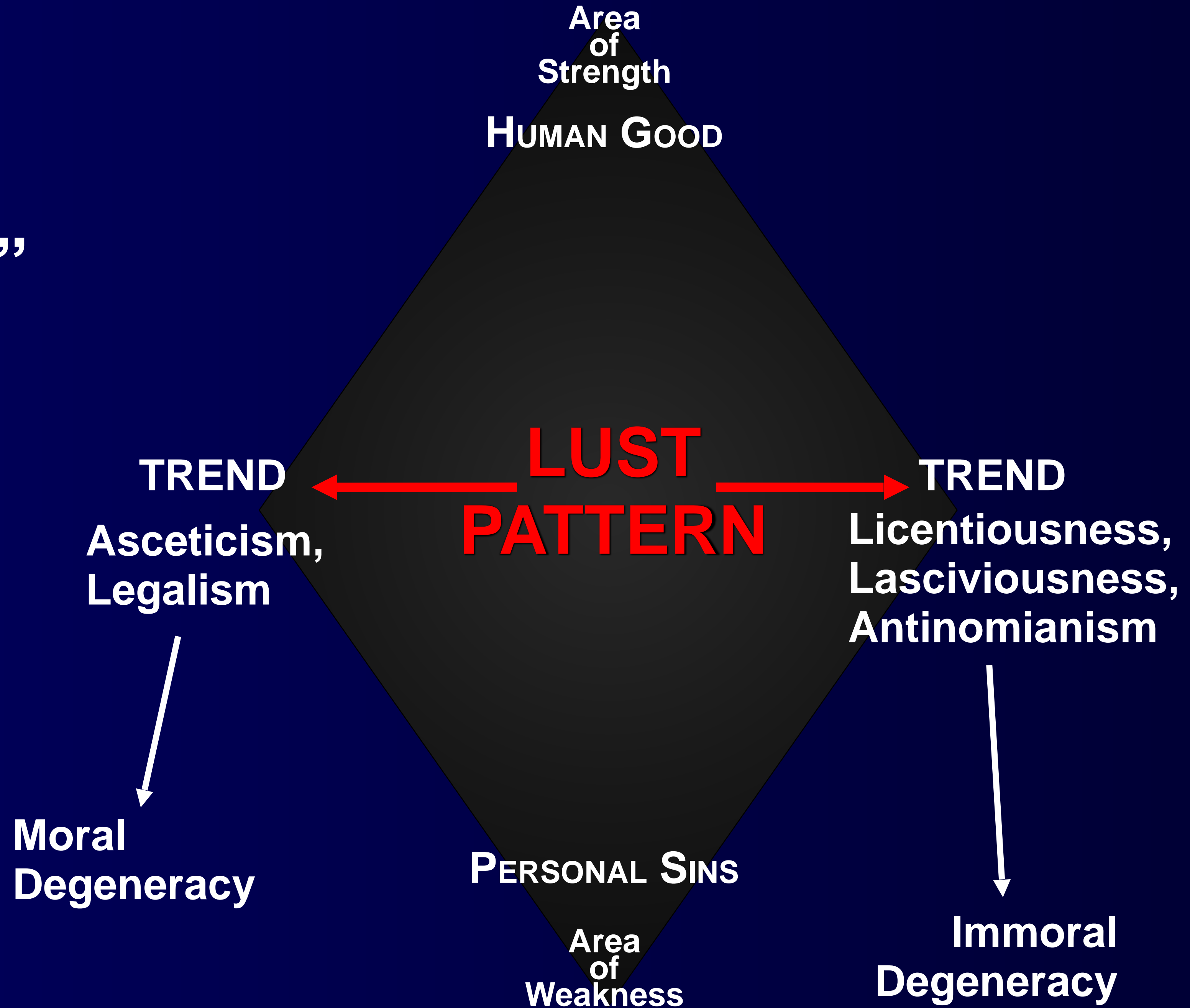
**Gal. 1:8**, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

**Gal. 1:9**, “As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”

**Gal. 2:16, “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” [NKJV]**

**Gal. 2:16, “because we know that a person is not declared righteous by means of the works of the law [i.e., circumcision] but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order that we might be declared righteous by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law no flesh, no person, will be declared righteous.” [RD]**

# THE SIN NATURE “the flesh”



**Php. 3:4, “though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:”**

**Php. 3:4, “though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:”**

***πεποίθησις* *pepoithēsis* fem sing acc confidence**

***πείθω* *peithō* perfect tense act part masc plur  
nom “to persuade; believe; trust; have  
confidence”**