



Philippians

Chapter 3

- Author: The Apostle Paul
- Recipients: The Church at Philippi
 - First church in Europe, in the region of Macedonia in northern Greece
 - Founded by Paul on his second Missionary Journey, AD 51 – predominantly Gentile
- Time and Place of Writing: Most likely during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, AD 61 or 62
- Occasion and Purpose: Acknowledging the generosity of the church, sending Epaphroditus back, urging unity in the body
- Significant Themes:
 - Joy
 - Right Thinking – knowing Christ
 - Holy Living
 - Exaltation of Christ

Background to Philippians

- I. Opening 1:1-11
 - A. Salutation 1:1-2
 - B. Thanksgiving 1:3-8
 - C. Prayer 1:9-11
- II. Paul's Missionary Report 1:12-26
 - A. Paul's Circumstances 1:12-17
 - B. Paul's Attitude 1:18-26
- III. A Call to Sanctification 1:27-2:30
 - A. Christian Citizenship 1:27-2:4
 - B. Christian Humility 2:5-11
 - C. Christian Obedience 2:12-18
 - D. Resumption of Paul's Missionary Report 2:19-30
- IV. Doctrinal Polemics 3:1-4:1
 - A. Judaizers as the Context for Theology 3:1-6
 - B. The Essence of Pauline Theology 3:7-11
 - C. Practical Theology 3:12-4:1
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 - B. A Word of Thanks 4:10-20
 - C. Closing 4:21-23

Outline of Philippians

³ Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things *again* is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. ² Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³ for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

- Paul introduces a rather abrupt change of tone in 3:2, beginning a section that is best described as a polemic (Webster: an aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another) against the Judaizers (see Galatians 2:14).
- Paul has extremely strong words against these opponents, similar to 2 Cor 11:13-15 ("For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ") and Galatians 1:8-9; 5:12; 6:12-13. He is always direct when it comes to the central message of the Gospel, but is harshest toward those who would lead believers astray.
- Paul refers to the Judaizers as dogs – would have been a significant insult to any Jew, especially one who is trying to introduce the Mosaic Law upon Gentile believers. The irony is that those who thought they were being observant Jews are called by the insult typically used for Gentiles.

Doctrinal Polemics (Phil 3:1-3)

⁴ although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

- Paul is mocking the Judaizers, who no doubt appealed to their own Jewish credentials in trying to convince the Philippian converts to adhere to the Mosaic Law. His “boasting” has a dual purpose: to mock the Judaizers, and to remind the church that even if they were inclined to trust the Judaizers, by their own logic they should trust Paul even more.
- Paul lists two types of qualifications as a Jew: those he received by birth, and those he pursued as an adult. By including both aspects, he is showing that according to the religious thinking of the day, he was second to none in his worthiness, at least terms of observable characteristics. He did not leave Judaism behind because he was a failure as a Jew!
- He is setting up his next argument, that whatever benefits and privileges he had as a Jew are worthless compared to knowing Christ.

Paul's Mock Boasting (Phil 3:4-6)

⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

- Paul is describing his conversion, and is emphatic in affirming the sincerity of his commitment to Christ. He has left behind his old life, and not only does he not express any longing or fond memories, he views it as a negative in light of knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord.
- Paul's focus is on his mindset – three times he says he “counted” (considered/esteemed) things to be loss, in exchange for knowing Christ.
- As Paul describes what he has given up, he expresses with increasing intensity his sense of dissatisfaction with those things that had previously been most important to him:

<u>The Old Life</u>	<u>The New Life</u>
I have counted as loss	For the sake of Christ
I count all things loss	For the value of knowing Christ
Suffered the loss of all things	For whom [i.e., for Christ]
Count them but rubbish	That I may gain Christ

Spiritual Bankruptcy (Phil 3:1-3)

⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- After discussing what he has lost because his previous efforts resulted in spiritual bankruptcy, Paul now focuses on what he has gained by virtue of being in Christ.
- This passage touches on each of the three categories present in the application of salvation: Justification (v. 9), Sanctification (v. 10), and Glorification (v. 11).
- Verse 9 makes a clear distinction between the righteousness which comes from God through faith in Christ, and the righteousness that comes from the Law – which is not righteousness at all, it is only “of my own.” True righteousness is obtained only by abandoning one’s own efforts and exercising faith.
- We are being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), as we share in His sufferings and death, we will also be glorified.

Spiritual Wealth (Phil 3:9-11)

¹² Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- Paul again provides insight into salvation – Ultimately, he has already been laid hold of by Christ (God’s election), and as a result, he presses on to live out what has already been accomplished on his behalf (sanctification).
- He uses three different terms in v.12 to describe the goal for which he is striving: obtained, become perfect, lay hold of. He recognizes the already/not yet tension – he has been justified by faith in Christ, but he has not yet been perfected in the completion of being conformed into His image.
- “Press on” = *dioko*: earnestly pursue, zealously persecute, apprehend, aggressively chase, like a hunter pursuing a catch. This is active work, far more than simply apprehending a concept or mental assent. Paul is living an example and encouraging us to work hard to take hold of Christ.

Practical Theology: Frustration and Hope (Phil 3:12-14)

¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; ¹⁶ however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

- “Perfect” = *teleioi*: having reached its end, complete in all its parts, full grown, of full age, specially of the completeness of Christian character. Paul may have been using this term ironically, in that his opponents likely thought of themselves as mature or perfect in their understanding and application of spiritual truths.
- “Attitude” = from the verb *phroneo*: to think, to judge, to care for. Occurs 3 times here (“standard” in v. 16) and 11 times total in this letter. Paul continues to emphasize the need to direct our thinking toward God and His Word.
- He also is appealing to two other themes that occur throughout the letter: Unity and Steadfastness. Paul wants their thinking to be aligned with one another because he urges them to have the mind of Christ, and He is not divided. He also calls them to keep on living (ESV: let us hold true) according to what we have attained (i.e., salvation).

Practical Growth through Obedience (Phil 3:15-16)

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

- In several places, Paul calls on his readers to follow his example (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7-9). But in this instance, he is making the appeal right after he shared his own struggles in verses 12-14. He is running the same race they are, with the same weaknesses, so they can relate and imitate him in how he presses on despite the weakness. He even calls them “brethren” to emphasize his identification with them.
- “Observe” = *skopeó*: look at, regard attentively, take heed, beware, consider. Emphasis on looking closely and pondering what you are seeing. This is different from the word for “beware” in v.2 (*blepó*), which is used of physical sight and has more of the sense of perceiving something, especially a danger.
- Verse 19 may be a warning about licentious behavior, but it is not necessarily limited to specific sins such as gluttony or sexual sin. Ultimately, whatever it is they are glorying in will lead to their destruction unless they turn to Christ and count all else as loss.

Patterns of Behavior (Phil 3:17-19)