



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
- V. Final Concerns 4:2-23
 - A. Exhortations 4:2-9
 - B. A Word of Thanks 4:10-20
 - C. Closing 4:21-23

Outline of Philippians

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)

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

4 Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long *to see*, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

- Paul starts with a statement of fact (our heavenly citizenship), followed by an expression of hope (the return of Christ and our glorification), which leads to an exhortation – in light of these truths, we must stand firm in the Lord.
- “Humble state” = *tapeinōseōs* (body of humiliation) – echoes Philippians 2:8, “He humbled Himself...” Jesus humbled Himself and became like us and now that He has been glorified, we will one day be conformed to the body of His glory.
- All of v. 21 refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is emphasizing that our hope is not ultimately in our citizenship, but in the person of the Savior.
- Paul uses six terms in verse 1 that express his close relationship with the Philippians: beloved, brothers, long to see, my joy, my crown, and beloved (again).

Heavenly Citizenship (Phil 3:20-4:1)

² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. ³ Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in *the cause of* the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

- The only other instance of Paul exhorting someone by name (outside of the Pastoral Epistles) is Col. 4:17 – “Say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.” In both cases, Paul must have been confident enough in the believers mentioned, and those in their churches, to call them by name, that they will have the spiritual maturity to receive such an admonition.
- “in harmony” = be of the same mind. Paul has emphasized this idea of having the proper mindset, particularly to have the mind of Christ. The issue is less that they agree (that is, to have the same mind as one another) than that they both should have the mind of the Lord, and to think as those who are in Christ.
- Who is the “true companion” (*syszygos*) in verse 3? Some have suggested Epaphroditus, or a man whose name is Syzygos. Or, it could be that he is speaking generally to all, inviting them to help in bringing unity to the body of Christ.

Final Concerns: A Call for Unity (Phil 4:2-3)