

PHILIPPIANS 3 | Paul's Model Mindset

No Confidence in the Flesh

1 Finally, my brothers and sisters, keep rejoicing (χαίρω, pres.) in the Lord [Jesus]. To go on writing the same things to you (pl.) is no trouble to me and is safe (ἀσφαλής)¹ for you.

2 Look out for the dogs (κύων),² look out for the evil workers,³ look out for the mutilation (τὴν κατατομήν).⁴ 3 For we are the circumcision (ἡ περιτομή), those who worship (λατρεύω, pres.) by the Spirit of God,⁵ boast (καυχόμαι, pres.)⁶ in Messiah Jesus, and have put no confidence (πείθω, perf. act.) in the flesh (ἐν σαρκί)— 4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:⁷ 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews;⁸ as to the law, a Pharisee;⁹ 6 as to zeal,¹⁰ a persecutor¹¹ of the church; as to righteousness under the law, “blameless” (ἄμεμπτος).¹²

¹ “[P]ert. to being in someone’s best interest, *safe, secure*” (BDAG, 147).

² “The point of comparing the false teachers to dogs is that they are unclean, like Gentile outcasts in Israel (cf. Mt 15:24-27). Paul sees that those who add human works (especially circumcision) to the finished work of Christ are outside the orthodox camp” (L. Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 641-643).

³ **2 Co 11:13** 13 ...Such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Messiah.

⁴ “[M]utilation, cutting in pieces” (BDAG, 528).

⁵ **Jn 4:23-24** 23 ...The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

⁶ **Php 1:26** 26 ...So that in me you may have ample cause to boast (καύχημα) in Messiah Jesus, because of my coming to you again. **Php 2:16** 16 ...Holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Messiah I may boast (καύχημα) that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. **2 Co 10:17** 17 Let the one who boasts (καυχόμαι), boast in the Lord.

⁷ “...[I]n the flesh [Paul] had more in which he could have boasted than did any of the Judaizers. ...Paul wrote as though he were challenging the Judaizers to a showdown.” (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:659). “Two kinds of advantages are enumerated. First are those things which the apostle had by birth, apart from his choice” (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:660).

⁸ Unlike some Jews, Paul did not adopt Greek customs.

⁹ **Ac 26:4-5** 4 My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. 5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I [Paul] have lived as a Pharisee.

¹⁰ **Ac 22:3** 3 I [Paul] am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.

¹¹ **Ac 9:1-2** 1 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord [Jesus], went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. **1 Co 15:9** 9 ...I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹² **Php 2:15** 15 ...That you may be blameless (ἄμεμπτος) and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world....

Knowing Jesus Intimately

7 But whatever gain I had, I have counted (ἡγέομαι, perf.)¹³ loss for the sake of Messiah. 8 Indeed, I continue to count (ἡγέομαι, pres.) everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing (γινώσκω)¹⁴ Messiah Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and keep counting (ἡγέομαι, pres.) them as rubbish (σκύβαλον),¹⁵ that I may gain Messiah 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness¹⁶ of my own that comes from the Torah, but that which comes through faith in Messiah, the righteousness from God that depends on faith¹⁷— 10 that I may know (γινώσκω, aor.) him, the power of his resurrection,¹⁸ and the partnership (κοινωνία) of his sufferings,¹⁹ becoming like him in his death,²⁰ 11 that by any means possible I may attain the [out-]resurrection (ἐξανάστασις)²¹ from the dead.

Upward Call of God

12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already been made perfect (τελειώω, perf. pass.), but I press on to make it my own, because Messiah Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize²² of the upward call of God in Messiah Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are

¹³ “[T]o engage in an intellectual process, *think, consider, regard*” (BDAG, 434).

¹⁴ **Je 9:24** 24 ...Let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am Yahweh who practices loyal love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares Yahweh.

¹⁵ “[U]seless or undesirable material that is subject to disposal, *refuse, garbage* (in var. senses, ‘excrement, manure, garbage, kitchen scraps’)...specif. of human excrement...*consider everything garbage/crud*...to convey the crudity of the Greek...: ‘It’s all crap’” (BDAG, 932).

¹⁶ **Is 64:6** 6 ...All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

¹⁷ **Ro 3:24-25** 24 ...Justified by [God’s] grace as a gift, through the redemption [that is in Messiah Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

¹⁸ **Ro 6:4** 4 We were buried...with [Jesus] by baptism into death, in order that, just as Messiah was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

¹⁹ **Php 1:29** 29 ...It has been granted to you that for the sake of Messiah you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.... **Ac 9:16** 16 ...I [Jesus] will show [Paul] how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. “These sufferings were not Christ’s substitutionary sufferings on the cross. Paul knew that those could not be shared. But he did desire to participate with Christ...in suffering for the sake of righteousness” (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:661). “Ironically, avoiding suffering could be the very thing that prevents us from partnering deeply with the Risen Jesus” (N. Ripken, *The Insanity of God*, 308-9).

²⁰ **2 Co 4:10** 10 ...Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

²¹ “[T]he state or condition of coming up from among the dead, *resurrection*... (the compound in contrast to the simplex ἀνάστασις that precedes connotes a coming to fullness of life, as vss. 12-21 indicate)” (BDAG, 345).

²² **2 Co 5:10** 10 ...We [believers] must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

mature (τέλειος) think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.²³

Two Ways to Walk

17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating²⁴ me, and keep your eyes on those who walk (περιπατέω, pres.) according to the example you have in us. 18 For many walk (περιπατέω, pres.), of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, as enemies of the cross of Messiah. 19 Their end is destruction,²⁵ their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, setting their minds (φρονέω, pres. act.) on earthly things. 20 But our commonwealth (πολίτευμα)²⁶ is in heaven, and from it we eagerly await (ἀπεκδέχομαι, pres.)²⁷ a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Messiah, 21 who will transform (μετασχηματίζω, fut.) our lowly body to be like his glorious body,²⁸ by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

²³ “[T]he greatest need among God’s people is to live up to what they already have in Christ. Most live far below their exalted position in Christ” (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:662).

²⁴ **1 Co 11:1** 1 Be imitators of me [Paul], as I am of Messiah. **Ac 26:29** 29 ...I [Paul] would to God that not only you [Agrippa] but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.

²⁵ “This word (*apōleia*) does not mean annihilation but rather ruination by separation from the presence of God in eternal judgment” (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:662).

²⁶ “The people of Philippi were living there as colonists while their citizenship was in Rome. Similarly Christians, while living on earth, have their citizenship elsewhere—in heaven” (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:662). The Philippians are to understand they are “citizens” of a greater “dominion.” Their allegiance is to another *Sōtēr*, whose coming from heaven they awaited with eager expectation (G. D. Fee, *NICNT*, 32).

²⁷ **Ro 8:19** 19 ... The creation waits (ἀπεκδέχομαι) with eager longing (ἀποκαρδοκία) for the revealing of the sons of God. **Ro 8:23** 23 ... Not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly (ἀπεκδέχομαι) for... the redemption of our bodies. **1 Co 1:7** 7 ... You are not lacking in any gift, as you wait eagerly (ἀπεκδέχομαι) for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Messiah.... **Ga 5:5** 5 ... Through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves wait eagerly (ἀπεκδέχομαι) for the hope of righteousness. **Heb 9:28** 28 ... Messiah... will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are waiting eagerly (ἀπεκδέχομαι) for him.

²⁸ **1 Jn 3:2** 2 ... When [Jesus] appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Observations

1. About Jesus we learn:

- a. He is Lord (Php 3:1) and Messiah (Php 3:3).
- b. We are to rejoice (Php 3:1) and boast (Php 3:3) in him.
- c. Paul counts everything loss for his sake (Php 3:7-8).
- d. To know him is of surpassing worth (Php 3:8).
- e. Paul counts all things as rubbish in order to gain him (Php 3:8).
- f. Paul wants to be found in him with faith-righteousness (Php 3:9).
- g. Paul wants to know him and the power of his resurrection (Php 3:10).
- h. Paul wants to share his sufferings and become like him in his death (Php 3:10).
- i. He has made Paul his own (Php 3:12).
- j. The prize of the upward call of God is in him (Php 3:14).
- k. Many walk as enemies of his cross (Php 3:18).
- l. He is the Saviour we wait eagerly for (Php 3:20).
- m. He has a glorious body (Php 3:21).
- n. He will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body (Php 3:21).
- o. He has the power to subject all things to himself (Php 3:21).

2. Paul commands the Philippians to:

- a. Rejoice in the Lord Jesus (Php 3:1).
- b. Look out for the dogs, the evildoers, and those who mutilate the flesh (Php 3:2).
- c. Think like himself (Php 3:15).
- d. Hold true to what they have attained (3:16).
- e. Imitate him (3:17).
- f. Keep their eyes on those who walk according to his example (3:17).

3. Comparisons and contrasts include:

- a. Spiritual circumcision vs. physical circumcision (Php 3:2-6).
- b. Boasting in Jesus vs. putting confidence in the flesh (Php 3:3).
- c. Works-righteousness vs. faith-righteousness (Php 3:9).
- d. Paul's present striving vs. his future perfection (Php 3:12-14).
- e. Mature believers vs. those who aren't (Php 3:15).
- f. Paul's walk vs. those who walk as enemies of Jesus' cross (Php 3:17-18).
- g. The future for unbelievers vs. the future for believers (Php 3:19-21).
- h. Heavenly-mindedness vs. earthly-mindedness (Php 3:8, 15, 19).

Discussion Questions | Lesson Six

1. BLESS and Prayer.

2. Review.

- a. What are the nine steps in the observation phase?
- b. Philippians at a Glance (p. 10).
- c. What are your Philippians 2 paragraph themes?

3. Philippians 3.

- a. Key words and phrases?
- b. Lists?
- c. What contrasts and comparisons did you find?
- d. What terms of conclusion did you find?
- e. What expressions of time did you find?
- f. Chapter theme?
- g. How does Php 3 relate to Php 2?

4. Philippians 3:1.

- a. Paragraph theme?
- b. Why does Paul say “finally”? Isn’t he only half-way through (see Php 4:8)?
- c. Is Paul talking to male believers only? Why does he keep saying “brothers”?
- d. How many times does Paul command the Philippians to rejoice?
- e. How many times does Paul use the phrase “in the Lord”? What does this phrase mean? Why does Paul use that phrase so often?
- f. How does Paul view the act of writing to the Philippians?

5. Philippians 3:2-6.

- a. Paragraph theme?
- b. Who are the dogs, the evildoers, and those who mutilate the flesh? Do these phrases describe the same people?
- c. Is Paul name-calling? Is that okay? Is Paul contradicting his own command in Php 4:5?
- d. What did you learn about circumcision from Ge 17 or other cross-references (pp. 55-56)?
- e. What religious rituals do people put their confidence in today (p. 56, 4c)? Why do they do this?
- f. If you stood before God, and he said, “Why should I let you into heaven?” what would be your answer (p. 56, d)?
- g. What characterises the true circumcision?
- h. What does Paul mean by “confidence in the flesh” (p. 53, 1)? What do most people put their confidence in today?
- i. Why does Paul list his reasons for confidence in the flesh? How many items does he list? Is he boasting?
- j. How can he say he was “blameless” under the law?

6. Philippians 3:7-11.

- a. Paragraph theme?
- b. Did Paul have any gain from the seven things he listed in vv. 5-6? How do those things compare to Jesus?
- c. How many times is the term “count” found in this chapter? In *Philippians*? Who else “counts” in *Philippians* (p. 57, 2)?
- d. Why is “count” in v. 7 past (aorist) tense, while the two “counts” in v. 8 are present tense?
- e. What is the connection between knowing Christ and gaining Christ? How do we gain Christ?
- f. What two types of righteousness does Paul compare in v. 9? Which is better? Why (p. 57, 3)?
- g. Why is Paul talking about himself so much? Is he being self-centered?

7. Application.

- a. What’s the big idea in *Philippians* 3:1-11?
- b. What is your lesson for life?

Lesson Seven | Discussion Questions

1. BLESS and Prayer.

2. Philippians at a Glance.

- a. What are the circumstances of Paul when he wrote Philippians?
- b. What are the other prison epistles?
- c. What is the primary purpose of Philippians?

3. Previous Lesson: Philippians 3:1-9.

- a. What is “confidence in the flesh”? Why does Paul talk so much about it?
- b. What stood out to you from Shayne’s sermon?

4. Philippians 3.

- a. What does Php 3 tell us about phase zero?
- b. What does Php 3 tell us about phase one?
- c. What does Php 3 tell us about phase two?
- d. What does Php 3 tell us about phase three?
- e. What interpretation questions do you have?
- f. Did you learn anything from commentaries?

5. Philippians 3:7-11.

- a. Paul uses the term count three times in this paragraph. What is he counting and why?
- b. What does Paul say about each of the three phases of the Christian life (justification, sanctification, and glorification)? Use the whiteboard.
- c. How are we to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection (v. 10)?
- d. How are we to share in Jesus’ sufferings and become like him in his death (v. 10)?
- e. Is resurrection from the dead something we have to attain to (v. 11)?

6. Philippians 3:12-16.

- a. What is the “this” Paul is trying to obtain (v. 12)? Be specific.
- b. In his advance to spiritual maturity, what are some of things Paul forgot (v. 13)? What are some of the things you must forget?
- c. What is the prize of the upward call (v. 14)? Do you want this prize? How are going to get it?
- d. What do vv. 15-16 tell us about the maturing process?

7. Philippians 3:17-21.

- a. In what ways does Paul want the Philippians to imitate him (cf. Php 4:9)?
- b. Are the enemies of the cross of Christ (v. 18) the dogs of v. 2?
- c. What do we learn about our end versus the end of the enemies of the cross of Christ?

8. Review and Application.

- a. According to Paul, what is to be our number one goal in life?
- b. Why should we make spiritual maturity through knowing Jesus our number one goal?
- c. How practically do we make this happen in our own lives?

Biblical Worldview

1. Introduction.

- a. Image.
 - (1) Dad's goal-setting training.
 - (2) *1001 Things to Do Before You Die*.
 - (3) Coach warning his team about plays the opponents will run.
- b. Needs.
 - (1) We need to know what our worldly CV/resume means to God.
 - (2) We need to know what to focus on in this life.
 - (3) We need to know what to do when legalists come along.
 - (4) We need to know what to do when we've made a huge mistake.
 - (5) We need to know our pursuit of Jesus won't be for nothing.
 - (6) We need encouragement to continue on the path of Christlikeness.
 - (7) We need to know how all our accomplishments compare to knowing Jesus experientially.
 - (8) We've got lots of goals in life. But we must prioritise.
- c. Subjects.
 - (1) How to think about ourselves and our accomplishments.
 - (2) What to focus on in this life.
 - (3) How to rebound from mistakes.
 - (4) How to advance to spiritual maturity.
 - (5) Why its important not to fall for legalism.
 - (6) The number one goal in life.

2. The Model Mindset of Paul (Php 3).

- a. Paul revealed his mindset toward life and death in Php 1:18-25. He revealed Jesus' mindset in Php 2:5-8. Now he will reveal his mindset toward his own self-accomplishments (vv. 4-11). Paul obviously believes thinking is important. In fact it is crucial. We are what we think.

3. No Confidence in the Flesh (Php 3:1-6).

- a. Paul says "finally" (v. 1), but he doesn't really mean it (Php 4:8).
- b. Again Paul urges the Philippians to keep rejoicing in Jesus (present tense)(v. 1). It really is the theme of the letter.
- c. Paul has previously warned the Philippians about the Jewish legalists, but he is happy to do it again (v. 1).
 - (1) Although there is no Jewish synagogue in Philippi and therefore no immediate threat, the Philippians believers still must watch out for the Jewish legalists. They will surface at some point. The Philippians need to be ready for that encounter.
 - (2) "Repetition is a vital part of learning" (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:659).
 - (3) Paul is once again defending the grace gospel. It is *the* hill that must be defended. Legalists constantly threaten the hill of grace Jesus won for us at the cross. "Confidence in the flesh is serious threat to our joy" (S. Martin).

- d. Paul calls the Jewish legalists three things (v. 2): (1) Dogs (κύων); (2) evil workers (κακοὺς ἐργάτας); and (3) the mutilation (τὴν κατατομήν).
- (1) Jewish legalists typically demanded three things of Gentile converts: (1) circumcision; (2) observance of dietary laws; and (3) observance of Jewish Sabbaths and festivals. They may have said something like, “If you really want to be like Jesus, you have to be circumcised. Jesus was circumcised, wasn’t he?”
 - (2) The Jewish legalists may have had good intentions, but they are still dead wrong. Circumcision is not necessary for justification or sanctification.
 - (3) This is harsh name-calling, but necessary. The Jewish legalists are a real danger to the Philippian church. They demand that Gentile believers become Jewish for justification, sanctification, or both.
- e. The Philippians are already spiritually circumcised, so physical circumcision is unnecessary (v. 3). They are already “the circumcision” (ἡ περιτομή).
- f. The Philippians’ spiritual circumcision is demonstrated in three ways (v. 3).
- (1) They worship (pres.) by the Spirit.
 - (a) True worshipers worship the Father in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23-24).
 - (2) They boast (pres.) in Jesus.
 - (a) The one who boasts is to boast in Jesus (2 Co 10:17).
 - (3) They put (aor.) no confidence in the flesh.
 - (a) See *Flesh*.
- g. Paul now invites the Jewish legalists to a “flesh showdown” (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:659)(v. 4).
- h. Paul lists seven CV items to show he is superior in the flesh (vv. 5-6).
- (1) Paul’s pedigree:
 - (a) Circumcised on the eighth day.
 - (b) Israelite.
 - (c) Benjaminite.
 - (d) Hebrew of Hebrews.
 - a) He was brought up in Jerusalem (Ac 22:3; 26:4) and has not been corrupted by Greek culture.
 - (2) Paul’s performance:
 - (a) Pharisee.
 - a) He was educated by the famous rabbi Gamaliel (Ac 22:3).
 - b) All the Jewish leaders knew him (Ac 26:4).
 - (b) Persecutor of the church.
 - a) Paul was extremely zealous for God (Ac 22:3).
 - b) He breathed threats and murder against the disciples of Jesus (Ac 9.1).
 - c) He went to the high priest and asked for letters so he could bring believers bound from Damascus to Jerusalem (Ac 9:1-2).
 - d) He persecuted the church of God (1 Co 15:9).
 - (c) Blameless under the Torah.
 - a) He lived according to the strict requirements of Pharisaism (Ac 22:3; 26:5).

4. Knowing Jesus Intimately (Php 3:7-11).

- a. At the moment of salvation, Paul counted (perf.) everything (vv. 7-8) gained in the flesh as loss for the sake of Jesus (v. 7).
 - (1) The seven CV items above used to be gain to him, but now they are loss to him. He has had a total mind-shift in how he views himself and his own accomplishments. They mean nothing to him now.
 - (2) Paul uses the perfect tense of ἡγήομαι (v. 7) because he is speaking about the moment he believed in Jesus. The unbeliever must do some counting in order to believe in Jesus.
 - (3) Jesus has fulfilled the requirements of the Torah for us.
 - (a) See *Mosaic Law*.
 - (b) “Self-made righteousness is the enemy of the cross” (S. Martin).
- b. In phase two, Paul keeps counting (pres.) all self accomplishments as loss compared to knowing Jesus (v. 8).
 - (1) To know Jesus experientially is of “surpassing worth” (τὸ ὑπερέχον) (v. 8). ὑπερέχω means “to be at a point higher than another on a scale of linear extent, rise above, surpass, excel...; to surpass in quality or value, be better than, surpass, excel” (BDAG, 1033).
 - (2) Paul emphasises “everything” and “all” in vv. 7-8. Knowing Jesus intimately is more valuable than all other things combined. In Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:2-3).
 - (3) The church’s return to “the surpassing worth of knowing Messiah Jesus our Lord” could go a long way toward renewing the church for its task in the post-modern world (G. D. Fee, *NICNT*, 337).
- c. When he turned to Jesus in phase one, Paul suffered the loss of all things (v. 8).
 - (1) Paul was on his way to becoming the next great Jewish rabbi. He was headed to the top of the Jewish world. When he turned to Jesus, he lost all that. He lost position, prestige, friendships. Family members repudiated him. The rest of his life, he was hunted down from city to city.
 - (2) Paul’s catalog of suffering for Jesus is listed in 2 Co 11:23-28.
- d. Paul keeps counting (ἡγήομαι, pres.) his self-accomplishments as rubbish in order to gain Jesus in phase two (v. 8).
 - (1) “Rubbish” (σκύβαλον) means “useless or undesirable material that is subject to disposal, refuse, garbage (in var. senses, ‘excrement, manure, garbage, kitchen scraps’...specif. of human excrement...consider everything garbage/crud...to convey the crudity of the Greek...: ‘It’s all crap’” (BDAG, 932).
 - (2) To gain Jesus means to know him intimately and become like him. This is the ultimate goal of our phase two spiritual life.
 - (3) Paul keeps criss-crossing between phases one and two in this paragraph.
- e. Paul is found in Jesus because, in phase one, he believed in him (vv. 8-9).
 - (1) Paul no longer relies on his own self-righteousness through obeying the Torah. He now has the imputed righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus (vv. 8-9).
 - (2) There are three types of righteousness mentioned in Philippians:
 - (a) Self-righteousness: a person’s attempt at goodness apart from God (vv. 3, 9).
 - (b) Positional righteousness: the goodness legally imputed to the believer at the moment of faith in Jesus (v. 9).

- (c) Practical righteousness: the goodness produced by the believer empowered by the Holy Spirit (v. 3; Php 1:11; Ga 5:22-23).
- f. With justification settled, Paul now pursues intimacy with Jesus (v. 10). This intimacy involves three things:
- (1) Experiencing the power of Jesus' resurrection (v. 10).
 - (a) **Ro 6:4** 4 We were buried...with [Jesus] by baptism into death, in order that, just as Messiah was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
 - (b) **Ga 2:19-20** 19 ...I died to the Torah, so that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Messiah. It is no longer I who live but Messiah who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
 - (2) Participating in Jesus' sufferings (v. 10).
 - (a) To share (κοινωνία) means "close association involving mutual interests and sharing, *association, communion, fellowship, close relationship...* participation, sharing" (*BDAG*, 552).
 - a) Paul was called to suffer for Jesus (Ac 9:16).
 - b) The Philippians were also called to suffer for Jesus (Php 1:29).
 - (b) This is not sharing in Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross.
 - a) **Heb 10:14** 14 ...By a single offering [Jesus] has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.
 - (c) It is not wise for the believer to avoid suffering. We must welcome it.
 - a) "Ironically, avoiding suffering could be the very thing that prevents us from partnering deeply with the Risen Jesus" (N. Ripken, *The Insanity of God*, 308-9).
 - (3) Becoming like Jesus in his death (v. 10).
 - (a) To become like (συμμορφίζω) means "to cause to be similar in form or style to someth. else, *grant or invest w. the same form as, ...be conformed to, take on the same form as...*the style of Christ's death, i.e. to be like Christ in his death" (*BDAG*, 958).
 - (b) Like Jesus, we are to humble ourselves by becoming obedient to the point of death (Php 2:8).
 - (c) Like Paul, we are to honour Jesus in our body, whether by life or by death (Php 1:20). We are to be willing to be poured out as a drink offering (Php 2:17).
 - (d) Like Epaphroditus, we are to risk our life for the work of Jesus (Php 2:30).
 - (e) We are to be willing to be given over to death for Jesus' sake (2 Co 4:10-11).
 - (f) We are to take up our cross and follow after Jesus (Mt 10:38-39).
- g. The reward for knowing Jesus and becoming like him is "out-resurrection" (v. 11).
- (1) Paul invented the word ἐξανάστασις. "[T]he compound in contrast to the simplex ἀνάστασις that precedes connotes a coming to fullness of life..." (*BDAG*, 345).
 - (2) "Out-resurrection" is likely a reward given in phase three to believers who have reached spiritual maturity through knowing Jesus and being like him.
 - (a) "The out-resurrection is a special reward which only faithful believers will receive. While the exact nature of that reward is unclear here, it can generally be understood as a sort of abundance of life. All believers will be resurrected

and have joy forever. Faithful believers only will obtain this out-resurrection and have abundance of joy forever. Hebrews 11:35 is instructive here. It speaks of believers who ‘were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.’ All believers will be resurrected, but there is a better one for those who endure. Obviously this out-resurrection is something which is capable of many degrees depending on the measure of one’s faithfulness. Thus the degree to which we are faithful to use our talents, treasures, gifts, abilities, resources, and opportunities in life to please Him is the degree to which we will obtain this out-resurrection abundance of life” (B. Wilkin).

5. Pressing Toward the Goal of Maturity (Php 3:12-16).

- a. Paul’s determination is to press on to the goal of knowing Jesus (vv. 12-13).
 - (1) The “this” (v. 12) is knowing Jesus intimately, especially in his resurrection, sufferings, and death (vv. 10-11).
 - (2) The Greek word “perfect” (τελειόω) means “to complete an activity, complete, bring to an end, finish, accomplish...to overcome or supplant an imperfect state of things by one that is free fr. objection, *bring to an end, bring to its goal/ accomplishment...make perfect*” (BDAG, 996).
 - (3) To “press on” (διώκω) means “to move rapidly and decisively toward an objective, *hasten, run, press on...to follow in haste in order to find someth., run after, pursue* (BDAG, 254).
 - (4) Paul is spiritually mature (v. 15), but he is not perfect (v. 12). He continues to press on (vv. 12-13).
 - (a) “A divine dissatisfaction is essential for spiritual progress” (W. Wiersbe).
- b. The reason Paul presses on is because he belongs to Jesus (v. 12).
 - (1) About 25 years before, Jesus made Paul his own (Ac 9:4-5).
 - (2) Jesus makes every believer his own at the moment of faith in him (1 Co 7:23).
- c. Paul’s single focus is the goal of knowing Jesus and being like him (vv. 13-14).
 - (1) Paul does one thing, and one thing only. His life is simple (v. 13).
 - (a) “The key to success is subtraction” (Dr. H. Hendricks, Dallas Theological Seminary).
 - (b) Like Paul we are to be “mono-maniacs.”²⁹ Our life is not to be a philosophy or a program, but a person—Jesus.
 - (2) The upward call of God (v. 14) is spiritual maturity (v. 15) through knowing Jesus intimately and becoming like him (v. 10).
 - (3) To focus on the future, Paul forgets the past—its disappointments, failures, mistakes, sins, and successes (v. 13).
 - (a) To forget (ἐπιλανθάνομαι) means “to not have remembrance of someth., *forget...in the sense disregard, put out of mind*” (BDAG, 374). The present tense indicates continuing action, “keep forgetting.”
 - (b) Illustration: British Olympian Derek Redmond (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYQ2IyMuPes>)).
 - (c) We are to put our hand to the plow and not look back (Lk 9:62).

²⁹ Dr. Dwight Pentecost, Dallas Theological Seminary.

- (d) “Christians are not focused *backward* and *downward*, but rather *forward* and *upward*” (Setting Captives Free).
- (4) To strain forward (ἐπεκτείνουμαι) means “to exert oneself to the uttermost, *stretch out, strain...toward someth.*” (BDAG, 361). The present tense again indicates continuing action.
- (a) “To know the incomprehensible greatness of Christ demands a lifetime of arduous inquiry” (Hawthorne, 151).
- (b) “I am so near the goal that I cannot help running with all my might” (Charles Simeon).
- d. The prize for reaching the goal of spiritual maturity is rewards in phase three (v. 14).
- (1) At the beginning of phase three, Jesus will reward believers for their faithfulness (2 Co 5:9-10). See *Judgment Seat of Messiah*.
- (a) “Paul’s goal is to imitate Jesus in his suffering and death so that he may be qualified for exaltation as Jesus was. Paul welcomes suffering because he knows that only through the experience of suffering may we truly know Jesus. The prize of the upward call—honour and rewards at the judgment seat of Messiah—awaits. But now is the time to co-suffer and co-die with Jesus.”
- (2) Not all runners receive the prize (1 Co 9:24).
- (3) The Olympian games were organised and presided over by highly respected officers called *Hellenodikai*. After each event a herald announced the name of the victor, his father’s name, and his country, and the athlete would come and receive a palm branch at their hands (G. Glotz, ‘Hellenodikai,’ in C. Daremberg and E. Saglio [eds.], *Dictionnaire des antiqués grecques et romaines* (Paris: Hachette, 1900-1963) 3, 1, 60-64).
- (4) A crown of righteousness is laid up for those who finish the race of spiritual maturity (2 Ti 4:7-8).
- (a) **2 Ti 4:7-8** 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day...
- e. Paul’s charge to the Philippians is to share his mindset and not regress (vv. 15-16).
- (1) To be mature, we must think like Paul thinks (vv. 7-14; Php 1:21-24), and like Jesus thinks (Php 2:5-8). Thus Paul’s prayer in Php 1:9-11.
- (a) Some believers are mature; others are not (v. 15). See *Spiritual Maturity*.
- (b) Paul is not perfect (τέλειος)(v. 12), but he and some of the Philippians are mature (τέλειος)(v. 15).
- (2) Paul trusts God to reveal to the Philippians where their thinking errs (v. 15).
- (a) Though Paul uses the term “reveal” (ἀποκαλύπτω), he is not speaking of special revelation. What God will reveal to the Philippian believers is not equal to Scripture.
- (b) God counsels every believer through his word, his Spirit, and his people. Here the focus is on the counsel of the Spirit (Jn 14:16-17) through God’s word.
- (c) If we have ears to hear (Mt 11:15), God will reveal to us when our mindset opposes the mindset of Jesus and Paul.
- (3) Paul urges the Philippians not to regress in their spiritual advance (v. 16).
- (a) See *Verses on Spiritual Regress*.

- (b) “[T]he greatest need among God’s people is to live up to what they already have in Christ” (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:662).

6. Two Ways to Walk (Php 3:17-21).

- a. Paul’s charge to the Philippians is for them to imitate him and those like him (v. 17).
- (1) Paul is able to say, “Imitate me,” because he knows he’s on the right path.
 - (2) Jesus trail-blazed a path, Paul is on it, and now he beckons the Philippians to follow it. It is a trail of suffering and death (v. 10), but it leads to the heights (vv. 11, 14; Php 2:9) (i.e., *Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Hinds Feet in High Places*).
 - (a) **1 Co 11:1** 1 Be imitators of me [Paul], as I am of Messiah.
 - (3) In following Paul, we are following Jesus.
 - (a) Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped (Php 2:6); Paul counted his former gain to be loss (v. 7).
 - (b) Jesus was found in human likeness (Php 2:8); Paul is found in Jesus (v. 9).
 - (c) Jesus took the form of a servant (Php 2:7); now Paul is Jesus’ servant (Php 1:1).
 - (d) Jesus’ death was followed by exaltation (Php 2:9).
 - (e) Paul’s present suffering and even death (v. 10) will be followed by a glorious resurrection (vv. 11, 21).
 - (4) If we are truly mature, it is right for us to set up ourselves as an example for others to follow. Are you able to say, “imitate me”? What will it take for you to get to that point?
- b. The reason Paul wants the Philippians to walk after him is because many walk as enemies of Jesus’ cross (v. 18).
- (1) To walk (περιπατέω) means “to conduct one’s life, comport oneself, behave, live as habit of conduct...” (*BDAG*, 803).
 - (2) The enemies of Jesus’ cross are probably the dogs, the evil workers, and the mutilation of v. 2. He has often warned the Philippians about these Jewish legalists (vv. 1, 18).
 - (a) These enemies like Jesus, but they don’t like his cross.
 - (b) One must choose circumcision or the cross. They are mutually exclusive principles (Ga 6:12-15).
 - (c) The cross is sufficient for our justification in phase one, and it is to be our way of life in phase two.
 - a) Phase one: Ro 6:3-4; Ga 2:20.
 - b) Phase two: Mt 10:38.
 - (3) The characteristics of these enemies are greed and self-indulgence (v. 19).
 - (a) Their god is their belly.
 - a) **1 Co 6:13** 13 Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food—and God will destroy both one and the other.
 - (b) They glory in their shame.
 - a) **Eph 5:12** 12 ...It is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.
 - (c) They set their minds on earthly things (i.e., circumcision, dietary laws, and religious festivals).

- a) **Php 2:21** 21 For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Messiah.
 - b) **Col 3:2** 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.
- (4) The final end of the enemies is destruction (v. 19).
- (a) “This word (*apōleia*) does not mean annihilation but rather ruination by separation from the presence of God in eternal judgment” (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:662).
 - (b) **Php 1:28** 28 ...Not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction (*ἀπώλεια*), but of your salvation, and that from God.
- c. The final end of believers is total transformation by Jesus’ infinite power (vv. 20-21).
- (1) In phase one, every believer obtains a heavenly citizenship (v. 20).
- (a) Commonwealth (*πολίτευμα*) means “commonwealth, state” (*BDAG*, 845).
 - a) “The people of Philippi were living there as colonists while their citizenship was in Rome. Similarly Christians, while living on earth, have their citizenship elsewhere—in heaven” (R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:662).
 - b) “Just as Philippi was a colony of Rome, whose citizens thereby exemplified the life of Rome in the province of Macedonia, so the citizens of the ‘heavenly commonwealth’ were to function as a colony of heaven in that outpost of Rome” (G. D. Fee, *NICNT*, 379).
 - (b) **Php 1:27** 27 Only let your manner of life be worthy (*πολιτεύομαι*) of the gospel of Messiah....
- (2) The believer’s eager expectation is the coming of Jesus from heaven (v. 20).
- (a) Creation waits with eager longing for Jesus’s coming (Ro 8:19).
 - (b) We groan inwardly as we wait for the redemption of our bodies (Ro 8:23).
 - (c) We hope for what we do not see, waiting eagerly with patience (Ro 8:25).
 - (d) We wait eagerly for the revealing of Lord Jesus (1 Co 1:7).
 - (e) By faith we wait eagerly for the hope of righteousness (Ga 5:5).
 - (f) Jesus will appear a second time to save those waiting for him (Heb 9:28).
- (3) Jesus will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body (v. 21).
- (a) Our bodies will be transformed (v. 21).
 - a) To transform (*μετασχηματίζω*) means “to change the form of someth., *transform, change*” (*BDAG*, 641).
 - b) See *Resurrection*.
 - (b) Jesus will transform our bodies by his infinite power (v. 21).
 - a) See *Jesus’ Omnipotence*.
 - (c) Jesus has the power to subject all things to himself (v. 21).
 - a) See *Jesus’ Sovereignty*.

7. Application.

- a. Who will you imitate?
- b. Are you able to tell others to follow your example? What do you need to change in your life so that you are able to tell others to follow your example?
- c. Do you think there are people less worthy of God’s grace? Do you think there are people more worthy of God than others? Who in society do you tend to write off?

Notes

Exodus 22:31 31 “You shall be consecrated to me. Therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

The upward call of God (v. 14) equals the goal (v. 14), which equals spiritual maturity (vv. 12, 15), which involves: (1) knowing Jesus and the power of his resurrection (v. 10); (2) sharing Jesus’ sufferings (v. 10); and (3) becoming like Jesus in his death (v. 10).