

Study of Philippians 3 (ESV)

Finally, my brothers,^[a] rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

² Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God^[b] and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— 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:⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people 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 righteousness under the law,^[c] blameless.⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.¹³ Brothers, 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 prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature 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.

¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ 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.

Footnotes

- a. [Philippians 3:1](#) Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses [13](#), [17](#)
- b. [Philippians 3:3](#) Some manuscripts *God in spirit*
- c. [Philippians 3:6](#) Greek *in the law*

General Context

Paul is writing from prison to a church he planted in Philippi (Acts 16). He clearly has tremendous affection for this community. His writing makes plain that he anticipates/hopes he will be released from prison and will be able to visit the Philippians again. Philippi was a Roman colony located in Macedonia, part of present day Greece. The initial converts to Christianity in Philippi all seem to come from non-Jewish backgrounds.

Observation Questions

1. What do you notice & what questions do you have?
2. What repeated language do you see in the text? (“Things” and some lists stand out to me.)
3. Where does Paul describe his own mentality or mindset?
4. Where do you see warnings in this passage?
5. Where does this passage engage a “now and not yet” reality?

Interpretation Questions

1. Contrast those things that “were gain” to Paul with what he values now. Why might his perspective have shifted so drastically?
2. Why might Paul give so much attention to his attitude/mentality in this passage?
3. How are worshipping in the Spirit of God, glorying in Christ Jesus and putting no confidence in the flesh connected to each other?
4. How might the Philippians have understood the phrase “set their minds on earthly things” in verse 18-19?
5. How are Paul’s actions and attitude undergirded by God’s action in this passage?

Application Questions

1. What sort of things do we in the church today value that might be misplaced “confidence in the flesh?”
2. What aspects of Paul’s redeemed values and mentality are most encouraging to you? What are most challenging?
3. What do you most urgently want your students to “beware of” today?
4. How are you encouraged by the promises in verse 20-21?
5. How do you resonate with “gaining Christ” being Paul’s highest value?

Active Response

- Make your own “confidence in the flesh” list. Take time to repent and ask for a “verse 8” heart to know Christ.