

Philippians 3:1-6. *Matters of the flesh; matters of the spirit*. You've seen how the humility of the Christ exalts Him, and will exalt you. You've seen what we need to do in working together in harmony, to shine like stars in the universe. And you've seen the great examples Timothy and Epaphroditus provide us. Now, it's time to rejoice, to repeat my warnings to safeguard you. Here's the deal:



Watch out for those dogs—those evil men, those mutilators of the flesh. Make no mistake about it, **we** who worship by Holy Spirit, who glorify Christ Jesus, and put **no** confidence in the flesh—we are the circumcision.

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-6

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

²Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. ³For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—⁴though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

For the record, I have reasons for such confidence; and if anyone thinks they have more reasons for confidence in the flesh, I have more:

1. I was circumcised on the eighth day.
2. My roots are clear for I am from the tribe of Benjamin; I'm a Hebrew of Hebrews.
3. I am, in regard to the Law, a Pharisee; I take God's rules seriously.
4. Zealous? I persecuted the called out, the members of The Way.
5. And, finally, in terms of righteousness based following the law—I am faultless.

- Q Why would Paul call out "those men who do evil" as "dogs?" Why were dogs such an icon of "bad?"
- Q What was so "evil" about following the Law, as represented iconically by circumcision?
- Q We are "we the circumcision?" Three reasons!
- Q Why was Paul's Hebrew name? So?
- Q Why did he brag about his attributes as a follower of the Lord God Almighty?

Philippians 3:7-14. *False riches; new wealth*. What I used to think was profitable, I now consider loss for the sake of the Christ. In fact, I consider it all a loss compared to the unbelievable magnitude of knowing Christ Yeshua as my Sovereign. It is for His sake I have lost all things—things I now consider crap (σκύβαλα, 4657).



I left this crap behind so I might gain the Christ, to be found εν Him, not having righteousness based on my own understanding and compliance with the Law. My righteousness now comes from the Christ; i.e., my

trust in the Christ, a righteousness that comes from God Himself. I want to know (γινῶναι) the Christ, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship that comes only from sharing in His sufferings. I want to become like Him in death, and by doing so also attain resurrection when I die.

Again, make no mistake about it, I have not “arrived.” I have not obtained this, yet; nor already made perfect. But, I press on. To take hold, to take hold of Christ Jesus who took hold of me. Listen up, I do not consider myself there yet. But one thing I do know: I forget what is behind and focus on what is ahead. I press on, I press on to win the prize, the very prize for which God Almighty has called me to Him εν Christ Jesus.

- Q How is “knowing the Christ” more than knowing about the Christ? Tacit vs explicit knowledge.
- Q What do you have most trouble “giving up” to follow the Christ?
- Q What is the greatest source of in σκύβαλα your life? To what extent do you find Paul’s metaphoric comparison disturbing? Why?
- Q What is the source of our righteousness? Why we do we continue to revert “to the Law?”
- Q Given Paul’s declaration of his soteriological status, which do you find most endearing, most challenging, most exciting for you?

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of [the] Christ.⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain [the] Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in [the] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.¹⁰ I want to know [the] Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:15-21. *Spiritual maturity defined*. You might not recognize it now, but the Lord God will clarify for you what it means to press on, looking heavenward. Just let us live up to what we have already attained. Here's how...

Join others and follow my example; take note of those who live according to the teaching we gave you. This is critical for as I've often warned you, with tears in my eyes, there are many who live only to be enemies of the cross of the Christ. Yes, their destiny is destruction; their stomach is their deity, and their glory is their shame. When a mind is rife with earthly things, destruction is the destination.

Our citizenship, however, is in heaven. This earth is but a way station on our journey home. Furthermore, we eagerly await the Savior's return from heaven—the Lord Jesus the Christ. It is His very power that enables him to end chaos, to return to equilibrium, to end entropy. Even our lowly bodies will be like His glorified body.

- Q Why are there enemies of the cross of Christ? What motivates them to action, fear, and despair? How can this knowledge be used to lead them to the cross?
- Q About what sources of entropy should the Christ follower be most concerned?
- Q Why will we need/have a new body for citizenship in heaven?

PHILIPPIANS 3:15-21

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

¹⁷ Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

