

# To Die is Gain

## THE PATH TO JOY, A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

### LESSON 6 (3:1-16)

If any man had reason to have confidence in himself, Paul did. He was advantaged by birth and accomplished by choice. A Roman, a loyal Benjamite (1 Kings 12:21) and descendant of kings (1 Samuel 9:1-2), a Hebrew of Hebrews, the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), and a student of an eminent doctor of Jewish law, Paul was well-known and esteemed by those who thought themselves of some importance (Acts 9:14).

Of the strictest Pharisaical sect (Acts 26:5), Paul carried out his convictions with unwavering tenacity. *“Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, [he was] blameless”* (Philippians 3:6). Concerning zeal, he put forth every effort to persecute those who stood in opposition.

And yet, it all meant nothing.

*“I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ”* (Philippians 3:8, NKJV), Paul said. Thirty years before he penned these words to the Philippians, he was forced to see that his religious confidence was creating a *blindness* and a *roadblock* in his relationship with God (Acts 9:1-9). From that moment forward, Paul was unwilling to allow religious pride to keep Him, or the Philippians, from the only thing that mattered—Jesus Christ.

### READ PHILIPPIANS 3:1-6.

1. Why is repetitious instruction necessary?
2. Of who and what were the Philippians warned to watch for carefully? (v.2)
3. Using their slang, Paul refers harshly to the Judaizers. This sect consisted of Jewish converts who added works of the law to faith in Christ—for both salvation and Christian living. Viewing all Gentiles as dogs (unclean), the Judaizers believed that Gentiles must become Jews and live according to Mosaic customs and traditions in order to be true Christians.

(Examples include the keeping of dietary laws and rituals, such as circumcision, and the observance of feasts, etc.)

Although the movement has ceased, many Christians still impose law-keeping upon others as a requirement of salvation. Today, what “laws” are many Christians pressured to keep?

How does this prevent them from knowing Christ and/or experiencing joy in Him?

4. How can one’s religious standards or ways of life become a tool of comparison and a measure of righteousness? (v.3)
  
5. According to Deuteronomy 30:6, Romans 2:28-29, 9:6, Galatians 6:15, and Colossians 2:11, what is meant by Paul’s statement that “*we are the circumcision*”? What results when this occurs? (v.3)
  
6. In verse 3, the word *worship* means “to do divine service; to serve”. What is the difference between the Judaizers’ worship and worship that pleases God? (v.3)
  
7. Considering the threatening conflict in the Philippian church (2:2-4, 14), why might Paul be calling attention to “*confidence in the flesh*”?

## READ PHILIPPIANS 3:7-11.

8. Upon what things did Paul place great value and trust before he knew Christ? (vv.5-6)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Why are fleshly confidences the greatest hinderance to knowing and gaining more of Christ?

Warren Wiersbe said, “Paul had enough morality to keep him out of trouble, but not enough righteousness to get him into heaven. It was not the bad things that kept him out of heaven—it was the good things!”<sup>i</sup> (Consider Luke 18:9-14.)

10. “Have you ever placed your confidence in something, thinking it would bring you closer to God?”<sup>ii</sup> Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Describe Paul’s efforts to uphold what he believed was right. (See also Acts 8:1-3, 9:1-2, 13-14, 22:3-5, 26:10-11.)

What does this teach us about misplaced ambitions?

12. Ironically, Paul’s confidences had created blindness and a roadblock in his relationship with God. (Read of his conversion in Acts 9:1-9.) Why was he able to say that all things were “*rubbish*” in light of knowing Christ?

13. Although Paul addressed the Judaizers, how might the Philippians who had exalted themselves, acting with selfish ambition and conceit, have heard Paul's words (vv.3-4, 14)?

14. Why *should* Paul's statement in verse 9 of Philippians 3, settle the disputes among the Philippian believers?

15. What is the difference in having knowledge of Christ and knowing Him? (v.10)

16. Paul was willing to suffer because he had experienced its results. Read Acts 9:15-16 and 22:14-15. What resulted on account of Paul's suffering?

Does this bring your willingness to experience greater intimacy with Christ into question? If so, why?

NOW READ PHILIPPIANS 3, VERSES 12-16.

17. Paul's conformation to Christ's death was occurring inwardly (v.10). It speaks of a continual cutting off from his former sinful ways by daily being set-apart from sin and living his life in Christ's power (Romans 6:11-14, Colossians 3:3).<sup>iii</sup> What does verse 12 communicate about Paul's condition and his dissatisfaction with it?

18. Considering Paul's predicament, what reasons did he have to cease striving to know Christ more and carry out his calling?

19. What causes many believers to "cease reaching"?

20. Read Luke 9:62. How can the "*things which are behind*" (successes and losses, etc.) serve as a hindrance to progression in Christ?

What are we to do instead? (Philippians 3:13)

21. To *reach forward* is "to exert every effort or energy to the utmost; conceived of as stretching out to full length". It conveys vigorous striving and ambition. Why mustn't the Philippians (we) be satisfied with their past efforts or compare their present efforts and progress with others'? Read 1 Corinthians 9:24.

22. What prize is Paul after? (v.14) As believers, how can our goals be a gauge of our present maturity? (v.15)

23. In what ways is Philippians 3:16 an exhortation *not* to digress?

24. Paul exhorts the Philippians to “*walk by the same rule... [and] be of the same mind*” (v.16)—  
“to agree on a position, to fall in line, to be in proper battle formation with other soldiers.”  
How does the sole pursuit of Christ, and the forsaking of religiosity, enable believers to walk in unity?

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<sup>i</sup> Wiersbe, W. (2001). *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament* (Vol. 2, p.84). Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications.

<sup>ii</sup> Author Unknown. Philippians: Jesus Our Joy.

<sup>iii</sup> Lightner, R. P. (1985). *Philippians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 661). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.