



~ Zoom Bible Study ~

# TO LIVE IS CHRIST: A STUDY IN PHILIPPIANS

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## Lesson Three – Philippians 3

### Philippians 3:1 – 2:

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.<sup>2</sup> Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

*Rejoicing in the Lord* is often simply a decision you make: *Today I will find my joy in the Lord. Regardless of what's going on, regardless of what people do, I will choose to be joyful on the inside.*

How do you resist the tendency to complain? How do you resist the tendency to feel sorry for yourself?

Remember that the Gospel of Jesus Christ went first to the Jews –

- **Acts 3:26:** “When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”
- **Romans 1:16:** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

The Jewish believers at that time thought they were the favored few, and then the Apostle informs them that he is called to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles:

**Acts 22:21:** “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

How do people today try to add to the Gospel—or try to change the Gospel—by adding works? Why is it so much easier for people to believe they can secure their salvation through their own works?

### Philippians 3:3 - 11

<sup>3</sup>For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup>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: <sup>5</sup>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; <sup>6</sup>as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup>But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>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 <sup>9</sup>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— <sup>10</sup>that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Paul talks about his past, when he thought he could be approved by God through his own good works, his own righteousness. Remember:

- He was taught by Gamaliel, the great Rabbi. (**Acts 22:3**: “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today”).
- He was “climbing the Jewish leadership ladder,” with a promising future (**Galatians 1:13 – 14**: For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup>I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.)

If anyone knows that you can “put no confidence in the flesh,” Paul does.

When Paul finally met Messiah Jesus on the road to Damascus, he saw himself for the first time—the way God saw him. And then he became a follower of Jesus Christ.

Paul talks about two kinds of righteousness:

- The kind that comes by obeying the Law
- The kind that comes through faith in Jesus Christ

**Romans 8:3**: For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh...

Paul was changed by his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, but that was just the beginning! Now more than anything he wants to know Christ better and better. A. W. Tozer put it this way:

*To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too easily satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart. St. Bernard stated this holy paradox in a musical quatrain that will be instantly understood by every worshiping soul:*

*We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread  
And long to feast upon Thee still:  
We drink Thee, the Fountainhead,  
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.*

**Psalms 27:8**: My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, Lord, I will seek.

But the apostle does not stop at simply knowing Christ; instead, he also adds another phrase: *and the power of his resurrection*. What is the power of Christ's resurrection?

**Romans 8:11**: And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

This power is not just for a few; it is for all believers. God has a purpose and calling for every believer, and in order to do what he has called you to do, it will require the “power of his resurrection.”

Philippians 3:10 goes on to say: and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death – We might be tempted to skip this part of the verse. Who wants to share in the sufferings of Jesus and become like him in his death? And what does that mean?

**Romans 5:3:** Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance...

**Romans 8:17-18:** Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

**1 Peter 4:12 – 13:** Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Our joy in the midst of suffering is that we (like the apostles) are “counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (Acts 5:41).

**Philippians 3:12 – 16:**

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, 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, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> All of us, then, 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. <sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Paul is not talking about running a race to gain salvation. He was not telling us how to be saved. He’s explaining what the Christian journey is like once we’ve been made new creations in Christ.

When did Christ “take hold of you”? That’s where the race, the journey, begins.

In order to press on, the Apostle says that there is one thing that is necessary, and that is to forget what is behind. To forget does not mean that you fail to remember. It means that you are no longer influenced by or affected by what you can no longer change.

Think of what the Apostle had to put behind him:

- He had persecuted believers for years, causing death and harm to many.
- He had suffered rejection from his Jewish brothers, from religious leaders, from the government of Rome.
- He had gone through many troubles and trials; friends had betrayed him; he had suffered much.

Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28).

Are you pressing forward for the prize ahead of you, or are you stuck in the past?

What can make us satisfied with where we are, instead of pressing on for what God has for us in the future?

Then Paul reminds them to live up to what God has given them to do.

**Philippians 3:17 – 21**

<sup>17</sup> Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. <sup>18</sup> For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> 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.

Paul is in jail, and yet he says “follow my example.” So, regardless of his circumstances, he lives as an example to others. Anyone who takes away from the finished work of the Cross is an enemy of the cross. Do we have those kind of enemies of the cross today?

Then he says that their god is their appetite, they glory in things that are shameful, their minds are totally concerned about earthly things. What do you think Paul is referring to when he says “their god is their stomach”? What might these “earthly things be?”

Then he urges us to remember that our citizenship is in Heaven. This means we live in a foreign land, with a foreign language, a foreign lifestyle, a foreign culture. And we can rejoice in this midst of this foreign land because we are eagerly awaiting a Savior. He will bring everything under his control.

If you have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ, you have a hope and a future. You have a Savior who is coming back again and you will be given a new body, like his body.

Hang onto this truth—whatever you’re going through, whatever your heartache. We have this glorious hope.

**Titus 2:11 14:** For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. <sup>12</sup>It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup>who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.