



# WELCOME TO BIBLE HOUSE OF GRACE

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## Philippians 3

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Philippians 3.

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### Topics.

- Look out for dogs and those who mutilate the flesh.
- Putting no confidence in the flesh.
- Blameless under the law.
- Jesus is, God's gift of grace.
- Sharing in Christ's suffering.
- Christ Jesus has made me his own.
- We await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The previous chapter:** in the previous chapter Paul told the Philippians to be of the same mind and of the same love counting others as more significant than themselves. He talked of Christ though being in the form of God did not consider himself equal with God, of a name above every name and of every knee bowing at the name of Jesus. He told them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling and to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation seeking the interest of Jesus.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### PHILIPPIANS 3:1-2

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### Look out for Dogs, Evildoers and those who Mutilate the Flesh.

- **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.

The words, "To write the same things" links back to chapter one and two where Paul spoke of some proclaiming the Gospel out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict Paul while he was in prison and others who were seeking their own interests and not those of Jesus Christ (Philip. 1:17) (Philip. 2:21). Now in this chapter Paul warns the Philippians to, look out for the following three groups of people:

- The dogs.
- The evildoers.
- Those who mutilate the flesh.

**Dogs in the ancient East:** were mostly without masters; they wandered at large in the streets and fields, and feed upon offal and even upon corpses (1 Kings 14:11) (1 Kings 16:4) (1 Kings 14:21:19). They were considered as unclean, and to call a person a dog was a much stronger expression of contempt there than with us (1 Sam. 17:43) (2 Kings 8:13). The Jews called pagans dogs, and Muslims call Jews and Christians by the same name.

**During the Roman age:** it was a common custom for a dog to lie chained before the door of a house and for a notice nailed nearby saying beware of the dog for all to see. In oriental towns most dogs had no owners and were lean, hungry and a sinister brood that combined into gangs, each of which assumed territorial jurisdiction over a particular street. They would

attack with the utmost ferocity any canine intruders who entered their territory making it difficult and often dangerous to walk amongst them especially during the night. They would keep up an incessant barking and howling in the streets (Psalm 59:6), such as is rarely ever heard in any modern European city.

**Dogs were considered as unclean animals;** (Matt. 7:6) (Matt. 15:26) so much so that the Israelites were forbidden in Deuteronomy to bring the price of a dog into the house of God for any vow offering (Deut. 23:18). They were used to denote what was unholy and profane (Psalm 22:16) (Rev. 22:15). It was a term of reproach among both Greeks and the Jews. Paul uses it to denote the judaizers wrangling with the apostles, snarling at their doctrines, and biting them with the devouring words of reproach and scandal. Likewise, they may be styled dogs for their covetousness, being such greedy ones as in (Isaiah 56:10) with feigned words making merchandise of men; and for their love of their, bellies, which they served and not Christ since their mind was set on earthly things (Philip. 3:19).

**The dogs in this context;** refer to the Judaizers who were a well-known party that appeared quite early in the history of the church, and are referred to in (Acts 15:1). They were nominal Christians who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but as the Saviour of Israel only. They insisted that Christ's Kingdom could only be entered through the door of Judaism and taught that only circumcised converts were fully accepted by God. Paul was the object of their special hatred and abuse. They challenged his birth, his authority, and his motives. Their watchword and cry were, "Paul and all who oppose Judaism must be destroyed." This no-doubt is one of the reasons Paul refers to them with such strong language. It is most fitting that Paul called the judaizers dogs, since they like dogs forsook the Gospel and returned to Judaism, as a dog returns to its own vomit (2 Peter 2:22).

**The evildoers:** since dogs are also used by Jews and Gentiles alike to denote a person that is shameless, impudent, malignant, snarling, dissatisfied, and contentious, troublesome, dissatisfied, and to those who produce disturbances and divisions the term evil-doers no-doubt also refers to the judaizers but also embraces any religious leader who brings brothers and sisters back under the law and trusting in self-effort and adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be saved and to anyone who lives a lifestyle of wickedness.

**Those who mutilate the flesh:** the expression, "Those who mutilate the flesh" (v2) refers to the act of circumcision, but it should be noted that Paul is not using such strong language against the act of circumcision because it was a bad thing since this could never be the case because God commanded Abraham's descendants to be circumcised as a sign of His covenant with Israel. The reason that Paul now refers to circumcision as "mutilating the flesh" is because the Jews rather than seeing it as a sign of God's covenant with them had made it a legalistic dogmatic law that without being circumcised no-one could be saved (Acts 15:1). This teaching not only nullifies what Christ achieved on the cross, but makes his death count for nothing.

Added to this whoever trusts in any form of law or self-effort to be counted righteous separates themselves from Christ thus the reason Paul used such strong language against those who were imposing not only circumcision, but also Jewish ceremonies and religious customs and traditions upon the Gentiles as necessary to be saved to eternal life. The strong language that Paul uses in this letter clearly shows the sense he had of the danger arising from the influence these legalistic Jewish teachers were having.

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## PHILIPPIANS 3:3-6

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**We are the Real Circumcision.**

- **Philippians 3:3-6:** For we are the real 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.

The following verses show how strongly Paul was against those who would impose circumcision upon Christian converts.

- No one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. (Rom. 2:28).
- A Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. (Rom. 2:29).
- In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ. (Col. 2:11).
- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands. (Ephes. 2:11).
- I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! (Gal. 5:12).

Circumcision in the Jewish mind was without doubt deemed to be one of the highest standards of righteousness since they believed that an uncircumcised person was separated from God and therefore unclean. Because of this mindset no religious Jew (especially those in high position of leadership) would willingly put themselves in the company of an uncircumcised person since they considered them to be unclean. The reason the Jewish nation held circumcision in such high regard was because God made the following covenant with Abraham and his offspring saying:

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- Every male among you shall be circumcised and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised it shall be an everlasting covenant and any male who is not circumcised shall be cut off from Israel because he has broken my covenant (Gen. 17:10-14) (Gen. 17:23-27).

**NOTICE:** circumcision was a sign they were God's people and not a guarantee of salvation. We know this because Paul tells the Roman church that:

- Faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness before he had been circumcised. Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he already had by faith while he was still uncircumcised so that God could make Abraham the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to the uncircumcised as well, to the circumcised who also walk in the footsteps of the faith Abraham had before he was circumcised (Rom. 4:9-12).

Nevertheless though circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Israel many in the Jewish faith had turned it into the means of salvation (i.e., as long as they were circumcised they were right with God), thus the reason for the lack of the fruits of the Spirit amongst many of the religious rulers of Jesus and Paul's generations.

**One of Paul's greatest battles:** throughout Paul's ministry circumcision was a re-occurring thorn to the Gospel amongst the Jewish brothers. The problem Paul faced was not that these Jewish brothers didn't believe in Christ, but that they denied grace to be saved. This is why these Jewish brothers were so deceptive, it is most likely they taught the promises of Abraham, that Jesus was the Son of God and the death and resurrection of Christ, but lacked insight into God's saving grace and that it is our faith that God counts as righteousness and not in the act of circumcision or any form of self-effort in keeping religious holy days, ceremonial practices or religious habits and traditions.

**The real circumcision:** Paul tells the Philippians that those who are of the real circumcision are those who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh (v3)

**Glory:** in this context in this context it carries the idea of boasting and rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ for our righteousness in contrast to boasting in our own self-righteousness, abilities and self-effort or religious works and practises.

**Worship by the Spirit of God:** means to worship in truth as opposed to worshipping in hypocrisy and pretence as the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes were doing in Jesus era.

**Putting no confidence in the flesh:** means, not relying on the law, good deeds and works to earn salvation it means that we do not trust in anything we can do to be saved, but solely rely on the righteousness God imputes to us because of our faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. It means that our heart, mind, intellect and emotions are totally surrendered to God's foreordained and eternal plan of salvation in Christ contrasted to trusting in anything we may do or be doing no matter how good it maybe. The following verses clearly show that righteousness that leads to eternal salvation is a pure and free gift from God:

- Now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law (Rom. 3:21).
- Faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness (Rom. 4:9).
- Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well (Rom. 4:11).
- The free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one-man Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17) (See also Romans 5:15-16).
- The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23).
- By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

These verses clearly show that faith was counted to Abraham (the father of faith) as righteousness and received by him prior to him being circumcision and that grace; righteousness and eternal life are a free gift and has absolutely nothing to do with the law.

**NOTE:** though brothers and sisters in Christ are not saved by the law they should nevertheless aim to live by it, but not to earn salvation, but because living a law abiding lifestyle and one that is worthy of the Lord is not only honours God, but also brings a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. Added to this is the obvious fact that it is the just, right, good and loving thing to do. The law is splendid as a guide to understanding God's will, but as a means of reunion with God, the God we have sinned against, it is a hopeless failure nevertheless both law and grace go together, the law without the Gospel is diagnosis without remedy, but the Gospel without law is only the Good News of salvation for people who don't believe they need it because they have never heard the bad news of judgment, the law is not the Gospel, but the Gospel is not lawless (Rom. 3:19-20) (Eph. 2:13-22).

**Paul had good reason for confidence in the flesh:** this statement of Paul's is directed primarily at the Jews who were trusting in their own religious works for righteousness, but what Paul is saying can be applied to everyone who trusts in self-effort and strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life. Paul is highlighting the truth to everyone who thinks they have good reason to put their confidence in the flesh (self-effort) to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life that they

are in fact trusting in their own self-righteousness and then uses his own testimony to show that no one can be saved by self-effort. He does this by telling the Philippians if anyone could attain to righteousness by their own self-effort, he would have far more reason than most to be fully confident of being counted righteous since under the law he would more than qualify (v4) for the following reasons:

- He was passionate and zealous for God and the works he did for God while under the law.
- Circumcised on the eighth day and belonged to the people of Israel.
- From the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee and a dedicated Hebrew.
- A scholar of the law, zealous for the law and for God.
- A persecutor of the church and righteousness according to the law.

**Blameless under the law:** in Romans chapter seven Paul says, when he looks inwardly at his thoughts, the intents of his heart, his attitudes and motives he cannot be counted as righteous before God which shows us that when Paul said, "As to righteousness, under the law he was blameless" (v6), he did not have in mind the inward intents, thoughts, and motives of his heart, but rather that he is blameless according to the outward actions of the law. The words, "Righteousness that comes by the law" (Philip. 3:9) refer to those things a person can do themselves (i.e., keeping Moses laws of purification, religious Jewish customs and traditions etc.). According to the Pharisees if a person outwardly kept the religious practises the law required they were counted righteous by the law and therefore righteous by God regardless of their inward attitudes and motives of the heart.

This is why Paul was able to say that "According to the outward actions the law required he was could be counted as righteous" because he outwardly did what the law required. It is in this sense Paul could say, "According to the law he was blameless," but Paul is using his testimony of law keeping to show the Philippian brothers and sisters and by extension all of us that just because a person keeps all the outward religious laws, customs and traditions it does not mean that God counts them as righteous. This is because a person can be in the ministry, wearing the holy robes, keeping every Sabbath and doing all the outward religious rites in minute detail, but be corrupt on the inside, or serving their own selfish ambition and not God as were the chief priest, Pharisees and scribes of Jesus era. They outwardly and dogmatically wore the holy robes and followed Moses law in legalistic detail, but Jesus said of them:

- Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:25-28).

The Pharisee were rulers of the Jews who professed to be more religious than the rest, they explained the laws of Moses more precisely with the goal of bringing the people to a similar conformity. During their religious rule over the nation of Israel they made the following three contributions to Judaism so that ultimately Pharisaism and Judaism became almost synonymous.

1. The first was Jewish legalism.
2. The second was that they formalised the religion of the Jewish scribes and placed it into practice.
3. The third was the development and organisation of the Jewish religion itself.

The Pharisee and scribes based their righteousness upon keeping ceremonial rites, holy days, Moses laws of purifications and religious customs and traditions. They believed they were right with God because they were descendants of Abraham and because they strictly adhered to religious rules and customs and because of this mindset they were, not only self-righteous and full of pride and hypocrisy, but also lacked compassion and mercy toward those seeking God (especially the Gentiles) who they considered inferior to themselves. This is why Jesus made the statement; "No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless their righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees."

**NOTE:** trusting in Moses laws of purification and Jewish religious customs and traditions is not going to be a problem to Gentile Christians in the west, but trusting in outward works is not limited to trusting only in Jewish laws, it embraces any other thing we might do (i.e., regular church attendance, being a faithful leader, reading our Bible daily or being committed to a ministry etc.), that we trust in for our salvation other than Christ alone. Though these are good in themselves and may bring eternal rewards they have no power to save us to eternal life.

**Jesus is, God's gift of grace:** the following words of Paul show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ. Paul in his letters wrote:

- I do not nullify the *GRACE* of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort, they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value.

Equally as horrific as this Paul states:

- When we forsake *GRACE* we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by *GRACE* that God made us alive in Christ (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5).

Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that:

- It is only by *GRACE* that any brother or sister has been saved (Eph. 2:8).

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. This means in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and Faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them. This is the reason Paul is warning the Philippian brothers and sisters and by extension all of us not to put any confidence in the flesh to save us to eternal life and the reason the author in the book of Hebrews spends so many chapters brilliantly and skilfully explaining to the Hebrews that they must stop their sin of trusting in religious works, the Levitical Law and their priesthood to be counted righteous before God and start trusting in the grace of God that is in Christ and in his righteousness to be saved to eternal life. By extension this means that Christians must stop trusting in strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be saved. Though the practise of some of these maybe good in themselves they become grossly sinful when believers trust in them for their salvation since not one of them has any power to save to eternal life.

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### PHILIPPIANS 3:7-8

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**Whatever Gain I had, I Counted as Loss for the Sake of Christ.**



- **Philippians 3:7-8:** 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.

The gain Paul had was everything the flesh, (self, ego and pride etc.,) desires. He was a son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) of the strictest party of his religion (Acts 26:5) and a Hebrew of Hebrews (Philip 3:5) and as such had enormous authority and power over many; he was no-doubt a man who his peers esteemed as a man of great stature and importance. Being a head Pharisee Paul would not be lacking in financial wealth and would certainly have mixed with many influential people in high positions of authority and influence yet Paul considered all this power, wealth and importance as nothing compared to knowing Christ. These verses are absolutely fabulous since they shine an enormously bright floodlight on the fact that it was not intellectual knowledge that Paul willingly gave everything up for, but knowing Christ. Paul suffered for the Gospel not to gain more head knowledge, but to gain Christ.

This gives us insight into the beauty and wonder of the Gospel since it shows that contained within it is something that far surpasses head knowledge, something that is so wonderful and so fulfilling people like Paul who know it are willing to lay everything aside to seek after it and possess it. There is nothing in this world that equals it, neither is there another religious faith that can compare to it. Its seed penetrates deep into the heart of those who surrender to it and it grows in good soil through the storms of life until it blossoms into the brightest and most radiant flower in the garden. Like a pure fountain of crystal-clear water, it floods the life and heart of those who know it to overflowing with its hidden joys of love, contentment and hope. Paul found that this glory that is contained within the Gospel of Christ was so overwhelmingly breathtaking that it by far surpassed head knowledge and so fulfilling that he willingly and gladly gave up all the glory he had in this world to know the one the Gospel freely invites sinners to.

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## PHILIPPIANS 3:9-11

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### Paul Desired to Be Found in Christ.

- **Philippians 3:9-11:** 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.

It is interesting to notice that the greatest desire and passion of Paul was not to increase in head knowledge but, "To be found in Christ" (v9) means that Paul's sole focus and heart felt passion was to be accepted by the Lord when he returns in glory at the last trumpet of God as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

### The expression "In Christ" carries the idea that:

- We fully belong to Christ.
- We are together and in union with Christ.
- We are in full agreement with Christ and sharing in his divine nature.
- We are by faith in a new race that Christ is the head of. Prior to this we were in the old race of which Adam is the head of. We could say we were in Adam's race and in Adam, but we are now in Christ and in Christ's race.



**Being in Christ also means:** that our heart and mind is full of love, compassion, mercy, kindness and forgiveness etc., (not only toward our brothers and sisters in the Lord, but also toward those outside the Kingdom of God) and that God's will, God's eternal plan, God's love, His purposes and promise are engraved in our hearts and our minds and that the Lord Jesus Christ is our greatest love and our greatest desire.

**NOTE:** any person we deeply love and worship can be formed in us. Every married person who has ever experienced self-sacrificing, compassionate and supporting love will have experienced the one they loved being formed in their heart their mind and their emotions. When someone loses a spouse, family member or friend they have been close to for many years and loved deeply the presence of that person will remain as a real entity in their mind and heart. For some it will be to the end of their lives while for others it will dissipate over time (depending on the depth of love and the length of time they have loved) for others though the memory will remain the spiritual presence will pass when new love blossoms.

**Christ in you:** (and a young girl) the following is a true story and a good example of a person being in the heart of another. An eight-year old disabled girl, whose best friend was her mother was doing her first live stage show. The mother loved her daughter but could not be at the opening show as she was in hospital with terminal cancer. A television reporter asked the young girl if she would be sad and miss her mother at the opening of the show. The small girl with tears in her eyes said, "Yes I will miss her, but she will be in my heart where she belongs." Love for a person creates the reality or presence of that person in the human heart. This presence is in direct proportion to the love (i.e., the greater the love the greater the presence). A Christian knows that God and Jesus love them by looking at the bloodstained cross. Whenever we doubt God's love all we have to do is look back to the cross and see what it cost the Father to save us and how much his Son suffered so that we could have put upon us a royal crown and majestic robe of righteousness apart from the law and works and not only be justified by faith, but granted eternal life in everlasting glory and remember that God showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8)

**Not having a righteousness of my own:** the following majestic words of Paul are the Good News and the very heart of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ:

- 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."

There was absolutely no-doubt in Paul's mind that to be found in Christ and accepted by him had nothing to do with law keeping or self-effort to attain to righteousness that leads to eternal life, but was solely dependent on the righteousness that comes from God and through faith in Christ. This is because righteousness that is attained by the law only deals with outward actions and not the inward nature. The Pharisees, chief priest and scribes outwardly kept the law in the smallest detail, so in that sense under the law they were righteous, but inwardly Jesus said of them:

- Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness (Matt. 23:23-27).

Though most brothers and sisters in the Christian faith are not like the scribes and Pharisees nevertheless we do all live in a corrupt fallen body that is not only tainted with self, ego and pride, but also infected with sinful dysfunction and aberrations such as jealousies, anger, coveting, lustful thoughts, greed and selfish desires etc., which means not one of us can stand before the Holiness of God and boast we are without sin and pure before him. In fact, John in his letter tells us:

- If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, but if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

Paul was very aware of the fallen nature he had inherited from Adam the earthly father of us all, thus the reason he is so passionate and zealous for the Gospel since it proclaims everyone can be righteous before God and saved to eternal life despite the inward sinful and corrupt nature we have all inherited from our earthly father Adam. This is why Paul so strongly states that he was not trusting in the righteousness he might outwardly attain to by self-effort in keeping the law and ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions, but rather by being fully dependent on God's righteous that comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**That I may know Christ and the power of his resurrection** (v10) these words link back to Paul's statement that he was trusting in Christ for righteousness and not in, law keeping. These words of Paul shine a brilliant spotlight on the following two majestic truths:

1. The only way for any brother or sister in Christ to know the LORD is not through trusting in their own self-effort to attain to the perfection of the laws standard of Holiness, but by being surrendered to God's eternal plan of salvation and fully trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to be counted as righteous by God.
2. That the only way anyone is going to attain to the resurrection from the dead is to fully trust in Christ for righteousness that leads to eternal life and is acceptable to God in contrast to trusting in self-effort and religious works, rites, customs and traditions etc.

**Sharing in Christ's suffering:** (v10) Paul's statement, "That I may share in Christ's sufferings" embraces any persecution or hardship a brother or sister in Christ may suffer because of their faith in the Lord, for some it maybe physical pain or prison, for others it maybe, financial loss or rejection by family members and friends. Whenever a brother or sister in Christ witnesses or does-good in Christ's name and it brings any form of suffering or hurt physically, financially, emotionally or mentally they are by their suffering sharing in the sufferings of Christ. This is because the suffering is a result of their faith in Christ, should they deny the Lord all their suffering would instantly vanish like a vapour in the wind.

**Becoming like Christ in his death:** Paul's earnest desire to become like Christ in his death (v10) carries the following two thoughts:

1. Paul's inward and earnest passion to live a lifestyle that honoured Christ's heavenly Father. Paul knowing that he could not attain to the perfection he desired beautifully expresses the heartfelt inward passion of his mind and heart and his attitude toward life in the following words:
  - Not that I have already obtained this *or am already perfect*, I do not consider that I have made perfection my own, but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (v12-14).
2. Paul desired to be raised as Christ was (i.e., to be clothed with an immortal body and raised to eternal life and everlasting glory).

**That I may attain to the resurrection from the dead:** (v11) these words, do not mean that Paul has doubts about being accepted by Christ. If this was the case everything he has taught about faith and God's grace would be nullified and worse still if Paul the author of most of the New Testament and who suffered far more for Christ than most in the Christian faith are ever called to do had doubts about being saved how can any of us ever be expected to trust in the Lord and in God's grace. The verse carries the following two dominant thoughts:

- 1 Paul was going to do whatever he had to no-matter what it cost or how much suffering it meant to attain to the resurrection. Meaning no-matter what hardships and troubles came his way he was not going to give up his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2 Paul had taught the Corinthian brothers and sisters that:
  - If anyone builds on the foundation (the Lord Jesus Christ) with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, they will receive a reward, but if anyone's work is burned up, they will suffer loss, though they themselves will be saved, but only as through fire” (1 Cor. 3:12-15)

This shows that Paul was very aware that not everyone was going to be counted a worthy and honourable servant. Thus the statement, “That by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” also carries the idea that Paul will not only do everything possible to honour God, but will also willing suffers loss so that he will be found by Christ to have been a worthy servant of the Lord’s at the resurrection of the dead as opposed to feeling ashamed.

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### PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

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#### **Christ Jesus has made me his Own.**

- **Philippians 3:12-16:** 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. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining (reaching forth in KJV) forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. <sup>16</sup>Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

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**Obtained:** carries the idea of meeting or arriving at a desired goal.

**Straining:** carries the idea of stretching oneself forward and reaching forth.

This attitude of Paul should be made the stronghold of every brother and sister in Christ and not only be made the wallpaper of our mind but be spiritually engraved into every cell of our being. Following are two reasons for this statement:

1. Not one of us can stand before the Holiness of God and boast we are without sin in fact if we do it shows that we do not understand the Scriptures or the Good News of the Gospel since John tells us, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).
- 2 Though those who long to honour God never give up the pursuit of perfection they are always aware that they have not obtained it and for some brothers and sisters in Christ the mental torment and condemnation of failing to live up to the holy standard of the law robs them from the joy of being in Christ and even worse can result in falling away from the faith since for them the high calling in Christ Jesus seems impossible.

This is why the attitude Paul expresses is so majestically beautiful, instead of being trodden under foot and defeated by our sinful aberrations and dysfunctions we not only put them behind us, but forget them and continue to move forward with our mind and our eyes firmly set on the prize of eternal life and everlasting glory. Paul’s statement is even more

magnificent when we consider that the purpose of the law is to bring us to this place of hopelessness in attaining to its perfect standard of holiness so that we will trust solely upon the Lord Jesus Christ for our righteousness that leads to eternal life and not our own self-effort or religious rites, customs and traditions.

**Christ Jesus has made me his own:** what awe-inspiring, stunning and comforting words, "Christ Jesus has made me his own" (v12) especially when one stops to consider that these words of Paul do not only apply to him alone, but to every brother and sister in Christ. It means that Jesus has made whoever accepts the Gospel his own. Paul's motivation to serve and suffer for the Lord was motivated by the following three great passions:

1. Jesus had made him his own, Paul was fully aware that Christ loved him as an elder brother loves their younger sibling.
2. God's promise of an immortal body, eternal life and everlasting glory.
3. He saw those in the world not only as already dead and separated from God, but destined to eternal death and from this mindset and knowing the love and grace of God himself earnestly desired to translate those in the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light and save them to eternal life and everlasting glory.

**The upward call of God in Christ Jesus:** the Christian faith is called an upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (v14) for two reasons:

1. God the Creator and heavenly Father reaches down to the lowest of the sons of Adam and lifts them from the depth of sin to the highest heights in the eternal heavens.
2. Every sinner saved begins as a spiritual infant full of worldly desires, past baggage, hurts and false teachings and all sorts of fruits of the flesh (i.e., selfish ambition, ego, pride, jealousies, anger sinful passions and greedy desires etc.), but as they grow in the love of Christ these things slowly fall away and are replaced with the things that bring a good testimony to the name of Christ, thus the reason the Christian faith is called an "upward call."

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**Let the mature think this way:** the word perfect (in the KJV) or mature (in the ESV) in the following verse, "Let those of us who are mature/perfect think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you" (v15) can hardly be supposed to mean that Paul is addressing them as already being perfect, when he had just said of himself that he had not attained to the state of perfection himself (v12), but rather that those who he is writing to might be aiming at perfection. The word, perfect/mature here is used in the same sense in which Paul uses it in his letter to the Corinthians when he told them, "Not to be children in their thinking or infants in resisting wickedness but in their thinking to be mature" (1 Cor. 14:20) meaning they should be thoroughly instructed and deeply experienced in Christian knowledge and godly behaviour. It means, "Having the wisdom of God contrasted to the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor. 2:6) and carries the idea of being of full age, able to discern what is right and what is not in any given situation or circumstance (Heb. 5:14). Being perfect/mature in this context is being humble and filled with the fruits of the Spirit doing all that is in our power to uphold the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ contrasted to being prideful (exalting others and self) and causing quarrels, contentions, strife and divisions.

**If you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you:** (v15) Paul is saying to those amongst his listeners that have not yet grown in the fruits of the Spirit or the full glory and grace of the Gospel and to those who still had doubts regarding the Gospel or were still holding fast to Jewish law and customs to be saved that God would reveal even these things to them while they are honest and sincere in their seeking after him.

**Hold true to what you have attained:** (v16) shows that Paul understands that every brother and sister in the Lord will be at different levels of intellectual understanding and at different levels of developing the fruits of the Spirit and that on our spiritual journey in growing in the Lord and the fruits of the Spirit we should not condemn ourselves by what we lack, but focus on and hold fast to what we have achieved and keep our eyes fixed on the eternal prize at the end of our spiritual journey in Christ.

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## PHILIPPIANS 3:17-20

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### Paul tells his Followers to Imitate Him.

- **Philippians 3:17-20:** Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup>For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup>Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup>But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a fantastic testimony Paul has; to be able to say to other brothers and sisters in Christ, "Imitate me," meaning behave in the same manner as I and those ministering with me do, this is the testimony we should all earnestly desire and seek after.

**NOTICE:** when Paul talks of those who are enemies of Christ, he does not speak mockingly of them but, with tears in his eyes. How different is this to many in the faith today who not only mock those who are against Christ but speak in a demeaning and degrading manner of them. Paul knowing that the eternal destination of those who denied Christ was destruction (meaning eternal death) felt a sorrow toward them because he had a true shepherd's heart and was motivated only by the love of Christ who laid his life down for the world. Love never mocks and therefore Paul's attitude toward those who were lost or deceived by false religious teachers was one of love and an eager passion to rescue them to eternal life. In fact, the only people the apostles and Jesus himself spoke against were the hypocritical religious leaders who were in the ministry for their own selfish gain, but even then, they did not speak against them with mocking words, but rather strongly rebuked them to their faces and not behind their backs.

**Our citizenship is in heaven:** (v20) carries the following two ideas:

1. Our minds are set on the things that honour God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ it carries the idea of being humble and filled with the fruits of the Spirit in contrast to being driven by pride and ego and having our minds set on earthly and worldly things that would offend God and bring a bad testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith.
2. Whoever is in Christ does not belong to this world, but to God's Kingdom. The world they live in with all its corruptions is not their home. Every faithful brother and sister is at this present time living as a foreigner amongst the world since they are not of the spirit of this world, but of the Spirit of God.

Those who belong to the body of Christ can be likened to Abraham who obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going, but by faith he went with Isaac and Jacob to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, because he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God (Heb. 11:8-10).

**We await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:** (v20) these words refer to the return of the Lord in spectacular and awesome power and glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from

God's Holy city Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign. In the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-5) the dead in Christ and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory.

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**For further information see titles:**

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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