

October 7th, 2025

Philippians Chapter 3 Study Guide

Overview:

Paul writing from a Roman prison A.D. 61-62 to the Philippians in the province of Macedonia.

Paul first visited the area on his second missionary journey (AD 49 or 50) Acts 16:6-40

Paul returned to the area on his third missionary journey Acts 20

City of Philippi:

- Located in modern Greece
- A city of 10,000 residents (larger due to visitors) that was ten miles inland from the coast or the port city of Neapolis.
- Was an important Roman city and referred to as a “Little Rome” it was home to a large number of retired Romans
- The area was established by the Romans for the mining of Gold and had become a huge trade route from the port city to the rest of Europe.
- Religious beliefs were Greek/Roman paganism and Thracian deities
- Contained a medical school in the city
- For a small city had all the “modern” attributes of Rome itself.
(baths/amphitheaters/entertainment areas)

Church of Philippi (Est. AD 50) (Acts Chapter 16:6-40)

- Established by Paul after the conversion of Lydia and the jailer with their families
- First church in Europe and started in Lydia’s home
- Received the Letter to the Philippians approximately ten years after Paul’s initial visit
- Church endured persecution as being in a Roman colony but was financially wealthy and shared its wealth in support of Paul.

Philippians Chapter 3

Some questions to consider:

1. What was Paul warning to the Philippians about at the beginning of Chapter 3? What was the danger?
2. What was Paul’s status and earthly credentials? How did he feel about what he had achieved?
3. How did Paul perceive his “reaching the goal” and what goal was he speaking of?
4. Where did Paul place his “citizenship” and what did he say in encouragement to the Philippians?

Philippians 3:1-2 – (Encouragement/Warning)

- Finally- (Loipon, “as to the rest”) Paul normally used this term when he was getting ready to discuss key principles in his letters
- Rejoice in the Lord!
 - “Do not grieve, your strength comes from rejoicing in the Lord” – Neh 8:10b
- Paul is *reminding* them. Why should we remember?
- Dogs in Philippi were marauding packs of wild animals that would attack/destroy
 - Mutilators/Legalists
 - The law/pseudo religious action was more important than faith in Christ

Philippians 3:3-6 (Where to put our confidence)

- We are the circumcision...
- We serve by the Spirit of God
- Paul’s worldly credentials: (Super Hebrew)
 - Circumcised on eighth day (steeped in tradition)
 - Tribe of Benjamin (wealthy family)
 - Hebrew
 - Pharisee (trained in the best school in Jerusalem)
 - Zeal in persecuting the church (at Stephen’s stoning and Galatians 1:13-14)
 - Worldly righteousness in the Jewish law
- Paul was born into and then had obtained an extremely high Jewish social status in a brief period of time.
- Paul discusses his earthly credentials in Chapter 3:5-6. Compare those to what he said about Jesus’s achievements in Chapter 2:6-11.
- Matthew Chapter 23 most of the entire chapter is devoted to Jesus’s warnings about the Jewish religious hypocrisy.

Philippians 3:7-11 (Knowing Christ/The Goal)

- Paul’s earthly birthright/achievement/status/social standing/credentials were filth
- Paul lost “everything” when he began to follow Jesus, but he considers losing everything to be a “gain” in Jesus Christ.
- What Paul “found” in Jesus
 - Not a righteousness based on the law (Paul’s effort by works)
 - Righteousness through faith in Christ provided by God
- Paul’s ultimate goal is to fully “know” Jesus. Know the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his suffering and being conformed to his death.

Philippians 3:12-14 (Attaining the Goal/Fully knowing Christ)

- Paul did not feel he had reached the goal of “knowing” Christ or fully “matured” as a Christian.
 - Greek (gnonai: ginosko root)- intimate, personal, experiential, continual process of awareness of Christ.
 - Phil 2:5 - *“Make your own attitude that of Jesus Christ”*
 - 1 Cor 2:2 – *“For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified”*
- He strives to continue to try grasp/hold the goal (think trophy) because Jesus has taken a “hold” of him. Paul knows he has not reached it yet
- Paul continually forgets the past and moves forward in maturing and growing
 - Luke 9:62- *“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of heaven.”*
- Paul strives forward in his development and growth for the prize. (Jesus’ perfection/salvation/spiritual achievements)
 - Phil 1:6 - *I am sure that he who started a good work in you will carry it on until the day of completion.*
 - Hebrews 12:1-2 – *“...and run the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus”*
 - 1 Cor. 9:24 – *“Run the race in such a way as to get the prize”*
 - There were 5Ks back then? Are we just running or trying to win?
- When is the race or working to attain the goal over? If you are breathing, you should be growing/maturing.
 - Matt 5:48 – *“Be perfect as therefore your father is perfect”*
 - Ephesians 4:13 – *“Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.”*

Phil 3:15-16 (Adopt this Attitude/Perspective)

- Paul is asking the Phillipians to think as he does. If you do not understand what Paul is saying at some point God will reveal it to you. (When you grow up/mature)
- Use what you have/understand now. (You should live up to what you have grown/matured to) Each of us are on different growth trajectories.

Phil 3:17 (Walking the walk)

- Paul asks the Philipians to imitate his walk with Christ and to live according to the example in “us.” (Us may mean mature Christians/Christ)

- 1 Cor 11:1 *“Be imitators of me as I also am of Christ”*
- Ephesians 5:1-2 *“Be imitators of God and walk in love as the Messiah”*

Phil 3:18-19 (Enemies of the Cross)

- Paul looked at people who taught differently than he as enemies of the Cross
 - Current examples: New Ageism, Universal Unity theologies
 - Inaccurate beliefs: The soul is saved, so you are free to live as you want, or Legalism is the way to heaven
 - Passages for these discussions: 1 Cor 6:12-20 and Romans 6
- Characteristics of enemies of the cross
 - Destruction: apart from God
 - Their desires are of the flesh (stomach)
 - Shameful things they see as their “glory”
 - Their focus is earthly/secular
- Luke 12:16-21 (Parable of the Rich man and his store houses)

Phil 3:20 (Citizenship)

- Roman citizenship was highly valued/much like being an American
- Paul even used his Roman citizenship to escape Philippi the first time
- If you are a citizen in heaven, you are an alien everywhere else (kingdoms of the earth)
- What characteristics does a citizen of earth have vs the characteristics of a citizen of heaven?

Phil 3:21 (Transformation)

- Jesus will transform us
 - 2 Cor 5:17- *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: old things have passed away and look, new things have come”*
 - Galatians 5:22 – *“For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing; what matters instead is a new creation”*
- Everything in heaven and earth is subject to Jesus, including us
 - 1 Cor 15:27-28 – ***“For He has put everything under His feet (Ps 8:6). But when it says “everything” is put under him it is obvious that He (God) who puts everything under Him (Jesus) is the exception. And when everything is subject to Him (Jesus), then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him (God) who subjected everything to Him (Jesus), so that God may be in all.”***