

Paul's Joyful Letter to the *Philippians*

CHAPTER 3: THE SPIRITUAL MIND

Paul's Past (3:1-11)

A Righteousness of Works (3:1-6)

A Righteousness of Faith (3:7-11)

Paul's Present (3:12-16)

Dissatisfaction, Devotion and Direction (3:12-13)

3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been (made perfect)⁶, but I press on to (take hold of)⁷ that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. [⁶*teleioo*: completed or finished; ⁷*katalambano*: intentionally seize (lit)] This is the humble statement of a Christian being sanctified ¹Thessalonians 4:3-5.

Paul recognized that Jesus did/will do the hard work in the sanctification process: Christ made a way on the cross, started the process in each believer and will complete it in Heaven ¹Corinthians 13:9-10, Philippians 1:6b.

However, Paul instructed Timothy to “fight the good fight” here on Earth by embracing the “eternal life” through actively pursuing “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” ¹Timothy 6:11-12.

3:13 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, ... Paul acknowledged that his life was a work in progress. He also stated his fervent desire to not let the past keep him from working toward the future. Devotion to God comes when a saint is single minded (only needing “one thing”: following Jesus ^{Mark 10:21, Luke 10:41-42}) and applies His principles to all of life, because otherwise they can become double-minded ^{James 4:8}. Christians should learn from the past, but then move forward ^{Luke 9:62}, by following the example of God. God knows everything (omniscience) ²Samuel 14:20, ¹John 3:19-20, and yet He said (about believers): “I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” ^{Jeremiah 31:34 (Hebrews 8:12), Hebrews 10:17}. This can only mean that while He still remembers the sinful acts, those acts are viewed in the context of the forgiveness provided by Jesus’ shed blood, and are no longer “sins” in need of judgement ^{Psalms 103:11-12}. Paul was exhorting Christians to remember the past, but to no longer carry a burden for their past sins.

Determination (3:14)

3:14 ...I press on toward the goal⁸ to win the prize for which God has called⁹ me heavenward in Christ Jesus. [⁸*skopos*: finish line; ⁹*klesis*: summoned] Paul admits that while the ultimate goal will only be attained in Heaven, he will “press on” ^{Hosea 6:1-3} in his earthly work with passion and purpose ^{Proverbs 6:1-5}. Notice that Paul does not compare himself to other Christians, because that is not the criteria by which God judges the works of the individual believer. He judges them on their specific work ¹Corinthians 3:10-15, ²Corinthians 5:10. He has called them to ^{Ephesians 2:10}. Christians are not called to die to self and stop, but should die to self, be reborn and then allow Christ to live through them ^{Romans 14:7-8, Galatians 2:19-20, Colossians 3:1-4}.

Discipline (3:15-16)

- 3:15 All of us who are mature¹⁰ should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will (make clear)¹¹ to you. [¹⁰*teleios*: perfect; ¹¹*apokalupto*: remove a covering to bring into open view what was hidden (lit)] Paul's maturity was indicated by his wisdom from God¹ 1 Corinthians 2:6-7 that allowed him to recognize his imperfection apart from Christ^{Romans 7:14-20}. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul prayed for the Ephesians to receive "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation"^{Ephesians 1:17} from God, because he knew that all learning of value must come from the teaching of God¹ Thessalonians 4:9.
- 3:16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Many new believers have great zeal^{Romans 12:11}, but then often they will lose their spiritual focus^{Psalms 119:176} with time. Paul challenged Christians to maintain their fervor and even constantly grow in the Lord by running the "race marked out" for them^{Hebrews 12:1}. Followers of Jesus must be disciplined in their faith walk^{Hebrews 12:7-11}, because they will have to answer for how they lived, when they face the Judgement Seat of Christ^{Hebrews 9:27, Romans 14:10-12, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10}.

Paul's Future (3:17-21)

- 3:17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and (take note)¹² of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. [¹²*skopeo*: spy on (lit)] Paul stressed the importance of Godly examples (Christ, Paul & others^{Philippians 2}) in the application of Biblical principles to earthly life. In an even stronger statement, Paul told the Corinthians to "imitate" his Christian walk¹ 1 Corinthians 4:16. General Biblical guidance for Christian growth is to choose solid leaders and follow in their footsteps^{Hebrews 13:7}, then as they mature, they should "set an example in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity"¹ Timothy 4:11-12 for others.
- 3:18-19 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction¹³, their god is their stomach¹⁴, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. [¹³*apoleia*: the state after death when exclusion from heaven is realized; ¹⁴*koilia*: also translated 'appetite'] Paul was once again addressing the Judaizers^{Philippians 3:2} who not only wanted to make circumcision a requirement for salvation^{Galatians 6:12-15}, but they also wanted to require the following of the Old Testament dietary laws^{Colossians 2:20-23}. In his warning with tears^{Acts 20:31}, Paul was expressing his genuine anguish for the Philippian church to "watch out"^{Romans 16:17-18} for those who teach false doctrine, and to concentrate not on earthly things, but on heavenly things² 2 Corinthians 4:18-19, Colossians 3:2.
- 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await¹⁵ a Savior¹⁶ from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ... [¹⁵*apekdechomai*: to expect with confidence; ¹⁶*soter*: a deliverer, preserver] Christians are aliens and strangers on Earth¹ 1 Peter 2:11, but have their citizenship in Heaven ("fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household"^{Ephesians 2:19}, because their "names are written in Heaven"^{Luke 10:20}). Saints "eagerly await" the return of Jesus¹ 1 Corinthians 1:7, because their "hope"^{Hebrews 6:19} is rooted in the firm knowledge that Jesus is literally/physically coming back to Earth^{John 14:1-3, Revelation 22:20}.

The English word "politics" is a transliteration of the Greek word for "citizenship" (*politeuma*).

- 3:21 ...who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform¹⁷ our lowly¹⁸ bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. [¹⁷*metaschematizo*: transfigure (change of condition); ¹⁸*tapeinosis*: humble] The "incomparably great power" that resurrected Jesus^{Ephesians 1:18-20} will also raise up believers "conformed to the likeness" of Jesus^{Romans 8:29} in glorified, eternal bodies¹ 1 Corinthians 15:42-53.

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