

PHILIPPIANS: DIVISION IV
THE "PRESSING ON" OF THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER,
Philippians 3:1-21

A. Pressing On: Guarding Oneself, Philippians 3:1-3

(Philippians 3:1-3) Introduction: this chapter is one of the great chapters of the Bible, a chapter that needs to be studied time and again. It includes the great personal testimony and ambition of Paul. It gives us some of the great principles that governed Paul's life. The subject of the chapter is "The Pressing On Of The Christian Believer." These are some things the Christian believer must do as he presses on for Christ. First, he must guard himself.

1. **By rejoicing in the Lord (v.1).**
2. **By heeding what is written (the Scripture) (v.1).**
3. **By watching out for false teachers (v.2).**
4. **By knowing that you are the true (spiritual) circumcision (v.3).**

1. (Philippians 3:1) Rejoicing: guard yourself by rejoicing in the Lord.

A person who is always rejoicing in the Lord will not go astray. As the believer walks through life, two things are always confronting him: circumstances and false teaching. No matter where he goes, the trials of life, both minor and major, confront him.

He has to stand face to face with the awful trials of life including.....

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|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. enticing temptations | g. divisions |
| b. lust of the eyes | h. inhuman behavior |
| c. lust of the flesh | i. criminal acts |
| d. greed | j. death |
| e. selfishness | k. accidents |
| f. arguments | l. disease |

The list could go on and on. No person escapes the trials of life—not if he walks upon this earth. He is confronted with the awful reality of trials every day of his life. Note another fact as well. No matter where he walks, the false teachings of this life confront him. No matter which way the believer turns, he is confronted with different ideas about how to handle life and its great trials.

- a.** There is the teaching that says, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Ignore the trials and problems of life. Life is to be enjoyed by those who have the health and money to enjoy it, so get all the gusto out of life possible. Do your own thing."
- b.** There is the teaching that says, "Discipline and control yourself. Take care of your body and mind. Don't give in to the lusts and passions of this life. The abuse of a mind and body is a waste. Live

as long and contribute as much as you can by walking a disciplined and controlled life."

- c. There is the teaching that says, "Don't go overboard. Enjoy life—join in—do what you want; but do it within reason. Don't overly abuse your mind and body. It's all right to join and indulge occasionally; just don't do it too often and hurt yourself."
- d. There is the teaching that says religion is the answer to both life and death, "Join a religious body, undergo its rituals, adopt its beliefs, and live the best you can. This will give you a strong self-image and confidence that God will accept you. Just be as good as you can and God will accept what goodness you are able to build up."

The list of false teachings could go on and on. The point is this: the believer is bombarded by both trials and false teachings every day of his life. He must, therefore, guard himself; and the first guard is to rejoice in the Lord. If he walks throughout the day rejoicing in the Lord, his mind is upon the Lord.

He rejoices over what Christ has done for him—rejoices over the Lord.....

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|----------------------|---|
| a. justifying him | h. securing righteousness for him |
| b. adopting him | i. dying for him—bearing his condemnation and judgment |
| c. reconciling him | j. arising for him—giving him a new life |
| d. saving him | k. giving him the privilege of knowing God |
| e. loving him | l. giving him victory over sin |
| f. delivering him | m. guiding and directing him |
| g. looking after him | n. giving him an eternal hope and the glorious confidence of eternal life |

The believer just walks about joying and rejoicing in all that the Lord has done and is doing for him. This is essential if the believer is to guard himself against the onslaught of trials and false teaching in this life. If the believer is to press on in his Christian life, he must walk about rejoicing in the Lord.

Now note: the great thing that rejoicing does is this: it places and keeps a person in the presence of Christ. No matter what confronts the believer—no matter how terrible the trial—he knows that he is being looked after by Christ Jesus his Lord. He knows that nothing can separate him from the Lord and His love—that he shall never die, but rather live eternally. Therefore, he knows that whatever comes upon him can never conquer and overcome him. Christ will give him supernatural power and strength to overcome it.

And if he is called upon to lay down his body and move on to heaven, he knows that he shall never taste or experience death; he knows that Jesus Christ is going to escort him right on into God's presence immediately—quicker than the eye can blink—about 1/100 of a second. The believer is forever secure in the keeping power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, he walks rejoicing in the Lord: he rejoices no matter what confronts him.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Romans 8:35-39](#)).

Thought 1. Rejoicing in the Lord is one of the very best ways to guard oneself against the trials of life and false teaching. When a person rejoices in the Lord, his mind is focused upon the Lord, upon what the Lord has done for him. And the mind cannot be two places at once. If it is upon the Lord and His glorious salvation, then it cannot be upon the trials and false teachings of this world.

"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" ([Luke 10:20](#)).

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" ([John 15:11](#)).

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" ([Romans 12:15](#)).

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" ([2 Cor. 6:10](#)).

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" ([Phil. 4:4](#)).

"Rejoice evermore" ([1 Thes. 5:16](#)).

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" ([1 Peter 4:12-13](#)).

"And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee" ([Deut. 12:7](#)).

"But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee" ([Psalm 5:11](#)).

"Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" ([Psalm 32:11](#)).

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" ([Habakkuk 3:17-18](#)).

"The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel" ([Isaiah 29:19](#)).

2. ([Philippians 3:1](#)) Scriptures: guard yourself by heeding what is written, that is, the Scriptures.

Note: Paul says that he is writing some things that he had apparently written before. What he is about to write is so important that it has to be repeated. The church must do what is being said.

The point is this: the writings of Paul and of Scripture must be heeded. What Scripture says was written to instruct us and to help us in *pressing on* for Christ. No person can press on apart from heeding the Scriptures. If he fails to study and obey the Scripture, he will cave in either to the trials of life or to false teaching. Only as we obey the Scripture—the commandments of the Lord—can we show our love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" ([John 14:15](#)).

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" ([John 14:21](#)).

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" ([John 14:23](#)).

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" ([John 15:10](#)).

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" ([Acts 17:11](#)).

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" ([Acts 20:32](#)).

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" ([2 Tim. 2:15](#)).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" ([2 Tim. 3:16](#)).

"And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" ([2 Peter 2:2-3](#)).

3. (Philippians 3:2) Teachers, False: guard yourself by watching out for false teachers.

Paul was always facing false teachers who were savage in their attacks upon him. He mentions three groups of false teachers in this verse.

1. Beware of “false teachers” who act like dogs (*kunas*).

It should be noted that both Jew and Gentile called each other dogs as a term of contempt. The word "dogs" was the lowest title possible to convey contempt and ridicule. Dog does not refer to the house pet of today, but to the wild dogs that roamed in the forests by day and the city streets by night. They were scavengers and snarlers who could be very vicious and dangerous.

The point is descriptive: there are some false teachers who are just like wild dogs.

⇒ They are scavengers who seek out all whom they can consume with their false teaching. And if any step forward to defend the sheep and the truth, they snarl and often become vicious and dangerous, ready to attack the defender and destroy him.

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" ([Matthew 7:6](#)).

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" ([Matthew 7:15](#)).

"Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" ([Matthew 10:26](#)).

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision" ([Phil. 3:2](#)).

"While they [false teachers] promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" ([2 Peter 2:19-22](#)).

"For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" ([Rev. 22:15](#)).

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet" ([Psalm 22:16](#)).

2. Beware of false teachers who are “evil workers”.

The world is full of people who work evil things.

1. This refers to those who hold to and teach high standards of righteousness, morality, and religion. They are absolutely sure they are righteous and good—at least good enough to be acceptable to God. There is just no way God would ever reject them—they think.
2. This also refers to those who live and teach evil by the way they live and talk about morality, righteousness and religion. Some live base, immoral, indulgent, and extravagant lives, while others try to mix both a religious and indulgent life-style together.

The point is this: there are those who are always opposing the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation by grace alone. They do not accept that He is God's Son—that He is the Lord of man's life; the Lord who is to be given all we are and have. Therefore, they accept His teaching, but ignore or deny salvation by His blood. They stand opposed to the gospel of salvation by His grace alone. They go about establishing their own way to God, doing whatever good they feel is needed to make themselves acceptable to Him. The result is false teaching—a way to God that stands against the Lord Jesus Christ and His way. Such false teachers are evil workers—workers who stand opposed to the truth.

3. Beware of false teachers who are of the “concionism”. The concision refers to the Judaizers (see note, [Judaizers—Galatians 2:3-5](#); [Deeper Study #1—Galatians 2:4](#) for discussion. It is important to read this note before proceeding with this point.)

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" ([Matthew 5:19-20](#)).

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them" ([Romans 10:3-5](#)).

"Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" ([1 Tim. 1:7](#)).

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself" ([1 Tim. 6:3-5](#)).

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" ([2 Tim. 4:3-4](#)).

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" ([2 Peter 2:1](#)).

4. (Philippians 3:3) Believers— Circumcision: guard yourself by knowing that you are the true circumcision. (see [Deeper Study #1, Circumcision—Phil. 3:3](#) for discussion).

Note that believers are called *the circumcision*. What does Paul mean?

1. Believers are those who worship God as He really wishes to be worshipped: in the spirit; that is, they have circumcised or cut away the flesh as the means by which they worship God. **Think for a moment: How do most people attempt to worship God?**

- a. By attending church services
- b. By praying
- c. By making occasional gifts to needy causes
- d. By thinking of God occasionally
- e. By being circumcised or baptized or undergoing some other ritual
- f. By keeping the rituals and ceremonies of a church
- g. By joining a church
- h. By observing special days

But note a critical point: as good as all of these are, they are not the basis of true worship. They are things that we do *because* we worship; they are the result and activities of worship. They are not the basis or spirit of worship. True, they may help us to focus upon God and stir us to worship Him, but as stated, they are not the basis and spirit of worship.

⇒ **The basis of worship is the Spirit of God, and the spirit of worship is the Spirit of God.**

To worship God, man must have the Spirit of God living within his body and spirit. He no longer worships God externally through rituals and ceremonies. He now worships God inwardly through the Spirit of God who lives within him. True worship is no longer through anything that is of the physical or material world, no longer of anything that is of man's flesh. True worship is of the spirit.

Thought 1. True worship has to be of the heart and spirit. Why? Because a man can attend church, keep all the rituals and ceremonies, and still be living in the depths of sin. But if a man's spirit is right with God, he worships God with a clean and pure heart, free from all sin and defilement. The truly circumcised person is the person who worships God in spirit.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" ([John 4:24](#)).

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" ([1 Cor. 6:19-20](#)).

2. Believers are those who rejoice as God really wants us to rejoice: in Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus.....

- a. is God's only begotten Son.
- b. is the Person who gave Himself to die for us, bearing our sins and condemnation.
- c. is the Person who has saved us, made it possible for us to live forever in the presence of God.
- d. is the only Savior, the only acceptable way to enter God's presence.

Therefore, it is only natural that God expects us to rejoice in Christ Jesus. How could we boast and rejoice in ritual and ceremony and religion? The Source—the Author and Finisher—of our faith is Christ Jesus. Therefore, the true circumcision, the true believer does not boast in anything physical or material—not in ritual or ceremony or religion. The true circumcision rejoices and boasts in Him who has given us salvation and access to God, even in Christ Jesus our Lord.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" ([John 15:11](#)).

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" ([Phil. 4:4](#)).

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" ([1 Peter 1:8](#)).

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" ([Isaiah 61:10](#)).

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts" ([Jeremiah 15:16](#)).

3. Believers are those who have no confidence in the flesh.

The flesh.....

1. • is only physical and material.
2. • can only handle physical and material things.
3. • can only do good works and keep external rituals and ceremonies and religious practices.
4. • can do nothing beyond the physical and material.
5. • cannot penetrate the spiritual world or dimension of being.

The flesh ages, deteriorates, and corrupts. Therefore, the flesh goes the way of all material and physical substances: it dies and decays. And no matter what the flesh has done and accomplished in this physical world, it takes all its works to the grave with it. The flesh dies and all that concerns the flesh dies with it. Therefore, the true circumcision, the true believer, has no confidence and puts no stock in the flesh. He has confidence only in Jesus Christ.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" ([Romans 7:18](#)).

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" ([Romans 7:25](#)).

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" ([Romans 8:8](#)).

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" ([Romans 8:13](#)).

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" ([Galatians 5:17](#)).

"For he that soweth to this flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" ([Galatians 6:8](#)).

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" ([1 John 2:15-16](#)).

PHILIPPIANS: DIVISION IV
THE "PRESSING ON" OF THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER,
Philippians 3:1-21

B. Pressing On: Paul's Personal Testimony—Rejecting Self-Righteousness and Seeking Perfection, Philippians 3:4-16

(Philippians 3:4-16) Introduction: all across the world men sense they need a relationship with God. They have a sense of God, but they sense there is something wrong between them and God. Sometimes they feel things are right; other times as though things are wrong. But underlying whatever feelings they have, men are never sure whether or not things are right with God. They lack perfect assurance and confidence that they please God enough to be acceptable to Him. They have a hope that God will accept them, but they do not know, not with absolute certainty.

It is these feelings that have stirred the religions of the world. Men want to be right with God; they want to be approved and accepted by God. They want God to look after them and help them, and they want God to accept them when this life is over. Therefore, they set out to do what they feel will make them *good enough* to be acceptable to God. They try to do whatever good they feel is necessary to please *their god*. Granted, the degree to which men feel this differs among all men. One man will feel that he has to be extremely good, whereas another man feels that he has to be moderately good.

The point to note is this: *this kind of religion is a religion*.....

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. of works | e. of being good |
| b. of doing good | f. of preparing oneself for God |
| c. of securing God's favor | g. of making oneself approved by God |
| d. of making oneself acceptable to God | |

It is a religion of self-righteousness—of becoming as righteous and good as a person can—of earning and meriting God's favor—of working one's way into God's presence.

There is, of course, a severe fallacy with this approach to God.

- ⇒ God is perfect and not a single person is perfect. No person can do enough good to become perfect no matter what he does. In fact, man is already imperfect; and once perfection is lost, it is lost. Imperfection can never become perfection, not by the efforts of human (imperfect) flesh. Imperfection cannot make perfection.

The point is this: no person can ever earn or merit the right to live in God's presence. If a person is ever going to live in God's presence, it will be because God loves the person enough to accept him and to transform him into a perfect person. This is exactly what God does through Jesus Christ. God accepts men *through His Son*, through the love and grace of His Son.

It was this, the gospel of Jesus Christ, that Paul had missed. And it is this that so many in the world miss. Paul had never seen the great love of God for man. Yet, *above all men*, he had given his life to seeking after God, doing all the good he could to make himself acceptable to God. But despite all his achievements, he still did not have peace with God. Perfect assurance and confidence—of living eternally with God—was still lacking. This is the message of the present passage: Paul's personal testimony—his rejection of self-righteousness and turning to the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

1. **Paul had achieved the height in self-righteousness (v.4-6).**
2. **Paul sought to win Christ—His righteousness and perfection (v.7-11).**
3. **Paul did not count himself as having yet arrived—he was not yet perfect (v.12-16).**

1. (Philippians 3:4-6) Self-righteousness— Paul: Paul had achieved the height of self-righteousness.

Paul ranks among the greatest of men who have attempted to work their way into God's presence. Paul did all the good he could to secure God's approval. Few if any men have ever attained what Paul did by human effort. Yet, it was all to no avail. His goodness and his attainments did not make him acceptable to God. And there is one primary reason: he could not make himself perfect.

However, note what Paul says: "**If any man thinks he can trust in the works and attainments of his flesh, I more. I can trust and boast in the goodness and morality and works of the flesh as much as any man who has ever lived.**" This is a phenomenal claim, but Paul lists seven privileges and achievements which show the total inadequacy of man to save himself. Paul divided the list under "**Privileges of Birth**" and "**Achievements by Self-Effort.**"

1. The privileges of birth are three in particular.

- a. "**Circumcised the eighth day**": Paul was saying that he had the *right birth*. A true Jewish family always had its male child circumcised when he was just eight days old. Circumcision was the sign that a person believed in the Old Testament laws and in His promises—in particular the promise that the Jews were the promised and covenant people of God. Paul was claiming to be a true Jewish believer who had the privilege of believing parents.

Thought 1. Paul was saying that goodness and righteousness are not found in birth nor in religious rituals and ceremonies. **Yet, how many people think they are acceptable to God because they.....**

1. have godly parents?
2. have a godly spouse?
3. have godly children?
4. have godly friends?
5. have kept religious rituals and ceremonies?

How many expect the godliness of others to rub off on them—to count for them and to make them acceptable to God?

b. **"Of the stock of Israel"**: Paul was saying that he had the *right national heritage* and a very special relationship with God. He was born in the right nation, among the right people. The name Israel goes back to the time when God changed Jacob's name to Israel. Jacob had a special need, and God met his need in a very special way through a dream and changed his name ([Genesis 32:28](#)). When a Jew wished to stress his special relationship to God, he called himself an Israelite; that is, he was of the nation and descent of Israel which had a very special relationship with God and who had received a very special name from God.

Thought 1. Paul was saying that goodness and righteousness are not found in ancestors nor in social superiority. Yet, how many think that being born in a Christian nation and surrounded by Christian principles carry some merit with God? How many feel that the people of a so called Christian nation are more acceptable to God than the heathen of some idol-worshipping tribe in the depths of a jungle? How many feel that they have some merit with God because they have a Christian name? How many feel they have a little better relationship with God and are a little more acceptable to God because they live in a so called religious nation?

c. **"Of the tribe of Benjamin"**: Benjamin was considered the aristocratic tribe of Israel because of the tribe's loyalty when so many were disloyal ([1 Kings 12:1](#)) and because of the tribe's courageous acts throughout Israel's history ([Judges 5:14](#); [Hosea 5:8](#)). Paul was saying that he was of the *highest aristocracy, of the most noble, of the most respectable persons of Israel.*

Thought 1. Paul was saying that goodness and righteousness are not found in social or religious status. **Yet, how many feel they are more acceptable to God because they belong to.....**

1. • an upper class?
2. • a more elite church?
3. • a more dynamic church?
4. • a more active ministry?

2. The achievements by self-effort are four in number.

a. **"An Hebrew of the Hebrews"**: Paul claimed to have the *right language* and the right customs. When the Jews were conquered and scattered over the world, a believing Jew refused to give up his Jewish language and customs. He continued using Hebrew and he continued to practice Jewish customs. Every Jew did not, but Paul says he and his family did. What Paul meant was that he had the mark of faithfulness. He had deliberately kept the Hebrew tongue and refused to forget it. In his day, this was extremely difficult, for the Jews were literally scattered across the world and the world had one common language,

Greek. But Paul remained steadfast. He learned and refused to forget the right language. He was loyal to the elect race of God. He was untinged by other philosophies.

Thought 1. Paul was saying that goodness and righteousness are not found in religious faithfulness, nor in a spiritual language, nor in the ability to know and speak in religious terms. **Yet, how many think that they are acceptable to God because they.....**

1. do good and are faithful in being good?
2. are faithful in studying their religion, the Bible, and the great doctrines of the faith?
3. are faithful in talking about and sharing spiritual things?
4. know and use religious terms and languages?

- b. **"A Pharisee":** Paul claimed to have had the *right religion*; to have been a Pharisee. The Pharisees were strict religionists, so strict their very name meant The Separated Ones. Paul said that he was of the strictest religious sect ever known. He devoted his whole life to the most *separated* and demanding religion ever known to man. He achieved *separation*, an exacting separation from other men.

Thought 1. Paul was saying that goodness and righteousness are not found in religion, not even in being a follower of the true religion. Yet, how many feel the very opposite?

- c. **"Zeal":** Paul had zealously stood and fought for his religion. He hotly pursued and persecuted the church. Paul had such a zeal for his religion that he sought to wipe out any cause that differed from his ([Acts 22:2-21](#); [Acts 26:4-32](#); [1 Cor. 15:8-10](#); [Galatians 1:13](#)).

Thought 1. Paul was saying that goodness and righteousness are not found in religious commitments or zeal. Few have ever been committed to their religion like Paul—few have ever been as faithful to the worship services, ordinances, rituals, and ceremonies of his religion as Paul. Paul was a religionist among religionists. Few have ever proclaimed and protected their religion like Paul. Paul was as zealous as a person could be in trying to reach converts for his religion and in keeping his religion as pure as he could. Paul was full of zeal for his religion, as faithful as a person could be.

- d. **"Blameless":** Paul claimed he had sought to keep the law and he had kept it—completely and fully. This does not mean that Paul was sinless; it means that when Paul sinned, he obeyed the law and took his sacrifice to the temple. He obeyed all the commandments, rituals, and ceremonies just like Scripture said. He followed all the laws and instructions of the Scripture. He was blameless—ritually and ceremonially—in the righteousness of the law.

Thought 1. Paul was saying that goodness and righteousness are not found in keeping all the rituals and ceremonies of religion. They are not even found in keeping all the commandments of the Scripture.

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" ([Matthew 5:20](#)).

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" ([Matthew 7:22-23](#)).

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" ([Romans 3:20](#)).

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" ([Romans 10:3](#)).

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" ([2 Cor. 10:12](#)).

"Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?" ([Proverbs 20:6](#)).

"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" ([Proverbs 30:12](#)).

[2. \(Philippians 3:7-11\) Righteousness— Perfection— Paul: Paul sought to win Christ, to win His righteousness and His perfection.](#)

The one thing in life that Paul sought was the righteousness and perfection of Jesus Christ. He knew that no matter how good he could become, he could never become perfect. He still came short and he was still doomed to face death. Therefore, his only hope for living forever was the righteousness and perfection of Jesus Christ. He had to trust Christ; he had to focus his heart and life—all he was and had—upon Jesus Christ. He had to trust the righteousness and perfection of Jesus Christ to *cover him*. Therefore, he cast his heart and life upon Christ. He lived for Jesus Christ, and he trusted God to honor his commitment. He trusted God to *count his faith* as the righteousness and perfection of Jesus Christ. If God did not do this, he was lost and doomed to death forever; he could never gain perfection. His only hope was Christ and Christ alone. This is what the present passage is all about. Paul believed with all his heart that if he trusted Jesus Christ—that if he sought after the righteousness and perfection of Jesus Christ with all that he was and had—God would take his faith and *count it as righteousness*. God would honor his commitment to His Son by accepting and giving him eternal life. Note five significant points.

1. Paul had a *past experience with Christ: there was a time when he had counted his own righteousness as loss* ([Phil. 3:7](#)). Paul was referring to his conversion experience. There was a time when he had given up his own self-righteousness and works, his own attempts to become perfect. There was a time when he had accepted the fact that he could not become perfect—he could not gain righteousness—he could not make himself perfectly acceptable to God.

- a. Note that this is a past experience, a once-for-all experience. It is a definite time when Paul made a definite decision—a decision that he was unable to secure righteousness and perfection himself. If he was to become righteous and perfect, he had to trust the love of God—that God loved him enough to cover him with the righteousness and perfection of Christ.
- b. Note also that this did not mean that Paul quit trying to live for God. On the contrary, it meant that Paul tried more diligently than ever to live for God. When God saw Paul's total commitment to Christ, God knew that Paul's faith was genuine. He knew that Paul really believed that Christ was his Savior, his hope for perfection and righteousness—for eternity. If Paul had not committed himself totally to Christ, God would have known his faith was not genuine and God would not have saved Paul.

Thought 1. God sees our faith; whether or not it is genuine. Genuine faith makes a total commitment to Jesus Christ. A person who truly believes in Jesus Christ gives all he is and has to Christ. He counts his own effort and works, his own righteousness as loss—as nothing—in order to gain Christ.

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" ([Luke 9:23](#)).

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" ([Hebrews 11:6](#)).

2. Paul had a continuous experience with Christ: he constantly counted all things as loss and as waste in order to win Christ ([Phil. 3:8](#)). The word "**count**" is in the present tense; it is continuous action. When a person has made the decision to seek after Christ, he is *to continue* to seek after the knowledge of Christ—to learn all he can about the righteousness and perfection of Jesus Christ.

1. It is not a matter of making a decision to follow Christ, and then turning and walking on as a person has always walked—doing his own thing and fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind.
2. It is making a decision to follow Christ and continuing to seek after the knowledge of Him—continuing to seek to know Him more and more.

- a. Note that the knowledge of Christ is said to be excellent: it is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the most excellent knowledge in all the world. No other knowledge can give a person righteousness and perfection. No other knowledge can make a person acceptable to God and give him the right to live eternally.
- b. Note what Paul says: "I have suffered the loss of all things." The words "have suffered" mean to forfeit and to cast away. The phrase all things includes not only the religious position Paul had attained, but the "social, financial, intellectual, and political" gains he had made as well (Lehman Strauss, *Devotional Studies in Philippians*, p.163). Wuest gives a graphic description of what Paul gave up to become a Christian believer.

"Paul was a citizen of Tarsus. At the time he lived there, only families of wealth and reputation were allowed to retain their Tarsian citizenship. This throws a flood of light upon Paul's early life. He was born into a home of wealth and culture. His family were wealthy Jews living in one of the most progressive of oriental cities. All this Paul left to become a poor itinerant missionary.

*"But not only did he forfeit all this when he was saved, but his parents would have nothing to do with a son who had in their estimation dishonored them by becoming one of those hated, despised Christians. They had reared him in the lap of luxury, had sent him to the Jewish school of theology in Jerusalem to sit at the feet of the great Gamaliel, and had given him an excellent training in Greek culture at the University of Tarsus, a Greek school of learning. But they had now cast him off. He was still forfeiting all that he had held dear, what for? He tells us, 'that I may win Christ'" (Kenneth S. Wuest. *Wuest's Word Studies*, Vol.2. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966, p.91).*

"Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee" ([Mark 10:28](#)).

"And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me" ([Luke 5:27](#)).

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" ([Luke 9:24](#)).

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" ([Luke 14:33](#)).

"And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" ([Luke 18:29-30](#)).

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the

loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" ([Phil. 3:8](#)).

3. Paul sought a future experience with Christ: he sought to be found in Christ ([Phil. 3:9](#)). Paul was looking ahead either to death or to the return of Christ. When he came face to face with God, he wanted to be *found in Christ*. He wanted to stand before God in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, not in his own righteousness.

Note that the righteousness of God is *Christ Himself*. The righteousness of God does not refer to behavior or works or deeds of righteousness. No person can ever secure the righteousness of God by behavior or works or deeds—no matter how good the works or deeds may be. The righteousness of God is Jesus Christ Himself. A person has to trust the righteousness of Christ to cover him if he wishes to become acceptable to God.

"Christ, the righteousness which is of God" ([Phil. 3:9](#)).

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference" ([Romans 3:21-22](#)).

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" ([Romans 10:3-4](#)).

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" ([1 Cor. 1:30](#)).

4. Paul sought a victorious experience with Christ: he sought to know Christ—to know His glorious power over the world and all that is in the world ([Phil. 3:10](#)). This is one of the Bible's great verses of Scripture, a verse that should be memorized and that should dominate the believer's life. As clearly seen throughout this whole passage, Paul's great pursuit in life was to know Christ.

This verse spells out exactly what he meant by knowing Christ.

- a. To know Christ is to know the power of His resurrection. The power of the Lord's resurrection refers to three great things.
- b. To know Christ is to know the fellowship of His sufferings. Most of us are willing to share in the blessings of Christ but we want nothing to do with the sufferings of Christ. We shrink from the ridicule, questioning, and abuse He had to bear. There is nothing pleasant about suffering pain and having people oppose us. There is nothing wrong with being honest about the fact. Paul said that he wanted to know the *fellowship* of the Lord's sufferings. That is, he wanted to share in *the purpose for which Christ was suffering*. Why did Christ suffer? He suffered because He proclaimed the righteousness and salvation of God—because He proclaimed the way men could become acceptable to God and live forever. Paul was saying

that he wanted to suffer right along with Christ, suffer for the same cause—suffer for proclaiming the righteousness and salvation of God.

There is no question about it: if we live for Christ—proclaim the righteousness and salvation of God—we shall suffer persecution. Why? Why would the world persecute anyone who brings the hope of eternal life to them? Because some persons want to live their lives like they want, and a righteous life and message condemns them. Therefore, they oppose anything that keeps them from living a life that pleases their own personal desires and flesh. The believer must know: he shall suffer persecution if he truly follows Christ.

"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" ([Acts 14:22](#)).

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" ([Phil. 1:29](#)).

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" ([2 Tim. 2:10](#)).

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" ([2 Tim. 3:12](#)).

"But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ" ([1 Peter 3:14-16](#)).

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" ([1 Peter 2:21](#)).

Note one other thing: God draws close to the believer when he suffers for the cause of Christ. God gives a very special sense of His presence, love, and care when the believer is suffering. In fact, His presence is so near and dear it is called "the spirit of glory and of God" which rests upon the suffering believer.

"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified" ([1 Peter 4:14](#)).

- c. To know Christ is to be made conformable to His death. Jesus Christ subjected Himself totally to God. He put His own flesh and desires to death; He did only what God willed and desired. Even when He died, His flesh did not desire to die. He did not want to take the sins of the world upon Himself and be separated from God ([Matthew 26:39, 42](#)).

But He subjected Himself to God's will. God willed Him to die for the sins of the world; therefore, Christ subjected His flesh and desires to do exactly what God willed. He subjected His flesh and desires and died for the sins of men.

Paul sought to be conformed to the death of Christ. He sought to subject himself totally to God—to put his flesh and desires to death and to do only the will and desire of God.

1. Paul sought to *deny himself and take up the cross* of Christ daily.

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" ([Luke 9:23](#)).

2. Paul sought to *crucify his old man* with Christ.

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" ([Romans 6:6](#)).

3. Paul sought to *count himself dead to sin* but alive to God.

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" ([Romans 6:11](#)).

4. Paul sought to *kill himself* all day long.

"As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" ([Romans 8:36](#)).

5. Paul sought to *die daily*.

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" ([1 Cor. 15:31](#)).

6. Paul sought to be always *delivered to death* for Jesus' sake.

"For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" ([2 Cor. 4:11](#)).

7. Paul sought to be *crucified with Christ*.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" ([Galatians 2:20](#)).

8. Paul sought to be *dead with Christ*.

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances" ([Col. 2:20](#)).

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him" ([2 Tim. 2:11](#)).

5. Paul sought an eternal experience with Christ: he sought to be resurrected from the dead ([Phil. 3:11](#)). Paul sought to use all means—to commit himself totally—for this one great purpose: to attain to the resurrection of the dead. The words "**if by any means**" are not expressing doubt and uncertainty. Paul was not questioning the resurrection nor if he would be resurrected. Paul was simply saying what he had already stated ([Phil. 3:7-11](#)). He uses all he is and has—all the means at his disposal—for this one great purpose: to attain to the resurrection from the dead. He is totally committed to that glorious day of redemption. He lives for that day and for that day alone.

What is so significant about the resurrection of the dead? What is to be so different about that day? At death, we go to be with the Lord. Quicker than the eye can blink, when our time comes, we shall stand face to face with Christ. What is the difference between meeting Christ then and the resurrection? Why did Paul long for the resurrection over and above his meeting the Lord at death? There are at least two significant reasons why the resurrection, the glorious day of redemption, takes precedence over our meeting the Lord at death.

- a. The glorious day of resurrection will launch the events that will soon bring about the new heavens and earth. At death, when we go to be with the Lord, the world continues on in its sin and shame, disease and death, evil and corruption.

God is still being.....

1. cursed and dishonored.
2. denied and ignored.
3. rebelled against and rejected.

But as stated, the resurrection will launch the events that bring about the glorious day of redemption—the new heavens and earth—the day when all evil and sin and the cursing and dishonor of God will be stopped. God will become All in All: worshipped and served in glory and majesty, dominion and power forever and ever.

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" ([John 5:28-29](#)).

"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" ([John 6:40](#)).

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" ([John 11:25](#)).

"And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" ([Acts 24:15](#)).

"Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" ([2 Cor. 4:14](#)).

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" ([1 Thes. 4:16-17](#)).

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" ([2 Peter 3:10-13](#)).

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" ([Rev. 21:1](#)).

- b.** The glorious day of resurrection will be the day when believers will have earthly bodies transformed and recreated into perfect eternal bodies. At death when we go to be with the Lord, we do not receive our perfect eternal body. We will either be given temporary spiritual bodies or live with Christ as disembodied spirits. But as stated, at the resurrection the elements of our present bodies will be called forth by God from all over the world, and the elements shall be transformed into perfect and eternal bodies. And we shall live with and for God forever.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" ([1 Cor. 15:42-44](#)).

"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" ([1 Cor. 15:49-54](#); cp. [1 Cor. 15:12-58](#)).

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" ([2 Cor. 5:1-4](#)).

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" ([Phil. 3:20-21](#)).

[3. \(Philippians 3:12-16\) Righteousness— Perfection— Paul: Paul did not count himself as having yet attained—he was not yet perfect.](#)

Perfection is the great end of the believer. God has apprehended or laid hold of the believer for one reason only: to perfect the believer—to make him perfect so that he can live and worship and serve Christ forever.

Now note a critical point: no person achieves perfection on this earth. The fact is so evident to the thinking and honest man that it is actually ridiculous to even make the statement. Yet, too many are so narrow in their thinking that they seldom if ever grasp what perfection would really mean.

For example.....

1. Consider the brain and the mind. It has been estimated that man uses only *one-tenth of one percent* of his mental capacity. Imagine how far short this is of perfection!

2. Consider the body. What would a perfect body be like? A body that never desired, thought, or did wrong; that never came up short; that never aged, deteriorated, died or decayed?

The examples could go on and on, but note what Paul says: he had not attained perfection. In fact, he was always emphasizing how far short he came.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" ([Romans 7:18-19](#)).

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" ([2 Cor. 3:5](#)).

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" ([Ephes. 3:8](#)).

Beyond doubt, Paul was one of the greatest men who has ever lived. The great *Book of Second Corinthians* clearly shows this. If Paul was so short of perfection, how much further are we? The point bears repeating: no person achieves perfection on this earth. But note: Paul says five significant things.

1. Paul followed after perfection, after his God-given purpose. When Christ saved Paul, that was just the beginning, not the end. He had been saved to *live for Christ and to serve Christ*, and as long as he was on this earth he was going to *live for Christ* and do all he could *to serve Christ*. The word "**follow after**" (*diōkō*) means to press; to pursue just like a runner in a race. There was no place for walking, much less for sitting or lying around in comfort, complacency and lethargy. Christ had saved Paul for perfection—to attain to the resurrection of the dead—and as long as Paul was on this earth, he was going to press and run after perfection.

- a. Paul was going to do all he could to help the Lord in the Lord's great task of perfecting him.
- b. Paul was going to do all he could to lay hold of perfection—the perfection for which the Lord had laid hold of him.

Thought 1. There is no such thing as a genuine believer sitting still after he has been saved.

The believer must not.....

1. become comfortable, complacent, lethargic, or lazy.
2. waste time and lose opportunity.
3. begin to think he is safe and secure forever; therefore, he can sometimes do what he likes and give in to his own desires.

The believer must follow, run, and press after perfection—the perfection for which Christ has saved him. The believer must be active in living for Christ.

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Cor. 4:7-8).

"Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Galatians 5:7).

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

2. Paul worked at forgetting the past. This is a verse that is of enormous help to believers who have failed God—miserably failed Him. Paul had so failed God, and he was always confessing how far short he came ([Romans 7:18-19](#); [2 Cor. 3:5](#); [Ephes. 3:8](#)).

Paul faced what so many of us face:

- a. failure and shortcoming
- b. the struggle to forget it and to move on

How does a person do this? It is one of the most difficult things in all the world to do. And it is especially difficult if others are not forgiving and willing to let the believer put his failure behind him. But note: Paul tells us how to deal with the past. How? By concentrating and controlling the mind and by reaching forth to those things which are before us.

Note the concentration and focus:

- a. but *one thing*.
- b. but *this one thing I do*.

In one focused act, we must forget the things that are past and reach forth to those things that are before us. The act involves two parts: both forgetting and reaching forth. The past cannot be forgotten without reaching forth to what lies ahead. A person cannot sit around moaning and regretting the past. To do so is to be concentrating upon the past. The things of the past are to be *forgotten*. The things of the future are to be the focus of

the mind. The believer is to zero in on the things at hand and on the things that lie ahead. If we do this, there is no time to wallow around in the past and its failure.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" ([Luke 13:24](#)).

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" ([1 Cor. 15:58](#)).

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" ([Galatians 6:9](#)).

"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" ([Col. 1:29](#)).

"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" ([Hebrews 12:4](#)).

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" ([1 Peter 1:13](#)).

"Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" ([Rev. 3:11](#)).

3. Paul pressed on toward the goal, toward God's purpose in Christ Jesus. What is God's purpose for us in Christ Jesus? It is to be conformed to the image of Christ—to be perfect even as He is perfect.

Once we are perfect.....

- a) we shall be incorruptible and eternal.
- b) we shall live in honor and glory.
- c) we shall live in God's perfect presence and power.
- d) we shall live in perfect righteousness and purity.
- e) we shall live worshipping and serving God eternally.

Perfection means eternal life, a perfect life that never ends—that goes on and on doing the things that God created us to do. Perfection means the eternal life of Jesus Christ—being conformed to the perfection of Jesus Christ.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" ([Romans 8:16-17](#)).

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" ([Romans 8:29](#)).

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" ([Phil. 3:21](#)).

"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" ([Col. 3:24](#)).

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" ([1 John 3:2](#)).

4. Paul kept his mind on growing and maturing in Christ. All believers are ordained by God to be perfect in Christ Jesus, and we shall be perfected in the glorious day of redemption. Let us, therefore, as many as are ordained by God to be perfected, keep our minds on perfection.

Note: this is sometimes difficult to do because we live in a world that is gripped by the lust for.....

1. comfort and ease
2. pleasure and plenty
3. possessions and recognition
4. indulgence and extravagance
5. more and more

But note something: God will not let the genuine believer rest unless his mind is on righteousness and purity, the gospel and witnessing. God pricks our hearts, reveals that we are failing and coming short. God stirs us to get our minds back upon living like we should—upon pressing for perfection.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" ([Matthew 5:48](#)).

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" ([2 Cor. 13:11](#)).

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" ([Ephes. 4:13](#)).

"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" ([Col. 1:28](#)).

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God" ([Hebrews 6:1](#)).

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" ([James 4:1](#)).

5. Paul maintained the growth he had already achieved. Too many live up and down lives. We gain some discipline and some growth, then before too long, we slip right back.

It may involve.....

1. lying, stealing, or cheating
2. devotions or prayer
3. control of thoughts and mind
4. discipline of body and habits

Growth takes place, but then some circumstance or interruption takes place, and the *new man* and new growth are forsaken and we slip back into being the *old man*, living just like we used to live.

But note the strong exhortation of Scripture: take what you have learned and attained and walk by that rule; keep your mind upon that rule.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" ([Romans 8:6](#)).

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" ([Galatians 5:16](#)).

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" ([Ephes. 5:15](#)).

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" ([1 John 1:7](#)).

"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" ([1 John 2:6](#)).

PHILIPPIANS: DIVISION IV
THE "PRESSING ON" OF THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER,
[Philippians 3:1-21](#)

C. Pressing On: Marking Those Who Walk as Examples, [Philippians 3:17-21](#)

[\(Philippians 3:17-21\)](#) Introduction: this is one of the most important passages in the Bible. It has to do with the example we set before the world and before our families and friends. The way we live and what we do influences people. We may not want to influence them, but it does not matter whether we want to or not: they are influenced. Family, friends, and children—everyone who knows us—watch us; and they follow both the good and the bad of our example. It may be conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional; we may be willing or we may not be willing for them to follow in our steps—it matters not—they follow our example.

We influence people by how we live and by what we do.

1. If we follow good and do good, it encourages them to do good.
2. If we follow bad and do bad, it sets a pattern of bad before others. It even causes some (in particular, the young and immature) to think that since we did it and still got along fairly well, they can do it and get along fairly well, too.

The point is this: the life we live sets a pattern for others to follow. Others are going to follow us no matter what we do. This says something to us, something of critical importance: we must live lives on the highest plane possible. We must set the most dynamic example possible. We must set the most perfect pattern possible for others to follow. But it also says something else: we must follow after those who live on the highest plane of life. We must mark those who walk as examples and follow after the great traits of their lives. We must take those who live as examples and dissect the traits of their lives, and apply those traits to our own lives. This is the subject of the present passage: marking those who walk as examples for us all.

1. **Reason 1: some walk as examples (v.17).**
2. **Reason 2: many walk as enemies of the cross (v.18-19).**
3. **Reason 3: the believer is a citizen of heaven (v.20-21).**

1. [\(Philippians 3:17\)](#) Paul— Testimony: we must mark those who walk as examples, first, because they do walk as examples.

Note what Paul said: he and others followed Christ ever so diligently; therefore, they were dynamic examples as to how people should walk and live. When a person lives a life on the highest plane—when he lives like Christ said to live—he is an example. He is living just like we all should live: just as Christ said.

What did Paul mean? Was he claiming perfection—claiming to be the perfect pattern for men to follow? No! A thousand times no! In fact, the very opposite is true.

He had just declared.....

1. that he could never stand before God in his own righteousness ([Phil. 3:9](#)).
2. that he had not yet attained ([Phil. 3:12](#)).
3. that he was not perfect ([Phil. 3:12](#)).
4. that he had not apprehended that for which Christ had laid hold of him ([Phil. 3:13](#)).

What then did Paul mean? Just what he said. He was a dynamic example...

1. in forgetting the things that were past.
2. in reaching forth to the things that lay ahead.
3. in pressing toward the prize, even the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul was a dynamic example in seeking to follow Christ. He was forever reaching forth, forever pressing to be like Christ. He never reached the perfect pattern of Christ—he could not, not as long as he was a man—but he pressed and pressed to be all he could for Christ. It is this that Paul sets before us as a pattern.

We are to follow Paul.....

1. in forgetting the past, no matter how terrible it is.
2. in reaching forth to the things that lie ahead.
3. in pressing toward the prize, even the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We will never achieve perfection, not in this life, but we are to follow after Christ and seek to be like Him. Now note the point: when we see a person sharing Christ with such dynamic commitment and energy, that person is an example for us. We should follow that person. He is following after Christ, doing the very thing we should be doing. Therefore, he is a living example for us.

Note the word "**example**" (*tupon*). The underlying meaning of the word is that of an imprint or mark made by a blow or some mould or dye. The idea is that we are to be seeking Christ with such diligence that our example will be like a powerful blow being thrown at those around us. Take the most powerful boxing blow of the heavyweight champion and our example for Christ should strike others with just as much power.

Thought 1. No believer should ever claim or think that he has come anywhere close to perfection. But *every believer* should follow Christ with so much commitment and diligence that he is a dynamic example for others. Every believer should be able to say "follow me"—follow my seeking after Christ—my seeking to be like Christ.

"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me" ([1 Cor. 4:16](#)).

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" ([1 Cor. 11:1](#)).

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" ([Phil. 3:17](#)).

"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" ([Phil. 4:9](#)).

"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" ([1 Thes. 1:6](#)).

"Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" ([1 Thes. 2:10](#)).

"For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" ([2 Thes. 3:7](#)).

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" ([1 Tim. 4:12](#)).

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" ([2 Tim. 1:13](#)).

"In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity" ([Titus 2:7](#)).

"But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" ([James 5:12](#)).

2. [\(Philippians 3:18-19\) Testimony— Jesus Christ, Cross: we must mark those who walk as examples, second, because many walk as enemies of the cross.](#)

Who are the enemies of the cross? Many commentators say they are the hypocritical and false believers within the church, those who are nominal Christians. They say that the word "walk" is used of Christians in [Phil. 3:17](#); therefore, it also refers to church members in [Phil. 3:18](#). It is also said that Paul would weep only for false believers within the church.

It is true that Paul could have been referring to false and hypocritical believers within the church; however, **every unbeliever both in and out of the church walks as an enemy of the cross.....**

1. whether the leader of a nation or a movement who is set on wiping out the church and the cross.
2. whether a professing believer who really doubts the substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Note something else as well: it is a common thing for believers to weep for the lost. Certainly Paul wept many times over the lost of the world and not just over false believers within the church. ([Matthew 23:37](#); [Luke 13:34](#); [Romans 9:1-3](#); [Romans 10:1](#); [1 Tim. 2:1-4](#).)

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" ([1 Tim. 2:1-4](#)).

Again, who are the enemies of the cross? It seems best to take the verse for just what it says: there are many who walk as "**the enemies of the cross**"—no matter who they are, whether within or without the church. Unquestionably, the enemies of the cross are many. Note what is said about them.

1. Their end is "destruction" (*apōleia*). The word means **"perdition, destroyed, or slayed; to lose one's well-being; to be wasted and ruined and given a worthless existence"**. It does not mean that a person will cease to exist. It means a person will be destroyed and devastated and condemned to a worthless existence. He will suffer waste and loss and ruin forever and ever.

If a person stands as an enemy of the cross, he shall be destroyed. It does not matter who he is, either within or without the church, he shall suffer perdition, that is, utter destruction. **Who is an enemy of the cross?**

It is the person.....

1. who rejects the cross of Christ as the only way to God.
2. who does not accept the death of Christ as payment for his sins.
3. who does not believe that Christ died for him, that is, as the punishment for his transgressions.
4. who does not believe that the penalty for his imperfection was borne by Christ on the cross.
5. who does not approach God claiming that he is coming by the death of Christ—that is, that he wants God to accept him in the death of Christ.
6. who claims that there are other ways to approach God—ways other than the cross of Christ.
7. who considers the cross of Christ to be foolishness.
8. who opposes and curses Christ and His cross.
9. who persecutes and attempts to stamp out Christ and His cross.
10. who denies and questions that Christ died for our sins.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" ([Matthew 25:46](#); cp. [Matthew 25:25-45](#)).

"But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation" ([Mark 3:29](#)).

"...he [Christ] will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" ([Luke 3:17](#)).

"But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile" ([Romans 2:8-9](#)).

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" ([2 Thes. 1:7-9](#)).

"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people" ([Hebrews 10:29-30](#)).

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" ([2 Peter 2:9](#)).

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" ([Rev. 20:15](#)).

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" ([Rev. 21:8](#)).

2. Their god is their "belly" (*koilia*), that is, their appetite, their sensuality, their desire for the physical pleasures of this world. Physical and material gratification is their god.

They center their lives around.....

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. possessions and property | f. pleasure and sex |
| b. houses and furnishings | g. acceptance and social standing |
| c. food and appetite | h. money and wealth |
| d. comfort and plenty | i. honor and fame |
| e. position and success | |

Just take a moment and think upon any of the above, how some persons center and focus their lives upon such things. Some persons spend more time in front of a mirror or eating or thinking about acceptance or success or possessions or some business deal than they do in prayer.

The point is this: when a person has a craving and an appetite for such things, they become his god. The craving begins to consume his thoughts, energy, and effort. Before long his craving is taking up so much of his energy that he has very little if any time for God or for anything else. His appetite and craving, or as the Scripture says, his belly, becomes his god. Marvin Vincent quotes the Cyclops in Euripides as saying: "My flocks which I sacrifice to no one but myself, and not to the gods, and to this my belly the greatest of the gods: for to eat and drink each day, and to give one's self no trouble, this is the god for wise men" (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol.3, p.452).

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" ([Romans 8:5-6](#)).

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" ([Romans 8:13](#)).

"For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" ([Romans 16:18](#)).

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" ([Ephes. 4:17-19](#)).

3. Their glory is their shame. This simply means that men boast in their sins and shame.

They boast in and pride themselves.....

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| a. in their comfort | f. in their partying |
| b. in their drunkenness | g. in what they eat |
| c. in their gluttony | h. in what they have purchased |
| d. in their conquests | i. in their authority and power |
| e. in their sex | j. in how much they have |

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" ([Luke 12:15](#)).

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" ([Ephes. 5:3](#)).

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence [desire], and covetousness, which is idolatry" ([Col. 3:5](#)).

"Let your conversation [behavior] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" ([Hebrews 13:5](#)).

"For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth" ([Psalm 10:3](#)).

"They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" ([Psalm 49:6-7](#)).

"Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain" ([Proverbs 25:14](#)).

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" ([Proverbs 27:1](#)).

4. They keep their mind on earthly things. This is simply another way of saying that a person is worldly. He focuses his mind, energy and effort upon the things of the world. But note: the things of the world include much more than the physical and material gratifications of this world.

Worldly things also include the commendable things that are accepted by society such as.....

- 1. religions and spiritual pursuits**
- 2. self-development programs**
- 3. rules of virtue and morality**
- 4. the pursuit of ambition or success**
- 5. employment and jobs and business**

As stated, such things are commendable and some are even necessary for survival and health. But the point is this: the basis of our lives must be the cross of Christ, not the things of this world. The only hope for conquering the ills and corruption of society and the evil and death of man is the cross of Christ. Nothing on this earth, no matter how good and beneficial it is, can give us life—not abundant and eternal life. Only Jesus Christ can give us life that conquers all and that infuses us with life that lasts forever. Therefore, the focus of our lives must be Christ and His cross. Yes, we must give our attention to our jobs and families and to the other good and beneficial pursuits of life, but underlying everything we do must be Christ and His cross. He and His cross must be the consuming passion and purpose of our lives. The person who sets his mind on earthly things is an enemy of the cross of Christ.

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be

carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" ([Romans 8:5-6](#)).

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" ([Romans 12:2](#)).

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" ([2 Cor. 10:5](#)).

3. ([Philippians 3:20-21](#)) Heaven— Believer: we must mark those who walk as examples, third, because the believer is a citizen of heaven.

Note three points.

1. **The believer's life is to be heaven-centered, for his citizenship is in heaven.** The word "**conversation**" (*politeuma*) means citizenship in this context. Remember that Philippi was a Roman colony and its citizens, although in Macedonia, were citizens of Rome. As pointed out earlier, the citizens of Roman colonies lived as Romans: they dressed as Romans, spoke the Roman language, lived by the laws of Rome, engaged in Roman pleasures and social affairs, and worshipped the Roman gods. Despite the fact that they lived in Macedonia, their citizenship was in Rome.

The point to see is this: the Philippian believers knew exactly what it meant to live in one place and to be a citizen of another place.

They knew exactly what it would mean to live upon the earth and.....

1. to dress as a citizen of heaven and not of the earth.
2. to speak as a citizen of heaven and not of the earth.
3. to engage in the pleasures of a citizen of heaven and not of the earth.
4. to live by the laws of heaven as well as the laws of earth.
5. to worship the God of heaven and not the religions and gods of this earth.

Thought 1. Believers are to live as citizens of heaven and not of this world. The point is forceful.

"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" ([Luke 10:20](#)).

"That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" ([Luke 22:30](#)).

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" ([Ephes. 2:19](#)).

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" ([Phil. 3:20](#)).

"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" ([Hebrews 11:9-10](#)).

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" ([Hebrews 11:13-16](#)).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" ([1 Peter 1:3-4](#)).

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" ([Rev. 21:27](#)).

2. The believer's life is to be focused upon the return of Christ. He is to be looking for the Lord's return—constantly looking—looking every day of his life. **Lehman Struss** makes a strong point in the following:

*"The greatest event in any country on earth is a visit from its chief emperor. History records the most elaborate preparations and memorials for such an event. Special coins have been minted, commemorative stamps issued, and highways built. Looking forward to the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is the highlight of Christian expectation. We should be dwelling daily in this thought of His return....Imagine how the residents in your neighborhood would feel if the President of the United States had announced that he was making a personal appearance in your community. I feel certain there would be some special preparations for his coming" (*Devotional Studies in Philipians*, p.207f).*

Kenneth Wuest points out that the Greek word "**look**" is made up of three words put together.

There is.....

1. the word "**receive**" which speaks of welcoming as the welcoming of a guest. It also has the idea of preparation for the guest.
2. the word "**off**" which speaks of withdrawing one's attention from other objects.
3. the word "**out**" which has the idea of waiting for, of stretching out the neck and waiting out or for the return of Christ. (*Philipians*, Vol.1, p.102.)

Combined together, the word "look" (*apekdechometha*) means "to yearn, to eagerly look and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus to take His dear people to heaven".

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" ([Matthew 24:44](#)).

"And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come" ([Luke 19:13](#)).

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" ([John 14:1-2](#)).

"So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" ([1 Cor. 1:7](#)).

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" ([1 Thes. 4:16-18](#)).

"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" ([Titus 2:12-13](#)).

"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" ([1 John 2:24](#)).

3. The believer's life is to focus upon the glorious body he is to receive when Christ returns.

a. Right now the believer's body is vile, that is, lowly and humiliating.

The human body is so lowly and humiliating.....

1. • because it has its origin out of the earth: it is nothing more than earthly chemicals or human flesh.
2. • because it is subject to sin and selfishness, evil and destruction.
3. • because it is so weak: it becomes sick and diseased, injured and maimed, aged and deteriorated.
4. • because it is corruptible and dying, aging and mortal, offering no hope of ever lasting beyond a few short years—no hope whatsoever.

b. However, note the wonderful declaration: the Lord Jesus Christ shall change the believer's body and fashion or make it just like His glorious body. The word

"fashion" (*summorphon*) points out a most wonderful thing. The word means the permanent, constant, and unchangeable being of a person. Our bodies shall be fashioned just like the glorious body of Christ. Imagine! To have a body that is permanent, constant, and unchanging. The believer will receive a spiritual body.

"There is a natural body [soma psuchikon] and there is a spiritual body [soma pneumatikon]" (1 Cor. 15:44).

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:21).

We shall be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).

"We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

- c. How is such possible? By the power of God, the very power which is able to subdue all things to Christ.

The very power that created the world and all that is in the world.....

1. is sovereign over the world.
2. is able to control the world.
3. is able to subdue the world.
4. is able to recreate the world.
5. is able to transform the body of man.

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:10-13).