

# An Exposition of Philippians

## Lesson #09 3:1-8

**Preceding Context:** From Lesson #8 we learned of details of Paul’s relationship with this local church and Paul’s planning for the future after his expected release from prison. This included high praise for the man, Epaphroditus, that the Philippian Church sent to Paul with support and for the purpose of ministry to Paul while in house imprisonment

Scripture Text NASU	Commentary
<p><b>3:1</b> <i>Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a <u>safeguard</u> for you.</i></p>	<p><b>Key Words:</b> <u>safeguard</u> ἀσφαλε <i>asphale</i> (804) 5x pronoun meaning - firm, secure from falling, sure, steady, immovable.</p> <p><b>Exposition:</b> Speaking of Epaphroditus’ near death illness and his return to Philippi, recovered from this illness is a reason to rejoice about God’s grace and Epaphroditus’ faithful service in behalf of these faithful saints in Philippi.</p>
<p><b>Cross Reference(s):</b> None</p>	
<p><b>2</b> <i>Beware of the <u>dogs</u>, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;</i></p>	<p><b>Key Words:</b> <u>dogs</u> “during the 1<sup>st</sup> century, dogs roamed the streets and were essentially wild scavengers. Because dogs were such filthy animals, the Jews loved to refer to Gentiles as dogs. Yet here Paul refers to Jews, specifically the Judaizers, as dogs to describe their sinful, vicious, and uncontrolled character.” (John MacArthur note from his Study Bible) Here “dogs” is used to denigrate those Jews who hated Christ and His church, those referred to as Judaizers who were distorting the gospel of grace.</p> <p><b>Exposition:</b> Paul speaks with great severity in this verse because his response is to the Jewish leaders attempting to corrupt the gospel with elements of the Jewish Law. Any attempt to corrupt the gospel with external requirements is heresy of the highest kind. Note the very different view of Paul’s love for his Jewish brethren in Rom 9:1-5 below!! These are not the “Judaizers” who were distorting the gospel.</p>
<p><b>Cross Reference(s):</b> Note Paul’s attitude towards his Jewish brethren in his epistle to the Romans. <b>Rom 9:1-5</b> <i>I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, <sup>2</sup>that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. <sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup>who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, <sup>5</sup>whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.</i></p>	
<p><b>3</b> <i>for we are the <u>true circumcision</u>, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,</i></p>	<p><b>Key Words:</b> <u>true circumcision</u> – is certainly a physical cutting, but implies an inner circumcision of the heart. The physical circumcision was to be a reflection of the inner cleansing and purification of the heart. It was to <i>be the sign of the covenant between Me and you</i> <sup>Gen 17:10-11</sup>.</p> <p><b>Exposition:</b> Believers in Christ have a new heart, a circumcised heart towards God. The outer circumcision of the flesh, performed by men, is meant to be a reflection of the inner circumcision of the heart performed by the Spirit of God. Christian believers should have no confidence in fleshly inclinations towards righteousness!</p>
<p><b>Cross Reference(s):</b> <b>Rom 2:25-29</b> <i>For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup>So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? <sup>27</sup>And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? <sup>28</sup>For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is</i></p>	

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## Lesson #09 3:1-8

outward in the flesh. <sup>29</sup>But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

**4** although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:

**Key Words:** None

**Exposition:** Paul's resume would suggest that he has every right, amongst men, to declare a self-righteousness in his own flesh (see 5-6 below). His resume regarding righteousness in the flesh (by human standards) is exceedingly outstanding.

**Cross Reference(s):** Here is another version of Paul's resume that includes his ministry in Christ.

**2 Cor 11:21-28** But in whatever respect anyone else is bold — I speak in foolishness — I am just as bold myself.

<sup>22</sup>Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

<sup>23</sup>Are they servants of Christ? — I speak as if insane — I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. <sup>24</sup>Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. <sup>26</sup>I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; <sup>27</sup>I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. <sup>28</sup>Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. - - -

**5-6** circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

**Key Words:** zeal ζηλον *zalon* (Str. 2205) 16x noun meaning zeal, earnestness as a positive thing, especially related to God's glory and purpose.

**Exposition:** Here is Paul's Hebrew resume of his former glory of self-righteousness:

- Circumcised the 8<sup>th</sup> day after birth;
- Born of parents of Israeli birth and lifestyle;
- Born of Hebrew parents, raised as a Hebrew, educated as a Hebrew;
- A Pharisee trained to obey the Law perfectly;
- A persecutor of the church with great zeal;
- Blameless in obedience to the Law from his own perspective.

Here are his former bragging rights before Israelites.

**Cross Reference(s):**

**Gal 3:7-14** Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. <sup>8</sup>The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying,

"ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." *Gen 12:3* <sup>9</sup>So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

<sup>10</sup>For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." *Dt 27:26* <sup>11</sup>Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE

RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." *Hab 2:4* <sup>12</sup>However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM." *Lev 18:5* <sup>13</sup>Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE" *Dt 21:23* — <sup>14</sup>in order

that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

**Note:** The Jews made a serious error by understanding that the Mosaic Covenant was an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant. This is an easy mistake to make for the Jews and still is today for the Church. Man's natural inclination about pleasing a god is to perform service and righteousness in our own strength. The gospel of God's grace is counterintuitive to the natural mind.

# An Exposition of Philippians

## Lesson #09 3:1-8

<p><b>7</b> <i>But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as <u>loss</u> for the sake of Christ.</i></p>	<p><b>Key Words:</b> <u>loss</u> ζημιαν <i>zemian</i> (Str. 2209) <b>4x</b> noun meaning – damage, loss, or detriment. These things are no longer of any value to Paul.</p> <p><b>Exposition:</b> The former things that Paul trusted in, he now considers loss, for there is no salvation in these things which are only precursor pictures meant to teach Israel about the principles of salvation alone in Jesus the Christ of Hebrew prophecy.</p>
<p><b>Cross Reference(s):</b>  <b>Gal 2:19-21</b> <i>"For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. <sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. <sup>21</sup>I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."</i></p>	
<p><b>8</b> <i>More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing <u>value</u> of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as <u>rubbish</u> so that I may gain Christ, - - -</i></p>	<p><b>Key Words:</b> <u>value</u> τιμη <i>time</i> (Str. 5092) <b>41x</b> noun meaning the amount something is valued at, its “price”. It can also mean honored or respected. It also has the meaning value beyond monetary value as used here.</p> <p><u>rubbish</u> σκυβαλα <i>skubala</i> (Str. 4657) <b>1x</b> noun meaning – dung, manure, sweepings, refuse, or rubbish. That which has no value in spiritual matters.</p> <p><b>Exposition:</b> In Paul’s life of being in Christ, his former values, his very heritage has become of no account. In Christ, all things are new. Paul’s righteousness is now entirely derived from his relationship, by faith alone in Jesus. In himself, Paul understands that he has attained no merit that adds to his standing before God.</p>
<p><b>Cross Reference(s):</b> Paul writing to the church in Ephesus:  <b>Eph 3:8-11</b> <i>To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup>and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; <sup>10</sup>so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.</i></p>	

### Some Important Quotes

"Purity of heart is to will one thing," said Kierkegaard, and we may with equal truth turn this about and declare, "The essence of sin is to will one thing," for to set our will against the will of God is to dethrone God and make ourselves supreme in the little kingdom of Mansoul. This is sin at its root. Sins may multiply like the sands by the seashore, but they are yet one. Sins are because sin is. This is the rationale behind much maligned doctrine of natural depravity which holds that the impenitent man can do nothing but sin and that his good deeds are really not good at all. His best religious works God rejects as He rejected the offering of Cain. Only when he has restored his stolen throne to God are his works acceptable.

**A. W. Tozer; *The Knowledge of the Holy*; p. 30**

Natural man cannot have a principle of the beauty and the amiableness of holiness simply because he has no idea of its existence. The natural man cannot see because "he has not the ideas in the mind," that is, any awareness of the beauty and loveliness of God. The disclosure of the moral beauties of God is a matter of a "divine and supernatural light" revealed in the innermost recesses of the soul. It enraptures, ravishes with desire, and floods the soul with true delight. The lost individual is not in this desperate condition because he/she is without sufficient faculties of reason and will. No, it is because, in the state of adversity to God and His beauty, he/she responds with vileness and contempt. Humanity is without true mental awareness of the true God. People do not have a knowledge of God as He truly is, so they simply cannot embrace what, to them at least, is nonexistent!

**John D. Hannah;** from *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*; p. 160