




Day 1

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

¹ Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

 “*Finally, my brothers*”: Some commentators opine that Paul was concluding his letter to the Philippians (verse 1) and either (1) someone interrupted his concluding thoughts with news concerning the Philippian church or (2) the Holy Spirit pricked his soul to include these words of warning against the teachings of the Judaizers. Starting with verse 2, Paul is ‘on-fire,’ denouncing the teachings of the Judaizers.

 It seemed that, as soon as Paul moved-on to his next missionary location from a church which he had started (e.g., the Church at Philippi), the Judaizers appeared (Satan at work). While the new Believers believed in the saving grace of Christ Jesus as Paul taught, the Judaizers convincingly taught that their new belief was not enough – the new Believers also needed to follow the old Jewish laws, which the Jews themselves failed to follow with perfect compliance. Additionally, the Judaizers also taught that all true believing men needed to be circumcised, an act which Paul refers to as a mutilation.

The Judaizers’ teaching turned the work of Christ Jesus on its head. Suddenly, the new Believers were working for their salvation, not out of loving obedience to the Savior and His gift of redemption to all who simply believe, but as a way for the person to earn their way into Heaven through his or her own efforts. Therefore, salvation was no longer a gift from our Savior but an endless series of chores.

It is similar to climbing an endless ladder in which the top of the ladder is shrouded in fog so the climber really has no idea how tall the ladder is. During the climb, sometimes the climber hangs-on for dear life just happy to maintain the status quo, sometimes the climber manages to climb several rungs in a row, and sometimes the climber commits a sin and falls-down a rung or two before catching him- or her-self. The point is that the climber becomes old and decrepit without ever reaching the top of the ladder. Whereas, Christ Jesus whisks the true Believer to the top, bypassing the ladder altogether. Thank You, Jesus!

² Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh.

Q1. When Paul writes “dogs”, to whom is he referring?

Q2. What evil do the “dogs” perform?

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Q3. Why does Paul refer to them “as mutilators of the flesh”?

Acts 15:1-2a [NIV-1984]

¹ Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ^{2a} This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them.

Galatians 2:4-5; 3:1-5, 8-14 [NIV-1984]

^{2:4} This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. ⁵ We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. . .

^{3:1} You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.

² I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? ³ Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? ⁴ Have you suffered so much for nothing -- if it really was for nothing? ⁵ Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? . . .

^{3:8} The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." ⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰ All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." ¹¹ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." ¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

³ For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh --
⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

Q4. Why does Paul say that he “put[s] no confidence in the flesh”?

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Q5. If circumcision is bad, why does Paul write, “we who are the circumcision”?

Q6. Paul writes: “we . . . worship by the Spirit”; we . . . glory in Christ Jesus”; we . . . put no confidence in the flesh”. Are these traits of a Believer in Christ Jesus?


Yes?
No? } Why?

⁵ If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

Q7. What is Paul trying to prove through his list of qualifications?

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Day 2

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⁷ But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Q8. If Paul considered the qualifications listed in verses 5 & 6 (↑) as “to my profit”, why does he now “consider [his ‘qualifications’ a] loss for the sake of Christ”?

⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ -- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Q9. What has Paul lost as he obeys Christ Jesus (“I have lost all things”)?

Q10. Paul seems to be a pretty good, religious guy. Why does he write that he has “no . . . righteousness [to be ‘right’ with God] of my own that comes from the law”?

Q11. Should we, like Paul, aspire to become righteous?

Yes? }
No? } Why?

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21


Q12. In reading verse 9, how are you and I to attain righteousness?

Q13. What are some personal barriers (or excuses) to attaining righteousness?

Q14. Have you attained righteousness?

Yes? }
No? } Why?

Day 3

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¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,
¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Q15. How do we “know Christ”? (Through Scripture? Obedience? Action? Prayer? Others?)

Q16. Paul “want[s] to know . . . the power of his resurrection”. How did Paul gain this knowledge?

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Colossians 3:1 [NIV-1984]

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Romans 4:25 [NIV-1984]

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

1 Corinthians 15:17 [NIV-1984]

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

Q17. Paul “want[ed] to know Christ and the . . . fellowship of sharing in his sufferings”. What did Paul mean?

Q18. Paul “want[ed] to . . . becom[e] like Him in His death”. If Paul wanted to be identified with Christ, does Paul want to be crucified? Why?

Yes? } Why?
No? }

Colossians 1:24 [NIV-1984]

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

Matthew 10:38 [NIV-1984]

and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Matthew 16:24 [NIV-1984]


Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. . ."

2 Timothy 2:11-13 [NIV-1984]

¹¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

Q19. Does “becoming like Him in His death” mean that we, too, should aspire to die by crucifixion?

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

 The simple answer to the above question is “No”. However, it does mean that our lives should be lived as one focused on our Lord Christ Jesus. Our lives should demonstrate the love, mercy, compassion, and service of Christ Jesus, because we are God’s obedient feet (to carry us), hands (to serve), ears (to listen), and voice (to speak God’s loving Truth) to the people God brings to us to receive our ministrations and to observe us as we demonstrate Jesus’ love to others. And our spouses, our children should be first-in-line to receive our love, respect, and service, because God has blessed us with a partner and some with children. We should train our children in the Lord through our example and training in the Scripture.

Will we fail? If you are like me, then . . . yes, frequently. However, God wants us to try . . . and try . . . and try, again. Jesus did not give up. Paul strove to finish the race. God wants you and me to finish the race, too. God has given us Scripture, prayer, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and other Believers to provide guidance, an ear to listen, a convicting conscience, and an encouraging word. God wants what is best for you, and for me. That does not mean that His holy vending machine will give us whatever we covet, but it does mean that for the benefit of our soul He loves to give us that which is best for us. God be praised! God’s will be done!

Acts 20:24 [NIV-1984]

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me -- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Q20. How do we “attain . . . resurrection from the dead”?

2 Corinthians 5:1-5 [The Message (MSG)] [A paraphrase]


¹⁻⁵ For instance, we know that when these [physical] bodies of ours are taken down like tents and folded away, they will be replaced by resurrection bodies in heaven — God-made, not handmade — and we’ll never have to relocate our “tents” again. Sometimes we can hardly wait to move — and so we cry out in frustration. Compared to what’s coming, living conditions around here seem like a stopover in an unfurnished shack, and we’re tired of it! We’ve been given a glimpse of the real thing, our true home, our resurrection bodies! The Spirit of God whets our appetite by giving us a taste of what’s ahead. He puts a little of heaven in our hearts so that we’ll never settle for less.

Romans 6:3-5 [NIV-1984]

³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?
⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Day 4

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ^{13a} Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.

Philippians 3:12 [The Message (MSG)] [A paraphrase]

I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me.

Q21. How do you explain Paul's words, "I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me"?

Q22. When Jesus met Saul/Paul on the 'Road to Damascus', did God have a plan for Paul?

Acts 22: 6-11 [NIV-1984]

⁶ "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?'

⁸ " 'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. ⁹ " 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied.

My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

¹⁰ 'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked.

¹¹ " 'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'

Q23. Does God have a plan for you?

Yes? } Why did you circle that answer?
No? }

Psalms 139:16^b [NIV-1984]

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Q24. How does a person discover God's plan for himself/herself?

Q25. Does your personal discovery of God's plan require trust? Prayer? Scripture reading? Obedience? Action? Others?

Q26. If God has a plan for each one of us, do we still have free-will?

Yes? } Thoughts?
No? }

^{13b} But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Q27. Paul writes that he "[forgets] what is behind". Do we sometimes do (or say) something, judge that we did it poorly, remember it, and then refuse to repeat anything that remotely resembles that which we did or said? If we appropriated Paul's philosophy for our own, what might be the outcome?

Q28. Paul writes that he is "straining toward what is ahead". Since we cannot foretell the future, what does it take to "strain . . . toward what is ahead"?

This declaration: T _ _ _ T IN GOD!

Q29. If we trust God to know that which is best for our eternal souls and His Heavenly prize for each one of us who believe, what barriers must be removed in our life to take that first step of action? To say that word of witness to an unbeliever? To serve that person in need?

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Romans 10:12-15 [NIV-1984]

¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

James 2:17 [NIV-1984]

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Psalms 56:3 [NIV-1984]

When I am afraid, I will trust in you.

Psalms 56:11 [NIV-1984]

in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Luke 12:12 [NIV-1984]

for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."



Implied in each one of these verses is action — we, who believe and obey, must step-out in faith. We must take the first step. We must open our mouths and speak. In faith, we take the first step. And God promises to come alongside of us. God gives us His Words through the Holy Spirit; but God may also judge that our words are enough and we do not need any Heavenly embellishments.

We must believe, we must trust, that God's plan is enough. We may want, with every fiber in our being, that this person before us becomes a Believer, or rejects a certain sin, or an addiction. God may use our words and prayers to begin a change in him or her. The person may undergo an epiphany ("I believe!"), but more likely our demonstrated faith-in-action will bear fruit at some time in the future — God's will be done!

John 15:18 [NIV-1984]


¹⁸ "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.



We must remember that our words spoken in faith to someone may be rejected; our faith-in-action may be rejected, our words ridiculed; their words may be hurled back at us with a venom that is aimed to humiliate, to ridicule. The world is Satan's. The world rejected Christ Jesus first. Many will reject Jesus, some will accept. We do not know who will embrace our words spoken in faith, our behavior that demonstrates our belief in Him, so we must trust, obey, and do. And some will be saved! Praise the LORD!

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Day 5

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

¹⁵ All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

Q30. To whom is Paul referring when he writes, "All of us who are mature"? What identifies a "mature" person?

Who is mature?

Identification?

Q31. How does the dictionary define legalism (as it relates to religion)?

Romans 14:1 [The Message (MSG)] [A paraphrase]

Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with -- even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently.

Q32. What are some examples of fundamental beliefs within the church? What are some examples of inconsequential matters?

Fundamental?

Inconsequential?

Q33. Should inconsequential matters be given the same weight in an argument as fundamental beliefs?

Yes?
No? } Why?

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Q34. Are we to correct (or divide) over inconsequential matters?

Yes? }
No? } Why?

Q35. Regarding differences, how might God “make clear to you” that which is fundamental versus inconsequential?

Acts 17:11 [NIV-1984]

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

¹⁶Only let us live up to what we have already attained. ¹⁷Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.

Q36. Verse 16: What have they “attained”?

Q37. Verse 16: How might they “live up to what we have already attained”?


Q38. Verse 17: Paul asks the Philippians to “[follow] my example”. What does your “example” illustrate to those in your life? Dedicated to Christ? Hypocrite? A sinner forgiven by Christ? Others?

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Q39. Verse 17: What does Paul imply when he tells the Philippians to “take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you”?

Q40. Verse 17: When Paul writes “take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you”, does he expect we, who are ‘taking notes’, to confront hypocrisy or sin in the other person’s life?

Day 6

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today’s study.

¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

Q41. Verse 18: Can you provide 2-3 examples of who might be an “[enemy] of the cross of Christ” from either Paul’s time or in our world today?

①

②

③

Q42. Verse 18: Do “many” in our world today “live as enemies of the cross of Christ”?

Yes? }
No? } Why did you circle that answer?

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

Q43. Verse 19: This commentator asks, “I love the many flavors of food and drink. Why does Paul condemn my stomach, when he writes, ‘their god is their stomach’? Or is this an illustrative metaphor (an example)?”

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Q44. Verse 20: Who does Paul name as the “Savior from [Heaven]”?

Q45. Verse 21: What power does the “Savior from [Heaven]” have?

Q46. Verse 21: When our physical bodies die, what happens to the bodies (souls) of Believers?

Q47. Do you believe in the saving grace of the Savior Christ Jesus of Nazareth?

Yes?
No? } Why did you circle that answer?

1 Peter 4:19 [(NIV-1984)]

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

1 John 2:5-6 [(NIV-1984)]

⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶ Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Lesson 3: Philippians 3:1-21

1 John 4:1-3 [(NIV-1984)]

¹ Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

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