

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS
Chapter 3: Attentive to God's Upward Call

INTRODUCTION

The Philippians: Proud, strong, free citizens of the mighty kingdom of Rome

Yet, a greater Kingdom is now at work in the world.

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3)

I. OUTLINE OF THE LETTER

A. Chapter One - This new Kingdom is on the move. It is unstoppable, because its tactics are utterly subversive.

¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (Philippians 1)

B. Chapter Two - This peculiar Kingdom is merely imitating its king: King Jesus

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2)

"So, you Philippians, imitate him!"

C. Chapter Three - "So, you Philippians, imitate me!"

¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. (Philippians 3)

D. Chapter Four - The Result of living this way is Joy and Peace

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4)

II. WHAT WAS THE EXAMPLE THAT PAUL LEFT US? (Chapter 3 explored)

A. v. 4 - Paul was truly a big deal - his credentials were superior:

⁴ ... If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more ...

B. v. 7- 8a - One can't hang on to being a big deal – and take hold of Christ.

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ^{8a} Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

C. v. 8b - There is a comparison to be made a weighing up of gains and losses

^{8b} For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

“Rubbish” - σκόβαλον - literally: “just a bunch of crap”

“Gain” - κερδαινω - a business term – see James 4:13 – “we will go and make a profit”

D. v. 11 - But in what sense does Paul mean these things are a loss?

¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

He is on a journey. He wants to reach the goal of the journey – the resurrection from the dead.

“Attain” - καταντήσω – “to reach the goal on a journey” - used 9 times in Acts

E. vv. 13a – It is inevitable: on a journey somethings must be left behind

^{13a} Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind

1. The things left behind: some are pink bunnies and white elephants; others are precious treasures

2. Paul's sea voyage in Acts 27. Great storms and tempest pounded the ship!

²¹ Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss" ³⁵ And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) ³⁸ And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea. (Acts 27)

F. 13b-14 – Obtaining the Goal

The end of our journey is the resurrection Kingdom. Our guide and navigation to there is the upward call of God in Christ Jesus

^{13b} ... and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

III. TRAVELLER, HOW FAR ARE YOU IN YOUR JOURNEY?

A. This is what Christian perfection means – pressing toward this goal

¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

B. A personal word ...