

Philippians Lesson 6 Articles

Phil 3:3 The Jew placed his confidence in the physical badge of circumcision and in the performance of the duties of the Law. The Christian places his confidence only in the mercy of God and in the love of Jesus Christ. The Jew in essence trusted himself; the Christian in essence trusts God.¹

Phil 3:8 We never have to worry that we will “miss out” on the good things in life because of our Christian faith. *Nothing* we give up because of our connection to Christ has any lasting value.²

Paul was religious before he was saved, but his religion could not save him. He had to lose his religion in order to find eternal life! He begins this chapter by warning the believers against religion apart from Christ. The Jews called the Gentiles “dogs,” but here Paul uses the term “dogs” to describe the Jewish teachers who emphasized circumcision and keeping the Law. (We met those teachers in Acts 15 and Galatians.) In fact, he does not even call the rite “circumcision”; he calls it “concision,” which means “a cutting, a mutilation of the flesh.” True worship is in the Spirit (John 4:20–24) and not in the flesh; it honors Jesus Christ, not religious leaders; it depends on God’s grace, not on fleshly strength. How much of what passes for the Christian faith in this world is really only fleshly religion.

Paul had the best possible reputation as a Jewish rabbi. In birth and training, he far surpassed all of his friends (see Gal. 1:11–24). He was sincere too; his Jewish religion meant life and death to him. So sincere was he that he even persecuted those who differed with him. If any man could get to heaven on the basis of character and religion, it was Paul—and yet he was a lost sinner apart from Jesus Christ! When he met Christ, he considered all of his earthly and fleshly attainments mere rubbish! “I counted” (v. 7) is the way he puts it. He measured carefully, took stock of himself, and decided that all of his religion and worldly honors were not worth it. He wanted Christ!

What did Paul obtain through faith in Christ? Righteousness, for one thing (v. 9). Paul had plenty of legal righteousness (v. 6), but he lacked that true righteousness that God demands and that He alone can give. It is one thing to be religious enough to get into the synagogue, and quite another to be righteous enough to get into heaven. Paul also obtained a personal knowledge of Christ. Salvation is not knowing about Christ; it is knowing Him (John 17:3). Paul also experienced resurrection power (see Eph. 3:14ff) in his life. Added to these blessings was the privilege of suffering for Christ (Phil. 1:29). Finally, through Christ he was given a new promise: the “out-resurrection from the dead” (v. 11). The Jews believed in the resurrection, that is, a general resurrection at the end of the age; but Christ introduced a resurrection of the just out from among the dead. This is called the first resurrection (1 Thes. 4:13–18; Rev. 20:5). When Paul says “If by any means . . .” he is not suggesting uncertainty but humility. To think that he, a murderer, should share in that glorious resurrection!³

¹ Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1975). *The letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (electronic ed., p. 56). Philadelphia: The Westminster John Knox Press.

² Stanley, C. F. (2005). *The Charles F. Stanley life principles Bible: New King James Version* (Php 3:8). Nashville, TN: Nelson Bibles.

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (pp. 566–567). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.