

## Exegetical Notes – Philippians 3:1-14

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship  
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320  
610-384-1375  
[charleshjensen@aol.com](mailto:charleshjensen@aol.com)

### Philippians 3:1-14

#### Verses 1-4a

**<sup>1</sup> Further, my brothers and sisters, 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. <sup>2</sup> Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—<sup>4</sup> though I myself have reasons for such confidence.**

- Paul tells his reader that they should rejoice in the Lord and not in themselves. We are saved by God's grace alone. It is not of ourselves. So, our joy should be in the Lord and what He has done for us. Paul has told them this before but, for their good, he repeats it again, so that they will not be confused in any way.
- He warns them to “watch out” for “those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.” All of these terms are derogatory and insulting. He is referring to those teachers who teach that “circumcision is necessary for salvation;” either Jews or Jewish converts to Christianity who insist that one must not only trust God for salvation but also keep the Jewish laws. He claims that those who trust Jesus alone for their salvation are the “true circumcision;” those chosen by God, not those who put their faith in works of the flesh.
- He then reminds his readers that he, personally, had all the right credentials to claim salvation by works of the flesh before he knew Jesus as his Savior.

#### Verses 4b-6

***If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> 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; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.***

- He lays out his credentials. He was circumcised according to the Hebrew law. He was born into the tribe of Benjamin. He practiced Judaism without

flaw. He was a Pharisee. And he persecuted the Church. He was a perfect Jew.

### Verses 7-11

*<sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> 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 on the basis of faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

- But now, after coming to Jesus, he knows that all he once counted as important is garbage. He now knows that salvation is God's gift given through faith in Jesus Christ. He only wants to know Christ and to become sanctified, to become more and more like Jesus.
- He is simply trusting Jesus to save him from the consequences of his sin, death, and to give him eternal life.

### Verses 12-14

*<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

- Sanctification is not a fact complete. It is a process, a life-long process, which begins when a person accepts Jesus as his Savior and continues until the day that person is perfected by God's grace in Heaven.
- So, Paul has not arrived, but is progressing toward the goal of Christlikeness. He presses ahead to become more and more like Jesus.
- He seeks to please God more and more. The goal is to become more and more like Jesus.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on Philippians 3:1-14. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)