

TO KNOW CHRIST AND HIS POWER (PHILIPPIANS 3)

The epistle of Philippians, by the Apostle Paul, is one of four letters that are considered to be his "prison epistles", that Paul wrote while in Rome. They are comprised of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon (fee-LAY-mone-filet moan). Each of Paul's prison epistles are quite personal in tone, and are much different from his letters to the Corinthians and the Galatians. The Corinthian church had quite a few issues that needed to be dealt with such as division within the church (**1:10**), sexual immorality (**5:1**), suing one another (**6:1**), causing others to stumble in their new-found "liberty in Christ Jesus" (**8:9**), support of the clergy/church leadership, or rather, their lack of support (**9:9**), dishonoring communion (**11:27**), proper order in the church (**14:40**), and unbelief in the resurrection (**15:12**). The letter to the Galatians was actually for a group of churches in the region of Galatia. The problem with those churches was that they were comprised of both Jews and Gentiles, although that alone wasn't the problem.

More specifically, the Jews who were to be called "Judaizers" "taught a combination of God's grace and human effort [and] were called "Judaizers." The word Judaizer comes from a Greek verb meaning "to live according to Jewish customs." The word appears in **Galatians 2:14** where Paul describes how he confronted Peter for forcing Gentile Christians to "Judaize." A Judaizer taught that, in order for a Christian to truly be right with God, he must conform to the Mosaic Law. Circumcision, especially, was promoted as necessary for salvation. Gentiles had to become Jewish proselytes first, and then they could come to Christ. The doctrine of the Judaizers was a mixture of grace (through Christ) and works (through the keeping of the Law). This false doctrine was dealt with in **Acts 15** and [is] strongly condemned in the book of Galatians. At the Jerusalem Council in **Acts 15**, a group of Judaizers opposed Paul and Barnabas. Some men who belonged to the party of the Pharisees insisted that Gentiles could not be saved unless they were first circumcised and obeyed the Law of Moses. Paul made the case that, in Christ, there was no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile, for God had purified the hearts of the Gentiles by faith (**Acts 15:8-9**). He said it plainly in **Galatians 2:16**: "A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." To add anything to the work that Christ did for salvation is to negate God's grace. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, not by returning to the Law. "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing" (**Galatians 2:21**)."¹

1 <https://www.gotquestions.org/Judaizers.html>

You'll see shortly why I brought all that up, when we begin reading in **Philippians 3**. Yet another difference between Philippians (or any of the other prison epistles) with Galatians is that Paul gives a warm greeting and powerful prayer to the former and for the Galatians, he starts with a nice enough greeting saying, "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who **gave Himself for our sins**, that **He might deliver us from this present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (**Galatians 1:3-5**) But then says, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." (**Galatians 1:6-8**) Sounds pretty harsh, eh? Paul in addressing the issue of false teachings, such as was with the the Judaizers, said to Timothy, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times [of which they were in and so too are we] some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." (**1 Timothy 4:1-5**) The Apostle Paul and the other apostles got together to discuss faith vs. the law in what we call the Jerusalem Council, in **Acts 15**. They concluded, through the words of James, the brother of Jesus, saying "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are **turning to God** [aka-repentance: metaneo, recognizing a need for change and heeding to that need, which is the Righteousness in Christ], but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood." (**Acts 15:18-20**) All those things could be said to have been associated with the practice of pagan idol worship. We'll see a clearer picture of what that all means as we look at Paul's letter to the Philippians and read **Philippians 3**.

Paul's greeting to the Philippians was warm and genuinely affectionate as he says, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, **for your fellowship in the gospel** from the first day until now [Paul is saying he recognizes the genuineness of their faith], being confident of this very thing, that **He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ** [as love hopes all things and believes all things, **1 Corinthians 13:7**]; just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because **I have you in my heart**, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

[Partakers of grace? Once again, as Paul had said "I do not set aside the grace of God", as His grace continues with us, working in us, to share and show the love and the gospel of Christ Jesus, as God is presently building His eternal kingdom, with us, through us and for us, in Christ! **Ephesians 2:8-10**] For God is my witness, **how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ**. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." (**Philippians 1:3-11**) Fruits of righteousness: fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**) So, Paul didn't have to address all those issues that the church at Corinth were having or the churches of Galatia, in his letter to the Philippians. Paul was just focused on encouraging them in Christ Jesus and in fellowship with one another!

While we are not then following the Mosaic law, a primary verse(s) in Philippians, that could be said to be its theme, and is not just what Paul was called to, but for us as well, is **Philippians 1:21-23**, where Paul says, "For to me, **to live is Christ, and to die is gain**. [That has a double meaning. Paul was speaking of a physical death where he would be in the presence and glory of God, but to "die is gain" also has a spiritual meaning. As Paul explained in **Romans 6:11**, to "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." That is just as Jesus said, "**I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**" (**John 14:6**) Paul continues:] But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean **fruit from my labor**; [and we are all promised that our labor in Christ is not in vain (**1 Corinthians 15:58**) and His Word will not return void (**Isaiah 55:11**)] yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and **be with Christ**, which is far better." Paul is implying that to physically die means no more agonizomai (striving, struggling, laboring intensively) in the faith, no more thlipsis, tribulation, all the stuff that comes against us as we are in this spiritual battle. Paul knew that Christ is always with us but the difference cannot be compared to what will be. Nevertheless, Jesus will be with us from the beginning of our life of faith in Christ to the end, where we will be eternally with Him. As Jesus gave, what we call, His "Great Commission" to His disciples, which has been passed on to us. He said, "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**" (**Matthew 28:18-20**) We are indeed, as believers of Christ, then following Him AND His Word that can be summed up in what Jesus said was the Great Commandments of God: to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind and

to love others as ourselves. (**Mark 12:30-31**). We are responding TO the love of God in Christ but are then also living according to who HE IS, as He dwells in us. "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them [the spirits of the Antichrist], because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who **knows God** hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. **Beloved**, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is **born of God** and **knows God**. He who does not love does not know God, for **God is love**. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, **that we might live through Him**. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (**1 John 4:4-11**) Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. [Great Commandments: LOVE] And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (**John 14:15-18**) "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me." (**John 14:22-24**) We are not following the Mosaic law, we are following Christ Jesus in the love of God!

In **Philippians 2**, speaks of what should be our perspective and how we should then conduct ourselves. "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ [or encouragement-paraklesis (holy urging)²] if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, **having the same love**, being of one accord, of one mind. [Consolation (paraklesis): parakletos (Holy Spirit), parakalountes (exhorting one another)] Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each **esteem others better than himself**. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus [**Romans 12:1-2**], who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled Himself** and became **obedient** to the

2 <https://biblehub.com/greek/3874.htm>

point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, **my beloved**, as you have always **obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both **to will** and **to do** for His good pleasure." (**Philippians 2:1-13**) Hopefully for all of us, that fear becomes the love of God. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." (**1 John 4:18**) Bottom line: God is perfecting His love in us!

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Philippians 3 Finally, my brethren, **rejoice in the Lord**. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe [a-sphales (as-fah-LACE): not fail]. Beware of dogs [(figuratively) "a spiritual predator who feeds off others"³], beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! [speaking of physical circumcision] For **WE ARE** the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit [as Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, "the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (**John 4:23-24**)], **rejoice in Christ Jesus**, and **have no confidence in the flesh**, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, **persecuting the church** [that's where Paul's flesh led him]; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the **knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may **gain Christ and be found in Him**, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through **faith in Christ**, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may **know Him** and the **power of His resurrection**, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on ["dioko" means pursue with all haste, chasing after, earnestly desiring to overtake, apprehend⁴], that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, **forgetting those things which are behind** and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press [dioko] toward the

3 <https://biblehub.com/greek/2965.htm>

4 <https://biblehub.com/greek/1377.htm>

goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, **God will reveal even this to you.** Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who **set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven,** from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which **He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**

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In closing, in the following chapter, Paul encourages us by saying, **“Rejoice** in the Lord always. Again I will say, **rejoice!** Let your gentleness be known to all men. **The Lord is at hand** [is near]. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will **guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.** Finally, brethren, whatever things are **true,** whatever things are **noble,** whatever things are **just,** whatever things are **pure,** whatever things are **lovely,** whatever things are of **good report,** if there is any **virtue** and if there is anything **praiseworthy**—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the **God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:4-9)** That same power that raised Jesus from the dead, is what we look for in saving, delivering, and healing us. As we have believed on Christ Jesus for dying on a cross for our sins against God, as He was raised from the dead on the third day, conquering death, sin and evil, and “who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (**2 Corinthians 1:22**), “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, IF indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” (**Romans 8:12-17**) To know Christ and His Power! “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (**Romans 8:31**) “We are more than conquerors through Him who love[s] us.” (**Romans 8:37**) “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (**1 John 4:4**) There is power in Jesus! May we all know Jesus and His Resurrection Power!