

1. **Introduction:** Paul told the Philippians of his beginnings, who he was and what he accomplished as a dedicated Jew. Paul was an admirable Jew, brilliant and accomplished.
 - He had been convinced that followers of Jesus were deceived about who Jesus was. Their deceptive view of Jesus led them away from Judaism.
 - Paul’s wrong beliefs about Jesus were radically changed while on his way to Damascus to continue his attacks on Christians. The risen Jesus appeared and confronted him.
 - In the next few verses, Paul relates how that meeting with the risen Christ changed him completely. In an instant he ceased to be an enemy of Christ and committed the remainder of his life to doing whatever Christ required of him.
2. **Philippians 3:7-11:** *But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith -¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*
 - Paul’s view of his life was now divided into two parts, “before and after encountering the risen Christ.” It seems that literally “in a flash of light” Paul’s life was totally changed, redirected and dedicated to preaching the gospel, particularly in the Gentile world.
 - To that point, he had devoted his life to learning about, protecting, and living Judaism. He studied with Gamaliel and had become a powerful Pharisee.
 - In his past life, he was successful, quickly advancing in authority and power. But, when the risen Christ appeared to him, he knew in that instant that he was in the presence of God and his future would be committed to doing whatever Christ wanted him to do.
 - Paul’s experience on the Damascus road was “shock and awe” beyond anything we can fully comprehend.
 - Paul says, *For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.*
 - The word translated “*rubbish*” literally means “dung, excrement, manure.” Paul recognizes that all his earthly treasures and accomplishments are worthless compared to being found in Christ.
 - Paul had worked all his life to obtain righteousness under the Law. Now he knew that labor had been in vain. But Christ drew Paul into Himself, giving him righteousness from God that could not be obtained from the law, available only by faith in Jesus and His salvation work.

- The crucial things he received “in Christ” by faith, he could not earn on his own.
 - Through this new relationship “in Christ,” the power of Christ’s resurrection became a present reality for Paul, enabling him to rejoice even as he shared in Christ’s sufferings. He now knew that the sufferings he endured for faith served to conform him to Christ’s character of selfless humility. This new relationship was a “seal” for the promise of future hope of attaining to the resurrection from the dead.
3. **The World as It is Today:** Like much of society, the media of today are proud of their “open-mindedness.”
- They parade before our eyes and ears immoral living as a virtue, an exercise of freedom to be proud of. They claim society is gaining new wisdom.
 - Utopian social progress is on the way through means that are entirely secular and often lean toward being anti-Christian.
 - From government to churches, from education to labor unions, from spirituality to ethics, from loyalty to watching out for # 1, the 21st century world functions on the assumption that people are basically good, society can and will be made better. Christians are viewed as a major impediment.
 - The problem with this outlook is that its foundations are false. People are not basically good, nor are things getting better all over the world. War not peace continues to be the norm. Quarrels, conflicts, lawsuits, and family feuds are common-place happenings.
 - Friendships dissolve, marriages fracture, personalities collide, and churches split. Why? Are these things something new to the world? No! Since Adam and Eve’s sin, the depravity of humanity continuously takes an awful toll on all. Sin abounds.
 - Children disobey parents, young and old disobey laws, etc. People are not basically good. The world of people is not getting better. There is hope but in God not humanity.
 - Despite all this, God has chosen to leave believers on earth, not to retreat and hide from its foolishness, pain, and other suffering, but to engage with the reality, obedient to God, and reaching out to those around us in Christian love.
 - This path will produce a bumpy ride. The road between the first and second coming of Christ is a time of significant risk to believers and of great demands on their faithfulness and obedience.
 - There is some comfort in knowing Christians have always had to journey through a wicked, hostile world. They have left us paths to follow. Paul gives important truths and practical advice for us as we follow Christ in the here and now and look to future glory.
4. **Acts 9:1-2:** *But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.⁴ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to*

him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”⁵ And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

- Until the risen Christ confronted Paul on the Damascus road, he was trusting in his abilities and proven track record and relying on his religious connections and his distinguished pedigree.
 - Now, he has for years obediently followed Christ, is currently in prison but presses on.
5. **Philippians 3:12-16**: *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind 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.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.*
- When the risen Christ confronted him on the Damascus road, Paul’s world was changed. All of his past achievements disintegrated before the transforming power of Jesus Christ.
 - Paul received salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. From that instant, the joy of being in Christ gave Paul an abiding confidence that kept him going both through dark days of tough times and glorious days of unfettered success in spreading the gospel.
 - But none of this meant Paul had arrived. His experience on the Damascus road had turned him from the wrong path and started him on a new faith journey in the right direction. His goal now was obedience to Christ and achieving Christlikeness.
 - There were obstacles and distractions, but Paul presses on to accomplish the task Christ has assigned to him. This he gladly does because Christ has made him His own.
 - So, Paul forgets the difficulties of the past and strains toward what lies ahead. He says, ***“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”***
 - In 3:12, notice that God’s plan is that we progress, not that we achieve perfection. So, Paul says, ***“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on.”***
 - Perfection in our earthly life is not possible. We are frail, fallen, feeble human creatures.
 - But progress in Christlikeness is not only possible but is what we commanded to do.
 - Constant, uninterrupted progress toward the goal of Christ-likeness is not likely, but progress is possible. We are to press on despite knowing that we must await glorification to be fully Christlike.
 - As Paul says, learn from the past but don’t be hampered by it. Leave it behind. Living in the past whether to glory in old success or to grieve over old sins and defeats interferes with advancing boldly into the future on the terms that Christ requires.
 - Paul says, hold on to that which you have attained, but know that the future has great possibilities that you need to reach out for. He mentions that you need maturity in Christ to leave behind the past and press forward reaching for success in the future.

6. **Philippians 3:17-21:** *Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.* ¹⁸ *For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.* ¹⁹ *Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.* 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.*

- The path believers must walk through the world has many pitfalls that can distract or slow us down. There are also “predators,” enemies of Christ and a danger to us.
- These predators may in many ways look and act like believers. They are not. Paul gives some instructions for pressing on in the face of obstacles and battles.
- (1.) Find some godly examples to follow. All believers need mature models in the faith who have faced and overcome obstacles and tragedies.
- God intentionally gives us contemporary models to follow. We must remember that they are sinners saved by grace just as we are. They are not perfect. But their experience in living God honoring lives amid our twisted, corrupt, sinful world provides a sound basis for advice.
- Carefully choose suitable models of Christian living to imitate. God will provide suitable people for each of us, trustworthy people whose example we can follow and whose advice we can depend on to be consistent with what Christ requires.
- (2.) Each believer will encounter enemies of the cross. The negative characteristics of such opponents of Christ, make Paul weep just to think about them. Such people need neither our condemnation or judgment, nor our agreement or affirmation. They need Christ.
- Our mission is to provide a good example and witness of and to the gospel of Christ.
- (3.) ***But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.***
- Paul says this in contrast with the lost whose minds are set on earthly things. Believers are to focus their minds on the truth that they are citizens of heaven with obligations to the Lord of heaven.
- In our time on earth, we are accountable to earthly rulers (who are accountable to God) but our true citizenship is in heaven and our ultimate accountability is to God.
- Ultimately, we will be home in heaven but presently we are sojourners on earth. When our journey home is completed, we will be free of the pain and sorrow of this world, reunited with all who have gone on before us, and free to rejoice eternally in Christ our King.

7. **Next:** 4:1-3.