**Chapter 3 of this letter begins with the word “finally”; Paul is wrapping up his “thank you note” to the Philippian church. He has already given us several verses and passages worthy of meditation and memorization: 1:6 (our unconditional guarantee of salvation); 1:21 (it only gets better when Christians depart this world); 2:5-11 (the mind of Christ – how He humbled Himself even to the cross, to be greatly exalted by God as a result); 2:13 (God is “at work” on the inside of every believer).**

**We also learned of Paul’s love for Timothy, his “son in the Gospel” and how important Timothy was to Paul’s missionary work. Lastly, we learned of the disciple Epaphroditus, a member and emissary from the church in Philippi whose dedication to the Lord’s service led to his serious illness, but whom God mercifully healed.**

**In this chapter Paul warns the Philippians about the “dogs” – his unflattering but accurate description of the false teachers who attempted to impose their Jewish traditions on the Gentile saints. Paul has had a long and intense struggle with them, beginning in his home church at Antioch (Acts 15:1-6). Paul emphasizes here that the practices of Jewish religion (such as circumcision) added nothing to the merits of Jesus Christ, which are freely given to all believers, regardless of their ethnicity. Paul offers himself as convincing proof.**

**Chapter 3 also reveals the single-minded devotion of Paul as he strives for continuous improvement as a Christian. His example should motivate us to greater service.**

1. **Read Philippians 3:1. What does Paul encourage the “brethren” to do? Answer: He encourages them to in the . (See Exodus 18:8-12; Deuteronomy 12:10-12; II Chronicles 30:15-27; Luke 10:17-24; I Thessalonians 5:16; Revelation 12:10-12; 19:5-9)**
2. **In the rest of this verse, Paul is almost apologetic for repeating things that he has taught the Philippians before. What is his reason for this repetition? (v.1) Answer: Paul is repeating his teachings for their . (See Acts 20:28-31)**
3. **Read verses 2-3. Paul warns the Philippian church about a group of false teachers commonly called Judaizers. What three terms does he use to describe them? (v. 2; See also Acts 15:1-11; Galatians 2:1-5)**
4. **Paul describes the church as the TRUE circumcision. What three things does the church have that Judaism cannot provide? (v. 3) Answer: We worship God in the , rejoice in , and have no in the .**
5. **Read verses 4-11. The teaching of the Judaizers was that “being a good Jew made you a better Christian”. Paul argued against this by using his own life as an example. He lists SEVEN facts about his life before he was saved. What are they? (v. 5-6) Was it possible for any Gentile to meet these standards? (See Acts 15:7-10; Galatians 3:10-12; Acts 13:38-39)**
6. **After he was saved, what is Paul’s opinion of his former life? (v.7) Answer: Those things that used to be for him are now considered to be for Christ.**
7. **In verse 8, Paul declares that the of the of Christ is more important that all of his worldly accomplishments. Compared to the Lord, what is Paul’s opinion of all the things that he has lost? (v. 8) Answer: He considers them to be (Greek skubalon - “that which is thrown to the dogs”; garbage).**
8. **Paul lists two kinds of righteousness in verse 9. What are they, and which one does he want? (See Genesis 15:3-6; Romans 10:1-4)**
9. **In verses 10-11, Paul sets forth the all-consuming desire of his life, and the secret of his effectiveness as an apostle and disciple of Jesus Christ. What is his ULTIMATE life goal? Describe, in your own words.**
10. **Read verses 12-14. Here, Paul likens his Christian life to an Olympic race, as he has done in letters to other churches. Is the race over? (v. 12-13) Answer: . If not, what is the “finish line”? Answer:**
11. **What is the PRIZE that Paul is racing for, and WHO will present it to him if he wins? (v. 13-14) Answer: The prize is the of in Christ Jesus. (See also I Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1-2; II Timothy 4:6-8)**
12. **THINK ABOUT IT: What kind of church would Mt. Zion be if every one of its members had the “same mind” as Paul? What kinds of things would we do in worship; in the community; and in our homes?**
13. **Read verses 15-17. Paul now applies his teachings to the Philippians. What does he tell those who desire to be more spiritually mature (“perfect”)? (v. 15) Answer: Paul instructs them to be “ “. Who will help them if they need it? (Philippians 2:13)**
14. **What is the responsibility of mature, experienced Christians in the church (especially those in positions of leadership and authority)? What is the responsibility of new or inexperienced Christians in the church? (v. 16-17; see also Titus 2:1-8; I Peter 5:1-5)**
15. **Read verses 18-21. Paul concludes this chapter with a warning to those who refuse to follow a godly example. The Philippian church was relatively problem-free, thanks to their love for the Lord, for Paul, and for each other. Paul was aware that not all churches were so blessed (for example, the church at Corinth!). How did “many” of these believers walk (live)? (v. 18) Answer: They walked like of the of Christ. (See also Matthew 10:34-39; 16:21-26; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 14:25-33)**
16. **How did the lifestyles of these immature, worldly believers affect Paul? (v. 18)**
17. **What are FOUR characteristics of such a lifestyle? (v. 19; see also James 4:4; Titus 2:11-14; I John 2:15-17)**
18. **The word “conversation” in verse 20 (Greek politeuma) means “citizenship”. Christians are citizens of what place? (See also John 14:1-3; Hebrews 11:13-16; Ephesians 2:19-22)**
19. **What wonderful change will take place when Jesus returns for His church? (v. 20-21; see also I Corinthians 15:51-54; I Thessalonians 4:16-17) Answer: Jesus will change what Paul calls “our body” to become like His body.**

**Summing Up**

**The apostle Paul never passed up an opportunity to build up the faith of the believers. In this third chapter of his “thank you note” to the church in Philippi, Paul warns them against the false doctrines of that time; specifically, the teachings of the Judaizers, which put observing the laws of the Jewish religion on the same level as their saving faith in Jesus Christ, which God freely provided through His Son’s death and resurrection (Ephesians 2:8-9). Paul referred to those false teachers as “dogs”, an expression of contempt in those times. Paul, himself a Jew of the highest qualifications, did not place any trust in his pedigree (“an Hebrew of Hebrews”), his religious zeal (a Pharisee who persecuted the church), or his observance of the law (“blameless”). Compared to his relationship with Jesus Christ, he considered all these as so much garbage.**

**Furthermore, Paul never grew complacent in his Christian walk. Like an Olympic runner, he continued to “press for the mark” of spiritual maturity and encourages all sincere disciples of Jesus to follow his example.**

**A source of tearful heartbreak for Paul were believers in Jesus who refused to accept their “cross” – their call to practice self-denial and sacrificial living in the name of Jesus. Their “god” was their own “belly” – the indulgence of their desires for the pleasures of this life. All Christians are called to be more “heavenly minded”, so that we may be used to bring glory to God.**

**Paul continues his encouragement to the Philippians in the next (and last) chapter. He also reveals the reason for this “thank you note” and gives us one of the most oft-quoted verses in the New Testament: Philippians 4:13.**