

“Lose Your Religion!” (Philippians 3:1–11)

Brad Pitt. Just the mention of his name causes women all over the world to melt. If somehow you're not familiar with Brad Pitt, he is a movie star featured in many films including *Legends of the Fall*, *Fight Club*, *Troy*, *Ocean's Eleven*, *Twelve*, and *Thirteen*, *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. He was married to Jennifer Aniston from the TV show “Friends,” and is currently married to popular Angelina Jolie. This month, I read an article about Brad Pitt. In an interview with a German Web site, Pitt was asked if he believed in God. He smiled and replied, “No, no, no!” Pitt insists he is not a spiritual person: “I'm probably 20 percent atheist and 80 percent agnostic. I don't think anyone really knows. You'll either find out or not when you get there, and then there's no point thinking about it.” In the meantime, Pitt claims he's found happiness in life. He says, “I am on the path I want to be on.” And right now, that path is a 2½ hour drive from Berlin to Prague on one of his many motorcycles. When asked by the reporter how many motorcycles he owns Pitt responds “Sorry, but I've got a problem with that. To be honest, I don't know how many I have.” Pitt admits his family and a couple of his motorbikes are his most important possessions in life. In this list he also included Jolie's backside, along with a prized Michael Jackson t-shirt.¹

Apparently, this good old Midwest boy lost whatever religion he may have had. Yet, despite what our world may say, the Bible teaches that no amount of fame and fortune means anything apart from knowing Jesus Christ personally. Unfortunately, there are many people like Brad Pitt who are losing their religion. But there can be great wisdom in “losing your religion” because religion is humankind's attempt to reach God. On the other hand, Christianity is God reaching down to humanity through the person and work of Christ. The religious and irreligious alike need to understand that nothing and no one is saved apart from Jesus Christ. In Philippians 3:1–11, Paul challenges you to *lose your religion; choose your relationship*. He provides two directives that lead to a right relationship with Christ.

1. Shred your religious résumé (3:1–6). Since religion doesn't save, Paul urges you to renounce your religious background and tendencies. He begins 3:1 with the infamous phrase: “**Finally my brethren.**” The word “finally” (*loipos*) makes it sound like Paul is wrapping up his letter. However, he is only at the halfway mark. He has written sixty verses (1:1–2:30) and still has forty-four more to go (3:1–4:23!) As you can imagine, the phrase “finally my brethren” has occasioned a lot of humor at the expense of preachers. A little boy was sitting with his dad in church and whispered, “What does the preacher mean when he says ‘finally’?” To which his father muttered, “Absolutely nothing, son!”² This story is humorous because there is so much truth in it. We all know that when a preacher says “finally,” he's not really done. In most cases, he is merely warming up! Admittedly, many preachers (undoubtedly myself included) inadvertently tease the congregation by giving the impression that they are landing the sermon, only to descend, fill up, and lift off again. Of course, we preachers could argue that the translation “finally” in 3:1 provides us apostolic precedence!³ Regardless, here the Greek adjective *loipos* doesn't mean “finally”; instead, it is a transitional marker that should be translated “so then.”⁴

Paul now issues a command: “**rejoice in the Lord.**”⁵ Literally: “You all keep rejoicing in the Lord.” Throughout Philippians, Paul emphasizes the theme of joy. The words “joy” (*chara*),⁶ “rejoice” (*chairō*),⁷ and “rejoice with” (*sunchairo*)⁸ appear a combined total of sixteen times. Here for the first time, however, Paul follows his admonition to rejoice with the qualifier “in the Lord.” This phrase (or “in Christ”) is the key phrase of Philippians and occurs nearly twenty times.⁹ It echoes the language of the Psalms that admonishes the righteous to “rejoice in the Lord and be glad” (Ps 32:11) and to “sing joyfully to the Lord” (33:1). In both of these instances, the psalmist urges the worshiping community to praise the Lord for what He has done for them.¹⁰ In other words, regardless of your circumstances, you can always rejoice in God's attributes and His provisions. While happiness depends upon happenings; joy depends upon Jesus. It is a decision of your will. You can choose to celebrate Christ in the midst of the most difficult circumstances in your life. This happens when you reject discontentment and instead choose to praise.

In Africa there is a fruit called the “taste berry.” It changes a person’s taste so that everything, including sour fruit, becomes sweet and pleasant for several hours after eating the berry. (Since I hate vegetables, I’m on a quest for some taste berries.) Praise could be considered the “taste berry” of the Christian life. When you spend your day in praise and gratitude even the sour circumstances in your life can taste sweet. While this may seem trite to you, it is nonetheless true. If you praise God for who He is and what He has done for you, gratitude will well up within you. As a result, rather than asking God to remove pain, suffering, and trials from your life, you may find yourself praying that He accomplishes His will in the midst of them.¹¹ I challenge you today to take a notecard and write down the characteristics and attributes of God that are meaningful to you. You may also want to write down the many good gifts that God has given you. Spend time reading through this card daily (perhaps several times a day) and watch God transform your perspective on your adverse circumstances.

Paul concludes 3:1 by saying: **“To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.”** What are “the same things” of which Paul writes? They are Paul’s frequent exhortations to rejoice during affliction (cf. 2:28, 29; 3:1; 4:4).¹² Paul writes, “It’s no problem for me to wax eloquent on the need to rejoice in the midst of suffering. The Lord knows I’ve had plenty of experience in this endeavor.” More importantly, Paul declares that his repetition is a “safeguard” (*asphales*) for the church. This word is the opposite of the verb meaning “to trip up, or cause to stumble.” Paul’s passion is for the believers to stand firm, to be steady and secure. The reason is simple: Words sink in over time. Major truths need to be repeated for emphasis, impact, and retention. So today “rejoice in the Lord...and again I say REJOICE!”

In 3:2–6, Paul discusses the danger of religion and religious people. He begins with a warning in 3:2: **“Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision.”** This is very strong language—definitely not very PC! Three times he calls these religious zealots derogatory names. Three times he uses the word “beware!” Paul’s word to the church is: Look over your shoulder and look ahead. Pray, but don’t close your eyes.¹³ Although it may appear that Paul is referring to three different groups of people; he is describing three distinguishing characteristics of a single religious group called Judaizers.¹⁴ These Jewish extremists believed that circumcision and other works were necessary for salvation.¹⁵ So after Paul shared the message of faith alone in Christ alone in Philippi, they came onto the scene and told the church his message was inadequate. They had the audacity to insist that the uncircumcised Greek and Roman Philippians were not saved after all.¹⁶ Now you can see why Paul is so righteously indignant and downright ticked off!

- First, Paul calls the Judaizers “dogs.” In any day and age, it’s not a compliment to be called a dog; however, in Paul’s day it was a real slap. Dogs were coyote-like scavengers who fed on road kill, filth, and garbage—they were vivid images of the unclean.¹⁷ Rabbis called Gentiles “dogs” because they did not believe in the one true God—Yahweh. The great irony of this rebuke is Paul turns the table on his fellow Jews and declares: “YOU are the ones who have rejected God! *You* are the ones who are leading people astray through your false teaching. YOU are the dirty dogs!”¹⁸
- Second, Paul calls the Judaizers “evil workers.” The term “worker” (*ergates*) is typically used in a positive sense of a laborer or missionary.¹⁹ But here Paul adds the adjective “evil” (*kakos*) to denote a worker who perverts God’s purposes. This is true spirit of treachery.
- Third, Paul calls the Judaizers “the false circumcision.” The term translated “false circumcision” (*katatome*) literally means “mutilation.” Instead of using the typical biblical term for circumcision (*peritome*, cf. 3:3), Paul refuses to dignify this false teaching by giving it a biblical name.²⁰ Circumcision, the Judaizers’ greatest source of pride, is interpreted by Paul as mutilation.²¹ He is saying, “YOU have mutilated the flesh of these young brethren!”²²

In 3:3, Paul contrasts false religion with a relationship with Christ. Specifically, he certifies that the church is the true people of God: **“for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”** Paul declares that Christians are not mutilators of the flesh. Instead believers are the true circumcision, spiritually speaking. Paul gives three evidences that Christians indeed are the people of God rather than the unbelieving Jews.

- First, Christians “worship in the spirit of God.” In this context this phrase could mean that our worship is *internal*, not merely external. However, this word for “worship” (*latreuo*) connotes servanthood *or* service *or* coming under the authority of someone. So Paul is likely suggesting that believers are called to worship in “spirit and truth” (John 4:24), yet are also called to external expressions of that worship.
- Second, Christians “glory in Christ Jesus.” Paul’s word for “glory” (*kauchaomai*) can mean “to boast,” and, together with two other closely related words (*kauchema* and *kauchesis*), is often used in his letters to indicate one’s confidence.²³ We are the true people of God, says Paul, because we boast that the Messiah has come in Jesus.
- Third, Christians “put no confidence in the flesh.” “Flesh” (*sarx*) here refers to “earthly things or physical advantages.”²⁴ When you stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, don’t you dare say, “We made it didn’t we? Jesus, you did your part by dying on the cross, but I also did mine through my works of righteousness. We partnered together in my salvation.” I can’t think of a declaration more repugnant to the Lord. Instead, we must fall on our faces and acknowledge that we don’t deserve God’s goodness and grace.

In 3:4–6, Paul seems to respond to those religious objectors who might be brazen enough to say, “Well, Paul, perhaps you prefer grace because you don’t have the works or the religious pedigree that we do.” Paul squashes this notion like a bug when he declares: **“...although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”** Paul was the *crème de la crème*. He was a religious connoisseur. In this passage, Paul presents a succinct list of seven reasons why he could boast in the flesh. The first four relate to his birth: (1) “circumcised the eighth day”: he was a legitimate Jew from the beginning, not a proselyte; (2) “of the nation of Israel”: he had a pure lineage that traced directly back to Jacob (i.e., Israel); (3) “of the tribe of Benjamin”: the tribe of Benjamin provided Israel with its first king and remained loyal to the house of David; and (4) “a Hebrew of Hebrews”: he was not raised as a Hellenistic Jew, but in a family that retained the Hebrew language and customs. The last credentials relate to Paul’s achievements: (5) “as to the Law, a Pharisee”: he was a member of the strictest, most orthodox and patriotic sect of Judaism; (6) “as to zeal, a persecutor of the church”: he was a zealous defender of the integrity of Judaism, and before his encounter with Christ, he aggressively sought to overthrow the early Christian communities; and (7) “as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless”: from the outward perspective of conduct and observance of the Mosaic law, he lived by the book.²⁵ By rattling off his credentials, Paul successfully demonstrates that he can beat the Judaizers at their own religious game!

What do you boast in? Where does your confidence lie? Perhaps you have claimed one or more of the following. I was...born into a Christian country, raised by Christian parents or grandparents, baptized or confirmed in a church, or educated in a Christian school. Maybe even now you claim...I am a church member, I read my Bible and pray, or I am a good person. While these are blessings and privileges, they do not make you a Christian, or put you in good standing with God. Works have their place, but not when it comes to salvation.

I have been asked why I don't hang any of my diplomas in my church office. This is a legitimate question since most pastors display their theological degrees and ordination. While there's absolutely nothing wrong with this, personally, I've never felt led to do so. I don't want anyone to be impressed with my education. Moreover, I don't want to glance up at my wall in my weaker moments and be impressed with my education. Earlier this year, I came home one day to find our degrees framed and hung in the hallway outside our master bedroom. (No one except our family typically goes into this part of our house.) When I asked Lori about this, she explained that she hung our degrees to remind us of God's faithfulness. What a woman! She understands the primary value of education—to demonstrate God's faithfulness to us. This is equally true of experience, wealth, position, and spirituality. It's all from God! *So lose your religion; choose your relationship.*

[Paul is clear. In order to have a right relationship with God, you must shred your religious résumé. His second directive is equally straightforward.]

2. Know your ultimate purpose (3:7–11).²⁶ Instead of trusting in your religious résumé, it is crucial to trust the person and work of Christ. This section forces you to ask: What's really important in my life? Paul writes in 3:7: **“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”** The word “but” marks a sharp contrast with the previous section. The “things” that were gain to Paul is a reference to his religious résumé (3:4–6). The term “count” (*hegeomai*) is used three times in verses 3:7–8. It is a mathematical term that means “to engage in an intellectual process, think, consider, regard.”²⁷ The word “loss” (*zemia*) is only found in two other places in the New Testament. This is a business term for “forfeit.”²⁸ Paul is saying that at a point in the past when he was converted to Christ, he made a decision of his will to count everything that he had accomplished as loss—making no contribution whatsoever to his salvation.²⁹ He transferred his trust from his own supposed works of righteousness to the Lord Jesus Christ's perfect righteousness. Today, if you have never believed in Christ, transfer your trust in your own works to Christ's perfect work.

Verses 8–11 constitute one long sentence. The main part of the sentence is: “I count all things to be loss.” The rest of the sentence is made up of three subordinate clauses that present three reasons to *lose your religion and choose your relationship*. In 3:8, Paul moves from a past act to a present lifestyle. Not only did Paul count all things loss in the past; he continues to do so in the present as a believer. He puts it like this: **“More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.”** In his present Christian life, Paul counts all of his achievements as “loss.” This refers to works such as writing Scripture, preaching Christ, evangelizing unbelievers, planting churches, and mentoring missionaries and pastors. Granted, all of these works of service are wonderful; however, they do not measure up with “the surpassing value of knowing Christ.” Ultimately, Paul concludes that these works and many more are “rubbish.” Now this translation is fine if you live across the pond in the UK; however, most Americans don't use this term. Let me explain. One of my neighbors is an engineer who works for LOTT. This past month he gave me a tour of the sewage plant in downtown Olympia. (Fortunately, he did so before we ate lunch and not after. I might have thrown up!) Eric is a consummate gentleman (and he knows I am a pastor) so he was using only the most prim and proper terms. When he said, “It would be great to give your kids a tour of the plant,” I said, “Eric, if you do so you'll need to use some serious ‘potty talk.’ My kids would love good bathroom humor!” Here, our English versions are like Eric when he was giving me the tour. They try to be prim and proper. But the Greek term that is translated “rubbish” (*skubala*) means “dung, excrement, poop.”³⁰ This term is so strong that some Greek scholars even use expletives to define this word. However, if I used the appropriate expletive, it would be the only thing you would potentially remember about my sermon. But I will unashamedly and unapologetically use the word “poop.” Paul says, “Human accomplishments are ‘poop’ compared to the pursuit of knowing Christ.” **Even Isaiah 64:6 declares that our righteousness is like “filthy garments” (see**

the NET's literal rendering: "a menstrual rag")

Our "good works" apart from Christ are putrid in God's nostrils. They cannot earn salvation or even maintain salvation. Even impressive religious works that aren't carried out by abiding in Christ cannot win God's favor or bring eventual reward. They will result in "wood, hay, straw" (1 Cor 3:12). I want to come to the place in my life and ministry where I *truly* believe this. I want to be a man who clings to Christ because I recognize that I can't do anything apart from Him (John 15:5). May I *lose my religion and choose my relationship*. I pray this for you as well.

In 3:9, Paul indicates that he longs to **"be found in Him [Christ], not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith."** Paul insists that salvation is the work of God. The phrase translated "through faith in Christ" is better rendered "through the faithfulness of Christ" (see NET).³¹ This means Jesus Christ initiates and sustains salvation. Someone came to an Orthodox priest one day and asked, "Father, are we saved by faith or by works?" The answer was filled with wisdom. "Neither. We are saved by God's mercy."³² What a great insight! Salvation comes from God. It was His idea and He ought to receive all the glory. Your only response should be to appropriate His offer. This is what the Bible calls "faith" (*pistis*). It is simply taking God at His Word by receiving His promise that Jesus gives eternal life to those who trust in Him. This is what it means to be "found in Him."

Would you humor me and take a piece of paper and your Bible? Let your Bible represent Christ and the piece of paper your life. Now take the paper, place it in the Bible, and then close the Bible so that the paper is completely covered. Now the paper (your life) is "in" the Bible (Jesus Christ). It's not enough to be "near" Christ or "next to" Christ. True salvation means to be "in" Christ so that when God looks at you, He doesn't see you, He sees Jesus instead.³³ Your sins, past, present, and future are forgiven, forgotten, forever! That's what Paul means in 3:9 when he speaks of "the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith."

However, Paul doesn't stop with faith in Christ. He doesn't want you to sit, soak, and sour because he's not satisfied with mere "fire insurance." Instead he longs for you and me to press on to maturity in Christ. In 3:10, Paul shares his mission and ultimate purpose in life: **"...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."** To "know" (*ginosko*) Christ does not mean to have head knowledge about Him, but to "know Him" intimately and passionately. *Ginosko* and its Hebrew counterpart *yada* can even be used of sexual intercourse.³⁴ Here, in this context, however, to know Christ is to experience intimate fellowship with Him and live out His life. Paul wants to know Christ's resurrection, but not just in an intellectual sense. Paul wants to be resurrected in a spiritual sense on a daily basis. He also wants to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Most Christians would prefer to skip this aspect of knowing Christ. Yet, suffering is part and parcel of the Christian life. Over the course of my life, I have battled canker sores. My parents both had canker sores as well. I married a woman who was also prone to get canker sores. When a husband and wife both have canker sores, it is nearly certain that their children will share in their suffering. Such is the case with our three children. (I still don't think they have forgiven us for this.) Similarly, if you are a member of God's family, it is guaranteed that you will share in the suffering of Christ. It is hereditary. Yet, suffering will grow you up in Christ like nothing else. Lastly, Paul yearned to be conformed to Christ's death, which means a daily dying to self and living for Christ. The story is told that when James Calvert went out as a missionary to the cannibals of the Fiji Islands, the captain of the ship that had carried him there sought to turn him back by saying, "You will lose your life and the lives of those with you if you go among such savages." Calvert's reply demonstrates the meaning of Philippians 3:10. He said, "We died before we came here."³⁵ This is what it means to be conformed to Christ's death. For Paul and for you and me, knowing Christ can get better and better. Lori and I have been married sixteen years and I can testify to you that a Christ-honoring marriage can get better and better with every passing year. Similarly, the

longer I walk with the Lord, the more I love and appreciate Him. Is anything more important in your life than your relationship with Jesus Christ? If so, ask the Lord to give you a greater passion for Him.

Finally, and I really do mean, *finally*, Paul concludes this section with an unusual and surprising statement expressing a desire to “**...attain to the resurrection from the dead**” (3:11). The NASB begins this verse with “in order that”; however, this phrase doesn’t appear in the Greek text. Instead, it is the adverbial phrase *ei pos* which means “if somehow” (see NASB margin).³⁶ This leads to several observations. First, whatever Paul means by “the resurrection from the dead,” he is unsure that he will attain it. It is unlikely, then, that he is referring to his bodily resurrection.³⁷ Second, the term translated “resurrection” (*exanastasis*) literally means “out-from resurrection.”³⁸ It appears that Paul’s hope is not simply to be physically resurrected, but to gain what he calls the “out-resurrection.” The compound form points to a fuller participation in the resurrection. Third, attaining to the resurrection from the dead is dependent upon being conformed to Jesus Christ’s sufferings and death.³⁹ Paul knows that he has to do something in addition to place his faith in Christ. Knowing the power of Christ’s resurrection is required, sharing His sufferings is required, and conforming oneself to His death by laying down one’s life for others is required in order to participate in the “out-resurrection.” Fourth, this out-resurrection is a reward, not a gift of grace. Verse 14 likens it to a “prize.”⁴⁰ Paul is concerned with achieving a distinctive resurrection life—a new life that stands out from the rest. This calls to mind Hebrews 11:35, which speaks of a “better resurrection” for those who suffer. Jesus speaks of believers being “repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” for humility, servitude, and obedience (Luke 14:14). Paul is not merely hoping that he will attain physical resurrection. That’s a done deal! He is confident in his salvation. Rather he is seeking to be distinctively resurrected; resurrected to stand before Christ who will approve his life and give him important new responsibilities in the age to come.⁴¹ Thus, in this single passage, Paul hits justification, sanctification, and glorification. Yet, his goal is that the Lord Jesus Christ receives all glory, honor, and praise.

You are likely familiar with the story of the Titanic. But you may not have heard of a rich lady who was in her cabin when the order to abandon the ship was given. There was no time for packing possessions. She noticed two things on her dressing table: her jewel box and a bowl of oranges. She made a rapid assessment of what was most valuable to her given the urgency of the situation. Wisely she abandoned her jewels and grabbed the oranges instead. She recognized that they might give nourishment on the open sea whereas her jewels would be worthless to her.⁴² Likewise, you are called to invest your life in a pursuit that doesn’t seem very significant to the world, the pursuit of knowing Christ. In this life knowing Jesus will provide you purpose and significance. More importantly, if you live your life for Christ, in the life to come you will be eternally grateful. *Lose your religion; choose your relationship.* Make sure today that you choose Jesus Christ. The Bible declares, “You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (Jas 4:14). Don’t delay; choose Christ today! Seek to know Him intimately. Live for Him all the days of your life. You will never, ever regret it.

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Scripture References

Philippians 3:1–11

Matthew 23:25–27

John 6:47

Acts 15:1–2

Romans 2:28–29; 3:21–28

2 Corinthians 5:21

Ephesians 2:8–9

Study Questions

1. Do I regularly and instinctually “rejoice *in the Lord*” (3:1)? What would those who observe me and know me best say? What areas of my life bring out discontentment in me? How can I learn to rejoice in God’s character and His goodness despite adverse circumstances?
2. How have I struggled with “confidence in the flesh” (3:4–6)? In what ways could my religious background be an impediment to my faith? Which of my spiritual works am I the most proud of? How can I depend solely on Christ for both salvation and sanctification?
3. Is anything more important in my life than my relationship with Jesus Christ (3:8)? Does my desire to know Christ exceed all other aspirations? If not, how can I reprioritize my relationship with Christ? Who can help me rearrange my life?
4. How does righteousness obtained through faith differ from righteousness obtained through works (3:9)? How seriously does works righteousness infect my congregation or society’s view of Christianity in general? Why is this concept of justification or righteousness by faith so difficult to grasp? Am I clear in my understanding of the gospel? Could I explain it to a coworker or family member?
5. What does it mean to “know” Christ (3:10)? How have I learned to know (i.e., experience) the power of Christ’s resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings? How have I learned to be conformed to His death? Where am I in my pursuit to know Christ? How can I progress in my relationship with Christ?

Notes

¹ Saryn Chorney, “Brad Pitt Doesn’t Believe in God,” *WonderWall*, 7/24/2009:

wonderwall.msn.com/movies/brad-pitt-doesnt-believe-in-god-1518637.story/?gt1=28135.

² D.A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 80.

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*. Preaching the Word (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 121.

⁴ Many think that Paul begins his conclusion with *loipon* (“finally”), but then breaks into a new subject only to resume his conclusion in Phil 4:8. Fee disagrees and suggests that the meaning here is not “finally” but “as for the rest [of what needs to be spoken to].” It marks “a transition to the final matters to be taken up in the letter, not its conclusion” (cf. 1 Thess 4:1; 2 Thess 3:1). Fee also introduces what remains to be said. Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 291. See also Robert C. Swift, “The Theme and Structure of Philippians,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141:563 (July-Sept 1984): 247 and Jerry L. Sumney, *Philippians: A Greek Student’s Intermediate Reader* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 69.

⁵ This use of rejoicing ties back to Phil 2:17–18 where Paul refers to the joy of offering oneself in the sacrificial service of Christ. Peter T. O’Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*. New International Greek Testament Commentary series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 347. Swift, “The Theme and Structure of Philippians,” 247 notes, “...the supposed roughness of transition between Philippians 3:1 and the rest of the chapter almost vanishes when it is realized that the ideas of joy and standing against opposition to the gospel have already been associated with one another earlier in the epistle. In 1:19, 28–30; 2:17–18 joy is presented as the proper reaction to such circumstances.”

⁶ Phil 1:4, 25, 2:2, 29; 4:1.

⁷ Phil 1:18 [twice]; 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4 [twice], 10.

⁸ Phil 2:17, 18.

⁹ Phil 1:1, 14, 26; 2:19, 24, 29; 3:1, 3, 8, 9, 14; 4:1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 21.

¹⁰ O’Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*, 350; Frank Thielman, *Philippians*. NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 166–67.

¹¹ David Jeremiah, “The Taste Berry,” *Today Turning Point*, 7/24/2009.

¹² It is also possible that the idea of writing the same things again looks ahead to Phil 3:2–11, as a review of what Paul has already taught the Philippians previously, most likely in person. See O’Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*, 352; Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 81; Sumney, *Philippians*, 70.

¹³ Sam Gordon, *An Odyssey of Joy: The Message of Philippians*. Truth for Today Commentary Series (Belfast, Ireland/Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2004), 107.

¹⁴ O’Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*, 353–54.

¹⁵ Circumcision was instituted by God in the OT as an outward sign of a covenant relationship between God and the people of Israel. Circumcision was a mark of Judaism, but God never intended it to be a condition of salvation.

¹⁶ It is important to recognize that the early church was predominantly Jewish. Jesus was a Jew. The twelve apostles were all Jews. The first converts were Jews. All were circumcised. Thus, when Gentiles began believing in Christ, Judaizers began to require circumcision as a condition of salvation.

¹⁷ The term “dogs” in the OT referred to (1) male prostitutes (cf. Deut 23:18) or (2) evil people (cf. Ps 22:16, 20).

¹⁸ These Judaizers were like ravenous dogs and vicious unbelievers (cf. Matt 7:6; Gal 5:15; Rev 22:15).

¹⁹ Sumney, *Philippians*, 71.

²⁰ *Katatome* is not used anywhere else in the NT, and may have been coined by Paul himself.

²¹ O’Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*, 357.

²² Gordon, *An Odyssey of Joy*, 109.

²³ Thielman, *Philippians*, 168.

²⁴ BDAG s.v. *sarx* 5: “the outward side of life.” The use of *sarx* in Phil 3:3 is defined as, “*place one’s trust in earthly things or physical advantages.*”

²⁵ Ken Boa, “Boasting in the Flesh” (Phil 3:3–7):

www.kenboa.org/text_resources/teaching_letters/kens_teaching_letter/2156.

²⁶ Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, suggests that these verses begin with the theme of gain and loss, echoing earlier language of the letter (1:21) before introducing the main theme which is *knowing Christ*. The theme of righteousness and the law (picking up in 3:6) is then introduced against the background of this foundational theme which then returns to occupy the foreground in 3:10–11. Paul’s primary focus is on what it means to *know Christ*.

²⁷ BDAG s.v. *hegeomai* 2.

²⁸ BDAG s.v. *zemia*: “damage, disadvantage, loss, forfeit.”

²⁹ Gordon, *An Odyssey of Joy*, 118. All Paul previously trusted in for righteousness (his race and religious performance) he “counted as loss” when he became a Christian. The word *zemia* (“loss”) is a rare word that is only used two other times in the NT. In Acts 27:10, 21, it describes the loss and damage suffered by the ship on which Paul was taken prisoner to Rome. This provides us with a real life illustration of how gain can turn to loss. The Italy-bound ship had cargo aboard which was meant to bring considerable profit to its owner. If the crew had not thrown it over the side, all passengers on board were potential casualties. The cargo was jettisoned, the ship ran aground breaking its back, but the passengers and crew were all saved (cf. Acts 27:38–41). Everything intended for gain became loss so that the lives of men might be saved. Similarly, with the apostle Paul, all the cargo of his past life was thrown overboard so that he might gain a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

³⁰ In extra-biblical Greek it describes a half-eaten corpse and lumps of manure. Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*. Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Ralph P. Martin, vol. 43 (Waco: Word, 1983), 139.

³¹ In the last twenty years or so many NT scholars have come to recognize that the genitive construction *pistis Christou* (Rom 3:22, Gal 2:16, 3:22, and Phil 3:9) should be rendered as a subjective genitive and refers to Christ’s faithfulness. See O’Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*, 398–99; Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 1996), 115–16; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 2002).

³² Bruce Goettsche, “Christ Alone” (Phil 3:1–11): www.unionchurch.com/archive/020401.html.

³³ Revised from Ray Pritchard, “From Rubbish to Jesus” (Phil 3:1–11): www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1998-11-29-From-Rubbish-to-Jesus/.

³⁴ Paul has thus taken up the OT theme of “knowing God” and applied it to Christ. It means to know Him as children and parents know each other or wives and husbands—knowledge that has to do with personal experience and intimate relationship.

³⁵ Doug McIntosh, “Reasons for Being” (Phil 3:1–11):

www.cornerstonebibch.org/html/Sermons/Philippians/Phil06.pdf.

³⁶ See also the NET and NIV who render this phrase “and so, somehow.”

³⁷ Many scholars (e.g., O’Brien 411–13) argue that Paul is speaking of his physical resurrection but that he is merely uncertain about the timing of this event. I don’t find this solution persuasive. However, see Ralph P. Martin, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 153–54; O’Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*, 411–13.

³⁸ *Exanastasis* does not appear anywhere else in Greek literature. It is possible that Paul coined this term.

³⁹ Sumney, *Philippians*, 82.

⁴⁰ The Greek word used here is used in only one other place in the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 9:24, where Paul speaks of competing in a race to gain a crown, meaning the approval and commendation of the Lord Jesus.

⁴¹ McIntosh, “Reasons for Being,” 4–5.

⁴² Owen Bourgaize: www.sermoncentral.com.