

## ***International Bible Lessons Commentary***

### ***Philippians 3:1-11***

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**Sunday, January 20, 2013**

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The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, January 20, 2012**, is from **Philippians 3:1-11**. Note: Some Bible Lesson Quarterlies only study Philippians 3:7-11 on Sunday, January 20, 2013.

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (also known as the *Bible Lesson Forum*). **Study Hints for Thinking Further** give possible hints to answer the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website and below. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive [International Bible Lessons Commentary Index](#). The weekly [International Bible Lesson](#) is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at <http://InternationalBibleLessons.org> and in [The Oklahoman](#) newspaper.

## ***International Bible Lesson Commentary***

### ***Philippians 3:1-11***

**(Philippians 3:1)** Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard.

Paul gave the Philippians good reasons to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul also taught them repeatedly the same essential facts about saving faith in Jesus, God the Father, and their responsibilities to God. Paul taught many of the same truths as often as he could—in person, by letters, and by sending his coworkers to various churches. Studying and teaching repeatedly the central truths in the Bible serves as a safeguard against falling away from faith in Jesus Christ and into a life of disobedience.

**(Philippians 3:2)** Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh!

We need to understand the Bible's teachings, including what Jesus Christ expects and does not expect or require of us; then, we will be prepared and able to recognize false and evil people who claim to represent and be working for Jesus Christ. Paul wrote directly about those who claimed to follow Christ while teaching that a person needed to follow the ceremonial laws in order to be saved and obedient to God; specifically, that a man needed to be circumcised and convert to the Jewish faith before he could be saved.

**(Philippians 3:3)** For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh—

Those with a true or valid circumcision are those who have circumcised their hearts; these are the true children of God. Paul wrote, “Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart—it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God” (Romans 2:29). The “true children of God” do not trust that they are “saved children of God” because they are physically circumcised. True “children of God” (and the Gentile Philippians had become true “children of God”) worship God the Father in the Holy Spirit, and in spirit and in truth as Jesus Christ taught according to the Scriptures. Jesus said, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23, 24). The true circumcision love to boast that Jesus Christ saved them. They do not boast that they are saved because they are physically circumcised (Gentile males were not ceremonially circumcised at birth, but they needed to be circumcised to convert to the Jewish religion. They did not need to be circumcised to become Christians or to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ). Paul argued this fact about Jesus and salvation strenuously.

**(Philippians 3:4) even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more:**

Paul denied having confidence before God that he was saved because of what had been done to his physical body or flesh after he was born (his circumcision as a Jew or “child of God” eight days after his birth). Paul described how and why some thought they could have confidence before God because of their background, or their behavior, or their nationality, or in their race, but that would have been a false confidence. Paul refused to trust in a false confidence, and instead he trusted in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

**(Philippians 3:5) circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;**

All of the Jewish males, including Jesus and Paul, were physically circumcised on the eighth day after their birth in order for their parents to obey the Jewish ceremonial law. Paul wrote that since the coming of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that worship “in the Spirit of God” is what God required—not physical circumcision or obedience to Jewish ceremonial laws. Paul might have placed his confidence that he was saved in his lineage (he was of the tribe of Benjamin and the first Jewish King, Saul, was of the tribe of Benjamin). Paul might have placed his confidence that he was saved in his academic achievements (he was a Pharisee, an expert in the law), but Paul refused to deceive himself into thinking that he could be saved because of any physical or behavioral distinctions over others.

**(Philippians 3:6) as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.**

As a “good” Jew and Pharisee, Paul was zealous in his persecution of Christ’s church. When the time came for him to meet God, Paul might have put his confidence in the fact that he was zealous to serve God according to his level of understanding, but he refused to do so. Paul might have put his confidence in his perfectly obeying the law of God

externally as far as anyone could observe his behavior. Before Paul became a Christian, no one could cast any blame on him for not obeying God perfectly according to God's law (at least according to appearances), because no one could see Paul's heart.

**(Philippians 3:7) Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.**

Looking at Paul's birth and achievements, a person might conclude that Paul could have confidence that he was a saved child of God. However, Paul wrote that no person should have confidence in their salvation before God based on their ancestry, their parents, their lineage, or their achievements. All of these reasons would bring a false confidence, and not lead to salvation, and could lead to judgment instead. Before God, only faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior can give a true confidence that a person is saved. Paul regarded as loss, as insignificant, as not worth bragging about, any personal background or achievements that some might think would qualify someone for salvation. He trusted in Christ alone for his salvation. Faith in Christ alone is the only sound basis for someone to have confidence that they are saved.

**(Philippians 3:8) More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ**

When Paul considered what he had done prior to knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, he considered it as not worth having or keeping compared to knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord. Those achievements that people of the world or religion think most valuable Paul considered trash in order to have a loving, faithful, truthful, obedient relationship with Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

**(Philippians 3:9) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.**

First and foremost, Paul wanted to live in a right relationship with Jesus Christ and maintain that right relationship as the Spirit of Christ worked with him and in him—in his heart, mind, and spirit. Paul placed his faith in Jesus Christ, in trusting Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, in following the Lord Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures, rather than depending on his outward or inward obedience to the laws of the Jewish religion instead of loving and trusting Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord.

**(Philippians 3:10) I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death,**

Paul wanted to know Jesus Christ more and more personally as his Lord and Savior. The righteous way of living comes from following Jesus Christ more and more closely day by day, rather than from obeying religious laws better. No one was more important to Paul than Jesus Christ. Rather than look to himself, who he was or what he had become according to the Jewish law, Paul kept his focus on Jesus Christ and the power and love that Jesus Christ gave him as his resurrected Lord; so, Paul would serve Christ no matter what he suffered even if he had to die for his faith in Jesus.

**(Philippians 3:11) if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.**

Paul taught that the resurrection from the dead would be a future event in divine and human history. The resurrection from the dead was not an experience to spiritualize as something that had already happened to someone. Paul kept his focus on the future that God intended for every Christian to enjoy, and that future included life after death in heaven and the eventual bodily resurrection from the dead at the return of Christ.

### **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What are some of truths of Scripture that Christians need to study repeatedly?
2. What might some “evil workers” in the church teach in churches today? Do you feel comfortable saying that people who promote and teach falsehoods or ideas contrary to the Scriptures are “evil workers”? Give a reason for your answer.
3. Why should we not have confidence that we are saved based on our race, background, or behavior?
4. What false confidence that they will be saved when they meet God and God judges them do some people have today?
5. How can someone have confidence that God will not condemn them after they die?

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