

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

### ***Philippians 3:12-4:1***

***International Bible Lessons***

**Sunday, January 27, 2013**

**L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.**

The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, January 27, 2013**, is from **Philippians 3:12-4:1**. Note: Some Bible Lesson Quarterlies only study Philippians 3:12-16 on Sunday, January 27, 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 3:12-4:1***

**(Philippians 3:12)** **Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.**

Because Jesus Christ gave His life in order to ransom God's children from sin and death, Christians believe that they belong to Jesus Christ. Paul even called himself a bond slave of Jesus Christ; a bond slave is one who willingly commits himself and gives himself as a lifelong slave to someone else. Paul did not focus on any of his past attainments, whether obsolete or beneficial to him, or his past sins. Paul did not claim to possess all the future promises of Jesus Christ through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul wanted to know more about Jesus, and know Jesus better personally in his everyday life. Jesus had made Paul into a true child of God, and Paul wanted to prove himself a true child of God.

**(Philippians 3:13)** **Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,**

Through prayer, through his study of the Hebrew Scriptures (and how they taught about Jesus the Messiah), through reflection on the life and words of Jesus Christ as he received revelations from Jesus and learned from the teachings of the other apostles, Paul kept his spiritual eyes on Jesus Christ. Paul kept straining to learn so he could keep doing what Jesus Christ wanted him to do each day as God's child and Jesus' possession.

**(Philippians 3:14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.**

This verse reminds us of the call John received in the Book of Revelation 4:1, 2. Paul's wholehearted endeavors may have been based on his knowledge of one of Jesus' parables; where Jesus taught, "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master'" (Matthew 25:23). Paul knew that being in the presence of God and seeing Jesus Christ face to face instead of in a mirror dimly was a goal to be sought that was more important than any earthly prize: "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

**(Philippians 3:15) Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.**

God meant for Paul's letter to the Philippians to guide all Christians. God wants all Christians to live spiritually mature, which includes a prayerful study of the Scriptures (such as Paul's letters) so we can come to an agreement on what God's plan is for us as the church and individuals in specific situations. Through prayerful study, people can come to learn the will of God, and the Spirit of God can lead them to agree on doing the will of God according to the Scriptures.

**(Philippians 3:16) Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.**

In addition to striving to draw closer to Jesus Christ, Who leads and goes before us, we need to keep prayerfully studying the Scriptures and obeying Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit leads us according to the Scriptures, so we do not lose any of the spiritual benefits, progress, and growth that the Lord Jesus has granted us. If we fall back into a life of sin or sloth, we can lose the spiritual progress we have made. If we do not hold fast to the truths we have learned, we can forget the Bible's teachings or the Bible's application.

**(Philippians 3:17) Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us.**

The Apostle Paul imitated Jesus Christ in all the ways that he had come to know Jesus – even suffering as Jesus had suffered for the truth of God and the good news that the world needed to hear. To accompany their words, Paul and his companions gave a good example for others to follow, and Paul told his readers to follow their example. He also wanted all Christians to imitate him so they could be a good example to others. Paul could have said in contemporary speech, "Do as I say and do as I do," which is the mark of a good teacher.

**(Philippians 3:18) For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears.**

No matter what some claim or say about themselves as supposed followers of Jesus Christ, they are actually enemies of the cross of Christ; that is, enemies of the true teaching about the sacrificial death of Christ in behalf of sinners and they mislead many. No wonder Paul wrote his warning with tears. Paul warned against the influence and teachings of those who claimed to be Christians in the church, but who taught contrary to the Scriptures and the teaching of Jesus Christ. Some of these false Christians taught that salvation depended on a person becoming a Jew (becoming circumcised) in addition to believing in Jesus Christ the Messiah. Actually, our salvation is by grace through faith, and it depends on Jesus' death on the cross for us and not on what we do.

**(Philippians 3:19) Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.**

Whatever the false gospel, or false morality, or false teaching, those who promote falsehood instead of the true gospel of Jesus Christ will end in destruction. These false teachers, who are deceived and deceiving others, do so for selfish reasons, and there "God is their belly;" which means they do everything, even worship, for their own personal pleasures and self-gratification. They promote what is shameful and unmentionable. They set their minds on worldly goals and pleasures, and often use religion and false teachings to "justify" their behavior to themselves and mislead others.

**(Philippians 3:20) But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

True Christians are citizens of heaven; citizens of the kingdom of God. Rather than place their hope in elected officials, in political parties and policies, and in earthly kingdoms or nations, Christians place their hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, who they expect to come to them and into the world someday as visible Lord and Savior. Having lived as subjects of "this world," Christians have chosen to become super-naturalized citizens in heaven and subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is and will come as their Savior.

**(Philippians 3:21) He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.**

Jesus Christ received a glorified human body when He rose from the dead. Christians will receive resurrected, glorified, human bodies similar to Jesus' new body, when Jesus comes again as Savior and raises their bodies from the dead. By the grace and power of God, all believers, all beings, and all created things will be subject to Jesus Christ as Lord. However, that does not mean that all beings will praise Jesus and receive Him as their Lord and Savior, for some will end in destruction.

**(Philippians 4:1) Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.**

Once again, Paul expressed his love for his readers (readers throughout the ages until Jesus Christ comes again). Believers bring joy to God in heaven and to all who have helped them in their walk of faith. The only crown a believer desires is knowing that some have come to saving faith and have drawn closer to Jesus Christ because of their words and work. Paul prays for and encourages all of his readers to “stand firm in the Lord” in spite of persecution, temptations, or false teachers who would try to mislead them. Believers can pray for the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to help them “stand firm in the Lord” no matter what the consequences.

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

1. What does this mean to you, “Christ Jesus has made me his own”?
2. What benefits does a follower of Jesus Christ enjoy because Jesus Christ has made them his own?
3. How difficult is it today for Christians or church members to say, “Do as I do and do as I say, because I imitate Jesus Christ”? Give a reason for your answer.
4. What can happen to a person who says they believe in God and Jesus, and who wear a cross around their neck on a chain, but who set their minds on earthly things?
5. What do you need to do to live each day as a person who knows that their citizenship is in heaven?

Write your comments, suggestions, and thoughts on the [Bible Lesson Forum](http://biblelessonforum.com/) at <http://biblelessonforum.com/>. Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson* at [International Bible Lessons](http://internationalbiblelessons.org) at <http://internationalbiblelessons.org>.

— © Copyright 2013 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.