



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

## **Philippians 3:7-21** **King James Version** **February 3, 2019**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, February 3**, is from **Philippians 3:7-21** (Some will only study **Philippians 3:7-14**). **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Philippians 3:7) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for 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, or at least very successful in this life because God was blessing him. 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 these reasons would bring a false confidence, and not lead to salvation; instead, a false confidence could lead to judgment. Before God, only a true 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 or be a sign of God's favor. By grace, Paul 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) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,**

When Paul considered what he had done prior to knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, he considered it as not worth bragging about, having, or keeping compared to knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord. No “this world’s” achievements, goals, or desires are worth more than knowing Christ Jesus as our Lord. Those achievements that people of this 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. No worldly riches, power, or fame can be compared to the immeasurable value of personally knowing Jesus Christ, the King of creation, and having Jesus consider you His friend and a child of God.

**(Philippians 3:9) And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:**

Striving for a “righteousness of **our own** that comes from the law” will not turn us from self-centeredness to God-centeredness or Christ-centeredness, because we will be focusing on ourselves and how well we are obeying the law to be acceptable to God rather than focusing on God in Christ and loving God and serving God because we love God and God is worthy to be served. 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, in showing his love for Jesus by obeying His commands rather than depending on his outward or inward obedience to the laws of the Jewish religion. Instead of striving to “live right” according to his ideas of right and wrong, or according to the traditions and interpretations of the teachers of the law, Paul loved, followed, and trusted in Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. By trusting in Jesus Christ, Paul knew that God would declare and make him righteous. God will declare righteous all who trust in Jesus Christ as their

Lord and Savior.

**(Philippians 3:10) That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;**

Paul wanted to know Jesus Christ more and more personally as his Lord and Savior. Rather than striving to obey religious laws more perfectly, true righteousness comes from faith in Jesus Christ that results in loving Jesus and following Jesus Christ more and more closely day by day according to the Bible as the Holy Spirit helps us. No one was more important to Paul than Jesus Christ. Rather than look to himself, who he was as a rabbi, 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. Paul chose to serve Jesus Christ supremely no matter what he suffered even if he had to die for his faith in Jesus. The power of Christ's resurrection defeated the devil and death when He rose from the dead. Paul wanted to know Jesus Christ so well that Christ's power would work through him, and also defeat the devil and death whenever he suffered for Christ in his obedience to Christ.

**(Philippians 3:11) If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of 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 other than Jesus Christ. 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. Paul praised Jesus Christ and prayed to Jesus Christ knowing that his resurrection from the dead depended on Christ alone through faith alone; then, Paul worked without ceasing to promote the cause of Christ as though his salvation depended on his ceaseless labors for Christ. Paul wanted Jesus, his Master, to be able to say to Him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:23). Paul looked

forward to the joys of seeing and worshipping Jesus Christ face to face forever.

**(Philippians 3:12) Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.**

Paul did not sit back relaxed and think, “I am saved,” and then live his life selfishly or self-centeredly from the moment he believed—waiting to die and go to heaven, where he could have more of his selfish wants met forever. Rather, Jesus Christ made Paul into His own servant and representative in the world, and Paul loved Christ and loved to serve Him. This is a fact of experience for all true Christians. 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 still potentially beneficial to him) or his past sins. Paul did not claim to possess in this life all the future promises of Jesus Christ through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul wanted to know more about Jesus to 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 before the watching world and the Church, even as a Christ-like example to others. In Philippians 3:17, Paul wrote: “Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.”

**(Philippians 3:13) Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,**

Paul did not focus on himself and what he had achieved even as a Christian and an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul kept his focus on Christ Jesus and the future work that Christ wanted him to complete—completing his future work for Christ demanded all his time, thoughts, prayers and energy. He did not spend time reflecting on his past achievements, failures, or sins;

rather, Paul wanted to do those things that would help him serve Christ more effectively each day. Paul was not averse to learning from his mistakes, but he did not keep thinking about them. He strained forward for what lay ahead, the Lord being his Helper. Through prayer, through his study of the 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 toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**

The “upward (or heavenly) call of God in Christ Jesus” reminds us that our living in “this world” was not and is not the final purpose of Christ's life, death and resurrection for us. Christ is preparing us for heaven, and eventually we will reign with Him as kings and priests someday on a new earth. What we do in the future better prepares us for the future that God has planned for us after that, and what we have learned from the past will help us serve Christ better in the future and throughout eternity. This verse reminds us of the call John received in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 4:1, 2). 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 us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.**

The Bible discusses both spiritual babies and the spiritually mature. Paul recognized that over time and through serious, prayerful, study and application of the Word of God to one's daily life, that Christians could mature and begin living consistently for Christ—that Christ might prepare them for an eternal future. 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 Bible 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) Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.**

Trials and temptations threaten to lead us away from putting Christ and His purposes first and foremost in our lives. Sometimes suffering persecution can be so severe all we can do is hold fast to our faith in Christ Jesus until we receive from Him the strength we need to endure, or He rescues us from our physical and/or spiritual danger. 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) Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.**

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 as he imitated Christ; then, they could be good examples 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 walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:**

No matter what some claim or say about themselves as supposed followers of Jesus Christ (if they are “supposed” and not real followers), they are actually enemies of the cross of Christ; that is, enemies of the true teaching of Jesus Christ and the truth 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 and obeying the ceremonial laws) in addition to believing in Jesus Christ the Messiah. Truly, our salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and it depends on Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross for us and not on what we achieve.

**(Philippians 3:19) Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)**

If we compare this verse to the change in many predominate cultures today; sorrowfully, for too many people their god is whatever will satisfy their selfish passions and desires; they glorify, publicize, and expect to receive praise for all they do that is contrary to the God’s law and natural law; and rejecting God and heavenly blessings, they have committed themselves to whatever satisfaction they can find from the pleasures of “this world.” 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) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:**

True Christians are citizens of heaven; citizens and subjects 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) Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto 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.

**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?

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Contact: P.O. Box 1052, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083 and [lgp@theiblf.com](mailto:lgp@theiblf.com).