

PHILIPPIANS: THE SECRET OF CHRISTIAN JOY (studies 4,5)

Loss for the Lord

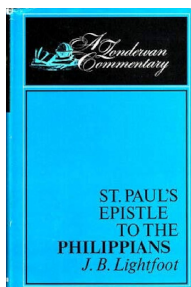
I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus My Lord ... PHIL.3:8

Study 4a: PAUL'S PEDIGREE and the 'DOGS' (3:1-6)

3:1-3 What must the boasting be of the 'dogs'? (Gal.4:4-7)

[3:2] If one is shocked at Paul's use of the word "dogs" for the Judaizers, he may be reminded that this was the common description of the Gentiles by the Jews. A Jew was forbidden to bring the price of a dog into the house of God to pay a vow (Deut.23:18). [Robertson 98]

[3:2,3] The Judaizers spoke of themselves as banqueters seated at the Father's table, of Gentile Christians as dogs greedily snatching up the refuse meat which fell therefrom. St Paul has reversed the image. The Judaizers themselves are the dogs ... the ordinances, which the formalists value so highly, are the mere refuse of the feast. [Lightfoot 149]



3:4-6 Why was Paul's pedigree perfect -- in the providence of God -- for meeting the objections of the 'dogs'?

[3:1-6] If we are faithful to our Lord it must be sometimes our office to make people uneasy, to reveal to them their sins, and especially those darling sins which supply an opiate to the conscience ... The very fire of our rebukes must be identical with the flame that burns in our most sacred joy. We must inspire men even while we reprimand them. While we point out their deficiencies they must feel as though we were giving them wings. [Jowett 109,111]

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REASONS FOR PAUL'S PRIDE IN THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN

- 1. Benjamin born of Jacob's favourite wife, Rachel
- 2. Only child of Jacob born in promised land
- 3. Tribe of Israel's first lawful king, Saul
- 4. Jerusalem and temple within its borders
- 5. Benjamin remained loyal to Davidic line after 10 tribes broke away
- 6. Benjamin and Judah formed core of colony in Palestine after exile
- 7. Always held post of honour in army battle array

- 8. Mordecai, deliverer of Israel, a Benjamite
- 9. Benjamin resisted inroads of Greek culture after exile

Study 4b: The ROOT of SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS (3:7-11)

3:7-8 Is Paul's sacrifices for Christ is their any lingering regret?

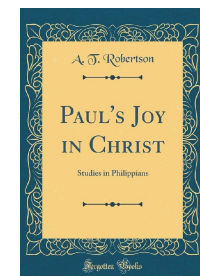
[3:1-11] Thus it should not be surprising to discover in these verses a radical and rapid shift in Paul's tone from that of joy and affection for the Philippian Christians (v 1) to that of violent hostility against those who would undermine the spiritual vitality of his friends. Nor is this swift alteration of the apostle's mood unique to this section. It is found in other of his letters (cf. Gal 3:1; 4:21) and elsewhere in Phil (1:16-17). [Hawthorne 123]

3:9-11 In these days of power-hungry Christians, we do well to note with what resurrection power is here connected (Acts 4:23-37)

[3:3] We observe that the Apostle does not say that we are resigned, that we are at peace, that there is a calm upon us. This is true; but he says that "we exult." The "still waters" ... of Ps.23:2 are anything but stagnant. [Moule 177]

A 'treadmill of spiritual exercises'?

[3:16] The dull monotony of religious routine palls on a person. But there is but one thing to do, and that is to keep on going in the same path. There is monotony in work, the tedium of household cares, the grind of church services, the petty details of pastoral life, the minutiae of scholarship and all forms of Bible study, the treadmill of spiritual exercises (prayer, reading the Scriptures, singing, church attendance, work for Christ), the humdrum of things like three meals a day and going to bed every night – these things tend to pall on the sensitive spirit. But we shall die if we do not eat, sleep, walk, work, breathe. We shall die without the common details in the spiritual life. [Robertson 116]



Imitation to Image

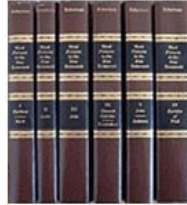
Brethren, join in following my example ... our Lord Jesus Christ ... will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory ... PHIL.3:17,21

Study 5a: SATISFIED WITH BEING 'SAVED'? (3:12-16)

3:12-14 What is Paul's attitude as to the significance of his past salvation? (cf. Heb.6:1)

[3:12] Paul pointedly denies that he has reached a spiritual impasse of non-development. Certainly he knew nothing of so-called sudden absolute perfection by any single experience. [Robertson *Word Pictures in the New Testament* Vol.4 p.454]

[3:13] He is in fact protesting against the false security, the antinomian recklessness, which others deduced from the doctrine of faith ... The Antinomians ... refuse to conform to the cross ... The Apostle elsewhere reminds these lax brethren, that 'the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking,' Rom.xiv.17 ... [Lightfoot 152,155]



3:15-16 What can we gather as to a 'perfectionist' doctrine in Philippi? (cf. v.12)

[3:15] As far as my own observation goes, such views [perfectionism] are not uncommonly attended, in those who hold them, by a certain oblivion to personal shortcomings and inconsistencies; by an obscuration of consciousness, and of conscience, more or less marked, towards the sinfulness of everyday violations of the law of holiness in respect of "meekness, humbleness of mind, longsuffering," sympathy, and other quiet graces. [Moule 188]

[3:15] Paul has patience with the merely inept, and surely we need it. Sanity on the subject of Christian perfection is sorely needed when we have one extreme of antinomian license and the other of professional perfectionism. A story is told by Spurgeon that one Sunday morning a crank stepped into his study with the remark that the Lord had revealed to him that he was to preach for Spurgeon that morning. Quick as a flash Spurgeon replied that he had just received a later revelation to show him the door, which he did. [Robertson 115]



Handley Moule

Study 5b: The PATTERN of PERFECTION (3:17-21)

3:17 Where is the divine pattern of perfection to be found? (v.12; cf. Matt.5:48)

3:18-19 Whom does Paul here denominate as 'enemies of the cross'? (Gal.5:11)

[3:18,19] Neither Paine nor Voltaire ever inflicted such awful havoc on the religion of Jesus Christ as those false professors who have borne His name, but have been destitute of His grace and power ... They were made to face God like kings, but they are always rooting in the earth like swine; their ambitions are limited by the horizon of time and sense. [Meyer 202]

3:20-21 Though our citizenship is in heaven, what glorious truth about our final destiny must we not neglect if our gospel is not to appear 'mist-erious' for the earthly-minded? (v.19)

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