



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Surrender: Serving the Savior"
(Pentecost, 2026)

"Press On!" Text(s): *Philippians 3.1-11*

☐ Day #1—Monday, October 5th. Read: Philippians 3.1. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?

In Philippians 3, Paul encourages a continual focus on the truths that bring peace and joy. The truths that Paul will discuss here we need to remember on a daily basis. If we will continue to remember and refocus on these truths, and build them into our lives, the peace in our lives will exponentially grow. Moreover, the unhappiness and lack of peace in your life will decline. As we have studied, circumstances, people, our anxieties and fears, can rob us of peace; but so can lies and false teachings about God and how life is to be lived as a child of God! These "thieves" can steal our peace and hope. While we will examine chapter 3 in detail, it is important to see the complete message of this chapter:

vs. 1–11

Paul's past...

The accountant...

"I count" new values...

vs. 12–16

Paul's present...

The athlete...

"I press on" with new vigor...

vs. 17–21

Paul's future...

The "alien"...

"I look" forward with new vision...

What Paul is describing is the "spiritual mind."...recall that the city of Philippi was actually a Roman colony—a "Rome away from Rome." In the same sense, the people of God are a colony of heaven on earth. "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20, NASB), and we look at earth from heaven's point of view. This is the spiritual mind.¹

In *n.1* it seems like Paul was about to close his letter since he uses a word that is typically translated as "finally." However, he feels that he must give a warning about those who wanted all non-Jewish (Gentile) converts to Christianity to essentially become Jews. Again, Paul is writing from a Roman prison and chained to a Praetorian guard. Yet, he can still encourage his fellow believers to *rejoice* in the freedom of the Gospel!

Consider/Reflect: "[Despite using the word 'finally']...Paul embarks on new topics and emphases, extending his conclusion...Paul does not need to add new things, but to remind readers of the truth they have already heard, as Jesus told His apostles (Jn 14:26)...[When Paul adds in v.1b it is] 'safe for you' [he is reminding the Philippians that]...Throughout the OT, God continually warned Israel about forgetting His Word and admonished them to remember it. Reminders of the truth provide safety against the constant assault of falsehood."²

☐ Day #2—Tuesday, October 6th. Read: Philippians 3.2.—Examine: The Text and its Message.

Paul was very vigilant when it came to the threats confronting Christianity...especially Christianity becoming another sect of Judaism. Here, Paul warns the Philippians to resist those who are *adding anything* to the Gospel of Jesus. Warren Weirby describes the context:

¹ W.W. Wiersbe. *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1996).

² *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

From the very beginning, the Gospel came “to the Jew first” (see Acts 3:26; Rom. 1:16), so that the first seven chapters of Acts deal only with Jewish believers or with Gentiles who were Jewish proselytes (Acts 2:10). In Acts 8:5–25, the message went to the Samaritans, but this did not cause too much of an upheaval since the Samaritans were at least partly Jewish. But when Peter went to the Gentiles in Acts 10, this created an uproar. Peter was called on the carpet to explain his activities (Acts 11). After all, the Gentiles in Acts 10 had become Christians *without first becoming Jews*, and this was a whole new thing for the church...³

It did not take long for the religious establishment and those who were strict, adherents to Judaism, to oppose Paul’s ministry and argue that Gentiles *must* to submit to Jewish laws and rituals before they could be admitted into fellowship as God’s people. This conflict led to the Conference at Jerusalem that is described in Acts 15.

As Weirby describes, “Those still insisting that Christians must adhere to the Jewish Law attacked Paul, mocked him personally, and attempted to steal his converts and his churches. This group has been referred to elsewhere as the “Judaizers.”⁴ This is likely the group Paul is describing in *Philippians 3.1-2*. Paul uses three very descriptive and vivid words...

“The Dogs:” To a Jew, dogs were viewed as dirty scavengers. Because of this, orthodox Jews would call the Gentile a “dog.” But here Paul calls orthodox Jews “dogs!” Paul is not just using names; he is comparing these false teachers to the dirty scavengers so contemptible to decent people. Like those dogs, these Judaizers snapped at Paul’s heels and followed him from place to place “barking” their false doctrines...

“Evil workers:” These men taught that the sinner was saved by faith *plus* good works, especially the works of the Law. But Paul states that their “good works” are really *evil* works because they are performed by the flesh (old nature) and not the Spirit, and they glorify the workers and not Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–10 and Titus 3:3–7 make it clear that nobody can be saved by doing good works, even religious works. A Christian’s good works are the result of his faith, not the basis for his salvation.

“The mutilators:” Here Paul uses a pun on the word “circumcision.” The word translated “circumcision” literally means “a mutilation.” The Judaizers taught that circumcision was essential to salvation (Acts 15:1; Gal. 6:12–18); but Paul states that circumcision of *itself* is only a mutilation! The true Christian has experienced a spiritual circumcision in Christ (Col. 2:11), and does not need any fleshly operations. Circumcision...or any other religious practice cannot save a person from his sins. Only faith in Jesus Christ can do that.⁵

Consider/Reflect: Read John 6.63. What does Jesus say about our dependence on what we do...our flesh?

☐ **Day #3—Wednesday, October 7th. Read: Philippians 3.3.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

After describing the false teachers in such a graphic way, Paul continues to use the image of circumcision to describe believers in Christ as the “true circumcision.” He characterizes Christians as people who...

Worship God in the Spirit—No works of the “flesh” can produce true worship of God because it is spiritual in nature...

Rejoice in Christ Jesus—William Hendriksen writes: “Those whose hearts—hence also lips and ears—have been circumcised make their boast in the Lord, in him alone. Such boasters rely entirely on Christ Jesus, the Anointed Savior; on his *person* and *work*. They glory in his *cross*, that is, in his atonement, as the only basis for their salvation...”

Have no confidence in the flesh—Hendriksen explains: “In broad terms, *flesh is anything apart from Christ on which one bases his hope for salvation.*” The believer, understanding that there is absolutely nothing that he can do with his body to earn salvation, trusts in Christ and Christ alone.⁶

Physical circumcision cannot remove the rebellious disposition bound up in that flesh. Paul writes about the spiritual removal of the sinful heart (Ezk 36:26), the putting to death of the deeds of the flesh (Rm 6:11)...The Spirit of God generates a new heart and moves that soul to faith, which is the origin of genuine worship (praise of God and service to neighbor)...Those regenerated know that our human nature (flesh) is utterly untrustworthy (Jn 2:24–25).⁷

3 Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 R. Ellsworth. *Opening up Philippians* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004).

7 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

Consider/Reflect: Is there anything in your past that you need to walk away from that is keeping you from fully surrendering to Jesus and becoming new in Christ? Pray about this today.

□ **Day #4--Thursday, October 8th. Read: Philippians 3.4-6.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

In these verses, Paul mockingly argues that if bragging in one's self is necessary for spiritual advancement, he would lead the way! Paul drove the point further writing that if the Jewish religious practices made a person acceptable to God, then Paul had a lot of credit stored up in heaven! Paul catalogued the things that he counted as "gains" in his religious life. Notice how each expands and build on the other before it...:

He was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth as the law required (Genesis. 17:12)...

He was born and raised an Israelite, the "Chosen People;" he did not wander away from his upbringing...

He came from the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe of Israel's first king, and one that had remained faithful when others did not...

He was not only a true Jew, but a *Hebrew*, an Aramaic-speaker (See Acts 6:1; 22:2; 2 Corinthians 11:22), son of *Hebrew* parents, not like so many who had lost the use of their native tongue...

Strict in observing the *law*, he was a devout *Pharisee*. This was the conservative popular sect within Judaism which developed during the Maccabean period (cf. John 3:1). The Pharisees desired to keep the Mosaic Law in every detail (cf. Acts 26:4–5). They had detailed regulations for every area of life which had developed over time in the discussion between the two schools of rabbis (Shammai and Hillel). Their oral traditions were later codified into the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmud's. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were positive examples of their sincerity and dedication.⁸...

His *zeal* was shown in what he did to persecute the Christians (Acts 8:3; 9:1).

He could say that as far as the external demands of the *law* were concerned, the Mosaic law by which he had tried to live, he was *faultless*. That, however, was a matter of *legalistic righteousness*, of trying to be right with God on the basis of obedience to the law.⁹

Consider/Reflect: In the Bible, the word "joy" is the Greek word *chara*. In addition, in the Bible the word "grace" is the Greek word *charis*. They come from the same root word...*chara* and *charis*. We get the word "charisma" from that word. In other words, joy and grace go together! With joy and grace in your life, there is peace. The more grace you live by, the more joy you are going to have in your life, which results in greater peace as well. Lesson? Relax in God's grace!

□ **Day #5— Friday, October 9th. Read: Philippians 3.7-9.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

After meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus and his eventual conversion, Paul came to see how useless ritual and rules were as a means of obtaining and maintaining a right relationship with God. Just as his list of credentials escalated as he reflected on his life prior to Jesus, here Paul does a similar thing. R.R. Melick notes that when Paul describes his life in Christ now, compared to his former life before Christ, the phrases Paul used were...

...progressively more vivid. First, he considered his gains as loss. The perfect tense form of "considered" (Gk *hegemaí*) suggests a completed evaluation with present effects. He came to realize that they were loss. Second, he continued to affirm that decision. In 3:8 the present tense of "consider" joins with the object "loss." Paul meant that this was a proper appraisal and a good decision. The point receives further emphasis by the repetition of the word "loss" in a verbal form: "I have lost all things." Third, in 3:8 Paul expressed his conviction more firmly with the verb "consider" and the object "rubbish" (*skybala*). There is increasing intensity, as though the mere thought of that decision brought a renewed appraisal that his former life was useless compared to what really mattered.¹⁰

What we also notice here is that Paul clearly understood that the Christian life was a life of *exchange*: Jesus *takes* all we have: our sin, our fears, anxieties, heart, mind, and soul, and we *receive* all that Jesus has: righteousness, purity, power, and a Spirit empowered relationship with God. Luther referred to this as "The Happy Exchange." Likewise, it is impossible to hold on to values and lifestyles apart from Christ and still have Christ. For Paul, and for us, Jesus exceeds anything and everything else.

8 R.J. Utley. *Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison (Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians)* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997).

9 D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham (Eds.). *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

10 R.R. Melick. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991).

Today, exchange with Jesus any fears, insecurities, and attitudes and receive His promises, grace, and peace!

Consider/Reflect: “Paul reflects on his heritage and contrasts its value with the blessing of knowing Jesus, who sets us free to invest our lives in the lives of others. Only the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has the power to truly set us free to experience life to the fullest. [Pray]: Dear Lord Jesus, by Your grace You set me free to live in Your righteousness and in Your image. Loosen my grip on earthly advantage, and take my hand in Yours. Amen.”¹¹

☐ **Day #6-Saturday, October 10th. Read: Philippians 3.10-11. —Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Being in Christ was at the heart of Paul’s theology. He saw all persons as either in Adam or in Christ (Rom 5:12–21). His desire to be in Christ meant to be in union with the Lord and thus to have the covering of Christ’s righteousness surrounding him and the resources of Christ available to him. Paul equated the words “gain Christ” (v. 8) and “found in him” (v. 9). Together they present two different points of view. From one perspective, Paul gained Christ. From another, he was found in him. The passive verb, “found in him,” often has the meaning of “prove to be” or “be present.”...At the great day of judgment, Paul wanted to be found in Christ...

For Christians, knowing Jesus is our desire and privilege. Knowing Jesus is what brings true peace.

In this verse [v.10] two ideas complement each other...They provide a theological foundation for Paul’s thought, as well as a model for Christian growth...Here another chiasm occurs. The first elements are the power of his resurrection (v. 10) and attaining the resurrection from the dead (v. 11). The second elements are fellowship of sharing in sufferings (v. 10) and becoming like him in his death (v. 10). The literary arrangement indicates that Paul’s deepest ambition was resurrection power. While the chiasm expresses these four statements in two, the logical order preserved Paul’s theology.¹²

Consider/Reflect: In longing to know Christ, therefore, Paul sought a complete relationship with him. Situations in our lives may be unique, but every believer has the hope in the resurrection power comes from Jesus through His Spirit in our lives. In fact, the more obedient one is to Jesus, thus conformed to his death, the more resurrection power becomes available. Additionally, one day we will enjoy the complete transformation of our lives and this world. We will live in heaven with our Lord and friend.

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...
Sermon Series: “Surrender. Serving the Savior.”
Scripture Texts:
Isaiah 25.6-9
Philippians 4.4-13
Matthew 22.1-14

¹¹ *Lutheran Study Bible.*
¹² Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.*