

# PHILIPPIANS

## Knowing Christ (3:10 – 4:1)

*Notes: Week Six*

### Philippians 3:10 – 4:1 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

### Following Paul's Example

<sup>15</sup> All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

<sup>17</sup> Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. <sup>18</sup> For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

### Closing Appeal for Steadfastness and Unity

**4** Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

## Philippians 3:10 – 4:1 (HCSB)

<sup>10</sup> My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, <sup>11</sup> assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.

### Reaching Forward to God's Goal

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already reached the goal or am already fully mature, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not<sup>[a]</sup> consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly<sup>[b]</sup> call in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Therefore, all who are mature should think this way. And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this also to you. <sup>16</sup> In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained. <sup>17</sup> Join in imitating me, brothers, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup> For I have often told you, and now say again with tears, that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction; their god is their stomach; their glory is in their shame. They are focused on earthly things, <sup>20</sup> but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>21</sup> He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject everything to Himself.

### Practical Counsel

**4** So then, my brothers, you are dearly loved and longed for—my joy and crown. In this manner stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.

#### Footnotes:

- a. [Philippians 3:13](#) Other mss read *not yet*
- b. [Philippians 3:14](#) Or *upward*

## Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible<sup>1</sup>

### Philippians 3:10 - 21

**3:9-11** Paul described his new aspirations in three ways: gaining Christ and being found in Him, having a Christian righteousness, and attaining resurrection from the dead. **Found** refers to judgment day. Christ brings a **righteousness** through faith in Christ (imputed), not from works of the law (cp. [v. 6](#)). **To know Him** (personally, experientially) parallels and explains "found in him." It involves experiencing the **power of His resurrection**, resulting in Paul's own resurrection from death, and knowing the **fellowship** (lit "participation in") **of His sufferings**. Identification with Christ's suffering brings conformity to Jesus' death through refining obedience, and a believer attains **the resurrection from among the dead**.

**3:12-16** These verses contain a call to follow Paul's pattern of living.

**3:12-14** Paul acknowledged his imperfection. **Reached the goal** (lit "received") and **fully mature** (lit "been perfected") indicate the need for growth. **Make every effort** recalls the athlete's discipline and focus. Together these reveal that Paul had not yet achieved perfection. **Take hold of it and have been taken hold** translate the same Greek word, one active the other passive. Paul aspired to complete salvation through resurrection. **Because** presents the substance of Paul's hope—the perfection of the resurrection. **Pursue** (cp. [v. 12](#)), **goal**, and **prize** use athletic imagery of the runner's energy, focus, and reward. "The prize" is **God's heavenly call** (to heaven), like a referee calling a winner to the platform to receive the prize.

**3:15-16** Paul exhorted the **mature** (lit "perfect"). The use of the same root word in [verse 12](#) reveals that Paul addressed the false teachers who claimed perfection. **Think this way** is "value" (cp. [2:1-11](#); [3:15](#)). **Live up to** means to walk in order, in rank like a soldier. **Whatever truth we have attained** is what brought previous success in Christian living.

**3:17-21** First, Paul encouraged believers. **Imitating me** reveals his confidence that he lived correctly before God and man. He spoke **with tears** (the only record that Paul cried) because of the damage these false teachers brought to God's work. As **enemies of the cross**, they were inflated with their own spiritual abilities (cp. [v. 3](#)) rather than trusting Christ. Paul described them four ways. First, their **end is destruction** (not annihilation but eternal judgment). Second, their **god is their stomach** reflects their preoccupation with Jewish dietary laws. Third, their **glory is in their shame** means focusing inappropriately on the genitals (circumcision). Fourth, they **focused on earthly things**, unable to see beyond the present time.

True believers differ from these false teachers. **Citizenship** was rare and prized, and the Philippians were justifiably proud of their Roman citizenship. "Citizenship" **in heaven** reminded the church of the existence of a greater society and culture. Military images continue with the **Savior** from heaven. Roman citizens called the emperor "savior"; Christians expect their deliverer from heaven. **The body of our humble condition** refers to the body limited by earthiness, finiteness, and sin. Christ will change the body into the **likeness of His glorious body**. Physical bodies will become glorified bodies in the image of Christ. Salvation has three stages: conversion, moral perfection at death, and the transformation of the body through resurrection at the second coming of Christ.

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1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Philippians 3 & 4".

## English Standard Version - Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

### Philippians 3:10 - 21

**3:10-11** The goal of trusting in Christ is to **know him**, that is, to know Christ in a personal relationship, and also to know **the power of his resurrection**—namely, the power Christ exerts now from the right hand of God. But this power is made known as the believer shares the same kind of **sufferings** Jesus faced—the sufferings that attend faithful witness in a fallen world. The good news is that those who suffer with and for Christ will **attain the resurrection from the dead**, even as he did.

**3:12-16** *Paul's Progress in the Gospel: Through Christ, Not the Law.* Paul emphasizes the need for progress in Christian living, presenting himself as one who continually reaches ahead to see God's kingdom expanded.

**3:12** Paul stresses that he is not **already perfect**—he is still involved in the struggles of life in a fallen world and hence he still sins; the full glory of the resurrection remains in the future. **I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.** There is a balance of faith and works, of God's call and the believer's response.

**3:14** **Goal** (Gk. *skopos*) could also refer to the finish line in a race or an archery target. Paul's life is purposeful, for he constantly aims toward a heavenly goal. **The prize** is the fullness of blessings and rewards in the age to come, most especially being in perfect fellowship with Christ forever.

**3:15** **are mature.** "Mature" (Gk. *teleios*) is the same adjective translated "perfect" in [v. 12](#) ("not... perfect"). Thus, Paul is saying, in effect, "If you are really perfect/mature, you will realize you are not yet perfect/mature!"

**3:17-21** *A Call to Follow Paul's Example of Commitment to Jesus as Lord.* Paul calls the Philippians to imitate him, a common theme in his letters (cf. [1 Cor. 4:16](#); [11:1](#); [2 Thess. 3:7-9](#)). Paul's intent is not for the Philippians to focus on him per se but rather for them to join him in humble, radical dependence on Christ.

**3:17** While Paul is not yet perfected, he is confident enough in his Christian walk to ask the Philippians to **join in imitating me** and other mature Christians. Much Christian growth comes through imitation of other Christians ([4:9](#); [1 Cor. 11:1](#); [2 Thess. 3:8-9](#); [1 Tim. 4:12, 15-16](#); [2 Tim. 3:10-11](#); [Heb. 13:7](#); [1 Pet. 5:3](#)).

**3:18-19** The **enemies of the cross** could be the Judaizers of [v. 2](#) or "worldly" people in general. Their destiny is final judgment (**destruction**), they worship themselves (**their belly**), and they are consumed with **earthly things**.

**3:20** **citizenship.** See note on [1:27](#).

**3:21** **Transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body** echoes [2:5-11](#). Those who follow Christ's example of service will share in his vindication and glory as well. Perfection will come only at the resurrection (cf. [3:11-12](#); [1 Cor. 15:12-28](#)). **To subject all things to himself** is messianic language drawn from the OT (e.g., [Ps. 8:6](#); [110:1](#)).

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2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Philippians 3".

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

*Philippians 3:10 – 21*

**3:9, 10** Paul gave up everything—family, friendship, and freedom—in order to know Christ and his resurrection power. We, too, have access to this knowledge and this power, but we may have to make sacrifices to enjoy it fully. What are you willing to give up in order to know Christ? A crowded schedule in order to set aside a few minutes each day for prayer and Bible study? Your friend's approval? Some of your plans or pleasures? Whatever it is, knowing Christ is more than worth the sacrifice.

**3:10** When we become one with Christ by trusting in him, we experience the power that raised him from the dead. That same mighty power will help us live morally renewed and regenerated lives. But before we can walk in newness of life, we must die to sin. Just as the Resurrection gives us Christ's power to live for him, his crucifixion marks the death of our old sinful nature. We can't know the victory of the Resurrection without personally applying the Crucifixion.

**3:11** When Paul wrote, "so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead," he was not implying uncertainty or doubt. He was unsure of the way that he would meet God, whether by execution or by natural death. He did not doubt that he would be raised, but attainment of it was within God's power and not his own.

**3:11** Just as Christ was exalted after his resurrection, so we will one day share Christ's glory ([Revelation 22:1-7](#)). Paul knew that he might die soon, but he had faith that he would be raised to life again.

**3:12-14** Paul said that his goal was to know Christ, to be like Christ, and to be all Christ had in mind for him. This goal took all of Paul's energies. This is a helpful example for us. We should not let anything take our eyes off our goal—knowing Christ. With the single-mindedness of an athlete in training, we must lay aside everything harmful and forsake anything that may distract us from being effective Christians. What is holding you back?

**3:13, 14** Paul had reason to forget the past—he had held the coats of those who had stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr ([Acts 7:57, 58](#), Paul is called Saul here). We have all done things for which we are ashamed, and we live in the tension of what we have been and what we want to be. Because our hope is in Christ, however, we can let go of past guilt and look forward to what God will help us become. Don't dwell on your past. Instead, grow in the knowledge of God by concentrating on your relationship with him *now*. Realize that you are forgiven, and then move on to a life of faith and obedience. Look forward to a fuller and more meaningful life because of your hope in Christ.

**3:15, 16** Sometimes trying to live a perfect Christian life can be so difficult that it leaves us drained and discouraged. We may feel so far from perfect that we think we can never please God with our life. Paul used *perfection* ([3:12](#)) to mean mature or complete, not flawless in every detail. Those who are mature should press on in the Holy Spirit's power, knowing that Christ will reveal and fill in any discrepancy between what we are and what we should be. Christ's provision is no excuse for lagging devotion, but it provides relief and assurance for those who feel driven.

**3:16** Christian maturity involves acting on the guidance that you have already received. We can always make excuses that we still have so much to learn. The instruction for us is to live up to what we already know and live out what we have already learned. We do not have to be sidetracked by an unending search for truth.

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3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 2020-21.

### Three Stages of Perfection

1. <i>Perfect Relationship</i>	We are perfect because of our eternal union with the infinitely perfect Christ. When we become his children, we are declared "not guilty" and thus righteous because of what Christ, God's beloved Son, has done for us. This perfection is absolute and unchangeable, and it is this perfect relationship that guarantees that we will one day be "completely perfect" (below). See <a href="#">Colossians 2:8-10</a> ; <a href="#">Hebrews 10:8-14</a> .
2. <i>Perfect Progress</i>	We can grow and mature spiritually as we continue to trust Christ, learn more about him, draw closer to him, and obey him. Our progress is changeable (in contrast to our relationship, above) because it depends on our daily walk—at times in life we mature more than at other times. But we are growing toward perfection if we "press on" ( <a href="#">Philippians 3:12</a> ). These good deeds do not perfect us; rather, as God perfects us, we do good deeds for him. See <a href="#">Philippians 3:1-15</a> .
3. <i>Completely Perfect</i>	When Christ returns to take us into his eternal Kingdom, we will be glorified and made completely perfect. See <a href="#">Philippians 3:20, 21</a> .

*All phases of perfection are grounded in faith in Christ and what he has done, not what we can do for him.*

*We cannot perfect ourselves; only God can work in and through us to "continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns" ([1:6](#)).*

**3:17** Paul challenged the Philippians to pursue Christ-likeness by following Paul's own pattern or example. This did not mean, of course, that they should copy everything he did; he had just stated that he was not perfect ([3:12](#)). But as he focused his life on being like Christ, so should they. The Gospels may not yet have been in circulation, so Paul could not tell them to read the Bible to see what Christ was like. Therefore, he urged them to imitate him. That Paul could tell people to follow his example is a testimony to his character. Can you do the same? What kind of follower would a new Christian become if he or she imitated you?

**3:17-21** Paul criticized not only the Judaizers (see the first note on [3:2, 3](#)) but also self-indulgent Christians, people who claimed to be Christians but didn't live up to Christ's model of servanthood and self-sacrifice. Such people satisfy their own desires before even thinking about the needs of others. Freedom in Christ does not mean freedom to be selfish. It means taking every opportunity to serve and to become the best person you can be.

**3:19** Paul gets tough with people who live to appease their appetites, who believe so strongly in their greatness that they become slaves to pride. What horrible people these must be—so concerned with earthly trivia that during worship their minds wander; so consumed with work that worship is inconvenient; so busy planning the next party that there is no time for prayer. Paul says they are headed for destruction because all they can think about is this life here on earth.

But then we must ask ourselves: Is too much of our time spent on efforts that will not endure in eternity, seeking earthly pleasures, or satisfying our physical desires? We must set our minds on knowing Christ, not on the pursuits of this world.

[3:20](#) Citizens of a Roman colony were expected to promote the interests of Rome and maintain the dignity of the city. In the same way, citizens of heaven ought to promote heaven's interests on earth and lead lives worthy of heavenly citizenship. Too many Christians have failed to transfer their citizenship to heaven. They still seek earthly pleasures and treasures instead of heavenly ones. Paul told the Colossians to remember that they are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. Have you transferred your citizenship? How are you promoting heaven's interests?

[3:21](#) The phrase "weak mortal bodies" does not imply any negative attitude toward the human body. However, the bodies we will receive when we are raised from the dead will be glorious, like Christ's resurrected body. Those who struggle with pain, physical limitations, or disabilities can have wonderful hope in the resurrection. For a more detailed discussion of our new bodies, see [1 Corinthians 15:35ff](#) and [2 Corinthians 5:1-10](#).

## Life Essentials Study Bible<sup>4</sup>

A Principle to Live By  
Philippians #10: Progressive Sanctification  
*from [Philippians 3:10-21](#)*

**To live in a manner worthy of the gospel,  
we must become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.**

After penning some very harsh words regarding the false teachers who were promoting works as being necessary to inherit eternal life, Paul quickly and humbly confessed that he was still growing in his own faith. Utilizing another athletic metaphor, he ran his race with his eyes on the goal—to become like Christ.

It's important to note that the "prize" ([v. 14](#)) was already guaranteed. Paul had already received eternal life through faith and had been "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" ([Eph 1:13-14](#)). Furthermore, he was looking forward to that moment when, with him, the Philippians would all receive glorified bodies at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ ([Php 3:20-21](#)). (See 1Co #31: Resurrected Bodies, [p. 1590](#).)

### Reflection and Response

*In terms of becoming fully mature in Christ, why is it important for all believers to balance God's enabling grace and power with our human responsibility?*

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4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1644.