

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The apostle exhorts the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord, Philemon 3:1. And to beware of false teachers, Philemon 3:2. Shows that Christians are the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, Philemon 3:3. And that himself had more reason to trust in the flesh than any of the Jews, Philemon 3:4-6. But that he counted all things loss for Christ, Philemon 3:7-11. He longs after a conformity to Christ in his death, and presses onward to the attainment of his high calling, Philemon 3:12-14. Exhorts them to be like-minded, Philemon 3:15-17. Warns them against certain persons who were enemies to the cross of Christ, Philemon 3:18, Philemon 3:19. Shows the nature of their heavenly privileges, and the resurrection and glorification of the human body, Philemon 3:20, Philemon 3:21.

Verse 1

Rejoice in the Lord - Be always happy; but let that happiness be such as you derive from the Lord.

To write the same things - He means those which he had formerly preached to them or to other Churches, for he had but one Gospel; and we may rest assured that the doctrine of this epistle was the same with his preaching.

For you it is safe - It is much better to have these Divine things committed to writing than confided to memory. By the latter they may be either lost or corrupted, by the former they will be preserved.

Verse 2

Beware of dogs - The Jews, who have here the same appellation which they formerly gave to the Gentiles: because the Gentiles were not included in the covenant, they called them Dogs; and themselves, the children of the Most High. Now, they are cast out of the covenant and the Gentiles taken in; therefore they are the dogs, and the Gentiles the children.

Evil workers - Judaizing teachers, who endeavored to pervert the Gospel.

The concision - ἡ περιτομή, ἡ περιτομή, ἡ περιτομή. The cutting or excision; not ἡ περιτομή, ἡ περιτομή, the circumcision: the word is used by the apostle to degrade the pretensions which the Jews made to sanctity by the cutting in their flesh. Circumcision was an honorable thing, for it was a sign of the covenant; but as they now had rejected the new covenant, their circumcision was rendered uncircumcision, and is termed a cutting, by way of degradation.

Verse 3

We are the circumcision - We, who have embraced the faith of Christ crucified, are now entered into the new covenant, and according to that new covenant, worship God in the Spirit, exulting, ἡ περιτομή, ἡ περιτομή, making our boast of Christ Jesus, as our only Savior, having no confidence in the flesh - in any outward rite or ceremony prescribed by the Jewish institutions.

Verse 4

Though I might also have confidence - If any of them have any cause to boast in outward rites and privileges, I have as much; yea, more.

Verse 5

Circumcised the eighth day - This was the time that the law required the males to be circumcised; and we find, from Genesis 17:14, both in the Samaritan Pentateuch and in the Septuagint, though the clause is now lost out of the common Hebrew text, that the male child, which is not circumcised the eighth day, shall be cut off from among his people: this precept was literally observed in the case of St. Paul.

Of the stock of Israel - Regularly descended from the patriarch Jacob.

Of the tribe of Benjamin - The most favourite son of that patriarch and a tribe that did not revolt with Jeroboam, 1 Kings 12:21, nor pollute the worship of God by idolatry.

A Hebrew of the Hebrews - Though born in a heathen country, Tarsus, yet both my parents were Hebrews; nor has there ever been any strange blood mixed with that of our family.

Touching the law, a Pharisee - One that not only received the law and the prophets as coming from God; but belonged to that sect which, of all others, was most scrupulously attached to it.

#### Verse 6

**Concerning zeal** - As to my zeal for Pharisaism, I gave the fullest proof of it by persecuting the Church of Christ; and this is known to all my countrymen.

**Touching the righteousness** - And as to that plan of justification, which justification the Jews say is to be obtained by an observance of the law, I have done every thing so conscientiously from my youth up, that in this respect I am blameless; and may, with more confidence than most of them; expect that justification which the law appears to promise.

#### Verse 7

**But what things were gain** - The credit and respect which I had, as being zealously attached to the law, and to the traditions of the elders, I counted loss for Christ - I saw that this could stand me in no stead; that all my acts of righteousness were nothing on which I could depend for salvation; and that Christ crucified could alone profit me; for I found that it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin.

#### Verse 8

**I count all things but loss** - Not only my Jewish privileges, but all others of every kind; with every thing that men count valuable or gainful, or on which they usually depend for salvation.

**The excellency of the knowledge of Christ** - That superior light, information, and blessedness which come through the Gospel of Jesus Christ; justification through his blood, sanctification by his Spirit, and eternal glory through his merits and intercession. These are the blessings held out to us by the Gospel, of which, and the law, Jesus Christ is the sum and substance.

**I have suffered the loss of all things** - Some translate ἅτα πάντα ἡμέτερον, ἃ ἔλαβον ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου, ἃ ἔμελλεν εἶναι μοι ὠφέλιμα, ἃ ἔβαλον ἅπασαν τὴν ὡφελίαν αὐτῶν, for whom I have thrown away all things - I have made a voluntary choice of Christ, his cross, his poverty, and his reproach; and for these I have freely sacrificed all I had from the world, and all I could expect from it.

**And do count them but dung** - The word ἡμέτερον...ἃ ἔμελλεν εἶναι μοι ὠφέλιμα means the vilest dross or refuse of any thing; the worst excrement. The word shows how utterly insignificant and unavailing, in point of salvation, the apostle esteemed every thing but the Gospel of Jesus. With his best things he freely parted, judging them all loss while put in the place of Christ crucified; and Christ crucified he esteemed infinite gain, when compared with all the rest. Of the utter unavailability of any thing but Christ to save the soul the Apostle Paul stands as an incontrovertible proof. Could the law have done any thing, the apostle must have known it. He tried, and found it vanity; he tried the Gospel system, and found it the power of God to his salvation. By losing all that the world calls excellent, he gained Christ, and endless salvation through him. Of the glorious influence of the Gospel he is an unimpeachable witness. See the concluding observations on the 9th chapter of the Acts, (Acts 9:43 (note)) on the character of St. Paul.

#### Verse 9

**And be found in him** - Be found a believer in Christ, not having mine own righteousness - not trusting in any thing I have done or could do, in order to my salvation; relying on no scheme of justification, set up either formerly by myself or by others.

**But that which is through the faith of Christ** - That justification which is received by faith through the atonement made by Christ.

**The righteousness which is of God** - God's method of justifying sinners through faith in his Son. See the notes on Romans 3:21, Romans 3:23 (note), Romans 3:25 (note), where this subject is treated at large.

#### Verse 10

**That I may know him** - To be the true and promised Messiah, and experience all that salvation which he has bought by his blood.

**The power of his resurrection** - In having this body of my humiliation raised from death, and made like unto his glorious body. This seems to be the sole meaning of the apostle; for it is in virtue of Christ's resurrection that we are to be raised incorruptible and immortal.

**And the fellowship of his sufferings** - Christ died, not only as a victim for sin, but as a martyr to the truth. No creature can have fellowship with him in his vicarious sufferings; as a martyr to the truth, St. Paul wished to

**imitate him. Not only in the apostle, but in the primitive Christians generally, there seems to have been a strong desire after martyrdom.**

### Verse 11

The resurrection of the dead - That is, the resurrection of those who, having died in the Lord, rise to glory and honor; and hence St. Paul uses a peculiar word which occurs no where else in the New Testament, ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν, . The words, as they stand in the best MSS., are as follow: ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν, ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν, ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν, , to that resurrection which is of the dead. This glorious resurrection, and perhaps peculiarly glorious in the case of martyrs, is that to which St. Paul aspired. The word ἀνάστασις, signifies the resurrection in general, both of the just and unjust; ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν, may signify that of the blessed only.

## Verse 12

Not as though I had already attained - ἵπῳ... ἡ δὲ ἀγωνία ἐστίν· ὁ μὴ ἐκείνην ὑπομένῃ. For I have not yet received the prize; I am not glorified, for I have not finished my course; and I have a conflict still to maintain, and the issue will prove whether I should be crowned. From the beginning of the 11th to the end of the 17th verse there is one continued allusion to the contests at the Olympic games; exercises with which, and their laws, the Philippians were well acquainted.

[illegible]

**So Basil the great, Hom. in Psalm 116:13:**

[illegible]

â€œHe will receive the cup of salvation; that is, thirsting and earnestly desiring to come, by martyrdom, to the consummation.â€•

**So Oecumenius, on Acts 28:**

[illegible]

• All the years of Paul, from his calling to his martyrdom, were thirty and five. •

**And in Balsamon, Can. i. Ancyran., page 764:**

$$|\alpha|_{\frac{1}{2}}^2 \leq \frac{1}{2} \|\mathbf{f}\|_{\frac{1}{2}}^2 + \frac{1}{2} \|\mathbf{f}\|_{\frac{1}{2}}^2 = \|\mathbf{f}\|_{\frac{1}{2}}^2$$

â€œTo be crowned with the crown of martyrdom.â€•

**Eusebius, Hist. Eccles., lib. vii. cap. 13, uses the word ἰμῖν ἡ μάρτυρις... ἵνα ὑμεῖς τοὺς μαρτύρους ἴδωτε to express to suffer martyrdom. I have been the more particular here, because some critics have denied that the word has any such signification. See Suicer. Rosenmuller. Macknight, etc.**

St. Paul, therefore, is not speaking here of any deficiency in his own grace, or spiritual state; he does not mean by not being yet perfect, that he had a body of sin and death cleaving to him, and was still polluted with indwelling sin, as some have most falsely and dangerously imagined; he speaks of his not having terminated his course by martyrdom, which he knew would sooner or later be the case. This he considered as the ἡ τελειότης, or perfection, of his whole career, and was led to view every thing as imperfect or unfinished till this had taken place.

But I follow after - ἵπῳ τοῦ ἁγίου ἠμῶν. But I pursue; several are gone before me in this glorious way, and have obtained the crown of martyrdom; I am hurrying after them.

That I may apprehend - That I may receive those blessings to which I am called by Christ Jesus. There is still an allusion here to the stadium, and exercises there: the apostle considers Christ as the brabeus, or judge in the games, who proclaimed the victor, and distributed the prizes; and he represents himself as being introduced by this very brabeus, or judge, into the contest; and this brabeus brought him in with the design to crown him, if he contended faithfully. To complete this faithful contention is what he has in view; that he may apprehend, or lay hold on that for which he had been apprehended, or taken by the hand by Christ who had converted, strengthened, and endowed him with apostolical powers, that he might fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life.

#### Verse 13

I count not myself to have apprehended - Whatever gifts, graces, or honors I may have received from Jesus Christ, I consider every thing as incomplete till I have finished my course, got this crown, and have my body raised and fashioned after his glorious body.

This one thing I do - This is the concern, as it is the sole business, of my life.

Forgetting those things which are behind - My conduct is not regulated nor influenced by that of others; I consider my calling, my Master, my work, and my end. If others think they have time to loiter or trifle, I have none: time is flying; eternity is at hand; and my all is at stake.

Reaching forth - The Greek word  $\rho\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$ ,  $\rho\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$ , points out the strong exertions made in the race; every muscle and nerve is exerted, and he puts forth every particle of his strength in running. He was running for life, and running for his life.

#### Verse 14

I press toward the mark -  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ ,  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  I pursue along the line; this is a reference to the white line that marked the ground in the stadium, from the starting place to the goal, on which the runners were obliged to keep their eye fixed; for they who transgressed or went beyond this line did not run lawfully, and were not crowned, even though they got first to the goal. See the concluding observations on 1 Corinthians 9:27.

What is called  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ , mark or scope, here, is called  $\rho\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$ , the line, i.e. the marked line, Philemon 3:16. When it was said to Diogenes, the cynic,  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  Thou art now an old man, rest from thy labors;  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  to this he answered:  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  I have run long in the race, will it become me to slacken my pace when come near the end; should I not rather stretch forward?  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  Diog. Laert., lib. vi. cap. 2. sec. 6.

For the prize of the high calling of God - The reward which God from above calls me, by Christ Jesus, to receive. The apostle still keeps in view his crown of martyrdom and his glorious resurrection.

#### Verse 15

As many as be perfect - As many as are thoroughly instructed in Divine things, who have cast off all dependence on the law and on every other system for salvation, and who discern God calling them from above by Christ Jesus; be thus minded; be intensely in earnest for eternal life, nor ever halt till the race is finished.

The word  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ , perfect, is taken here in the same sense in which it is taken 1 Corinthians 14:20: - Be not Children in understanding - but in understanding be ye Men,  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ , be ye perfect - thoroughly instructed, deeply experienced. 1 Corinthians 2:6: - We speak wisdom among the perfect,  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ , among those who are fully instructed, adults in Christian knowledge. Ephesians 4:13: - Till we all come - unto a perfect man,  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ , to the state of adults in Christianity. Hebrews 5:14: - But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age,  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ , the perfect - those who are thoroughly instructed and experienced in Divine things. Let us therefore, says the apostle, as many as be perfect - as have entered fully into the spirit and design of the Gospel, be thus minded, viz. Forget the things which are behind, and stretch forward along the mark for the prize.

If in any thing ye be otherwise minded - If ye have not yet entered into the full spirit and design of this Gospel, if any of you have yet remaining any doubts relative to Jewish ordinances, or their expediency in Christianity, God shall reveal even this unto you; for while you are sincere and upright, God will take care that ye shall have full instruction in these Divine things.

#### Verse 16

Whereto we have already attained - Let us not lose that part of the race which we have already run, let us walk by the same rule - let us keep the white line continually in view, let us mind the same thing, always considering

the glorious prize which is held out by God through Christ Jesus to animate and encourage us. The MSS., versions and fathers of the Alexandrian recension or edition, and which are supposed by Griesbach and others to contain the purest text, omit the words  $\text{ἐν ᾧ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ}$ , and read the verse thus: Whereunto we have already attained let us walk; or, according to what we have already attained, let us regulate our life, There is so much disagreement about the above words in the MSS., etc., that most critics consider them as a sort of gloss, which never made an original part of the text. Dr. White says, Certissime delenda;  $\hat{\text{a}}\hat{\text{e}}$ Most certainly they should be obliterated. $\hat{\text{a}}\hat{\text{e}}$

#### Verse 17

Brethren, be followers - of me - In the things of Christ let me be your line, and my writings preaching, and conduct, your rule.

And mark them -  $\text{ἐν ᾧ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ}$ . Still alluding to the line in the stadium, keep your eye steadily fixed on those who walk - live, as ye have us - myself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, for an ensample.

#### Verse 18

For many walk, etc - The Judaizing teachers continue to preach, who wish to incorporate circumcision, and other ordinances of the law, with the Gospel.

They are the enemies of the cross of Christ - They rather attribute justification to the Levitical sacrifices, than to the sacrificial death of Christ; and thus they are enemies to that cross, and will not suffer persecution for its sake. They please the world, and are in no danger of reproach.

#### Verse 19

Whose end is destruction - This is the issue of their doctrine and of their conduct. They are here described by three characters:

1.Their god is their belly - they live not in any reference to eternity; their religion is for time; they make a gain of godliness; and live only to eat, drink, and be merry.

2.Their glory is in their shame - they lay it down as a proof of their address, that they can fare sumptuously every day, in consequence of preaching a doctrine which flatters the passions of their hearers.

3.They mind earthly things - their whole study and attention are taken up with earthly matters; they are given to the flesh and its lusts; they have no spirituality, nor do they believe that there is or can be any intercourse between God and the souls of men. But their lasciviousness and uncleanness seem to be principally intended. See Kypke.

Despicable as these men were, the apostle's heart was deeply pained on their account:

1.Because they held and taught a false creed;

2.Because they perverted many by that teaching; and,

3.Because they themselves were perishing through it.

#### Verse 20

Our conversation is in heaven -  $\text{ἀἰὲς ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ}$ . Our city, or citizenship, or civil rights. The word properly signifies the administration, government, or form of a republic or state; and is thus used by Demosthenes, page 107,25, and 262,27. Edit. Reiske. It signifies also a republic, a city, or the inhabitants of any city or place; or a society of persons living in the same place, and under the same rules and laws. See more in Schleusner.

While those gross and Jewish teachers have no city but what is on earth; no rights but what are derived from their secular connections; no society but what is made up of men like themselves, who mind earthly things, and whose belly is their god, We have a heavenly city, the New Jerusalem; we have rights and privileges which are heavenly and eternal; and our society or fellowship is with God the Father, Son, and Spirit, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the whole Church of the first-born. We have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts; and regard not the body, which we know must perish, but which we confidently expect shall be raised from death and corruption into a state of immortal glory.

#### Verse 21

Who shall change our vile body -  $\text{ἀναμορφώσῃ ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῇ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ}$ .



Who will refashion, or alter the fashion and condition of, the body of our humiliation; this body that is dead - adjudged to death because of sin, and must be putrefied, dissolved, and decomposed.

That it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body - That it may bear a similar form to the body of his glory. That is: the bodies of true believers shall be raised up at the great day in the same likeness, immortality, and glory, of the glorified humanity of Jesus Christ; and be so thoroughly changed, as to be not only capable through their immortality of eternally existing, but also of the infinite spiritual enjoyments at the right hand of God.

According to the working - According to that energy, by which he can bring all things under subjection to himself. Thus we find that the resurrection of the body is attributed to that power which governs and subdues all things, for nothing less than the energy that produced the human body at the beginning, can restore it from its lapsed and degraded state into that state of glory which it had at its creation, and render it capable of enjoying God throughout eternity. The thought of this glorious consummation was a subject of the highest joy and confidence amongst the primitive Christian. This earth was not their home; and they passed through things temporal so as not to lose those which were eternal.

1.The preceding chapter, to which the first verse of the succeeding should be joined, contains a fund of matter the most interesting that can well be conceived. The apostle seems to stand on the verge of eternity, and to have both worlds opened to his view. The one he sees to be the place in which a preparation for the other is to be attained. In the one he sees the starting place, where the Christian is to commence his race; in the other the goal at which his course terminates, and the prize which he is there to obtain. One is the place from and over which the Christian is to run; the other is that to which he is to direct his course, and in which he is to receive infinite blessedness. In the one he sees all manner of temptations and hinderances, and dangers standing thick through all the ground; in the other he sees the forerunner, the Lord Jesus, who has entered into the heaven of heavens for him, through whom God calls him from above, and what he sees by faith, is the calling of God from above; and therefore he departs from this, for this is not his rest.

2.The nearer a faithful soul comes to the verge of eternity, the more the light and influence of heaven are poured out upon it: time and life are fast sinking away into the shades of death and darkness; and the effulgence of the dawning glory of the eternal world is beginning to illustrate the blessed state of the genuine Christian, and to render clear and intelligible those counsels of God, partly displayed in various inextricable providences, and partly revealed and seen as through a glass darkly in his own sacred word. Unutterable glories now begin to burst forth; pains, afflictions, persecutions, wants, distresses, sickness, and death, in any or all of its forms, are exhibited as the way to the kingdom, and as having in the order of God an ineffable glory for their result. Here are the wisdom, power, and mercy of God! Here, the patience, perseverance, and glory of the saints! Reader, is not earth and its concerns lost in the effulgence of this glory? Arise and depart, for this is not thy rest.