

## Philippians 3 – A Change in Priorities

Paul was on his way. He was one of the most qualified people to eventually become a member of the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin. He just needed a few more victories over those blaspheming Christians, and his ambition would be realized. But, on his way to Damascus, he met Jesus Christ. From that time on, his priorities changed. The fleshly body became unimportant as Paul developed Christ's Spirit within himself.

In **Philippians 3**, Paul begins by telling his readers not to have any confidence in the flesh, like the Judaizers who were teaching the need for the rite of circumcision among Christians. He tells them simply this in **verse 3**:

***“it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—”***

His emphasis had changed from one who boasted of being a “super Jew” to a person whose spirit had been figuratively circumcised. He speaks of that difference in a number of different places to others, since it seemed to be a real problem. (**See Romans 2:28-29, 1 Corinthians 7:19, Galatians 5:6, and others**) To Paul, the things in the past upon which he could boast were unimportant. He had only one priority:

***“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”***

Knowing Christ became Paul's number one priority from the moment he met Jesus on the Road to Damascus. And that phrase **“to know”** carried with it an extremely deep meaning. It is an on-going process. It involves constant learning and self-examination. It does, as **Philippians 1 and 2** indicate, involve developing Christ-like qualities.

Paul considered everything he had achieved to be, as he put it **“a loss”** or **“garbage.”** The old KJV uses the word **“dung”** in place of garbage. I, for one, think that is much more descriptive. The old accomplishments are to be thrown out. The new life is to continually developed. The righteousness accomplished by the keeping of the Law of Moses was no longer what God expected. Righteousness (which in itself is a quality that is developed over a lifetime) is to be based on faith in Christ's sacrifice to save us. We **“become like Him in His death”** (baptized into Him) in order to live **HIS** life in each of us. We will become, as Paul said to the Philippians earlier in **chapter 2, verse 15**:

***“blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’”***

That’s our goal – to become spiritually pure, boasting in the success of that life-long quest, and praising God for what He has accomplished in us.

---Johnny Stephens