

Jim's Notes
December 13, 2006
The Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians, Chapter 3

Philippians 3:1

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

Dejection and care, whenever they strain the soul beyond due measure, bereave it of its vitality. And therefore Paul relieves the Philippians, who were in great despondency, and they were in despondency because they did not know how matters were with Paul; they were in despondency because they thought that it was already over with him . . . Do you mark how he forbears to bring in the exhortation at the beginning? But after he had given them much commendation, after he had shown his admiration of them, then he does this, and again repeats his commendation. (Homily on Philippians 10.3.1-3)

Philippians 3:2a

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

The Jews are no longer children; once the Gentiles were called dogs, but now the Jews. Wherefore? because as the Gentiles were strangers both to God and to Christ, even so are these become this now. And he shows forth their shamelessness and violence, and their infinite distance from the relation of children. (Homily on Philippians 10.3.1-3)

Philippians 3:2c

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

The rite of circumcision was venerable in the Jews' account . . . Wherefore Paul makes a mutilation of the name, and says, "Beware of the concision"; and he did not say "that circumcision is evil, that it is superfluous," lest he should strike the men with dismay, but he manages it more wisely, withdrawing them from the thing, but gratifying them with the word, nay, rather with the thing too, in a more serious way. But not so in the case of the Galatians, for since in that case the disease was great, he forthwith adopts the remedy of amputation with open front and with all boldness; but in this case, as they had done nothing of the sort, he vouchsafes them the gratification of the title, he casts out the others, and says, "Beware of the concision; for we are the circumcision"—how?—"who worship God in spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh." He said not that "we test the one circumcision and the other, which is the better of the two"; but he would not even allow it a share in the name; but what does he say? That that circumcision is "concision." Why? Because they do nothing but cut the flesh up. For when what is done is not of the law, it is nothing else than a concision and cutting up of

the flesh; it was then either for this reason that he called it so, or because they were trying to cut the Church in two. (Homily on Philippians 10.3.1-3)

Philippians 3:4

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

If Paul had been of the Gentiles, and had condemned circumcision, and not only circumcision, but all those that adopted it out of place, it would have seemed that he was running it down, because he lacked the high ancestry of Judaism, as being a stranger to its solemn rites, and having no part therein. But as it is, he, who, though a sharer, yet blames them, will not therefore blame them as having no share in them, but as disowning them; not from ignorance, but most especially from acquaintance with them. (Homily on Philippians 10.3.4)

Philippians 3:5a

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

"Circumcised on the eighth day"; and he sets down the first that wherein they chiefly boasted, viz. the ordinance of circumcision. "Of the stock of Israel." He pointed out both these circumstances, that he was neither a proselyte, nor born of proselytes; for from his being circumcised on the eighth day, it follows that he was not a proselyte, and from his being of the stock of Israel, that he was not of proselyte parents. But that you may not imagine that he was of the stock of Israel as coming of the ten tribes, he says, "of the tribe of Benjamin." So that he was of the more approved portion, for the place of the priests was in the lot of this tribe. (Homily on Philippians 10.3.5)

Philippians 3:5b

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

Because he was not a proselyte, but from of old, of distinguished Jews; for he might have been of Israel, and yet not "an Hebrew of Hebrews," for many were already corrupting the matter, and were strangers to the language, being encircled by other nations; it is either this then, or the great superiority of his birth, that he shows. (Homily on Philippians 10.3.5)

Philippians 3:6a

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

If then both for purity of descent, and earnestness, and habits, and mode of life, I surpassed all, why have I renounced all those dignities, he asks, but because I

found that the things of Christ are better, and better far? (Homily on Philippians 10.3.6)

Philippians 3:6b

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430)

Before his conversion Paul fulfilled the law conspicuously, either through fear of the people or of God himself, even if he may have offended the law in his internal affections. But he was fulfilling the law through fear of punishment, not through love of righteousness. (On Two Letters of Pelagius 1.15)

Philippians 3:7

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

For what do the heretics themselves say? Lo! the Law is "loss," is "dung"; how then do ye say that it is of God? But these very words are favorable to the Law, and how they are so, shall be hence manifest. Let us attend accurately to his very words. He said not, The Law is loss: but "I counted it loss." But when he spoke of gain, he said not, I counted them, but "they were gain." But when he spoke of loss he said, "I counted": and this rightly; for the former was naturally so, but the latter became so, from my opinion. "What then? Is it not so?" says he. It is loss for Christ. And how has the law become gain? And it was not counted gain, but was so. For consider how great a thing it was, to bring men, brutalized in their nature, to the shape of men. If the law had not been, grace would not have been given. Wherefore? Because it became a sort of bridge; for when it was impossible to mount on high from a state of great abasement, a ladder was formed. But he who has ascended has no longer need of the ladder; yet he does not despise it . . . Not the Law then is loss, but for a man to cleave to the Law, and desert Christ. Wherefore it is then loss when it leads us away from Christ. But if it sends us on to Him, it is no longer so. For this cause he says "loss for Christ"; if for Christ, it is not so naturally. (Homily on Philippians 11.3.7-9)

Philippians 3:8

Theodoret of Cyrrhus (died A.D. 457)

It is not that I flee the commands of the law as base things but that I prefer what is superior. Having tasted the grain I throw away the refuse. For refuse means the denser and harder part of the chaff. It carries the grain but is discarded once the grain has been collected. (Letter to the Philippians 3.8)

Philippians 3:9b

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

That which is from the faith of God, i.e. it too is given by God. This is the righteousness of God; this is altogether a gift. And the gifts of God far exceed those worthless good deeds, which are due to our own diligence. (Homily on Philippians 11.3.7-9)

Philippians 3:10a

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

So then knowledge is through faith, and without faith it is impossible to know Him. Why how? Through it we must "know the power of His resurrection." For what reason can demonstrate to us the Resurrection? None, but faith only. For if the resurrection of Christ, who was according to the flesh, is known by faith, how can the generation of the Word of God be comprehended by reasoning? For the resurrection is less than the generation. Why? Because of that there have been many examples, but of this none ever; for many dead arose before Christ, though after their resurrection they died, but no one was ever born of a virgin. (Homily on Philippians 11.3.10-11)

Philippians 3:10b

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

For from faith is the fellowship of His sufferings. But how? Had we not believed, neither should we have suffered: had we not believed, that "if we endure with Him, we shall also reign with Him" (II Tim. 2:12.), we should not have endured the sufferings. (Homily on Philippians 11.3.10-11)

Philippians 3:11

Marius Victorinus (died after A.D.361)

We who believe in Christ endure sufferings with him and indeed all sufferings, even as far as the cross and death. From the knowledge of all these and from the sharing in suffering comes resurrection. And thus, as we are sharers in his death and his burden, we are enabled to share his resurrection. (Letter to the Philippians 3.10-11)

Philippians 3:12a

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370)

Throughout the letter Paul bears witness to his joy in them and praises their obedience and faith. He is, however, concerned that they, like all who are subject to human conceits, might become elated as though they were already worthy. So he tells them openly, speaking of his own person, that something is still wanting for perfect righteousness. He urges them to good works. If he who is adorned with such dignity confesses that he is still wanting in perfection, they would understand how much more they must work to acquire the blessings of righteousness. (Letter to the Philippians 3.12.1)

Philippians 3:12b

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

And He said not, I run, but "I pursue." For you know with what eagerness a man pursues. He sees no one, he thrusts aside with great violence all who would interrupt his pursuit. He collects together his mind, and sight, and strength, and soul, and body, looking to nothing else than the prize. (Homily on Philippians 11.3.12)

Philippians 3:13a

Marius Victorinus (died after A.D.361)

If they compared themselves with Paul, the Philippians would understand how far they were from the blessings of freedom. How frequently had he shared in so many of Christ's sufferings: He had been beaten, imprisoned, thrown to wild beasts and burdened with other evils. Nonetheless even he did not think that he had already taken hold of Christ, as long as he was alive. (Letter to the Philippians 3.13)

Philippians 3:13b

St. Jerome (AD 347-420)

He further declares that he always forgot the past, and ever stretched forward to the things in front, thus teaching that no heed should be paid to the past, but the future earnestly desired; so that what today he thought perfect, while he was stretching forward to better things and things in front, tomorrow proves to have been imperfect. And thus at every step, never standing still, but always running, he shows that to be imperfect which we men thought perfect, and teaches that our only perfection and true righteousness is that which is measured by the excellence of God. (Against the Pelagians 1.15)

Philippians 3:14

Marius Victorinus (died after A.D.361)

Here then are two precepts for the one who is going to live the rest of life walking in the Christian way. First, the one who is still living under divine governance, however well and rightly he has acted in the past, should not think about all the actions he has already done as though he deserved to obtain something by them. Rather he should cast them into oblivion, always seeking the new tasks that remain. Second, he should nonetheless keep living under divine rule, continually pressing on toward these things and observing the rule of Christ, even to death. (Letter to the Philippians 3.13-14)

Philippians 3:15a

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430)

"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." In other words, let us, as many as are running perfectly, be thus resolved, that, being not yet perfected, we pursue our course to perfection along the way by which we have thus far run perfectly, in order that "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part may be done away;"

Philippians 3:15b

St. Hilary of Poitiers (died A.D. 368)

And if, by an error incident to human nature, we be clinging to some preconception of our own, let us not reject the advance in knowledge through the gift of revelation. If we have hitherto used only our own judgment, let that not make us ashamed to change its decisions for the better. Guiding this advance wisely and carefully, the same blessed Apostle writes to the Philippians, Let us therefore as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you. Only, wherein we have hastened, in that same let us walk Philippians 3:15-16. Reason cannot anticipate with preconceptions the revelation of God. For the Apostle has here shown us wherein consists the wisdom of those who have the perfect wisdom, and for those who are otherwise minded, he awaits the revelation of God, that they may obtain the perfect wisdom. (On the Trinity 11.24)

Philippians 3:16

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430)

Hold true with the affections of the mind and habits of living, so that one is able to be perfectly in the possession of righteousness when, advancing day by day

along the direct road of faith, one has already become a perfect traveler on the road. (On What is Due to Sinners 2.20)

Philippians 3:17

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

He had said above, "beware of dogs," from such he had led them away; he brings them near to these whom they ought to imitate. If any one, says he, wishes to imitate me, if any one wishes to walk the same road, let him take heed to them; though I am not present, you know the manner of my walk, that is, my conduct in life. For not by words only did he teach, but by deeds too; as in the chorus, and the army, the rest must imitate the leader of the chorus or the army, and thus advance in good order. For it is possible that the order may be dissolved by sedition. (Homily on Philippians 12.3.17)