

The Book of Philippians

4

Morning Devotions

In your devotions this morning, read **Psalm 53**. As you read the psalm, talk to the Lord about the content of this psalm: What does this psalm reveal of the psalmist's heart. What does this psalm reveal of the Lord's heart? Then read **Psalm 14** and note the similarities and differences between them. When you have finished both psalms, meditate prayerfully on them.

Morning Study

This morning we are looking at the third section of Philippians – **Chapter 3** (but also including **4:1**). This section divides again into three subsections. Read each subsection separately, answering for yourself the questions associated with them. Type out your answers or jot them down on a piece of paper and file your answers with your morning study.

As a background to this morning's study, first read the Insight into Circumcision on page 2.

Read Philippians 3:1-6

- This subsection could be headed "Warning!" (**3:2**). Why does Paul write so strongly to warn them against those advocating circumcision?
- In **3:3**, what does Paul declare are the 3 qualifications of true "circumcision"?
- List the 7 qualifications of the "flesh" that Paul had once gloried in (**3:4-6**).

Read Philippians 3:7-16

- Why does Paul now count what he had once gloried in as "rubbish"? (**3:7-9**).
- In **3:10-11** Paul expresses what 3 things to be his great desire on earth?
- In **3:12-16** Paul reveals the depth of his heart. Note the clue he gives that makes it possible to "win the prize" – to reach the ultimate of what God has called us to in Christ (note **3:12**).

Read Philippians 3:17-4:1

- In **3:19**, how does Paul sum up what it means to live "as enemies of the cross"?
- In your personal evaluation, what do you think your mind is set on?

Insight

Circumcision

Paul's use of the word "circumcision" refers both to a ceremonial act and to a false doctrine which was spreading its influence within the Church. The *ceremonial act* of circumcision involves the cutting off of the foreskin of the male organ but that rite of circumcision had far-reaching covenantal implications.

In **Genesis 17:9-14**, God instituted the covenant of circumcision with Abraham (see also **Acts 7:8**). From that point on, circumcision was the "sign of the covenant" between Israel and God. Yet even under the Old Covenant, circumcision was seen as an outward symbol of an inner reality (**Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6**).

Read Romans 4:9-12

Paul explains patiently to the Roman Christians that circumcision was "a seal of the righteousness that [Abraham] had by faith while he was still uncircumcised." It is faith that counts toward righteousness, not circumcision. As Paul points out, the Old Testament does not say that Abraham was circumcised and therefore was counted as righteous. The Old Testament says that Abraham *believed God* and God "credited [that faith] to him as righteousness" (**Genesis 15:6**).

Read Romans 2:28-29

This is the issue at stake: outward ceremony or inward reality. But it was also more than that. Paul faced a constant problem. Everywhere he went, Paul preached the Gospel and established churches. But hot on his heels came a sect of Jewish Christians called the Judaizers (see **Titus 1:10-16; Galatians 2:1-5**). These people preached circumcision as the sign of faith in Christ. Paul declared total war on their doctrine. The whole book of Galatians was written to refute their teaching and to rebuke the Galatians for "turning to a different gospel" (**Galatians 1:6-9**).

Paul was not against circumcision itself (see **Romans 3:1-2; 1 Corinthians 7:18-19**). As a Jew, he himself had been circumcised, and he later circumcises Timothy, who was a half-Jew (**Acts 16:1-3**). But he vehemently protested that circumcision be preached as a requirement for becoming a Christian.

Read Galatians 5:1-6; 6:12-16

If you are a Gentile, the issue of circumcision is moot, thanks to Paul. The rite of circumcision represents the entire Law of Moses and the significant point of separation between Jew and Gentile (see **Ephesians 2:11-19**). What was at stake for Paul was not simply circumcision as a rite, but the question of whether Gentile believers are required to keep the whole Law of Moses (see **Galatians 2:11-16**).

Read Colossians 2:11-14

MEMORY VERSE

...But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14

Here are a few suggestions that may help you to memorize your memory verse:

- ➡ Ask the Lord to help you remember his Word (see [John 14:26](#)).
- ➡ Use the version of the Bible you are most familiar with. What you normally read in your Bible is what you need to be memorizing.
- ➡ Don't just memorize the contents of the verse; memorize its "address" (the verse reference) as well. You can do this by following this pattern: Step 1: **reference**; Step 2: **verse content**; Step 3: **reference**. Then repeat steps 1-3. Note that you are quoting the reference twice as many times as you quote the actual verse content. This gives the verse a clear "reference tag."
- ➡ After you have read your memory verse out aloud several times, try going through your memory verse *without* reading your computer screen.
- ➡ Look up your memory verse in your Bible. Look at its immediate context and read the verses that come before and after your memory verse.
- ➡ Print out your memory verse or jot it down on a piece of paper. Take this paper with you when you go to work or do other daily activities. Meditate on the meaning of the verse throughout the day.
- ➡ During your noon appointment with the Lord, take out your memory verse and go over it again. Talk to the Lord about what this verse means to you personally.
- ➡ In the evening (at either your evening study or your evening devotions), see if you can quote your memory verse from memory. Then, without looking at the memory verse itself, see if you can find it in your Bible.
- ➡ The next day, before you begin committing a new verse to memory, rehearse your previous day's memory verse and see if you can remember it (without cheating!).
- ➡ Finally, at the end of the week (possibly on the Sunday), collect all your week's memory verses, rehearse them and see if you can recall them without reading them. Spend a little extra time on any verses you have difficulty recalling.
- ➡ Remember: Don't just memorize a verse. Put it into practice ([James 1:22](#)). It is not being able to quote a verse from memory that counts. It is His Word *abiding* in your heart that counts ([John 15:7](#)). When you actually apply a verse consistently to your daily life, that is when you *truly* know that verse!