

# HIS . . . IN JOYOUS EXPERIENCE

The Christian's Joy Book  
Paul's Epistle to the Philippians

by

Norman B. Harrison, D.D. Pastor, Bible Teacher and Evangelist

Copyright @ 1926

## CHAPTER THREE

### CHRIST THE GOAL OF LIFE – The Onward Look

Coming to Chapter 3 our viewpoint once again changes. Our eyes no longer turned backward to the Christ who was, we are now to look ONWARD to the Christ who is to be, a look that infilters into all present effort a new eagerness and enthusiasm. That the Holy Spirit has included this forward look in His treatise on Christian Experience speaks volumes for its practical value to the believer.

#### *Outline*

#### **1— Warning against the Unregenerate among Them, 3:1-6.**

(They have not Entered the Christian Race).

a—“**Rejoice in the Lord**” (1a).

The one “Safe” Course (1b).

b—The Marks of the mere “Professor” (2).

Unchanged as to:

- (1) Nature (“dogs”),
- (2) Conduct,
- (3) Reliance upon old Religious Forms.

c—The Marks of the true Believer (3).

Circumcised of Heart, they:

- (1) Worship in the Spirit;
- (2) Rejoice in Christ;
- (3) Renounce confidence in the Flesh.

d—Paul’s Ground for Self-Righteousness (4-6).

Possessed of:

- (1) Pride of Birth;
- (2) Pride of Position;
- (3) Pride of Personal Devotion.

## **2— The Christian Race: Its Start, 3:7-9.**

a—Renouncing Self-Righteousness as Loss (7, 8).

b—Counting Christ and His Righteousness as Gain (8,9).

## **3— The Christian Race: Its Running, 3:10-19.**

a—An Experimental Knowledge of Christ.  
(In His Resurrection, Sufferings, Death) (10).

The Assurance of Attaining the Goal.  
(Of our own “Out-Resurrection”) (11).

b—Pressing on Eagerly for the Goal (12-14).

- (1) Not Counting ourselves to have Attained (12, 13a).
- (2) Forgetting the Things Behind (13b).
- (3) Reaching on for the Things Before (13c).
- (4) Intent upon the Prize of our High Calling (14).

c—Exhortation to “**Be thus Minded**” (15).

That we may “Walk” Worthily of the Race (16).

d—The Apostolic Example to be Followed (17).

The Shameful Walk of Others to be Shunned (18, 19).

## **4—The Christian Race: Its Finish, 3:20, 21.**

a—Precious Fact: Citizenship in Heaven (20a).

b—Present Attitude: Looking for the Lord Jesus Christ (20b).

c—Prospective Glory: Likeness to Him, even in Body (21).

Chart: Chapter 3.

PHILIPPIANS				
CHRIST IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE				
CHRIST – The Source		MIND – The Channel		
	CHAP. 1	CHAP. 2	CHAP. 3	CHAP. 4
<u>WHERE HE IS</u>	<u>WITHIN US PERSONAL</u>	<u>BEHIND US PAST</u>	<u>BEFORE US FUTURE</u>	
<u>WHAT HE IS</u>	OUR LIFE 1:21	OUR EXAMPLE 2:5-8	OUR GOAL 3:14	
<u>HIS MIND IN US</u>	GOSPEL MIND 1:5, 7, 12, 17, 27	HUMBLE MIND 2:2-5	EAGER MIND LOSS-GAIN	
<u>APPEAL</u>	SURRENDER TO HIM SUFFER FOR HIM	WORK OUT THE PATTERN WITHOUT MURMURING	CITIZENS OF HEAVEN CHRIST IS COMING	

*Sectional Chart – Chapter 3*

Applying the mode of chart analysis already adopted, a reading of the chapter yields the following conclusions concerning its contents:

1. **WHERE HE IS.** Not Within us, as in Chapter 1, nor yet Behind us, as in Chapter 2, but rather BEFORE US. Christ of the FUTURE; Christ in prospect; the Christ whom “**we look for**” (20); “**who SHALL change**” etc. (21).

And, let us be bearing in mind, we are urged to this view of Christ, not for theoretical purposes, no theory is advanced; nor yet for doctrinal purposes, no doctrine is propounded; but solely for practical purposes, for returns in the coin of Christian Experience.

2. **WHAT HE IS.** Our reading reveals the fact that central to the thought of the chapter is the figure of the Christian Race. And the GOAL of this race is Christ Himself (14), the inspiration and incentive of our on-reaching endeavor. The “**goal**” and the “**prize**” it holds forth to view are “**in Christ Jesus.**” Spurred on by the prospect of Him we run the race.

3. **His MIND IN US.** Such a race earnestly undertaken, with such a goal, is bound to beget in us what we may well term an EAGER MIND. This eagerness of mind results from an utter reversal of values—things once “**gain**” are now “**loss,**” and vice versa—causing us to readily relinquish our grasp of the worthless things for which we formerly strove, that we may lay hold of those things that are possessed of a new-found value “**in Christ Jesus**” (3-9).

### **1—Warning Against the Unregenerate, 3:1-6**

*Note*

THE SETTING for this chapter is the presence in the Church, then as now, of those who bear no evidence of having been born again.

Their presence is noted by the Apostle as a problem, enforced by his own experience out of Christ (4-6), for which the teaching of the chapter is the divinely appointed and adapted solution. Whatever else may be said of them, they fall short fundamentally in the fact that they have not as yet entered the Christian Race.

“FINALLY” (1) is not used by way of conclusion but by way of transition to another important phase of Christian Experience. It has the force of “furthermore” (so rendered in I Thessalonians 4:1); a further unfolding of the theme.

“REJOICE IN THE LORD” (1a). To this they are exhorted as their one “safe” course. Not merely “rejoice”—this is not the point just now; but “**rejoice in the Lord**” as opposed to the many things in which men are prone to rejoice—a rejoicing that results either in unrighteousness (2) or in self-righteousness (3b-6).

#### PROFESSORS (2) AND BELIEVERS (3) CONTRASTED.

“Beware”—keep your eye on—“**the dogs**,” those who, strangers to grace, by their unchanged lives bring the unworthy ideals of the world into the Church, contrasted with the “we” of true, transforming faith and life “**in Christ Jesus**.”

PROFESSORS are:

1—In character (self-ward), unchanged in nature, tastes, appetites, desires—“**dogs**,” degraded and degrading, wanting in spiritual nature and capacity for spiritual things (see vs. 19, II Peter 2:12, 22; Isaiah 56:10, 11).

2—In conduct (neighbor-ward) they are counted “**evil workers**.” Their being flavors their doing. Even their best efforts cannot be called “**good works**.” For “**a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit**” (Matthew 7:17, 18). Not themselves partakers of the Gospel they can create only confusion of thought and perversion of truth.

3—In worship (God-ward) they substitute for reality a legalism or formalism, to which the Apostle applies a term of reproach—“**circumcision**,” suggesting a senseless mutilation of the flesh, going beyond the law into a heathenism it prohibits (I Kings 18:28; Leviticus 21:5). In all this there is doubtless a distinct allusion to Judaizing teachers.

BELIEVERS, however, are the true “**circumcision**”—no longer an outward form prescribed by law, but an inward experience of the heart. Out of this experience we:

1—“**Worship God in (by) the Spirit**”—since His Spirit now indwells us, thus rendering to God the only acceptable worship (see John 4:23, 24).

2—“**Rejoice in Christ Jesus**” whose redemption is so abundant as to supply us with a righteousness that covers all evil works as well as lack of good works. Praise His name and rejoice in Him alone!

3—’**“Have no confidence in the flesh.”** Self, what man is by nature, lacks all inherent capability of goodness, as the Apostle elsewhere affirms: **“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing”** (Romans 7:18). The believer, then, has the only true life—God-ward, neighbor-ward, self-ward.

PAUL’S GROUND FOR SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS (4-6). If any man ever had warrant for **“confidence in the flesh”**—resting in his natural endowment and attainment in the accepted Jewish faith and its legal requirements—Paul was that man. **“I more”** (4). If ever a man could hope to find favor with God in and of himself, it was he, as he proceeds to set forth.

Note his:

1—Pride of Birth (5a). Not a proselyte, needing to be circumcised later in life, but born into the very heart of the Jewish race.

2—Pride of Position (5b). As a Pharisee he ranked the highest for orthodoxy and strict conformity to all the law required.

3—Pride of Personal Devotion (6). Not lacking in “zeal”—though so woefully mistaken in it, as he later discovered; nor falling short in character or conduct—“blameless” as judged by strict legal standards.

*Comment*

MORE THAN MERE MORALITY. All that Paul has enumerated, his stock in trade as a devotee of the Jewish religion, merely contributed to his self-approbation. It is **“confidence in the flesh”**—a glorying in what self is and self does. His “ego” is pleased; others approve and praise; but throughout God is not even mentioned.

Much that goes by the name Religion is merely this, an attempt to be and do what is accounted “good,” a system of ethics that satisfies a human standard but utterly fails to **“justify in His sight”** (Romans 3:20). True religion relates us to God, saved, justified, approved of Him. What a change from seeking the approval of “self” and “others” to being **“approved of God.”** Life has a new center—**“No longer I, but Christ.”**

SINCERITY NOT SUFFICIENT. Sincerity is no substitute for knowing and acting upon the truth. Yet how often we hear the plea, “If a person is only sincere in what he believes.” Paul was sincere, intensely so; yet his very sincerity, based upon a false belief, led him to a course of action that became the regret of his life (I Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13). Note his confession:

**“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief”** (I Timothy 1:13).

Boasted sincerity becomes confessed ignorance. And thousands of souls, perfectly sincere in the ignorance of unbelief, have walked on into the jaws of death. To **“love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity”**—this is life.

“REJOICE IN CHRIST” (3). Such is Paul’s description of a Christian. Not merely to believe in Him but to rejoice in Him, as against the things that please and pamper “the flesh.”

Many a man, professedly a follower of Christ, is today out on the high seas of a worldly, pleasure-seeking life. Why? He asked Christ to save him, but not to satisfy him.

To rejoice in Christ is to find Him our All-in-All, filling and flooding the soul with an exuberance of life to which others are strangers. There is no greater guarantee of a godly life or safeguard against a worldly one.

When we let Him satisfy, we “**put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof**” (Romans 13:14).

### **The Christian Life a Race**

From this on the thought of the chapter is pressed into the imagery of the Race, so familiar to the Greek mind. The first step is the Start; then comes the Running; finally the Finish.

The difficulty with the unbeliever, even the most moral and most religious, is that he is not even in the Christian race. He has never made a start.

JESUS THE START AND FINISH. The Race of Faith, in which we are called to succeed the Old Testament worthies (Hebrews 11), is described as one into which Jesus has introduced us—its “Author”; in the running of which He is at all times the inspiration—“**Looking unto Jesus**”; and in which He Himself leads on to a glorious finish—its “Finisher.”

**“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

Note how closely our chapter corresponds in its sequence of thought: The Start (7-9); The Running (10-19); The Finish (20, 21). See *Outline*.

Here, then, is the solution sought for the problem with which this chapter opens—the problem of mere morality, or even dead religious formality, in either case a total lack of spiritual vitality. The solution is this:

#### **A GENUINE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST—**

1. Resting in His Righteousness, to the Renouncing of any fancied Righteousness of our own (7-9).
2. Reaching on toward Perfection, to be Realized only in Him (10-19).
3. Receiving its triumphant Completion, in the Redemption of the Body, at our Lord’s Return (20, 21).

## 2—The Christian Race: Its Start, 3:7-9

### *Note*

“BUT” (7). This “but” is the pivot around which Paul’s life became revolutionized—changed from Saul to Paul. Into it is pressed all of his Damascus Road experience. He saw Christ in personal revelation. He cried, “**Who art Thou, Lord?**” He there began asking, “**Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?**” As he yielded, Christ revealed to him became Christ revealed in him (Galatians 1:16). The light that shone about him became a transforming illumination within him. Henceforth his life revolves about a Person.

“**For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the FACE OF JESUS CHRIST**” (II Corinthians 4:6).

RENOUNCING SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS AS LOSS (7, 8). The reversal of values is instant and complete. “**Whatever things were gains**”—plural, as enumerated above (4-6), things he individually prized and prided himself in—“**those I counted loss**”—singular, lumped together in one lot—“**loss for Christ**” (7).

This is the first step in the Christian life, for the Apostle and for the humblest believer:

“**If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For who soever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it**” (Luke 9:23, 24).

COUNTING CHRIST AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AS GAIN (8,9). Into this brief statement of personal experience Paul compresses the whole doctrinal teaching of Romans 1-5. That there is no such thing as “**a righteousness of mine own**” is his powerful plea, proved in Romans 1:18-3:20. That the only righteousness one can ever hope to have is “**that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith**” (9)—this is his great declaration, illustrated and enforced in Romans 3:21-5:21.

Here in Philippians Paul has given his own personal experience out of which grew his statement of the doctrine of Justification by Faith. For us the Spirit reverses the process: out of the doctrine grows our experience. Comment

SEEING THE LORD. For the early disciples, Christian experience began when they began to say one to the other, “**We have seen the Lord.**” Crucified, dead, risen again— and we have seen Him! Two things at once follow: A sense of “loss,” in self; a sense of “gain,” in Him. A great light breaks, before which the stars of our fancied goodness fade into nothingness. In the brightness of a transfiguration experience, His and ours, we see “Jesus only.” We wonder that the things which, since our eyes were opened by the sight of Him, seem only tawdry tinsel, could ever have enamored us. Constrained to “**count them but refuse,**” into the discard they go. In Him is our righteousness, our riches and our rejoicing.

“For Him I count as gain each loss,  
Disgrace for Him renown;  
Well may I glory in my cross,  
While He prepares my crown.”

“FOUND IN HIM” (9) has the forward look characteristic of this chapter—forward to the future coming of our Lord when all hearts will be revealed. Not to be found “in Him” in that day will mean our unspeakable shame and confusion.

**“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming”** (I John 2:28).

### 3—The Christian Race: Its Running, 3:10-19

#### *Note*

Possessed of Christ’s righteousness, his further desire is for a personal knowledge of Him, in the power of spiritual intimacy and fellowship. By the former he became a Christian, entered the race. By this latter he seeks to live the life, to run successfully the race. The former took us through Romans 1-5; this finds us in Romans 6-8.

AN EXPERIMENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST (10). Our success in the Christian life is dependent upon our knowing Him, in a fellowship, a participation in the great, initial, pivotal facts of the Christian faith—His resurrection and its antecedent sufferings and death.

All this is the familiar language of Romans 6:1-13. Here we are to “know” (three times) Him in the experimental value of our union with Him in these experiences—that “**with Him**” we were crucified, were buried, were raised again, and now walk in newness of life. All “**with Him**.” The “power” of these experiences with Him lies in the privilege to “**Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord**” (6:11) and to “**Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God**” (6:13).

THE ASSURANCE OF OUR OWN OUT-RESURRECTION. I desire thus to know Him, “**If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from among the dead**” (11). Were we to refer these words to a present, spiritual resurrection life, we would cause Paul to contradict himself. Such resurrection, he teaches us, is an accomplished fact, a past experience; we, by virtue of our union with Christ, “were raised together with Christ” (Colossians 3:1).

He is looking forward to the resurrection and transformation of the body (cf. 3:20, 21) as a part of his “goal” prospect. The literal wording is unique, occurring nowhere else in the New Testament, and made doubly forceful: “***If by any means I may attain unto the out-resurrection, the one from among the dead.***” Paul invents a word to express his thought. Otherwise his verbiage is the same as our Lord’s: “**They that are accounted worthy to attain unto that age, and the resurrection, the one from among the dead**” (Luke 20:35).



The teaching of the verse is two-fold:

First, a selective resurrection, out from among those who will be left. Not out from the state of death, notice, but from among others who are dead. The Scriptures do not teach a general resurrection, but the following order:

- 1— “**Christ the First-Fruits**” (I Corinthians 15:23a).
- 2— “**They that are Christ’s**” (I Corinthians 15:23b) or “**The dead in Christ**” (I Thessalonians 4:16).
- 3— “**The rest of the dead**” (Revelation 20:5). \*

\*Tragelles, eminent Biblical scholar and critic, translates. Daniel 12:2 as follows: “*Many from among the sleepers of the dust shall awake; these shall be unto everlasting life; but those (the rest of the sleepers) shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt.*”

Second. This explains Paul’s earnest longing and endeavor to “attain” the resurrection in question. Were there a general resurrection he would be compelled to participate. But he purposes not to be left out when the selective resurrection occurs.

Paul’s earnest desire to “attain” implies the danger and possibility of not attaining. \*

\* “**If by any means.**” The Greek expression found here “is used when an end is proposed, but failure is presumed to be possible.” Dean Alford.

Doubtless many will be disappointed. Such a contingency is a great incentive to a closer walk with Him, to a present life of holy living, “**the power of His resurrection,**” to “**make our calling and election sure,**” that so we may be “**found in Him.**”

PRESSING ON EAGERLY FOR THE GOAL (12-14). “**Not as though I had already attained**” (12a). Attained what? The knowing of Him in intimate, transforming power— verse 10. Contemplating this untapped wealth of experience, he repudiates the thought that he has already “attained,” or is “already perfect” (12b), or has “apprehended” (laid hold of) that for which he was “**apprehended (laid hold of) by Christ Jesus**” (12c, 13a).

The lure of this unattained purpose and possibility—the purpose on Christ’s part in laying hold of him for the Christian life; the possibility on his part as he lays hold on that purpose—these have made of Paul an eager, indefatigable athlete (13, 14). He is intent on “**one thing.**” “**Forgetting the behind things**” (13b)—they have lost their grip on him, and “stretching forward to the before things” (13c) —one can see the alert, bent-forward figure of the runner, pressing on under a great urge.

Why does he thus “**press on?**” His mind is intent, his eye is fixed upon “the goal”; it holds all that he has come to count worthwhile—“**the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus**” (14). The Greek means “*calling on high, above.*” His is double progress, in an onward and upward race.

EXHORTATION TO BE THUS MINDED (15). “Therefore” turns us back to vs. 3, “For we are” etc. Since we are Christians, followers of Christ, have entered the race, “**let us therefore be thus minded**” and press on in it to gain the goal.

“**As many as be perfect**” is Paul’s appeal to every believer, including himself (“**let us**”); yet he has just denied being perfect. There is no discrepancy. He is referring to different stages of “the race.” As each contestant in the Grecian games was examined and pronounced fit or “perfect,” so the Christian.

Every believer, on entering the race, acquires a POSITION which is perfect, complete “in Christ” and His righteousness (9). However, in running the race, our CONDITION is “not perfect”; in attainment we are immature, undeveloped, far short of our goal (10-14).

When we believed we became endowed with His mind (I Corinthians 2:16), hence God can, and will, reveal to us wherein our mindedness falls short of being “**thus minded**.” It is God who is working in us (2:13). Only we must not slip back from present attainments, but from them continue to carry on. We succeed in the “race” as we maintain a right “walk” (16).

EXAMPLES TO BE IMITATED AND SHUNNED (17-19). The lofty inward aspirations of the runner must find expression in an outward walk or manner of conduct that is wholly and worthily in keeping. The pattern is Christ (Chap. 2). As Paul, therefore, is an imitator of Christ (I Corinthians 11:1) he does not hesitate to bid them “Become my fellow-imitators of Christ” (17a), and “mark” or note with a view to following their example “**them that so walk even as ye have us for an ensample**” (17b).

In contrast is the walk of many, calling forth the Apostolic warning, even with tears, “**that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ**” (18). They have in practice denied its power (cf. Galatians 5:24; 6:14). Their forward look (in contrast to ours who look for a Saviour [20]) is only “destruction”; a finality in keeping with their present carnality, “who,” with no mind to pursue this heavenly race, “**mind earthly things**” (19).

#### *Comment*

EXPERIENCING CHRIST. Merely to be a Christian should as little satisfy a man as to have bread without eating it or to possess a mine without working it. The Welsh miners commonly speak of “winning” the coal, meaning the sinking of deeper shafts to uncover fresh layers of ore in yet more abundant supply. If we are His followers in saving faith, we “have” Him; now we must “know” Him. Know the “values” there are in Him. Know Him in the power of His resurrection, in the fellowship of His sufferings, in conformity to His death.

We hear the cry, “Back to Christ.” This is the way back. Here are the guide-posts to the real Christ, to His very person, presence and power. In His sufferings, death and resurrection is our meeting ground with “Him.” They are our spiritual Garden of Fellowship with Him. To thus get back to Christ is the beginning of a “**walk with Him in newness of life**,” out into a future of unfettered liberty.

“ONE THING” CHRISTIANS. It takes courage and concentration of purpose to declare one’s self out for just “**one thing**,” but the Cause of Christ is deserving of such a declaration. “**Seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness**”; He will add whatever “things” are needed. Moses did it, pushing many things aside for the one (Hebrews 11:24-27). Our Lord did it (John 4:34; 8:28, 29). Paul did it (Philippians 3:13, 14). D. L. Moody did it. When he heard someone say, “God has yet to show the world what He can do through a man wholly given up to Him,” he said, “I will be that man.” The world knows something of the result; eternity will tell the rest. Some one who reads this will do it, to their present and everlasting satisfaction. Reader, are you that one?

“GOAL” “PRIZE” “HIGH CALLING” “IN CHRIST JESUS.” It is a great and blessed experience to have seen all these “**in Christ Jesus**,” luring us on. We must indeed see them and sense them ere we are moved eagerly to set out after them. It is like a telescope. Looking into it we see a “goal”—we want to run. Pulling out a section we see a goal with a “prize”—we are eager to run and “attain.” Pulling out another section we see the goal and its prize involve a “high calling”—we want to run worthily. Looking again we see, not the goal, not the prize, not even the high calling, but “**Christ Jesus**”; they are all in Him. We run as seeing Him—“**Looking unto Jesus**.” At the end of the race we’re going to meet Him, and hear Him speak in bestowment of the crown (II Timothy 4:7, 8; Matthew 25:21; et al).

“TYPES” OF CHRIST. “**Ye have us for an ensample**.” The Greek is *type*. Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, David, etc., were “types” of Christ, their lives so molded as to picture some phase of our Lord’s person and work, pointing forward to Him before He came. But in as real a sense He has ordained us “types,” our lives by His indwelling Spirit pressed into the mold of His likeness, that now, after Christ has gone hence, men may be pointed to Him by our “walk” among them. We “**ought to walk even as He walked**” (I John 2:6). What a responsibility, just being a follower of Christ!

A SUMMARY. The secret of successfully running the Race may be summarily told in just three words: To “know” (10); to “apprehend” (12-14); to “exemplify” (17).

#### 4—The Christian Race: Its Finish, 3:20, 21

The verbiage of this section is in many respects remarkable. Those who can should read it in the Greek. What it says literally, is this:

*“For the citizen state (state with free citizen rights) to which we belong, is (exists of old) in the heavens whence we are looking (away) with earnest expectation for (the coming of) a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform (refashion) the body of humbling we now have, making it of like form and nature with the body of glory He now has, according to power which is His to bring everything into subjection to Himself.”*

Paul at the outset expressed himself as “**confident that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ**” (1:6).

He has now led us on to that day. The Christian life began with Christ as its Author; the course has been run in constant looking to Christ as its Inspirer; it is concluded with Christ as its Finisher.

The chapter's conclusion is a remarkable one, in that it summarizes the past, the present and the future of the Race, yet all with a forward, onward reach to that which lies BEFORE.

#### *Note*

PRECIOUS FACT (20a), a long-established fact; our citizenship, the state where we hold free citizen rights, "is" in Heaven, nay, it has existed from of old (so the Greek). Compare Matthew 25:34: "**Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**" Again: "**In My Father's house are many mansions** [abiding places] . . . **I go to prepare a place for you**" (John 14:2).

Since our life as citizens is in heaven, we have only a life as pilgrims here. We are just passing through. Like the patriarchs, we "**look for a city**" (same root word, *city-zen*). This keeps us free from the earthly and sensual around us (18, 19). He has given us our legal "residence" over there.

PRESENT ATTITUDE (20b). "**We look for,**" not in the sense of idly gazing; the word is carefully chosen and means, wait with eager expectation of receiving Him who is coming. "**Look for a Saviour,**" in that He will then bring His redemptive work to completion in believers and in society.

Note the same wording and thought in Hebrews 9:28: "**Unto them that LOOK FOR Him shall He appear the second time apart from sin unto SALVATION.**" Also I Corinthians 1:7: "**So that ye came behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**" The lexicon says it means "*assiduously and patiently to wait for.*" Why should any follower of Christ fail to take this attitude?

PROSPECTIVE GLORY (21). Salvation, not an initial step (Acts 16:31), nor yet a process (Philippians 2:12), but a finished product—"the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:21) as necessary to our "adoption" into the heavenly state. (See I Corinthians 15:50-53). The body must be, and will be, "refashioned" from what it is now, a "body of humbling," into likeness to that which He now has, a "body of glory."

This climax of Christian Experience is the complement and consummation of His Humiliation and Exaltation (2:5-11). In Humiliation He came to share our likeness on earth. In Exaltation He eagerly awaits our sharing His likeness in glory. Every Christian should be as eager and expectant of that day as He.

Will He do it? The guarantee is the power that is His "*whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself.*"

#### *Comment*

A RESUME. In resume of the race we discover three words that tell the whole story. (The fact that they begin with G should forever seal the three steps in memory).

1. Starting the Race—GAIN in Christ (3:7-9).
2. Running the Race—GOAL in Christ (3:10-19).
3. Finishing the Race—GLORY in Christ (3:20, 21).

Their doctrinal statement would be: Justification, Sanctification, Glorification.

One can readily correlate with these the three essential, cardinal virtues, Faith, Love and Hope.

- Faith, reaching back and resting in the Cross;
- Love, laying hold of the living Christ and filling the present with power to live and labor for Him;
- Hope, reaching on before, quickened by His promised coming again and all related experiences.

WHAT IS OUR HOPE? The Church should know the outcome of its gospelizing efforts, that it may intelligently direct them. Is it the conversion of the world? If it were, how freely might we expect Christ and the Apostles to refer to it for our encouragement. Yet we have not one single utterance warranting us to hope this. (Let the reader scrutinize his New Testament in search of one instance).

Rather, in the Holy Spirit's arrangement of the canon, He has placed last among the Church messages those that have as their theme the Hope of Christ's coming again—1 and 2 Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians, note the three virtues, Faith, Love, Hope (1:3), and the fact that each chapter closes with teaching concerning the Hope of His return. Second Thessalonians features the Man of Sin, whose career necessitates our Lord's personal return in power and glory, the only power known to Scripture for his destruction (II Thessalonians 2:1-12). Query: What must be man's state of mind and heart at the end of the age, converted or not converted, in a society that produces, fosters and receives the Antichrist just preceding Christ's return? Read verses 9-12.

Again, the General Epistles are placed last, having reference to "the last times." James, Peter, John exhort to Faith, Hope and Love. Jude warns of the breaking down of these virtues in apostasy and ungodliness. Then follows the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Such is the revealed mind of the Spirit.

A PROGRESSIVE EXPERIENCE. A progressive revelation calls for, and is designed to develop, a progressive experience. Some people seem to center their Christian living wholly in the past, in what Christ DID FOR US. While there is no other place or way to begin, and while we cannot get beyond or away from the Cross, this is wholly unscriptural and leads to an unprogressive experience, a going round in a circle.

Christ and the Apostles never so taught the Cross, but with it presented another center of Christian Experience—the fact of His coming again. All the Apostles hold forth this expectation in their writings; they preached it from the very beginning (Acts 3:20; 15:16; I Thessalonians 5:1, 2). This, held in prospect by the early Church, largely contributed to its zeal, enthusiasm and indomitable spirit. They rejoiced in what He is GOING TO DO. They had a glorious future in view; they were going somewhere.

As His Cross calls for Faith, His Coming Again calls for Hope. This gives us two centers, a life of forward movement and progress.

The law of the ellipse is that the sum of the distances from the two foci to any point on the circumference is always equal, a constant quantity. Let the circumference represent the experience of Christians from the beginning till now. First Century believers were constantly under the power and influence of both the Cross and the Coming. It was MEANT TO BE the same in the tenth, twelfth or twentieth—a constant admixture of Faith and Hope. We have not a normal New Testament Experience if this is not so with us.

Passing into solid geometry for the moment, we add the element of Love, relating us to the Christ now in glory, flooding our lives with His presence and power, filling in the whole gap between His first and second appearing. (Romans 5:5; Ephesians 3:16-19). The race of Philippians 3 is run in the power and spur of the Love of the living Christ as well as the Hope of the coming Christ. Both are on-reaching, toward a Christ as yet not “apprehended.”

THE SCRIPTURAL ATTITUDE. If the Church today could have the same clear-visioned conception of a Coming Christ, with the consequent eager enthusiasm and devotion evinced by the early Church; but—what has happened that she cannot have it? She may; and she should. It is the Scriptural attitude for every age of her earthly course.

Three considerations:

1—The Scriptures everywhere present the coming of Christ as a FACT. And all evangelical Christians believe and accept the fact.

2—The fact is a large part of our body of teaching. Christ and all the Apostles of record TEACH and preach His return, just as they do His atoning death, etc. If a man fail to teach the atonement, he is confessedly unscriptural. If he fail to teach the Lord’s Return, he ‘is equally unscriptural.

3— The fact is everywhere presented in the New Testament as the INCENTIVE FOR BETTER LIVING. Upon this fact is based the appeal for every worthy Christian grace and duty. That is, it is presented as a matter possessing large SPIRITUAL VALUES. An experience rather than a doctrine. It is so in Philippians.

The fact that the Holy Spirit found it needful to include the Coming of Christ in His treatise on Christian Experience, as necessary to the rounding out of that experience in every believer, should be carefully considered by every Christian.

It is not a question of when the Lord will come, or whether we shall live to see the actual event; but it is a question of taking the right attitude toward His coming, for present practical and spiritual purposes.

EVERY CHRISTIAN, OF EVERY AGE OF THE CHURCH, HAS THE RIGHT, NAY THE DUTY, TO LOOK FOR HIS LORD'S RETURN.

Reader, are you the eager, earnest, expectant, enthusiastic follower of Christ that this Hope will enable you to be? Have you the Experience of His Coming? Are you running with eye fixed on the Goal of divine revelation?

**~ end of chapter 3 ~**

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>

\*\*\*