

# ***Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians***

## ***Confidence Only in Christ***

Lesson #6 for February 7, 2026

Scriptures: **Philippians 3:1-16**; Romans 2:25-29; John 9:1-39; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 1:4,10.

1. Who besides Christ is wanting our confidence? Who wants our loyalty? Who wants us?
2. **This lesson emphasizing Philippians 3 is about knowing God and worshiping Him correctly and fully. Satan is determined to destroy all attempts at that kind of religion because, ultimately, it will lead to his destruction.**

[From the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=BSG:] There's something about us that remains **suspicious about salvation by faith alone, apart from the works of the law**. That is, **for some reason, we all tend to lean on our works, as if they could add to our salvation**. In a rather striking way, Paul deals with this point in a vigorous polemic [writing on a controversial topic] against those who insist that **circumcision** is necessary for salvation.—BSG\* for Sabbath Afternoon, January 31.†‡

[BSG:] **To guard against the possibility that some might consider their works, such as circumcision, as contributing to their salvation, Paul makes it clear that righteousness is from Christ as a gift that comes by faith, not by the law**. Though circumcision might not be an issue today, the principle it deals with certainly is.—BSG\* for Sabbath Afternoon.†‡

[BSG:] **The Protestant Reformation itself started over this very issue: the role of faith and works in the experience of a follower of Christ**. In the end, Christ is everything to us, “the author and finisher of our faith” (*Heb. 12:2*). If our priorities are in the right place, we will live with the assurance of God's love and enjoy the promise, even now, of salvation, all while placing “no confidence in the flesh” (*Phil. 3:3*).—BSG\* for Sabbath Afternoon.†‡§

3. Paul was very concerned about false teachers that followed him and were misleading the new converts. Remember that **Paul had been a “Pharisee of the Pharisees”!**

[From the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=T-BSG:] After asserting that believers shine in this world by performing Christ-centered good works, Paul now shifts attention to the necessity of trusting solely in Christ for salvation. The apostle expresses concern about the influence of **false teachers** who were promoting a flesh-based approach, thereby distorting the gospel message and endangering the entire Christian community in Philippi. It seems that a form of false teaching, similar to that in Galatia, was creating some confusion regarding **what Gentile Christians were supposed to believe and do in order to be saved**.—T-BSG\* 80.†‡

[T-BSG:] Paul took this matter very seriously. After all, the gospel message was at stake! Paul is so extremely concerned about the infiltration of false masters and their teachings that he refers to them as dogs and evil workers (*Phil. 3:2, NKJV*). These are strong terms, used to express contempt and disapproval. By addressing these issues in Philippi, **Paul provides precious lessons on how to deal with false teachings**. These lessons

are crucial for the church today. After all, to a greater or lesser degree, all our churches suffer the attack of false teachers.—*T-BSG\** 80.†§

[T-BSG:] This ... lesson emphasizes three major themes:

- 1) Rejoicing in the Lord is the **opposite of relying on human strength.**
- 2) **A genuine conversion leads to a radical change, from confidence in the flesh to confidence in Christ.**
- 3) **Knowing Christ is a progressive experience. As we draw closer to Him, our intimacy with Him will deepen more and more. One's intimacy with Christ must continue to grow until the day we see Him face-to-face.**—*T-BSG\** 80.††

4. Following is an illustration of placing one's trust in the wrong person.

[T-BSG:] “The king of Italy and the king of Bohemia promised John Huss safe transport and safe custody. They broke their promises, however, and Huss was martyred. Thomas Wentworth carried a document signed by King Charles I which read, ‘Upon the word of a king you shall not suffer in life, honour [*sic*-British spelling], or fortune.’ Shortly afterwards, however, his death warrant was signed by the same monarch. ‘Put not your trust in princes,’ were his last words. ‘It is better to trust in the Lord’ than in anyone or anything else.”—Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), p. 1525.— [as quoted in *T-BSG\** 80-81].†§

5. Pilgrims came to America because of religious persecution. Unfortunately, religious persecution is growing again around the world. In communist countries and in Muslim countries, people are being arrested and some are being killed for their beliefs. Even in Christian nations, more and more religious intolerance is appearing. To know more, see: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpgOUrIAsCzMAjh7BGJq5Q7WdCJTOaruK>

## Rejoicing in the Lord

6. What can we learn in Philippians 3:1-3 about Paul's understanding of the gospel?

**Philippians 3:1:** In conclusion, my friends, be joyful in your union with the Lord. I don't mind repeating what I have written before, and you will be safer if I do so.—American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*®\* [GNT] (*Today's English Version*) [TEV], Second Edition, (Philippians 3:1). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV\** or *GNB-TEV\**].‡ [Compare Acts 16:3].†

[BSG:] Paul begins [Philippians 3] on a very positive note and almost sounds as though he is wrapping up his letter. But he's not done. He returns to one of the main themes of this epistle: **rejoicing in the Lord**. And he will give a number of reasons for that here. Most important, we are to have confidence in Christ, not in ourselves: “We . . . rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (*Phil.* 3:3). Who among us has, in one way or another, learned the hard way about not putting confidence in the flesh?—*BSG\** for Sunday, February 1.††§

[BSG:] Interestingly, it seems that one solution to spiritual challenges, including the spread of false teachings, is to “**rejoice in the Lord**” (*Phil.*

3:1; compare *Phil. 4:4*).—BSG\* for Sunday, February 1.<sup>†§</sup>

[BSG:] Anything we *rejoice* about brings us *joy* (as in English, the two Greek words for these ideas are related). God wants us to be joyful, and His Word is a kind of instruction manual for true happiness and lasting joy. These include receiving God's mercy (*Ps. 31:7*); placing our trust in Him (*Ps. 5:11*); receiving the blessings of salvation (*Ps. 9:14*); adopting God's law as our way of life (*Ps. 119:14*), including the Sabbath (*Isa. 58:13, 14*); believing His Word (*Ps. 119:162*); and raising godly children (*Prov. 23:24, 25*).—BSG\* for Sunday, February 1.<sup>†§</sup>

**Psalm 119:162:** How happy I am because of your promises—

as happy as someone who finds rich treasure.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*

**Philippians 3:2-3:** <sup>2</sup>Watch out for ["beware of" in *NKJV*\*] those who do evil things, those dogs, those who insist on cutting the body. <sup>3</sup>**It is we, not they, who have received the true circumcision, for we worship God by means of his Spirit and rejoice in our life in union with Christ Jesus. We do not put any trust in external ceremonies.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*<sup>††</sup>

[BSG:] The strong warning "Beware" (three times) is not found anywhere else in Scripture. Apparently, the Philippians knew very well what threat Paul was referencing. Rather than three separate problems, **the warning appears to refer to a group of false teachers described in three different ways.**—BSG\* for Sunday, February 1.<sup>††</sup>

[BSG:] **Wicked or irreligious people** in Israel were sometimes referred to as "dogs" (*Phil. 3:2; compare Ps. 22:16; Isa. 56:10; Matt. 7:6; 2 Pet. 2:21, 22*). **False teachers** could also aptly be described as "**evil workers.**" Referring to them as "the mutilation" (*Phil. 3:2, NKJV*) or "**those who mutilate the flesh**" (*ESV*) shows that, **as in Galatia and other locales, they were seeking to impose circumcision on Gentile believers, contrary to the ruling of the Apostolic Council (see Acts 15).**—BSG\* for Sunday, February 1.<sup>††§</sup>

7. Satan hates true followers of Christ. They are a life-and-death threat to his very existence. He not only **invents completely false religions**; but also, if possible, **he will pervert and twist God's true religion.** The Judaizers who were troubling the true believers in Philippi had corrupted the Jewish religion and were trying to prevent others from learning about and adopting Jesus Christ as the true Messiah. Paul was not only warning of these false ideas but also reminding them and us to rejoice in the truth which is our only way to ultimate happiness. Try to imagine what happened to Paul after the "Damascus road"!

[T-BSG:] In Philippians 3:1–3, Paul introduces a warning against pride in human achievements. The exhortation, "Rejoice in the Lord," in verse 1 expresses a concept that is often found in the Old Testament, especially in the book of Psalms. A few remarkable examples include: "The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice" (*Ps. 21:1, NKJV*); "Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous" (*Ps. 32:11, NKJV*); "Let the righteous one rejoice in the LORD" (*Ps. 64:10, ESV; compare with Ps. 97:12*) [*sic*]; "Rejoice the soul of Your servant" (*Ps. 86:4, NKJV*); "For you have made me rejoice, LORD" (*Ps. 92:4,*

CSB); “May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD” (Ps. 104:34, ESV); “The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced” (Ps. 126:3, NRSV). **In fact, rejoicing in the Lord is a commandment repeatedly highlighted throughout the book of Deuteronomy** (see Deut. 12:7, 12, 18; Deut. 14:26; Deut. 16:11, 15; Deut. 26:11; Deut. 27:7).—T-BSG\* 81.†‡§

8. We all must admit that life can be very difficult for us at times, no matter how well things might be going at the moment. Even if the situation is not going well now, what things can you and should you rejoice about? What is stopping you from rejoicing? Even if we should die for our faith, we still have a glorious future ahead of us!

[T-BSG:] In Philippians 3:3, Paul uses the term *kauchaomai*, which the King James Version [*sic*] regularly translates as “boasting,” both in Romans (see Rom. 2:17, 23), and especially in 2 Corinthians, where it is also translated as “glory” or “glorying” (2 Cor. 5:12; 2 Cor. 7:14; 2 Cor. 9:2; 2 Cor. 10:8, 13, 15, 16; 2 Cor. 11:12, 16, 18, 30; 2 Cor. 12:1, 5, 6, 9, 11).—T-BSG\* 81.†§

[T-BSG:] Therefore, the original text translated as “rejoice in Christ Jesus” in Philippians 3:3 also could be translated as “boast in Christ Jesus” (*as in the NRSV*) or “glory in Christ Jesus” (*as in the ESV*). **Paul uses a strong word in order to make it clear that confidence in Christ and reliance on human efforts are mutually exclusive: one thing naturally invalidates the other!** In this sense, Paul’s expression is very similar to what he says in Galatians 6:13, 14. Paul reproves those who boast in the flesh (Gal. 6:13) and affirms that the only reason for his boasting is the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14).—T-BSG\* 81.†‡§ [Paul was transformed!]<sup>‡</sup>

9. Are we afraid to openly profess our belief in Jesus Christ? **Do we boast about our Lord?**

## Paul’s “Past Life”

10. In Philippians 3, Paul discussed his past life in contrast to his “current” life.

[BSG:] It is a common experience for Christian converts to think of their lives in terms of before they accepted Jesus and after, just as Paul does in Philippians 3. Nevertheless, rightly or wrongly, we sometimes speak of those who are not Christians as being “good people,” and, at least according to the world’s standards, many indeed are. In contrast, compared to God’s standards, no one is, not even Christians.—BSG\* for Monday, February 2.<sup>‡</sup>

11. **Why do you suppose it is that the things that Paul used to be so proud of, after his conversion, he thought of as useless?**

**Philippians 3:4-6:** <sup>4</sup>I could, of course, put my trust in such things. If any of you think you can trust in external ceremonies, I have even more reason to feel that way. <sup>5</sup>I was circumcised when I was a week old. I am an Israelite by birth, of the tribe of Benjamin, a pure-blooded Hebrew. As far as keeping the Jewish Law is concerned, I was a Pharisee, <sup>6</sup>and I was so zealous that I persecuted the church. **As far as a person can be righteous by obeying the commands of the Law, I was without fault.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.<sup>\*†</sup>

[T-BSG:] In Philippians 3:4, the apostle contends that no other Jew had as much confidence in the flesh as he did. In Philippians 3:5, 6, he presents

seven reasons why he, more than anybody else, could have confidence in the flesh: (1) “circumcised the eighth day,” (2) “of the stock of Israel,” (3) “of the tribe of Benjamin,” (4) “a Hebrew of the Hebrews,” [a student of Gamaliel the Elder] (5) a Pharisee, (6) persecutor of the church, and (7) blameless. Interestingly, circumcision opens the list, whereas blamelessness concludes it.—*T-BSG\** 82.‡ [Did Paul ever meet any of those “Judaizers”?]‡ [BSG:] Paul was so zealous for the law that he persecuted the church because of its perceived threat to the Jewish way of life, which he thought the law prescribed. Interestingly, though “blameless” in terms of that human-originated “righteousness,” Paul realized the law was actually far deeper and more demanding than he could imagine, and that without Christ he stood before it condemned.—*BSG\** for Monday, February 2.‡

[BSG:] **Paul makes an implicit contrast between believing Jews who are spreading false doctrine and uncircumcised believers who rely fully on Christ for their salvation and put no confidence in mere human works such as circumcision (see Heb. 6:1, Heb. 9:14; compare Rom. 2:25–29). Even though Paul’s past life and pedigree would have been quite impressive to his fellow Jews, none of these things contributed to his salvation. In fact, they actually hindered it because they blinded him for a while to his need of Christ.**—*BSG\** for Monday, February 2.†‡§

**Romans 2:25-29:** <sup>25</sup>If you obey the Law, your circumcision is of value; but if you disobey the Law, you might as well never have been circumcised. <sup>26</sup>If the Gentile, who is not circumcised, obeys the commands of the Law, will not God regard him as though he were circumcised? <sup>27</sup>And so you Jews will be condemned by the **Gentiles** because you break the Law, even though you have it written down and are circumcised; but **they obey the Law, even though they are not physically circumcised.** <sup>28</sup>After all, who is a real Jew, truly circumcised? It is not the man who is a Jew on the outside, whose circumcision is a physical thing. <sup>29</sup>Rather, **the real Jew is the person who is a Jew on the inside, that is, whose heart has been circumcised, and this is the work of God’s Spirit, not of the written Law.** Such a person receives praise from God, not from human beings.—*GNB-TEV*.\*†

12. Jesus and Paul both talked about attempts to gain righteousness by keeping the law. Both condemned such attempts. Read Romans 7:7-12 and Matthew 5:21-22,27-28.

## The Things that Matter

[BSG:] **The things that previously made Paul proud were actually hindrances to faith because they blinded him to his need of Christ.** Paul uses the language of commerce, gain and loss, to describe his spiritual ledger prior to faith. Although we don’t like to think about it much, every human being has a “spiritual ledger.”—*BSG\** for Tuesday, February 3.†‡

[BSG:] Previously, Paul’s ledger was measured by the Jewish values of the time rather than by the biblical values as taught by Jesus.

After his conversion, his spiritual ledger looked very different because its scale of values dramatically changed, from the “currency” of Judaism to the “currency of heaven.”—*BSG\** for Tuesday, February 3.‡

13. Ellen White wrote about “the currency of heaven.”

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] The Master has engaged us in his service, and has pointed out our duty, and opened before us the reward that will attend patient continuance in well-doing. He who came down from heaven can speak of heaven, and rightly present the things which form **the currency of heaven**, on which he has stamped his image and superscription. He knows the danger in which those are placed whom he came to uplift from degradation, and to exalt to a place beside himself upon his throne. He points out their peril in lavishing affection upon useless and dangerous objects. He seeks to draw the mind away from the earthly to the heavenly, that we may not waste time, talent, and opportunity, upon things that are altogether vanity. [Matthew 6:19-20 is then quoted].—Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*,\* July 1, 1890, par. 6.†‡

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p821.10542&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p821.10542&index=0)‡

[BSG:] In the world of first-century Judaism, Paul had been a rapidly rising star until, **by becoming blind at the sight of the glorified Jesus on the Damascus road (Acts 9), his spiritual eyesight was corrected**, and he saw clearly.—BSG\* for Tuesday, February 3.†§

**John 9:39:** Jesus said, “I came to this world to judge, so that the blind should see and those who see should become blind.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*

[BSG:] What could be more valuable than eternal life in heaven and on the new earth? Yet worldly values blind so many to this reality. There is an inherent competition between the things valued here (see *Matt. 13:22; Luke 4:5, 6; 1 John 2:16*) and the things Heaven values—likeness to Christ and souls saved.—BSG\* for Tuesday, February 3.†§

14. **Consider your own personal situation. Are your thoughts pointing to eternal values? Or, are you consumed with worldly values?**

[BSG:] The world can blind us to spiritual truths and to what is really important. What is the key to keeping our eyes focused on what truly matters?—BSG\* for Tuesday, February 3.‡

## The Faith of Christ

[BSG:] Paul’s main point must not be missed. There was a wonderful exchange that he experienced on the Damascus road, trading his old, law-based life for the presence of Christ Himself—“that I may gain Christ and be found in Him” (*Phil. 3:8, 9, NKJV*).—BSG\* for Wednesday, February 4.†§

15. **Paul exchanged a form of traditional Jewish religion that had been corrupted by Satan for a Christ-centered religion. He was not willing to have anyone deceived as he had been by that false religion. He was extremely proud of his new faith in Christ.**

16. **Many stories and passages in Scripture suggest that we need to develop a very close relationship with Jesus Christ. We must get to know Him intimately. How is that possible? In fact, in *Philippians*, Paul told us that we must become people “in Christ.” How is that possible?**

[BSG:] Paul’s reference to being in Christ has been widely discussed. Not surprisingly, perhaps the best explanation of it comes from Paul himself:

“That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him” (*Eph. 1:10, NKJV*). That has been God’s purpose from the start. And Paul makes clear how that happens: “You are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (*1 Cor. 1:30, NKJV*).—*BSG\** for Wednesday, February 4.†§ [For what more could one ask?]‡

[*BSG:*] Being “in Christ” comprehends everything that the plan of salvation encompasses, from the dawning of our spiritual intelligence (wisdom), to justification by faith (righteousness), to preparation for heaven (sanctification), and finally to glorification at the Second Advent (redemption). Salvation is Christ’s work from start to finish—for us and in us. Thus, by gaining Christ, we have everything we need.—*BSG\** for Wednesday, February 4.‡

17. ***If we are not “in Christ,” are we then “in Satan”?*** There are only two sides in the great controversy over God’s character and government. Either we are for God; or, we are not!

**Philippians 3:7:** But all those things that I might count as profit I now reckon as loss for Christ’s sake.—*Good News Bible-TEV.\** [What things were those?]‡

18. Notice how Paul concluded this discussion with a chiasmic structure as noted in *T-BSG\**:

A. “What things were **gain** to me” (*Phil. 3:7a, NKJV*),

B. “I have counted **loss** for Christ” (*Phil. 3:7b, NKJV*).

B’ “I also count all things **loss**” (*Phil. 3:8a, NKJV*),

A’ “[]that I may **gain** Christ” (*Phil. 3:8b, NKJV*).—*T-BSG\** 82.†§

[*T-BSG:*] **This concentric structure, also known as chiasmic structure, emphasizes the radical change in Paul’s mindset.** In addition to the term “loss” (from the Greek *zēmia*), Paul also uses its verbal form, “to suffer loss” (from the Greek *zēmioō*), in Philippians 3:8. This accentuation makes the emphasis on the change of his mindset even more remarkable. The items in the sevenfold list of autobiographical boasting are considered as loss in light of “the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus” (*Phil. 3:8, NKJV*).—*T-BSG\** 82.†§ [Are we proud of being Seventh-day Adventists?]‡

19. In Philippians 3:9, Paul pointed out very distinctly the contrast between “my righteousness” which I might gain by trying to keep the law and “Christ’s righteousness” which we gain by being in Him, that is, being close to Him and learning about Him daily.

**Philippians 3:8-9:** <sup>8</sup>Not only those things; I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere garbage, so that I may gain Christ<sup>9</sup> and be completely united with him. I no longer have a righteousness of my own, the kind that is gained by obeying the Law. I now have the righteousness that is given through faith in Christ, the **righteousness that comes from God** and is based on faith.—*Good News Bible-TEV.\**†

20. ***Do we clearly understand the contrast between “my righteousness” and “God’s righteousness”?*** ***Can we be sure we are on God’s side and not on Satan’s side?***

[BSG:] The only saving faith is “the faith of Christ.” Only *His* faith has obeyed fully and can obey. (The Greek word for faith, *pistis*, also means faithfulness.) So, if we are in Christ and He lives in us (*Gal. 2:20*), then we live by *His* faith through our faith in Him.—*BSG\** for Wednesday.†§

**Galatians 3:21-22:** <sup>21</sup> Does this mean that the Law is against God’s promises? No, not at all! For if human beings had received a law that could bring life, then everyone could be put right with God by obeying it. <sup>22</sup>But the scripture says that **the whole world is under the power of sin**; and **so the gift which is promised on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ is given to those who believe**.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*† [Do we think that we are fine?]‡

## Just One Thing—Knowing Christ: By Beholding, We Become Changed!

21. Read **Philippians 3:10-16**.

[T-BSG:] In Philippians 3:10, Paul indicates that the ultimate purpose of his life was to know Christ. **The fact that he mentions Christ’s sufferings, death, and resurrection suggests that knowing Christ involves not only a cognitive but, especially, a relational experience in a process of gradual growth** (see also *2 Pet. 3:18*). While this idea is somehow implicit in Philippians 3:10, Paul further elaborates on this thought in Philippians 3:12–16.—*T-BSG\** 83.†§

22. ***Can we truly know Christ? Can we experience the power of His resurrection? Can we share in His sufferings and become like Him in His death? Would that give us the hope that we will be raised from death to life? Many people are dying today!***

23. ***So, how do we get to “know” Christ? It is through His written Word: Reading it and living it. We cannot see Him face-to-face as the disciples did. However, through the Holy Spirit, we can come close to Him through letting the Holy Spirit guide us.***

**Matthew 7:21-23:** <sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do. <sup>22</sup>When Judgement Day comes, many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord! In your name we spoke God’s message, by your name we drove out many demons and performed many miracles!’ <sup>23</sup>Then I will say to them, ‘**I never knew you. Get away from me, you wicked people!**’”—*GNB-TEV*.\*†

[BSG:] **Another way we come closer to Jesus is through “the fellowship of His sufferings”** (*Phil. 3:10, NKJV*). Every trial faced, every painful experience borne, helps us to know and appreciate more what Jesus went through for us, and also to understand Him and His will more clearly.—*BSG\** for Thursday, February 5.†§ [What will God say to each of us?]‡

[BSG:] **A third way we come closer is by pressing onward “toward the goal”** (*Phil. 3:14, NKJV*). What is that goal? It translates a word used only here in the New Testament (*skopos*). It refers to the finish line of a race and the prize awarded the victor. Paul calls it **“the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”** (*Phil. 3:14, NKJV*). Just as Christ, through His death and resurrection, ascended upward to heaven, God invites us to receive the same heavenly reward—eternal life.—*BSG\** for Thursday, February 5.†§

[BSG:] Obviously, we have not attained that yet. We will not be perfected in

the fullest sense until our “lowly body” is transformed “that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (*Phil. 3:21, NKJV*). But by knowing Him and inviting His presence into our lives every day, we press on toward the goal of being like Jesus in every way possible now. **This is the “one thing” Paul focused on, too. Just like running a race (see 1 Cor. 9:24–27), we pay no attention to where we’ve been or who trails us. Our single focus is on the things that lie ahead—that heavenly prize that awaits us.** The image here is vivid: a runner’s full focus on the goal, straining every muscle and leaning forward to reach the finish line.—*BSG\** for Thursday.†‡§

24. There is at least one further thing that we need to understand.

[T-BSG:] Paul is aware that a more complete knowledge of Christ will be attained only in the resurrection (*Phil. 3:10, 11*). This idea seems to be the context for the statement in Philippians 3:12: “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected” (*NKJV*). **Next, Paul explains how he pursues the goal described in Philippians 3:10, 11, by suggesting that the task is twofold: (1) he forgets “those things which are behind,” and (2) he reaches forward to “those things which are ahead” (*Phil. 3:13, NKJV*). However, one thing does not disassociate from the other. In fact, Paul refers to these two things as a single action, when saying “one thing I do” (*Phil. 3:13, NKJV*).—*T-BSG\** 83.†‡§**

**2 Corinthians 3:18:** All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory.—*Good News Bible-TEV.\** [Transformation occurs by following Jesus’s example.]‡

25. If we keep looking back and focusing on our past life and the sins we have committed in the past, we are committing ourselves to repeat them!

26. Do we need to be reminded that if salvation were dependent on our good works, we would not have any hope?

[T-BSG:] The Bible clearly teaches that our salvation does not depend on our own efforts. This teaching is a compelling reason to rejoice in the Lord day by day. After all, **if salvation were dependent on our good works, we wouldn’t have any hope!** From a biblical perspective, joy is our response to what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. Things may not go as well as we wish or expect. Yet, we have reasons to rejoice, as so beautifully expressed in the song of Habakkuk: “I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (*Hab. 3:18, NKJV*).—*T-BSG\** 83.†‡§ [Habakkuk was saying this even when everything seemed to be lost!]‡

**Habakkuk 3:17-18:** <sup>17</sup>Even though the fig trees have no fruit

and no grapes grow on the vines,

even though the olive crop fails

and the fields produce no grain,

even though the sheep all die

and the cattle stalls are empty,

<sup>18</sup>I will still be joyful and glad,

because the LORD God is my savior.—*Good News Bible-TEV.\*†*

## 27. We must rely on God and not rely on our own achievements.

[BSG:] In the life of a true believer, there is no room for pride in human achievements. When one understands that salvation is not dependent on what we can do but depends completely on what God has done and is doing for us in Christ, those things considered gain are now deemed as loss, “for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ” (*Phil. 3:8, NKJV*). Christlikeness becomes the aim of one’s pursuit, and good works naturally come as a result. As Paul affirms elsewhere, “For we are His [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (*Eph. 2:10, NKJV*).—*T-BSG\** 83-84.†<sup>Ω§</sup>

[EGW:] He who would build up a strong, symmetrical character, he who would be a well-balanced Christian, must give all and do all for Christ; for the Redeemer will not accept divided service. Daily he must learn the meaning of self-surrender. He must study the word of God, learning its meaning and obeying its precepts. Thus he may reach the standard of Christian excellence. Day by day God works with him, perfecting the character that is to stand in the time of final test. **And day by day the believer is working out before men and angels a sublime experiment, showing what the gospel can do for fallen human beings.**—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles\** 483.1.†<sup>‡</sup>

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p127.2135&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p127.2135&index=0)†

[EGW:] Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the people, “Behold your God.” **The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.**

The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness.—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons\** 415.5-416.1.†<sup>‡</sup>

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p15.1875&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p15.1875&index=0)†

28. ***It is interesting to notice in these quotations that good works demonstrate our faith. Could we possibly be saved without faith that produces good works? (Acts 16:31)***
29. As we all know, a genuine conversion leads to radical changes in a person’s life. Knowing Christ is a progressive experience. As we grow closer to Him, our intimacy with Him will deepen more and more.
30. As we have seen, Paul does everything he can to contrast confidence in Christ with reliance on human efforts. These two things are mutually exclusive. Actually, they invalidate each other!
31. What a reason to rejoice in Christ Jesus! Shouldn’t we do that every day?

©2025, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. \*Electronic version. †Bold type is added. ‡Brackets and content in brackets are added. <sup>Ω</sup>Brackets and the content in brackets within the paragraph are in the source. <sup>§</sup>Italic type is in the source.

Last Modified: January 30, 2026

Email: [Info@theox.org](mailto:Info@theox.org)