

One marketing success report went as follows: “A food processing firm marketed a cake mix which required that the housewife add only water to produce a creamy batter and fine cake. The company could not understand why the mix would not sell, until special research revealed the public felt uneasy about a mix that required only water. It seemed too simple. They felt they themselves had to do something to a cake mix. So the company changed the formula and required the housewife to add an egg. Immediately, the mix achieved great success” [Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1979) 1228]. While the marketing claim appears believable, the truth is that instant cake mix achieved great success due to a decline in the art of cooking.

Nevertheless, many people do regard eternal salvation in a manner consistent with that reported as a marketing success. Scripture declares that salvation of one’s soul is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; “and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*” (Eph 2:8). Many people have difficulty trusting in Christ’s work alone on their behalf, and believe they must do some works to earn God’s acceptance. Of course, if one could earn salvation, it would no longer be “the gift of God;” rather, it would be anticipated just as one expects a paycheck for one’s labor.

## JOY IN ACCEPTANCE

(*Phil 3:1-14*) Philippians 3 reveals how one can know that he or she has received God’s acceptance. From the Bible, we learn that the believer does not receive God’s approval through performance. Only the death of Christ upon Calvary’s cross is the means to appease God.

Scripture reveals that fallen humanity is estranged from God as a consequence of sin, thus for any reconciliation to be accomplished with Him, one must have their sins forgiven and be cleansed from unrighteousness to God’s satisfaction. The distinct emphasis in Jewish thought (as evident in the book of Leviticus, for example), as opposed to Greek thought, is that humanity is estranged from God because of sin. Therefore the work of Christ upon the cross is the only divine provision for the sinner to deal with his or her sin, and the believer’s only basis for being reconciled to God.

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## GOD . . . TOOK THE INITIATIVE IN MAKING PROVISION FOR RECONCILIATION.

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Biblical atonement cannot be defined in terms of the general concept of the ancient Near East. Biblical atonement is not only unique with regard to the covenantal relationship, but also with regard to the initiative. In the Old Testament, atonement is indeed intricately related to sacrifice. However, the offering of atonement is not dependent upon human initiative. In the Old Testament, God revealed his character and will, and instructed fallen sinners as to how they may approach Him. God, therefore, took the initiative in making provision for reconciliation. The message of the New Testament is vitally distinct from the traditional concepts of atonement in classical Greek (wherein the demands of the gods are arbitrary and capricious).

The sins of believers are forgiven based upon the advocacy and propitiation of Jesus Christ. First John 2:1-2 argues conclusively that the true believer should admit the reality of sin and avail oneself of the continuing work of Jesus Christ in the presence of the Father on his or her behalf. Jesus Christ pleads the cause of the believer before the Father, and his responsibility (as Advocate) is to assist the Christian by his presence before the Father. In the midst of an unbelieving society, joy is receiving God’s acceptance, which is by knowing Christ and then doing the will of the Lord.

## JOY IN KNOWING

(*Phil 3:1-7*) Philippians 3:1 begins a new section with the general theme being “rejoicing in the future.” A performance-oriented relationship is a terrible burden, since one can never know if enough has been accomplished to appease the other. God assures the believer that his or her future is one of acceptance, because divine righteousness is found by faith (trust) in Christ.

The word, “finally,” beginning the chapter would seem to indicate that the epistle is reaching a conclusion. In the last two chapters, however, Paul continued to exhort the church to be discerning with regard to false teachers and to seek harmony by resolving disagreements among one another. If maturity in godliness will be realized, one must “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (3:14). Moreover, one must appropriate the provisions that God gives in the Lord (ch. 4).

*Philippians 3:7 – But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

The foundation of the gospel (“good news”) is in Christ Jesus. The word “beware” warns believers with regard to legalists (3:2-6). The most resolute language is used to warn those tempted to embrace false doctrine. There have always been false teachers among true believers, who attempt to subvert faith in God by communicating “destructive [damnable] heresies,” (2 Pet 2:1), which is false teaching that, if believed, would damn your soul to hell.

Paul explained that growing in “knowing Christ Jesus” would help them to overcome the false teachers. If one *could* have “confidence in the flesh,” Paul explained that he was most able to boast in who he was *and* his accomplishments, but explained why he *would not*.

Genuine believers have confidence in Christ's finished work upon the cross. The work of Christ on their behalf is the reason for confidence and hope, as opposed to anything done by self for God or in his name. Trusting in anyone or anything other than Christ is foolishness.

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**THE MOST RESOLUTE LANGUAGE IS USED TO WARN THOSE  
TEMPTED TO EMBRACE FALSE DOCTRINE.**

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In verses 4-6, the Apostle indicated his devout conformity to the customs of his forefathers. All of those customs he "counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (3:7), so that he could know the Lord "and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (3:10). All the advantages that he possessed "in the flesh," Paul regarded as "rubbish" in comparison to what he gained in Christ. Knowing Christ Jesus as Lord – through faith – and therefore possessing his righteousness was vastly superior.

### JOY IN DOING

(Phil 3:8-14) The passion of the believer is to gain Christ in all his fullness, which means to be "found in Him," having a righteousness that He has provided, rather than one's own efforts. God's righteousness is received by faith in Jesus and is not based upon works of the law (Phil 3:7-9). In laying aside supposed virtues of the past, nothing worthwhile is lost to gain the righteousness of Christ.

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**TO KNOW THE LIVING LORD AND SAVIOR IS TO RELY UPON  
HIS POWER FOR STRENGTH.**

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*Galatians 2:20 – . . . and the life which I now live in the flesh  
I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and  
gave Himself up for me.*

Especially if others depend upon our help, it can be tempting for one to boast, and it is even more tantalizing to depend upon one's own merits. Be wary anytime that someone gives praise for your help because anything worthwhile that you have imparted to another is only because you first received it from Christ. God alone is the One to whom all glory must be given for believers serve by his grace.

The instruction given to believers is not to have confidence in their own strength or works; rather, believers are told the advantage of knowing the living Lord and Savior. The knowledge revealed in verses 8-14 is greater than intellectual facts alone; it is the cultivation of a personal relationship in Christ through faith. To know the living Lord and Savior is to rely upon His power for strength, and experiencing joy in doing his will. To learn from the Lord in the context of difficulties and even distress allows one to live with the same attitude of the Savior. Such a perspective is not natural "in the flesh," which is why one must persevere (3:14).

*Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the honor to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone. These notes are adapted [with permission and minor revisions] from Capitol Commission Georgia.*

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#### About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission state ministers are pastors-missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. The Bible studies are hand-distributed, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

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We hope to join with you again next week to study God's Word, to aid you in growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



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