

## Philippians 3:4b-21<sup>iv</sup>

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

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### <sup>iv</sup> About Philippians 3:4b-21

Chapter 3 discusses Paul's opponents in Philippi who thought that Christians ought to keep the Jewish law, especially circumcision. Using a commercial metaphor, Paul responds to this by drawing up a profit-and-loss statement. What once he counted as assets—his Hebrew genealogy, his upbringing and his strict observance of the law—he now counts as loss in comparison to the “value of knowing Christ” (v. 8). Paul, once religiously affluent, has been bankrupted by Jesus. He experienced the annulment of all his former values. Righteousness, a

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relationship of intimacy with God, is humbly received as a gift.

The knowledge of Christ that Paul now seeks is not a special or secret knowledge such as the followers of the Greek mystery cults desired. Rather, it is the Hebrew sense of “knowing,” which comes from close personal relationship. This knowledge comes through sharing in Christ’s suffering and death, both in baptism and in daily life. Paul stresses that the resurrection is still in the future. What he possesses now is not the end, but the beginning of his salvation.