

Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.

Maxie D. Dunnam. *Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon: Communicator's Commentary*, gen ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1982),

Philippians

Paul's bio: [In Phil. 3: 3-7] Paul listed four special items for his external pedigree. One, he was born of orthodox parents, circumcised, as the law required, on the eighth day. Two, he was "an Israelite by race" –by blood descent. Three, he was "*of the tribe of Benjamin.*" This was the matter of special pride. Priests had to prove their lineage. The tribe of Benjamin was one of the two southern tribes existing in actuality and remaining true to the house of David and to Jerusalem as the center of the faith of Israel. Possibly Paul's parents named him Saul after the first King of Israel, who was also the tribe of Benjamin. Paul crowned all his enumeration of privileges of which to boast by claiming to be "*a Hebrew of the Hebrews.*" This had very special meaning. Jews were dispersed all over the world. Tens of thousands were in Rome. Alexandria had more than a million. Most of these Jews stubbornly refused to be assimilated into the nations of their residence, tenaciously retaining their own religion, culture, customs, and laws. Many of them, however, forgot their language, and spoke the language of the dominant people around them. A Hebrew was not merely a Jew, he was a Jew who with great effort and arduous discipline retained the Hebrew language and taught it to his children. So Paul claimed not only to be a full-blooded Jew, he was a Hebrew who had learned and never forgotten his mother tongue, though he was born and reared in the Gentile city of Tarsus. There was more to boast: He was ardent in his religious practice, a trained Pharisee, blameless in keeping the law, and zealous in persecuting the Christians. What he was by birth and what he had become by conviction and achievement were enough to tally a high level of superiority compared to any who might be preaching circumcision and righteousness by the law.¹

Each of the outward privileges in Paul's catalog had at one time been a distinct and separate gain, individual items of profit. Now – they all are one big

¹ Maxie D. Dunnam. *Commentary on Philippians: Communicator's Commentary*, gen ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1982), 292.

bundle of loss; loss because they are useless. Everything is *rubbish* compared to gaining Christ. Righteousness which is from the law is illusory, short-lived.²

² Maxie D. Dunnam. *Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon: Communicator's Commentary*, gen ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1982), 293.