

PHILIPPIANS 3

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Philippians chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God and this letter that Paul wrote to the church in Philippi while he was in prison for his faith in Rome!

As we begin the study of this letter, we saw in Philippians chapter 1 that Paul was encouraging the Philippians to work hard in the ministry, not to give up no matter what may come your way and he used his life as an example of someone who forged ahead and the fruit that was born.

Remember what we were told in Philippians 1:12-14, **“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”**

That is a pretty powerful witness of someone who did not give up but forged ahead, knowing that no matter where you are at, even in prison, the Gospel is not chained!

Then, as we moved into Philippians chapter 2, we see that Paul shows the Philippians the attitude they should have as they work for the Lord, minister the Gospel. He tells them the attitude is one of humility, looking out for others, caring for them.

Thus, as the work is going forward there is the right attitude in the work, the right motives.

Remember that Paul told us how we should live out our faith in humility, looking out for others and then, if we are struggling with this, he gives to us the example of Christ and what He did.

Paul put it like this in Philippians 2:3-8, **“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”**

If Almighty God was willing to humble Himself and serve humanity, then, as His servants, we should do no less!

Now, as we move into Philippians chapter 3 this evening, Paul gives to us a warning of those who will come in and try to stop the work of God or to get it off course by their false doctrines.

It is like Paul’s letter to the Galatians, trying to finish the work of the Spirit by the flesh and that will never work. You can’t add works to grace and again, we see this warning to the Philippians to be on guard because there are those who will come in and try to deceive you.

You see, Paul wants them to be on the right course and not to be led astray and we will see that tonight.

This chapter can be broken down like this as Paul shows us the Christian life and refutes the Judaizers who were coming in and leading people astray.

First of all, he shows us the *Christian's past* in regard to *salvation* in Philippians 3:1-11.

Then he shows us the *Christian's present* in regard to *sanctification* in Philippians 3:12-16.

And finally, he concludes the chapter by looking at the *Christian's future* in regard to our *glorification* in Philippians 3:17-21.

Thus, the work that God has begun in us, that Paul spoke of in chapter 1, He will complete. That means from the very start, from salvation to the very end, glorification, He will lose none!

With that said, let's begin reading in Philippians chapter 3, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening.

PHILIPPIANS 3

VERSE 1

When some read this, it is kind of funny. In fact, you may even be thinking of me and when I say, "*As I begin to wrap things up*" you know there is still some 20 minutes to go or so.

But that is not what Paul is saying here when he says "**Finally.**"

What Paul is saying here, according to classical Greek, is basically, "And so, my brothers, rejoice."

We may think of it like this, "*whatever else comes your way in life whether good or bad - rejoice in the Lord!*"

Wuest puts it like this, “Paul’s ‘finally’ here is not the ‘finally’ of the present-day preacher. He has another ‘finally’ in 4:8. He does not mean by this that he is about to close the letter. The words translated by the word ‘finally’ are literally ‘as for the rest.’”

And what Paul wants from us, the command of Paul for us, and we need to be reminded of this often, is that we are to **REJOICE!**

Now we can think of all kinds of things to rejoice in, like; “Rejoice in the new car.” or “Rejoice in the promotion.”

But that is not what Paul said. He is very specific in this command. He told us that we are to **“Rejoice in the Lord.”**

Why is that so important?

Because He is the only constant in our life!

Jesus said in John 16:22, **“Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”**

In Nehemiah 8:10, as the people heard the Word of God and conviction came upon their lives and they began to weep over their sin, we are told, **“Then he said to them, ‘Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.’”**

The problem for many today is they have lost the joy because their joy is not based in the Lord, but things!

Jesus warned us in Luke 12:15, **“... ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’”**

And isn't that interesting because the world is telling us to go after possessions, have an abundance of things and if this truly would satisfy our lives, why do we keep going after more and more possessions? Jesus got it right, obviously!

But we as Christian's, we can lose all of our things but we can never lose the Lord, He is always there if we would only focus back on Him, because, as we do, our joy will be full, our strength will be secure, we will rejoice in Him!

Now, in saying that, let me also say this. There is no way you are going to be able to trust God unless you believe certain things about Him.

First of all, ***GOD IS SOVEREIGN!***

He is God and thus, what He says is right, He is in control.

This means that not only is God aware of everything that touches my life, He is in absolute control of everything that touches my life. That means nothing happens in my life except what God allows for His purposes.

I need to understand that if I am going to trust God and rejoice in the things that are happening in my life!

Another thing we have to understand about God is that ***GOD LOVES ME!***

How do I know that God loves me?

His love for me is displayed in many different ways but the greatest way that God displays His love for me is seen on Calvary and what He did for me.

Remember what Jesus said in John 3:16-17, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**"

I need to understand that if I am going to trust God and rejoice in the things that are happening in my life!

These are both important, that God is sovereign and that God loves me unconditionally but in just knowing these two things about God is not enough to comfort me when I am going through times of difficulty, affliction, adversity unless I understood and believed one more thing about God!

And that is ***GOD HAS INFINITE WISDOM!***

I look at things that happen in my life and I am very short-sighted. I can't know how they will turn out and thus, I respond according to the limited information I have.

But God knows all things, He has infinite wisdom and thus, when things get tough in my life, when things don't go well for me, I have to rest that God knows what is best for me.

I need to understand that if I am going to trust God and rejoice in the things that are happening in my life!

Thus, to have this heart that is filled with rejoicing in the Lord means I have to trust in the sovereignty, the love and the wisdom of God that are working together for good in my life. And make no mistake about it, they are!

And notice how Paul closes out this verse, “**. . . For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.**” Philippians 3:1.

The Greek word for “**safe**” literally means “not to trip, stumble, or be overthrown.”

As we read on, we will see the problem. You see, false teachers, proclaiming salvation through ritual, ceremony, and legalism, posed a serious threat to them.

And this was something that Paul had taught the Philippians before but didn't mind repeating it because it was what was going to be a “***safeguard***” for them.

Here is the problem many times and I will use the act of eating food as the example.

In our physical lives do we grow by eating candy, junk food, cake, and ice cream?

We may grow in terms of our girth, but it is not healthy for us.

We grow and are physically strong as we eat a well-balanced diet.

Make no mistake about it, the same is true for our spiritual lives. We must take in a well-balanced diet of the Word of God, prayer and even fellowship with our brothers and sisters in the Lord!

Thus, Paul has no problem reminding them of things, warning them of some of the dangers that are out there because he wants them to grow and be strong in the Lord.

Too often in the church today people want their ears tickled, they want to be entertained, they want new revelations instead of partaking of the solid meat of God's Word by which we will grow!

Sometimes pastor's and leaders don't want to warn their people of the dangers that are out there, but that is wrong. Paul had no problem doing it, and in the days we are living in, we should be doing it as well!

And as we will see, Paul does not pull any punches with these false teachers and their false doctrines, and neither should we!

VERSE 2

Remember what Paul wrote, “**. . . For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.**” Philippians 3:1. And we saw that this Greek Word for “**safe**” literally means “not to trip, stumble, or be overthrown.” He was speaking of the false teachers with their false doctrine that they tried to bring into the church.

And now, as we open up Philippians 3:2, Paul tells them “**beware**” or “look out for.”

It is the Greek word BLEPO, (blep’-o) and it is a serious warning that they should listen and heed what Paul is saying here.

And in this verse, he gives to us three warnings about the Judaizers who would come in after Paul taught a salvation by Grace through faith and they would tell the people that you must also add the Law through works, you must be circumcised to be saved!

Paul, again dealing with the Judaizers in Galatians tells us, “**knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.**” Galatians 2:16.

I think that is very clear and yet when these false teachers come around, they can be very convincing, and Paul wants to remind the Philippians that their salvation is not based upon works but upon the finished work of Jesus Christ!

Paul’s first warning to the Philippians is “**Beware of dogs.**”

To the Jew a dog was an unclean animal and it was something the Jews called Gentiles in a derogatory way.

In fact, an old rabbinic saying went like this, “The nations of the world are like dogs.”

And please understand these were not cute dogs but they were wild dogs, and they would roam the streets in packs even attacking and killing humans besides feeding on the garbage of the streets.

Thus, when Paul calls these Judaizers “**dogs**” it was to shock the believer to stay away from them because they were dangerous!

Paul's use of this word to describe false teachers as "**dogs**" is fitting because, like these dogs, false teachers are "*unclean and dangerous*" because they teach salvation by works and therefore should be avoided at all costs!

They also were told to "**beware of evil workers.**"

And again, Paul is speaking of the Judaizers who mixed Law and Grace together and instead of bringing people closer to God; they were pushing them away from God.

I am not saying these Judaizers were not sincere in what they believed, what they were doing, but sincerity doesn't save you and Paul says that their work is evil because it is not based upon the truth of God.

Paul put it like this, and it is very clear. He wrote in Ephesians 2:8-9, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**"

And the third warning is harsh. Paul hits these Judaizers hard and heavy here as he warns the Philippians to "**beware of the mutilation.**"

The Judaizers believed you must believe in Jesus, but you must also become a Jew, become circumcised before you can be saved, you had to keep the Law of Moses!

Paul uses the Greek word KATATOME, (kat-at-om-ay') for "**mutilation**" and it carries with it the idea of the pagan practices that God forbid back in Leviticus 21:5, "**They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.**"

Paul's point is that they were not circumcising their flesh, but they were mutilating it.

Remember what Paul said in Galatians 5:12, "**I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!**"

He is literally saying that these Judaizers should castrate themselves!

You see, God is interested in removing the hardness from your heart, cutting away the garbage.

In Galatians 6:15 Paul said, **“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”**

God wants to give you a new heart, not the mutilation of your flesh.

And think about it, is God interested in rituals or a relationship?

He wants a relationship of course.

Does God want us to celebrate communion?

Yes, He told us that we should but don't make the mistake that communion will save you. Communion is a celebration of what Christ has done and if He hasn't transformed your life, then communion is meaningless to you!

Paul put it this way in Galatians 2:20-21, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; 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 for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”**

As we read on, we will see Paul speak about His past or the Christian's past through Philippians 3:11.

VERSES 3-6

Here is the shocker for the Judaizers. They saw themselves as right with God as they were circumcised and keeping the Law and Paul is saying the opposite is true.

True circumcision is of the heart and the worship of God is in the Spirit, you must be saved! True worship is not fleshly and external, but it is internal and intimate, and that relationship can then overflow in outward actions. But outward actions don't change the heart!

These Judaizers also rejoiced in the keeping of the Law as the Pharisees did but it was empty.

We rejoice in Jesus and the finished work He has done.

The Judaizers had confidence in the flesh as they tried to keep the Law, which we have absolutely no confidence in, for the flesh can't save us, only Jesus saves.

In fact, for those that try to keep the Law, work their way into heaven by doing good things, James says it won't happen.

He tells us, "**For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.**" James 2:10.

In Jeremiah 9:23-24 we are told, "**Thus says the LORD: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the LORD.**"

You see, the message of Grace can save, the message of the flesh can't.

Calvin put it this way, "To place one's confidence, one's trust, in anything outside of Christ is to have confidence in the flesh; and this would subvert the Gospel and endanger the soul."

Paul reminded the Philippians of what they have in Christ and what they have outside of Christ and we too need to be reminded of that as people come in, biting at our heels trying to get us to listen to their false message of salvation by the Law through works and not by Grace through faith.

Now Paul, to prove his point is going to show us that he had more right than anyone else to be justified by keeping the Law but he also shows how worthless that really was in his life.

And let me say this. Paul at one time did have confidence in his flesh, the keeping of the Law until the Lord got a hold of his heart on the road to Damascus as he was going to persecute the Christians in Damascus. And Paul was saved by grace through faith. He no longer held onto a false system of faith!

But just in case anyone wants to challenge Paul on his qualifications in the flesh, like the Judaizers might, he tells them that he had more right than they did to put his confidence in the flesh and he lists 7 powerful reasons why, four things where his possession by birth and three were by his own personal choice and conviction.

First, he lists things that were related to his birth. They are:

A. HE WAS CIRCUMCISED THE EIGHTH DAY – Paul’s parents conformed to the letter of the Law as Leviticus 12:3 tells us, “**And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.**” He was not an Ishmaelite who was circumcised after the 13th year of his life (Genesis 17:25, Josephus, Antiq. 1. 12, 2).

B. HE WAS OF THE STOCK OF ISRAEL – He was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and thus heir to the covenant promises of God.

C. HE WAS OF THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN – The tribe of Benjamin gave to Israel their first King, Saul (I Samuel 9:1-2). Also, when the nation was divided, Benjamin was the only tribe to align itself with Judah in the Southern Kingdom (I Kings 12:21). And lastly, the tribe of Benjamin had Jerusalem, the city of God within its boundaries (Judges 1:21).

D. HE WAS A HEBREW OF HEBREWS – I believe Paul’s point here was that he was not like many of the Jews who also embraced the Greek culture, but he was a Hebrew, 100%. He knew the Hebrew language and customs, not like many of the Jews of his day.

Now Paul lists three more points, but these are related to his personal choice or conviction. They are:

A. CONCERNING THE LAW, HE WAS A PHARISEE – The Pharisee’s were noted for their devotion to the Law.

Regarding this sect, Barclay tells us, “There were not very many Pharisees, never more than six thousand, but they were the spiritual athletes of Judaism. Their very name means *The Separated Ones*. They had separated themselves off from all common life and from all common tasks in order to make it the one aim of their lives to keep every smallest detail of the Law.”

You see, they tried to keep the Law and in doing so they missed the weightier matters of justice, mercy and-so-on.

In fact, Jesus rebukes them for their hypocrisy in Matthew chapter 23. Not only did they try to keep the Law but also the oral law which was nothing more than a vast body of human traditions which have been handed down over the years. That was the life of Paul before he was saved!

B. HE PERSECUTED THE CHURCH IN HIS ZEAL FOR GOD – Paul loved the Lord; he was very sincere but that was meaningless because he was trying to approach God on a works relationship. Thus, as he saw Christians having an intimate relationship with God that was based upon Grace through faith in Jesus, Paul was outraged because he could never have that kind of relationship with God by works. He therefore persecuted Christians. In fact, as I have said, he was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians when God turned his life around.

It is as Paul said in Romans 10:2, “**For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.**” That was Paul before he was saved.

You see, zeal does not equal salvation when it is not based in the truth of God, and many today have a zeal for God but without knowledge as Paul once had!

C. HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE LAW WAS BLAMELESS – This was a standard that was set by man and not by God for in Isaiah 64:6 we are told, “**But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.**”

Notice it is not some, but all the good we think we are doing to get into heaven, is like filthy rags when compared to a holy and righteous God. We can't be saved by our righteousness!

Thus, as Paul says in II Corinthians 5:21, “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**” That is how we are saved!

Now, as you look at all that Paul had going for him, he was more qualified than all these Judaizers put together and yet, listen to what Paul has to say regarding these things.

VERSES 7-9

Here was the problem for Paul. Those things he was holding onto, the Law, were in the way of Paul having an intimate relationship with God.

Thus, he counted them as loss, as nothing, as garbage, as dung!

You see, it is all about Christ and what He has done, paid the penalty for what we have done – sinned! Thus, why are you holding onto dung?

I don't think we think of it that way, but Paul did.

And, not only did Paul count all his religious things as a loss but he counted all things a loss when compared to what we have in Christ.

Think about that for a minute, what things are getting in your way of an intimate relationship with Jesus, of growing in Him?

Paul said they were not just worthless, but they were offensive as dung!

It is as Jim Elliot said before he was martyred for his faith at a young age, "He is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

That was Paul, his past life; his past reputation was counted as loss because of all he now had in Christ!

And listen again to what Paul says here in Philippians 3:9, "**and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.**"

Here's the thing. All religions of the world have a works-based relationship with God except for Christianity where God steps in and reaches down and lifts man out of the mire of sin that he is in and makes him a new creation in Christ.

You see, the Law can't save you; it has no power to save. All the Law can do is show you that you are a sinner and as Paul tells us in Romans 3:23, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

Thus, Jesus comes and saves us by His finished work and it is no longer my righteousness, which is like filthy rags, but His righteousness that has been imputed into my life by faith in Jesus and now I can stand before God as my sins have been cast as far as the east is from the west, to be remembered no more! (II Corinthians 5:21, Psalm 103:12, Isaiah 43:25).

Listen to how Spurgeon summed this up for us. He wrote, “After twenty years or more of experience Paul had an opportunity of revising his balance-sheet, and looking again at his estimates, and seeing whether or not his counting was correct. What was the issue of his latest search? How do matters stand at his last stocktaking? He exclaims with very special emphasis, ‘Yea doubtless; and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.’”

And as we read on, listen to why Paul wanted to lay all this aside. He wrote . . .

VERSES 10-11

Paul wanted to know Jesus more and more because Jesus was that important to him.

Now, if you are trying to reach God by your own efforts, the Law then your focus is not going to be upon Jesus but upon yourself as you try to attain some kind of perfection or acceptance with God by your efforts, which will never happen.

Paul's been there, done that and found out that it is empty, it is a dead end and thus, he wants to know Christ more intimately and as he does, he also knows there will be suffering.

Paul put it this way in Romans 8:17, **“and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”**

And The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“And if we are [His] children, then we are [His] heirs also: heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ [sharing His inheritance with Him]; only we must share His suffering if we are to share His glory.”**

Why the suffering? Because this world is against God and it is hard for them to fight against God and thus, they fight against the people of God! And we are seeing this happening more and more as the time of the Lord’s return gets closer and closer!

Now, verse 11 seems a little strange. He said, **“If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”** What does he mean?

Now is Paul saying here in verse 11 that he hopes to make it into heaven?

Not at all because in Christ we have assurance of our salvation.

Paul is speaking of living the resurrection life now by the power of Christ working in Him.

Paul knew that he was going to suffer for his faith, and eventually he would die, and he also knew that he would be raised from the dead as the Lord was.

To know Him is to live as He lived is Paul’s point.

Think of it like this. Paul is saying, ***“I just want to live my life in such a way that I stand up for Jesus and live a new life that everyone can see. I want to stop living the dead life I lived prior to salvation (v.5-7) and now I want to live the resurrection life in the Spirit.”***

Also, in these first 11 verses Paul has shown to us the Christian’s past in regard to his salvation, that it is based in Grace through faith and not by the Law through works.

Now, in Philippians 3:12-16 Paul is going to show us the Christian's present life in regard to sanctification.

VERSES 12-16

These verses are a great encouragement to me for when I think of Paul the apostle, when I read about him, I see a great man of God who has conquered all these things and yet, Paul, in humility and honesty says he still has a long way to go!

And yet, even in all of his shortcomings, he still presses on, he does not give up – what an encouragement that is to me and hopefully to you!

God is still working in us and it began the moment we were saved, and it will continue on till we go to be with the Lord and that is called the sanctification process where God is molding and shaping our lives into His image!

Notice what Paul says in Philippians 3:13, “**but one thing I do.**” Now it is interesting because he lists three things not one. Why does he do that?

Because Paul felt that these three things need to work together. There is not one without the others. Look at what he is telling us.

First, he tells us that he is “**forgetting those things which are behind.**”

Paul is saying that he is forgetting those things that are in the past, there is nothing he can do now to change what was done. In fact, the Greek word for “**forgetting**” literally means, “to no longer care for or be influenced by.” And the idea here is that he was “constantly forgetting.”

How much of our time is spent dwelling on the past and it keeps us from moving forward! Yes, we can learn from the past and we should learn from the past, but we should not live in the past. Paul didn't and he is admonishing us not to as well.

Next, we see Paul tell us that he is **“reaching forward to those things which are ahead.”**

If you are living in the past you will never be looking for what God wants you to do.

Someone has defined old age as *“a point in life when a person ceases to look forward and only looks backwards.”*

And I don’t think that applies only to those who are elderly. We can live in the past and be stuck in the past and do nothing for the Lord!

Do you think that God is done with us because of our past?

If that were true none of us would do anything for the Lord. And it is interesting because the Devil loves to mess us up in this area.

Look at these two points and see how they flow together - **“forgetting those things which are behind. . . . reaching forward to those things which are ahead.”**

And there is one more. Paul’s third point is this. He tells us, **“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

Think of the goal as the finish line of a race and here it represents the finish of life’s race. We are not talking about salvation here but the rewards we earn for running our race well as we appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

And as you can see, they all fit together and that is why Paul said, **“but one thing I do”** and gives us three points. Look at this and I think it will make sense to you.

He said, **“forgetting those things which are behind. . . . reaching forward to those things which are ahead. . . . I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

Again, it is so important that we apply these things to our lives. But, the problem for some is they let their past get in the way of what God wants to do here and now, they just can't let it go.

Paul could have dwelt on the past, how he persecuted Christians, consented to their death, but what good would that do?

And I think that is the point, it doesn't do any good to dwell on the past, it is over, live for today!

In fact, if we do dwell on the past it will not help us, but it will hurt us.

Thus, Paul presses on for what Jesus has for his life. And Paul is calling for us to run the race well, be wise, do your best, don't give up or drop out and if you stumble, get back up and continue on!

Spurgeon gives us this perspective in regard to what God is doing in our lives. He wrote, "But while the work of Christ for us is perfect, and it were presumption to think of adding to it, the work of the Holy Spirit in us is not perfect, it is continually carried on from day to day, and will need to be continued throughout the whole of our lives."

May we be able to say as Paul said at the end of his life, "**For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.**" II Timothy 4:6-8.

Now, because of all that Paul has just said, listen again to what he goes on to say in Philippians 3:15-16, **“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.”**

I find it interesting how Paul speaks forth these words now. You see, Paul knows that those who are mature will understand this, what he is saying. And for the rest, he is confident that the Lord will show them these things by which they will grow.

And Paul is admonishing them not only to grow in the Lord but also, with the knowledge they already have, that they will apply it to their lives, they will walk in the things of the Lord having put on the mind of Christ.

And when Paul says, **“let us be of the same mind”** I believe that he is speaking of the mind of Christ.

We saw that in Philippians 2:5 where he wrote, **“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”**

In other words, put on the mind of Christ, live as He would live and then you will be walking according to the high calling by which you have been called!

No doubt the greatest need among God’s people is to live up to what they already have in Christ.

Most live far below their exalted position in Christ.

Paul’s plea to the Philippians was that they live up to what they had already attained, namely a righteous position in Christ, that they would put on the mind of Christ and live accordingly.

Now, as we move into Philippians 3:17-21 Paul speaks of the Christian's future in regard to our glorification.

VERSES 17-21

Role models, people to pattern our life after, are hard to find today. At least good ones. Any sports fan remembers when former NBA great Charles Barkley spoke so publicly about it. He said something to the tune of "I'm an athlete, not a role model. If your kids look up to me then you need to do something about that."

He was right. He was very outspoken during his career and you never knew what controversial statement would come out of his mouth next. However, on that fact he nailed it perfectly.

And make no mistake about it, someone is training up our kids, and we need to be careful who they are following.

And for us, the same is true. We pattern our lives after someone and for Paul, he admonishes the Philippians to follow his walk, the things he did. And please understand that he is not saying that he was perfect by any means. But he followed the Lord and thus, as you followed Paul, you were really following the Lord.

And for Paul, he wanted them to not only follow him, but also those that are walking in the Lord, look to them as examples to follow after, why?

Because you will learn and grow by their examples.

That truly is what Hebrews chapter 11 is all about, the examples of the men and women of faith that we need to learn from and pattern our lives after!

Then, after Paul speaks of who to pattern their life after, in Philippians 3:18-19, he speaks of those we are not to follow, don't pattern your life after them because they don't have the mind of Christ, their walk is not in the Lord.

Now Paul could be speaking of these legalists who tried to enter into a relationship with God by the Law, the Judaizers.

But, as you will see, they can also be the liberals who live to satisfy self and Paul says they are the enemies of the cross! And I guess the Judaizers would fit into this picture as well. They made everyone keep the Law or try to and they themselves were not even doing it.

And Paul was broken, weeping over those who were living this way, it broke his heart. And I can tell you that I feel the same way when I see people I know depart from the faith and follow false teachers with their false doctrine. It breaks my heart and they refuse to see clearly what the Scriptures have to say!

Look at how Paul sees their behavior.

First, they are "**enemies of the cross of Christ.**"

Now that sounds harsh and I guess it is, but if you bring another Gospel into the picture, you are an enemy of the cross of Christ! It is that simple.

Then Paul says that their "**end is destruction.**"

Here's the thing. They may live like there is no tomorrow but, in the end, a lifestyle apart from Christ will end in destruction.

Paul, in II Thessalonians 1:7-9 put it this way, **“and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”**

They have cut themselves off from their only hope of salvation, Jesus Christ! Thus, their destruction is certain unless they turn to Jesus Christ!

And look at what fills their life. Paul says that they are those **“whose god is their belly.”** What does he mean by that?

For the legalist, their obedience to the Old Testament dietary laws made a ***“god”*** out of the belly.

And for the liberal, the idea here is that they live for pleasure, self-satisfaction at any cost. It is a life filled with self-gratification and it is in opposition to God.

And look at the health, wealth and prosperity teachers of today who have these mansions, these jets, all this wealth and I guess it is true, their god is the things of this earth! And it is not only the health, wealth and prosperity teachers, many others go down this same dangerous path.

Jesus put it this way in Matthew 16:24-26, **“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’”**

They were not denying self but indulging self – an eat drink and be merry mentality!

From there Paul speaks of them believing that their **“glory is in their shame.”**

This is probably a reference to how these Judaizers gloried in circumcision for salvation, but any emphasis on outward rituals to get a person into heaven takes away from the completed work of Christ and instead of being something to glory in and be proud of it is the ultimate **“shame.”**

And lastly, Paul says that they **“set their mind on earthly things.”**

Instead of living to please God, what we were created for, they are living to please this world, to get along with everyone, not to rock the boat you might say.

But as you do that you are nothing more than a dead fish floating down stream, being carried away by the currents of this world!

Make no mistake about it, this is the main characteristic of all false teachers, false Christians and even carnal Christians. They are consumed and preoccupied with earthly things and not heavenly things.

William MacDonald put it like this, “They were occupied with earthly things. For them, the important things in life were food, clothing, honor, comfort, and pleasure. Eternal issues and heavenly things did not disturb their groveling in the muck of this world. They carried on as if they were going to live on earth forever.”

So who are you following? And I guess the way to find out is what is your life focused upon?

Today we see so many Christians focused on the things of this world as they are being conformed to the world’s standards. But Paul says that this is not our home.

Listen again to what he says in Philippians 3:20-21, **“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”**

What a difference this is from being conformed to the world versus being transformed by the Lord as we are in His Word and allow the Spirit of God to transform our lives!

And I love this. Our glorification is not *“maybe”* or *“might be”* or *“I think so”* but it is a done deal for we are citizens of heaven because we have been adopted into the family of God through Christ!

One paraphrase puts this verse like this, **“We have our home in heaven, and here on earth we are a colony of heaven’s citizens.”**

May we never forget that fact, that this is not our home, we are aliens and strangers in this land, we are just passing through and one day we will be home with our Lord!

William Barclay put it like this, “Just as the Roman colonists never forgot that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship.” Absolutely!

And notice that we are eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus. At least we should be!

Tragically many churches don’t deal with the return of the Lord, the Rapture of the church, end times teaching because it is too controversial and yet, the Scriptures clearly teach that the Lord is coming back for His bride, the Church and we will be caught up to meet Him in the air prior to the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period. (I Corinthians 15:51-57, II Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Why is there so much sin in the church today?

Maybe it is because we are not looking for His return, as John tells us, **“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”** I John 3:2-3.

We have taken that hope away and we live for the things of this world instead of for the Lord as we look for His return!

Now, when the Lord returns for His Bride, the Church, what is He going to do?

Paul tells us, **“who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”** Philippians 3:21.

He is going to **“transform”** METASCHEMATIZO, (met-askh-ay-mat-id'-zo) in the Greek, and it speaks of, to “change the outward form of” our bodies and they will be like His glorified body or “identical in essential character.”

He is speaking of our glorified body we will receive!

Our *SALVATION*, *SANCTIFICATION*, and *GLORIFICATION* are seen in the working of Christ in our lives!

Let me leave you with these verses from The Living Bible, **“But our homeland is in heaven, where our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is; and we are looking forward to his return from there. When he comes back, he will take these dying bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same mighty power that he will use to conquer all else everywhere.”** Philippians 3:20-21.

Praise the Lord for the work He not only has begun in us but that He will also complete!