

**PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21**  
**JOY WALKING WITH JESUS!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Philippians chapter 3 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi.

As you have seen in our studies, our focus is – ***JOY!***

Many years ago, the thought was that if you were a spiritual person, you would have a solemn or somber face, wear dark clothes and to me, it looked like they were going to a funeral!

No smiles, no joy, just that look of death upon their faces.

I don't know about you, but when I come to church, when I am out in the streets, I don't want to have my face appear that I am going to a funeral, but a wedding!

What do I mean by that?

I mean that the Lord is coming back for His Bride, the Church, you and me! Thus, we should have such joy in our lives, and that joy should be like going to a wedding because the wedding day is getting closer!

Not only that, but, as the title of our study is, there should be such – ***JOY WALKING WITH JESUS!***

We have fellowship with God and that should be seen in our lives.

I think the problem for many is that they really don't know what is going on. They are confused by things and thus, their behavior, their actions, their countenance is reflected in their confusion!

Let me give you this example and you will see what I mean by confusion.

Several weeks ago, Julie and I traveled to Kaukauna for a running race. It was the 4<sup>th</sup> of July so there were a lot of runners there. In fact, there were about 1,000 runners that day!

As usual, Julie gets a great spot to set up and not only watches the start of the race but also the finish.

As she was sitting there waiting for the race to begin, we had a lot of time yet, one of the organizers came by and said that she needed to be careful because, with all those runners and it was a tight shoot coming out of the starting line, many of the runners will go outside the cones and she could be trampled!

So Julie was prepared, especially with 1,000 runners coming towards her, even though she was on the side, outside the race course.

I went to the starting line to get in a good position and the man who warned Julie about the potential problem came by Julie and stood by her.

The gun went off and 1,000 runners took off as well. Now, as the runners were coming by Julie, here was this man waving his arms warning them to stay away, not go past him!

Do you know what happened?

The runners had no idea what he was doing and as he waved his arms the runners came towards him, and they were high fiving him!

I guess they were confused in what he was trying to do and in fact, more runners were running towards him than they would have if he wasn't there!

As funny as that was, we are going to see a warning that Paul makes, and it is not confusing, it is on point, and it is important for us to understand if we want to walk according to the high calling by which we have been called.

I have broken down these verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

***FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE – PHILIPPIANS 3:17***

***THE FLESH ROBS YOU OF JOY – PHILIPPIANS 3:18-19***

***JOY IN THE FINISHED WORK – PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21***

Now, remember what Paul was just speaking about in this chapter. That he understood that he had not reached the goal, he made mistakes, but he was not going to dwell on those things, but he was going to press on, keep his eyes upon Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith!

We concluded our study last week with Paul saying this 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.”**

In other words, we need to put on the mind of Christ and then walk accordingly! And that truly is what our study is all about this morning – ***JOY WALKING WITH JESUS!***

With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Philippians chapter 3, beginning in verse 17 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word this morning.

**PHILIPPIANS 3****VERSE 17**

Remember our focus for this verse – ***FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE!***

Here is the problem. 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 – ***HE WAS NOT A ROLE MODEL!***

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

A prime example of what training kids the wrong way is seen in our school system. We are not interested in teaching our kids about reading, writing, arithmetic, science, true history and the like.

Now it is things like Critical Race Theory and Critical Social Justice! We are teaching children that they can decide what gender they are. Immorality is the focus and look at what has happened with the education of our children!

Our children need role models to follow so that they can grow and mature in life. That is why the Bible tells us to train up our children!

And if you think about it, we all need role models that we pattern our lives after!

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. We read that in Philippians 3:12-14. But he followed the Lord and thus, as you followed Paul, you were really following the Lord.

Now some may feel that Paul was being egotistical here. That he thought a little too highly of himself!

Absolutely not. Paul knew that he was not perfect. He even called himself the “**chief of sinners!**” (I Timothy 1:15)

The point Paul was making was that he followed or patterned his life after Jesus and thus, as long as he walked that way, people would be safe to follow him!

In fact, that is exactly what Paul said in I Corinthians 11:1, “**Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.**”

And Paul wanted them to understand that they were not just to follow him, but to pattern their lives after others who are walking with the Lord.

Why was Paul encouraging them to do this?

Because as they did, they would learn and grow by their examples!

I remember when I first came to know the Lord, came to saving faith. Julie found a Calvary Chapel close to our home, amazing because that was some 40 plus years ago.

And the pastor at Calvary Chapel Elk Grove was Phil Ballmaier. I never heard the Bible taught before and when Phil taught, I was like a kid taking it all in.

And it was not just the Bible studies, I saw my pastor as one who walked with God, not perfect because none of us are, but I patterned my walk with the Lord as Phil walked with the Lord! He truly was and is a servant leader!

His example helped me to become the man of God I am today!

And please understand that it was not just Pastor Phil, although he played a big role in my growth as a Christian. It was the biographies of Christian men that I was reading that also helped me grow in the Lord. Their examples were so important in my life!

Is there someone in your life that you can say helped you grow, mature in the Lord as you watched them live out their faith? There should be.

My prayer is that I would be an encouragement to you as you walk with the Lord and grow in His grace and knowledge!

I pray that you read the stories of the men and women that God has used in powerful ways to help you to grow.

I will give you one example.

I am sure most of you have heard of Corrie Ten Boom. She grew up in the Netherlands and she was a strong believer.

Then, in 1940, when the Nazis arrived, this family hid many Jews, as they were part of the Dutch resistance.

The Germans found out what they were doing, they arrested them and sent them to a concentration camp.

There, at the concentration camp, Corrie's father and sister died!

She did survive this horrific experience and became a powerful evangelist!

What is my point?

My point is that even in the darkest of times, where evil is so disgusting and devastating, there is hope and strength that can be found in Jesus Christ. It does not matter what challenges may come our way, the injustices that we face, the wrongs that are brought upon us, God is with us, and He will see us through these times!

Thus, walk accordingly! Learn the lesson of faith that Corrie Ten Boom gave to us as she walked with Jesus. And there obviously is much more to all she went through and the witness she brought forth during this time and you can read about it in her book – *The Hiding Place!*

And at one time or another in our lives, people will be watching how we walk as Christians. In a sense, we are leaders just because of who we are!

John Quincy Adams said, said, *“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.”*

God wants you to use your influence to impact the people around you. The way you live out your faith should cause others to have what you have, and I am not speaking of a great personality, or charisma – whatever that is, money, job positions, or whatever. I am speaking about the relationship you have with Jesus, and you are spurring them on to go further in their walk with the Lord!

And if you think about it, 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!

Make no mistake about it, the Church needs role models and mentors that others, especially the younger believers, can pattern themselves after, as long as they themselves are imitating Jesus.

One writer put it like this and within this, on how we are to walk, is the warning of where people are walking today. He wrote,

People who make an impact in the world invariably have a single-minded commitment to reaching their goals. Whether those goals are to conquer the world, succeed in business, or win a championship, they are willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to achieve them. On the other hand, those who are consumed with their own needs and comfort rarely accomplish much.

The same is true in the Christian life. There are no hidden secrets, gimmicks, or shortcuts to a life that makes an impact on the world for the truth of Jesus Christ. Such lives are the direct result of a maximum effort to reach the spiritual goals of Christlikeness in life and ministry.

Many noble servants of God have suffered much to reach those goals. Many even paid with their lives. All had one thing in common - their own comfort was less important to them than being like the Lord Jesus Christ in this world. They left their mark on the church through their undying devotion to Him and their untiring efforts for His gospel.

Unfortunately, few in the church today have that level of commitment to the cause of Christ. There are many reasons for that, not the least of which is the devastating impact humanistic psychology has made on the church.

One of the basic assumptions of modern psychology is that people exist for their own satisfaction. The primary goal of life, then, is for people to have all of their perceived needs and desires met. Only then will they be happy, content, and fulfilled. . . .

The narcissism that pervades contemporary Christianity has also corrupted the doctrine of sanctification. Jesus taught, ***“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me”*** (Luke 9:23).



In stark contrast, the emphasis today is on meeting people's needs and fulfilling their desires. Only then, it is argued, can they be effective Christians. That is the focus of much preaching, teaching, and writing.

Commenting on this new paradigm for the Christian life, Tony Walter writes,

*It is fashionable to follow the view of some psychologists that the self is a bundle of needs and that personal growth is the business of progressively meeting these needs.*

*Many Christians go along with such beliefs. . . .*

*One mark of the almost total success of this new morality is that the Christian Church, traditionally keen on mortifying the desires of the flesh, on crucifying needs of the self in pursuit of [Christlikeness], has eagerly adopted the language of needs for itself. . . .*

*We now hear that "Jesus will meet your every need," as though He were some kind of divine psychiatrist or divine detergent, as though God were there simply to service us.*

Need: The New Religion [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1985], Preface, 5

The church's adoption of the need mentality of humanistic psychology leads to a man-centered theology, a man-centered quasi-salvation, and a man-centered substitute for sanctification.

For many, the goal of Christian living is getting their needs met, being fulfilled, being happy, having a good self-image, and eliminating all of life's problems. The focus is on people, not Christ.

But the sub-Christian "need theology" is diametrically opposed to what the Bible teaches. The satisfaction of human need is not the goal of either salvation or sanctification.

The goal of salvation is for believers to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom 8:29).

Hence, Christian sanctification looks outward to Christ, not inward to believers' felt needs. The goal of Christian living is not believers' satisfaction, but God's. In fact, believers flourish when they are overwhelmed with weakness (2 Cor 12:9-10).

That Christians are to be like Jesus Christ is the simple truth that tends to be obscured by the plethora of theologies, seminars, books, formulas, and tapes that purport to unlock the secret of spiritual growth.

Some of those offerings may be helpful, but only to the degree that they equip believers to become more like Jesus Christ.

- John MacArthur, Philippians 3:17

How true that is. The sanctification process is to make us more like Jesus, not more like the world. In fact, becoming like the world is in opposition to becoming like Christ.

We are to crucify the flesh. We are to die to self. And, like John the Baptist said in John 3:30, "**He must increase, but I must decrease.**"

That is what God desires in our life, to be conformed into the image of Christ, to have His nature flow from our lives and not the works of the flesh!

And I like what Paul says, "**... as you have us for a pattern.**"

In other words, as the world is trying to conform us into its image, the Lord wants to transform us into the image of Christ, to put His stamp on us so when people see us, they see the love of God flowing from our lives!

Thus, Paul wants us to – ***FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE!***

But we have to remember that there are those who are trying to get us to walk contrary to Christ and Paul will deal with that next as – ***THE FLESH ROBS YOU OF JOY!***

### VERSES 18-19

In the verses we just looked at we saw Paul speaking of patterning their lives after Paul who was following the Lord!

Now, in these verses we see Paul speaking of not patterning our lives after those who are not following the Lord, those who do not have the mind of Christ!

And as Paul speaks of these people who are not walking with the Lord he does so with great sadness.

In fact, he calls them **“enemies of the cross of Christ.”**

Who is Paul speaking of here?

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

The Judaizers were those who said you needed Jesus but then you had to be circumcised and you had to keep the Law of Moses to be saved.

In other words, it was not a salvation by grace, but a salvation by grace and works, which nullifies grace, and it ends up being a salvation by good works! Which is not Scriptural!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Aka . . . the Judaizers. By adding to faith in Christ requirements for salvation, they’ve cheapened His work on the cross. If I could do anything to make myself right with God, Jesus would’ve never had to die in my place. The cross would have been in vain.

Even today, there are still enemies of the cross. People and preachers who try to dilute its importance.

There are folks embarrassed by the cross, and view it as an insult to modern sensibilities – *the bloody, gory cross.*

But apart from it there is no remission of sins. If not for the cross, we'd all go to hell.

***“What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!”***

It reminds me of a poem, “You're just out of date,” said young Pastor Bates, to one of our faithful old preachers who'd carried for years, in travail and tears, the Gospel to poor sinful creatures. “You still preach on Hades, and shock cultured old ladies with your barbarous doctrine of blood! You're so far behind you'll never catch up – you're a flat tire stuck in the mud!”

For some little while, a bit of a smile, enlightened the old preacher's face. Being made the butt of ridicule's cut did not ruffle his sweetness and grace. He turned to young Bates, so suave and sedate,

***“Catch up, did my ears hear you say? Why, I couldn't succeed if I doubled my speed. My friend, I'm not going your way!”***

Paul and the Judaizers were also headed in different directions. Paul loved the cross. The Jews despised it.

- Sandy Adams, Philippians 3:18-19

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!

When you see what is going on with leaders in churches today, it is very sad. Many are denying that Jesus is God, that He is the only way to the Father, that there is no blood atonement for our sins, that He did not rise from the grave, and the list goes on regarding the false teaching with these false teachers!

And let me say this. Please understand that if you deny the deity of Jesus, if you reject the blood atonement, if you say that there are many ways to get to the Father, you are not saved! And some of these teachers, even though they speak of Jesus, it is a different Jesus from the Bible, they are not saved!

That is not my opinion or what I feel, that is what the Bible clearly teaches.

The next point that Paul makes is a shocker or should be a shocker to many of these teachers!

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.”***

Paul makes that point about Law and Grace in Galatians 2:20-21, where he wrote, **“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.”**

Grace is a free gift and works earns me a place in heaven. You can't mix the two. We either enter in by grace or by works and not a combination of both! And if it is by good works, how much?

That is an important question and there is no answer to that question. You see, there are no good works that could take away your sins that you have already committed and will commit!

Well, that is not exactly true. The good work that Jesus has done for us, dying for our sins is what we need, it takes away ***ALL*** of our sin! And it is a free gift given to us and we receive it by faith!

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.

We need to get back to our first love, Jesus Christ and serve Him, be conformed to His image and not the image of this world!

And think about this for a minute. Look at all that American’s have today, even Christians who are focused on this world trying to be happy, and in the end – ***THE FLESH ROBS YOU OF JOY!***

You see, things, objects, are not going to satisfy the hunger of the flesh because the flesh is never satisfied!

Think about it. You wait and wait for that new phone, and you finally get it! Such happiness your life is filled with until you see the commercial a few months down the road that has a new and improved phone!



Now you want that one!

Why is that?

Like I have said, because the flesh is never satisfied and as we try to satisfy the flesh, we lose that joy!

If you are in that way of life, then you need to get refocused back on the Lord. In fact, Paul says that this is not our home! How important that is for us to understand.

Which brings us to our last point – ***JOY IN THE FINISHED WORK!***

### VERSES 20-21

Keep in mind that Paul is writing to the church in Philippi and thus, we need to understand what a statement like this, “**For our citizenship is in heaven**” would have meant to the Philippians!

They were a Roman colony and thus they enjoyed all the benefits that those living in Rome would have. What I mean by that is that they truly valued their Roman citizenship!

So, as Roman citizens they were under Roman laws and customs.

Now you may be thinking, “***How can that be? They were some 800 miles from Rome!***”

Again, it is as simple as them being Roman citizens and thus, it did not matter where they were at, they were citizens of Rome!

What is my point?

My point is this!

Paul tells us that we are citizens of heaven and yet, we are far away from heaven. Well, I guess I am getting closer as I am getting older, but you know what I mean.

Even though heaven is far from us, being citizens of heaven means we enjoy the benefits that God has for us, the blessings that He has for us.

Not only that but we follow the Laws, you might say, of God. We are representing Him down here and for some, we are the only representation of God that they may see and thus, may they see Jesus in us, may our life reflect His nature!

Barclay gives us this paraphrase regarding “**our citizenship is in heaven.**”

He wrote, “*We have our home in heaven, and here on earth we are a colony of heaven’s citizens.*” Paul is saying: “*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.*”

Exactly. And 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!

Peter makes that point in I Peter 2:9-12, **“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”**

In other words, with all these privileges that God has given to us, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, having obtained the mercy of God, we are now to go out and proclaim what God has done in our lives, praise Him and let others see what God has done in us and through us so others may enter in!

I like the way Warren Wiersbe summed this up for us. He wrote,

All of these privileges carry with them one big responsibility revealing the praises of God to a lost world. The verb translated ***“show forth”*** means ***“to tell out to advertise.”***

Because the world is “in the dark,” people do not know the “excellencies” of God; but they should see them in our lives. Each citizen of heaven is a living “advertisement” for the virtues of God and the blessings of the Christian life. Our lives should radiate the “marvelous light” into which God has graciously called us.

After all, we have obtained mercy from God! Were it not for His mercy, we would be lost and on the way to eternal judgment!

God reminded Israel many times that He had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt that they might glorify and serve Him, but the nation soon forgot, and the people drifted back into their sinful ways.

We are God's chosen people only because of His mercy, and it behooves us to be faithful to Him.

We are living in enemy territory, and the enemy is constantly watching us, looking for opportunities to move in and take over.

As citizens of heaven, we must be united. We must present to the world a united demonstration of what the grace and mercy of God can do.

As I write these words, the newspapers are reporting "dissensions" among the men who serve with the President of the United States.

These men are not presenting a united front, and the nation is a bit uneasy.

I wonder what the unsaved people think when they see the citizens of heaven and servants of God fighting among themselves.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 903

And then Peter says that we are not of this world, and he uses two Greek words for "**sojourner**" and "**pilgrim**."

First of all, the Greek word for sojourner is (*paroikous*) and it literally means "***alongside the house.***"

One writer put it like this regarding this word. "***The word came to denote any person who lives in a country not his own and is therefore a foreigner. The term fits Christians who do not belong to this world's system but live alongside those who do.***"

That should fit us perfectly, and yet, so many Christians are trying to make this world their home and it is not working for them because this is not their home.

And the only way to make it their home is to compromise their faith and that is what some have done!

Also, the word “**pilgrim**” translates a Greek word that applies to a person who is traveling through a country but who has settled down briefly to live among the native population.

Again, we live in this world, but this world should not live in us.

Keep in mind that these two words are not two different truths, but Peter uses both of them to emphasize this single point, this is not our home!

And as you read through this, I think you can see the heart of Peter as he pleads with them to abstain from fleshly lusts, the things the world uses to lure you away from God.

You see, those things should not have a hold on us because we are not of this world, we are just passing through on our way home because our citizenship is in heaven.

Just because the people of this world are promoting sin, we should not be because this is not our home and thus, we follow the Laws of God and not the sin of this world!

But there is a battle and the word “**abstain**” is literally saying we are to “*hold oneself constantly back from*” these things that are going to bring us down.

Yes, there is a tug to pull us back into the world and that will happen if we take our eyes off of Jesus and let the lusts of the flesh tempt us!

Don't put yourself in a situation where you will be tempted because the battle is on, and you need to be wise!

And what are we eagerly waiting for?

We should be eagerly waiting for the return of Jesus Christ! At least we should be!

In fact, this phrase, “**eagerly wait for**” is a very strong expression that speaks of  
*“earnest expectation of something believed to be imminent.”*

What that means is that the Lord can return at any time!

Another way to look at it is to literally thrust forward the head and neck as in anxious expectation of hearing or seeing something – ***THE LORD’S RETURN!***

You are watching, you are waiting for Him to come!

But more and more Christians don’t seem to care or don’t even believe that Jesus is coming for His Bride, the Church.

Listen to this article from 2020, just a few years ago, and things are not much better. We are told,

The doctrine of Jesus’ Second Coming has traditionally been a major focus of Christian theology: it has been a driving force for missions, it was a source of hope for suffering Christians, it helped to frame Christian worship.

American evangelicals in particular have been shaped by discussion of Jesus’ return - apocalyptic expectation helped to shape the early fundamentalist movement more than 100 years ago. Baby Boomer evangelicalism has been especially focused on the End Times, from Hal Lindsey’s ***Late Great Planet Earth*** of the 70’s to the Left Behind novels of the 90’s.

But it seems increasingly rare to us to hear about the Second Coming these days. . . .

Probably one of the biggest reasons that can be associated with why we had all the emerging church movement, is that millennials and Gen X wanted to have a faith that was not just looking for Jesus to come back and then having a dissonant [harsh] relationship with caring about life in the present. . . .

Well, I think part of it is the ways of talking about judgment. It's not a very popular thing to talk about - unless, of course, you want to virtue signal and condemn the people that disagree with you, in which case it's very popular to talk about - but aside from that, I think no one wants to be put in the place of being the judgmental person.

Among millennials and Gen Z, I think that is a popular disposition. People kind of have an allergy to that. I don't want to be the person that's a hater. I don't want to be the person that people always think if you're talking about Christianity, you're talking about hellfire and brimstone. I want to talk about the love of God. I want people to know that Christians care about them rather than Christians saying, "***I'm right, you're wrong,***" or "***You're wrong. Enjoy burning while I enjoy being here with Jesus.***" They don't want to do that.

- <https://bit.ly/4eZFA4Q>

As many read an article like that, from ***Christianity Today***, they are being directed towards agreeing with what they are saying, even though it is wrong.

Let's face it, no one wants to be a hater, right!

But this is a straw argument, and it moves Christians into accepting sin, so they are not hateful, and they miss the hope of the Lord's return!

Just because you are against something doesn't mean you hate a person. And just because you are looking for the Lord to return doesn't mean you don't care for people!

Paul spoke about the Lord's return in many places and listen to what he had to say instead of these words from men.

Paul tells us in Titus 2:11-15, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.”**

In other words, living like this will radically change your attitude and the way you live on this earth.

Are you living with anticipation of His coming?

Are you standing on your **“tip toes”** you might say, looking diligently for His coming so as not to be caught off guard?

If you’re heavenly minded, you are!

If you’re earthly minded you’re not!

Again, 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 that it is He “**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! Not that we become gods! Not at all!

You see, these physical carbon-based bodies are not fit for heaven. They are suited for life here on the earth with its atmospheric conditions but not for heaven.

In fact, that’s what the resurrection of the believer is all about. It’s when God brings the body up from the grave transforming it into a glorified body that is fit for heaven and made for eternity.

Paul speaks of this in I Corinthians 15:50-53 as he wrote, **“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”**

This work that God has begun in us, our *SALVATION* which goes into our *SANCTIFICATION* where God is making us into His image, ends with *GLORIFICATION!*

In other words, the work that God has begun in us, He will finish and thus, may we be looking for His return with joy in our hearts. May we walk with Jesus each and every day!

As Paul said – ***FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE!***

May we follow those who are following Jesus, learn from them as we grow in the Lord!

And then Paul gave a warning – ***THE FLESH ROBS YOU OF JOY!***

The reason for that is because the flesh is never satisfied and there are many out there who are waving you in their direction to feed the flesh!

It is like the man at the race who was waving his hands to protect Julie from the onslaught of runners, and they did not know what he was doing! They thought he wanted a high-five and so they all started running towards him and giving him high-fives!

The message of the false teachers with their false doctrine is so confusing you don't know where to go and yet, the flesh loves it. Be warned!

And lastly, Paul tells us that there is – ***JOY IN THE FINISHED WORK!***

I am so thankful that God does not give up on me and I think you feel the same way, that God does not give up on you!

The work He began in us, he will finish!

Thus – *JOY WALKING WITH JESUS!*

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!

*THE JOY OF WALKING WITH JESUS!*