

Contagious Joy

Part 15 – Heaven in the Real World

Philippians 3:17-4:1

July 26, 2009

You've heard the quip: "He is so heavenly-minded, he is no earthly good!" In our passage this morning Paul challenges this "conventional wisdom". An eternal focus has a way of defining your life! It changes the way you think, act, and respond. We know very little about heaven, but I once heard a theologian describe it as "an unknown region with a well-known inhabitant."

Proposition: How do we live with an eternal focus in an earthly world?

I. Respect Godly mentors...learn from their example (v. 17)

¹⁷*Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.*

A. Background... outline of chapter 3...

- The Christian's Past: Salvation (v. 3-11)
- The Christian's Present: Sanctification (v. 12-16)
- The Christian's Future: Glorification (v. 17-21)

B. We need multiple examples to follow...plural. Don't let one person disappoint you...no matter how godly or gifted.

C. *I Cor 11:1 Follow me as I follow Christ.* This doesn't mean he was perfect as we discussed last week. In fact it is his failures that encourage us as we follow Christ. 30 years as a believer he describes himself as "*chief of the sinners*" (I Tim. 1:15)

D. Pattern: tupos: the brand or marking. What is the pattern of your life? Who is imitating you? Is your desire to be an

authentic Christ-follower? Inconsistency produces confusion. Illustration: You jerk

- E. Paul calls attention to the life he requires by contrasting it with the one he rejects. We can see what to follow, if we know what to avoid!

II. Reject false teaching and self indulgent thinking...set your sights higher! (v. 18-19)

¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,

A. Who are the enemies of the cross?

1. They were very deceptive disguising themselves as messengers of Christ (II Cor.11:13-15).

¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

2. We are constantly warned about false teachers. They are characterized as: wolves clothed in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). Timothy (1:4), Titus (3:9) and John (I John 4:1-3; II John 2:7) all warned about them as well.
3. **Judaizers:** Believed the cross was not sufficient. It was the gospel plus circumcision and the law. They may be the same dogs referred to in 3:2-3 who caused much grief for Paul. Most likely they are false teachers that Paul warns the Ephesian elders about, too. (Acts 20:28-31)
4. **Gentile heretics:** Some Gentile false teachers held to a dualistic philosophy that was prevalent in contemporary Greek thought. Those heretics, forerunners of the second-century heresy known as Gnosticism, taught that spirit was good and matter was evil. Since the body is made of matter, it is intrinsically evil. Salvation ultimately involves not the redemption of the body, but deliverance from it. Thus, since the body is incurably

evil, it does not matter what one does with it. The heretics taught that these activities were inconsequential, since they affected only the body, not the spirit. (MacArthur)

5. Antinomianism was common in Paul's day, as it is today. We have people in churches today that believe that saving faith doesn't have to have an accompanying lifestyle of holiness. They argue that since Jesus died for my sins, I can live however I want...it is forgiven! Some liberal scholars have tried to twist Paul's words to suggest that he believed this as well.
6. Summary: The Judaizers added to the gospel; the Gentile false teachers subtracted from it. Either way, they are enemies of the cross.
7. "*destruction*": The same Greek word (*apoleia*) occurs in 1:28 where it probably refers to unbelievers and eternal destruction. Nevertheless believers can experience premature death as discipline if they continue to resist the will of God. (Constable)
 - Acts 5:1-11... The deceit of Ananias and Sapphira got them killed!
 - 1 Cor. 11:30... *For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.*
 - 1 John 5:16... *There is a sin leading to death;*

B. Their Characteristics

1. **Their Destiny:** *Whose end is destruction:*
 - Key: They are destined for eternal hopelessness and ultimately separation from God. They will perish.
 - *End:* *teleos* refers to their ultimate destiny in hell apart from God.
2. **Their God:** *Whose god is their appetite:*

- Key: **Self Indulgence**. They are driven by sensual appetites. Pleasure is their god. Eat, be merry (Epicureans)
 - It can refer to the Judaizers attention to dietary laws or Gentiles pursuit of sensual pleasures. (Jude 4)
 - Their god is sensuality.
 - *For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.* Rom. 16:18
 - Examples: Narcissism: meet my needs. Our goal in life is not getting our needs met.
 - God is more concerned about your holiness than your happiness.
3. **Their Glory:** *And whose glory is in their shame*
- **Key:** They think right is wrong and wrong is right! They find satisfaction and take pride in things that they do that should cause them shame (cf. Eph. 5:12 ¹²*for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret*). They twist and pervert moral values and standards. They essentially justify their behavior.
 - Example today: Homosexuality. It is when the sinners' most wretched conduct before God is his highest point of self-exaltation.
 - Judaizers boast in their piety and the Gentiles boasted in their freedom to pursue perversion.
4. **Their World view:** *Who set their minds on earthly things:*
- Key: Earthly and temporal; Dedicated to material things and possessions.
 - Judaizers focused on **performance** and the Gentiles focused **pleasure**.

- They involve themselves almost totally in physical and material things, things pertaining to the present enjoyment of life, to the exclusion of spiritual matters.

5. App.: What do you set your mind to? ...Set your minds on things above.

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Col. 3:1-3

C. Why is the cross so important?

1. It determines our **future**. Central to his teaching. Our eternal life comes through His death.
2. It defines our **focus**. The cross is about denial (Luke 9:23); his counterparts were about indulgence.

D. **Conclusion: Remember the cross...our life is not our own!**

III. Remember Your Citizenship...This world is not our home!

(v. 20-21)

²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

A. Our true citizenship

He now looks to our future, not our past. The prospect of our Lord's return should motivate us to live as citizens of heaven even while we are still living on earth. We belong to those bound for heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven but our involvements are on earth!

1. The Roman citizenship the Philippians enjoyed meant a great deal to them (Acts 16:12, 21) since they lived outside of Rome in Macedonia.

2. Our heavenly citizenship and destiny are far more important than our brief earthly sojourn. We are citizens of heaven living on earth! All believers need to learn to live as foreigners and pilgrims on this earth.

Heb. 11:13 *having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth*

1 Pet. 2:11 *Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers.*

3. When you visit a foreign country, you know this isn't your home. You anticipate coming home. Example: Missions travel. Show passport

B. What are you looking for?

1. *Looking for...*Eagerly wait: (*apekdechomai*) watchers of the return. Not passive resignation or bored disinterest. We await a person not just an event!
2. A proper view of cross ultimately leads us to anticipate his return for his bride (us) the church some day. Randy Alcorn's book on heaven.

C. The Rapture

1. When believers die before Christ's return, we have a temporary separation of the spirit from the physical body. The body goes to the grave and the spirit immediately goes to be in the presence of God (Phil. 1:21, 23; I Cor. 5:6, 8). They get their new bodies at the Rapture (I Thes. 4:15-17). Our new body will be glorious, more expressive of our true state as the children of God, and incorruptible. (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 5:9-10).
2. The OT saints and those saved during the tribulation receive their resurrection bodies at the Christ's 2nd Coming (Daniel 12:2; Rev. 20:4). The most complete account of our resurrection bodies is I Cor. 15:35-49. Greek thinking of the day was that resurrection was just a superstition.

D. The Essence of Hope

This same power is at work in our lives. C. S. Lewis says: Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next... It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth "thrown in." Aim at earth and you will get neither.

IV. Remain Firm...your anchor is in Jesus (4:1)

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

- A. Stand firm but don't stand still. Keep your equilibrium.
- B. They were his joy and crown.
 - 1. Joy: there is that theme again!
 - 2. Crown: another tie into 3:14 the goal of the upward call.
- C. A.W. Tozer quote: A real Christian is an odd number anyway. He feels supreme love for One whom he has never seen, talks familiarly every day to someone he cannot see, expects to go to heaven on the virtue of another, empties himself in order to be full, admits he can be wrong so he can be declared right, goes down in order to get up, is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest and happiest when he feels worst. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can keep, sees the invisible, hears the inaudible and knows that which passes knowledge or understanding.
- D. Conclusion: Where is your future hope? Invitation.

Table Talk:

1. Why do we get comfortable in this world?
2. How often do you think about Christ's return?
3. What does Col. 3:1-4 teach you about an eternal perspective?
4. Which one of the 4 principles do you need to apply specifically to your life this week?
5. If we lived in light of eternity, how would it change the way we think, act and respond?

John Erwin ■ Senior Pastor ■ Moorpark Evangelical Free Church