

Philippians 3:17-21 Sermon Notes

Philippians 3:17-21 - ¹⁷ Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. ¹⁸ For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. ²⁰ But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. ²¹ He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

1. Imitating Godly Examples (v. 17)

Philippians 3:17 - Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example.

Paul encourages believers to follow his example as he follows Christ.

- **1 Corinthians 11:1**: And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.
- **Philippians 2:5-11**: You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶ Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.
⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.
When he appeared in human form,
⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.
⁹ Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

2. Enemies of the Cross (vv. 18-19)

Philippians 3:18-19 - ¹⁸ For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth.

Paul warns against those whose lives are focused on earthly appetites and worldly values.

Warning against those who "say" they gave their life to Jesus, but live with no conviction of sin and the sinful ways of this world...grace abuse...

“I say it again with tears in my eyes”

“I never read that the apostle wept when he was persecuted. Though they ploughed his back with furrows, I do believe that never a tear was seen to gush from his eye while the soldiers scourged him. Though he was cast into prison, we read of his singing, never of his groaning. I do not believe he ever wept on account of any sufferings or dangers to which he himself was exposed for Christ’s sake. I call this an extraordinary sorrow, because the man who wept was no soft piece of sentiment, and seldom shed a tear even under grievous trials.” (Spurgeon)

“Professors of religion, who get into the church, and yet lead ungodly lives, are the worst enemies that the cross of Christ has. These are the sort of men who bring tears into the minister’s eyes; these are they who break his heart; they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.” (Spurgeon)

“that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ”

- **Romans 6:1-7** - Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? ² Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?... ⁶ We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.
- **I Corinthians 6:12-20** – ¹² You say, “I am allowed to do anything” – but not everything is good for you. And even though “I am allowed to do anything,” I must not become a slave to anything. ¹³ You say, “Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food.” (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.) But you can’t say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. ¹⁴ And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead. ¹⁵ Don’t you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ And don’t you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, “The two are united into one.” ¹⁷ But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. ¹⁸ Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. ¹⁹ Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.
- **Matthew 16:24-26** – Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

“They are headed for destruction”

- **II Corinthians 11:13-15**: These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve.

“Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things”

- **Romans 16:17-18:** I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. ¹⁸ For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

“they think only about this life here on earth”

- **Colossians 3:2:** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

3. Heavenly Citizenship & Transformation (vv. 20-21)

Philippians 3:20-21 - ²⁰ But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. ²¹ He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

“we are citizens of heaven”

We need to appreciate all this would have meant to the Philippians, who greatly valued their Roman citizenship. Just as the Philippians could consider themselves citizens of Rome and were under Roman laws and customs (even though they were in fact far from Rome) so Christians should consider themselves citizens of heaven.

One paraphrase of **citizenship is in heaven** reads like this: “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.” (Barclay)

- **Hebrews 11:13:** All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth.
- **1 Peter 2:11:** Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls.

If we are citizens of heaven, it means that we are resident aliens on earth. Foreigners are distinct in whatever foreign land they go. Christians must be so marked by their heavenly citizenship that they are noticed as different (David Guzik)

- Aliens should seek to do good works in the land they sojourn in.
- Aliens should not seek to interfere in the affairs of the land they sojourn in.

- Aliens have privileges as well as duties; they are not under the same obligations as citizens of the land they sojourn in.
- Aliens are not eligible for the same rewards and recognitions as the citizens of the land that they sojourn in.
- Aliens should not focus on building riches in the land they sojourn in.

iii. We also have a certain character as citizens of heaven.

- As citizens we are under the government of heaven.
- As citizens we share in heaven's honors.
- As citizens we have property rights in heaven.
- As citizens we enjoy the pleasures of heaven.
- As citizens of heaven we love heaven and feel attached there.
- As citizens of heaven we keep in communication with our native home.

“we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior”

As Philippians would eagerly await a visit from the emperor in Rome, even more so should Christians eagerly await the coming of their King — Jesus Christ.

Savior was a title given to the Caesars. In 48 B.C. Julius Caesar was declared to be “the universal savior of mankind.” It then became a common title for the ruling Caesar. Paul means something when he applies the title to Jesus in the context of **citizenship**.

The Lord Jesus Christ: The title **Lord** was also applied to the Roman Caesar. It wasn't long after the time of Paul that Christians were martyred for refusing to call Caesar **Lord**, claiming that Jesus was the only **Lord**.

“He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own”

- **1 Corinthians 15:42-44:** It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. ⁴³Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. ⁴⁴They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.

“using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control”

- **Ephesians 1:19-21:** I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in

the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. ²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.

- **1 John 3:2-3:** Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. ³ And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.

“There may be sins within your heart that have long resisted control. Do with them as you will, they still defy you... But if you will hand over the conflict to Jesus, He will subdue them; He will bring them under his strong, subjecting hand. Be of good cheer. What you cannot do, He can.” (Meyer)