

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

*How we need to live as believers in Christ ... By Gareth*

**READ: PHILIPPIANS 3:16 TO 4:1**

- Christians must not live as citizens of this earth (3:18-19). In our day, you warn the church about false teachers, you are labeled as judgmental. Instead, we're encouraged to focus on the positive and not worry about doctrinal error. But the apostle Paul repeatedly warned the Philippians about promoters of a false version of Christianity. One of the primary tasks of elders is to guard the flock from wolves who come in sheep's clothing (Acts 20:28-31; Matt. 7:15; Titus 1:9-16).
- **A. CITIZENS OF THIS EARTH ARE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST.**
  - The cross of Christ is the central principle of the gospel and of the Christian life. "For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). The cross humbles human pride, because it shows us that our good works are not able to make us right with a holy God. It shows us that we cannot save ourselves from God's righteous judgment. Enemies of the cross diminish its value by emphasizing human worth or merit in addition to what Christ did on the cross.
- **B. CITIZENS OF THIS EARTH ARE HEADING FOR ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.**
  - "Whose end is destruction" (3:19). Paul is referring to eternal punishment, not to some temporal judgment. Destruction does not mean the enemies of the cross will be wiped out by God so that they cease to exist. The uniform teaching of Scripture is that those who reject God's mercy at the cross will be cast into the lake of fire where they will endure eternal punishment (John 3:16-18 Rev. 20:10, 15). Thus destruction means eternal ruin or loss. While this is not an easy or pleasant teaching, it is the clear teaching of the Lord Jesus (Mark 9 vs 42-48)
- **C. CITIZENS OF THIS EARTH LIVE FOR THE THINGS OF THIS EARTH.**
  - Their "god is their appetite" (3:19), which means that they live for selfish and sensual pleasures, rather than denying self in order to live for Christ. The Bible does not promote the self-imposed denial of all pleasure as a means of purifying oneself and getting right with God. Rather, it teaches that God has richly supplied us with all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). But within the context of obedience to the teachings of scripture. If we remove God and His holy Word from the center as the chief object of our joy and replace it with some earthly pleasure, we are guilty of idolatry.
  - These false teachers gloried "in their shame" (3:19). They boasted in their supposed "freedom," when in reality they were slaves to their lusts. Further, they "set their minds on earthly things" (3:19). One form this takes in our day is our emphasis on how Christ can make you happy in the here and now. He can solve all your problems, however such teaching is not scriptural.
  - When people come to Jesus on that understanding and The Jesus of scripture (my Jesus) clearly spoke about and indeed endured trials and persecutions. The Bible clearly promises, such trials/persecutions. Luke 6 vs 22 & 23, 2 Timothy 3:12 & Matt 5v11.

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Week 47

- Don't miss understand me, we all have earthly things that consume our time and energy: jobs, bills to pay, houses to maintain, family problems, health problems, etc. However we should put Christ and our hope of being with Him in heaven at the centre. Setting our minds on Christ and the things above is the key to dealing with sin and all that goes with it. (**Col. 3:1-17**).
- So, Paul's point is that as citizens of heaven, Christians are not to live as citizens of this earth, who are enemies of the cross of Christ, who are heading for eternal destruction, who live for the things of this earth. Two practical applications before we move on:

- Don't be turned from the truth of the gospel because of the presence of hypocrites in the church. But the existence of hypocrites does not deny the reality of the truth.

Even true Christians can disappoint you, can let you down. But as we saw in previous studies we are running a race, we are on a journey which means, that we're still very capable of sinning. But Christianity should firstly focus on the person of Jesus Christ, not on Christians.

- Deeds or fruits are a more certain evidence of what people truly are than their words.

Jesus said that we can spot false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing, by their fruit or deeds (Matt. 7:15-20). Paul warned of those who "profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him. Enough about the wrong way to live. Let's focus on the right way to live:

- **Christians must live as citizens of heaven (3:17, 20-21; 4:1).**

- Just as being a citizen of Rome meant that you lived differently than those lacking such a privilege, so being a citizen of heaven means that you live distinctly, representing your native land in this alien land where you are temporarily staying. Three things distinguish the citizens of heaven:

- **A. CITIZENS OF HEAVEN FOLLOW GODLY EXAMPLES.**

- "Join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us" (3:17). Paul is not boasting here but is simply stating that he's a good example.
- It is a false humility that denies the truth by saying, "Well, I'm really not worth imitating." Paul knew that he lived with integrity before God. He also just admitted that he was still in the process of coming to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (3:12-14), so he is not implying that he is sinlessly perfect. But his life was an example of how believers should live. He also adds that there were others, probably referring to Timothy, Epaphroditus, and men like them who walked with God. Such men show us in practical ways how we should walk with God, how we should deal with relationships, etc.

- **B. CITIZENS OF HEAVEN EAGERLY WAIT FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

- The bodily return of Jesus Christ in power and glory is one of the most frequently emphasized truths in the New Testament. It is mentioned in every book of the New Testament except Galatians, which deals with a particular doctrinal matter, and the short books of *Philemon* and 2 & 3 *John*.

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- While there may be debate over the particulars, there is no debate over the certainty of His bodily return. *Matt 25:13*" Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" *Luke 21:25-28, Luke 21:34-36.*
- Just as He promised that He came the first time to die for our sins and kept His word, so He has promised to return.
- When He comes, it will be in power to rule and reign. Two things will happen. First, He will transform **our "lowly bodies,"** *Phillipians 3v21* which are subject to disease and death and prone toward sin, into conformity to His resurrection body. Secondly **He will subdue or subject all things to Himself.** It's safe to say that the extent to which we wait for His coming now reveals the condition of our hearts before Him. Citizens of heaven long for His appearing.
- **C. CITIZENS OF HEAVEN STAND FIRM IN THE LORD IN LIGHT OF HIS COMING.**
- As mentioned, 4:1 is really the conclusion of *chapter 3*: "*Therefore*" means, **in light of this truth of His coming, stand firm in the Lord. Notice Paul's tender heart for these people, whom he calls "my beloved brethren," "my joy and my crown," and again, "my beloved."** He longs to see them and especially to see them standing firm in the Lord, not swayed by false teachers. Remember, Christianity is knowing Christ Himself, and being found in Him. He is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption (*1 Cor. 1:30*). He is our all in all (*Col. 3:11*). He is our sufficiency for every need, our refuge, our rock in times of trouble. Stand firm in the Lord! ■