

## Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 13

Philippians 3:17-21

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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**Bruce:** Let's turn in your Bibles please, men, to Philippians 3. Again we'll be looking at 17-21. As you're turning to text let us ask the Lord to be our teacher. Merciful and gracious Lord we come to sit at your feet again and ask your Spirit to be our teacher. Father, we are just so overwhelmed with things going on in this world. We are glad that you are the sovereign Lord of the universe. We submit to your sovereignty and to your grace and trust that you will be our teacher today that we might behold the glory of Christ Lord more intimately and more lovingly in our minds and our hearts. May we serve for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**Men:** Amen

**Bruce:** I call your attention to Chapter 3 of the book of Philippians beginning at verse 17, *17 "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."*

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

We don't know a lot about heaven. It is enough to whet our appetite to make us want to think about it more often, but the scripture doesn't go into a lot of detail. A lot of times people ask me what is heaven like? We really don't know all of that. A lot of it is left up to our faith life. Paul in this particular passage does give us some insights into a big perspective of what it's going to be like when we take up our heavenly residence. You will notice on your handout our names are written in heaven's record. These are the big things we can understand to help us understand what it might be like when we get into eternal glory with our Father. Now the thing we will do in heaven, we will speak heaven's language. We won't talk the way we used to. We will obey heaven's law which we could not do here on earth. We will be loyal to heaven's causes and we will be looking for heaven's Lord. Those are the insights that Paul gives us in these particular chapters dealing with the issue of what is our heavenly citizenship.

If you recall last week, Paul gives a very clear description of the enemies of the cross and the people that we needed to avoid, and he uses the literary form of a contrast to help us understand that. He describes them and he also describes the kind of people we need to follow. He uses the literary form of a contrast. Now take a look at verse 19, there's a contrast summary for you from last week. In verse 19, he says their end is destruction. In verse 14, Paul says to win the prize, which is your contrast. There is destruction and Paul is saying follow those men, those people who want to win the prize, it is a contrast. Another one being their god is their belly. Contrast that with no confidence in the flesh (v.3). See the contrast?

Many times you see a contrast in the scripture. There are six literary forms. Anytime you see one of those six literary forms in the scripture, it means there's a point of application for it. Paul is using right now the contrast as a means of describing people we need to avoid and the

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kind of people we need to be. Another would be their minds are set on earthly things. Verse 10, compare that to now that I may know him. Now, Paul has been describing the kind of people we need to avoid and also describing the kind of people we need to follow. Now we spent last week talking a little bit about recognizing some of the things of the people we need to avoid, but I think we need to recognize the qualities that we have of the people we want to follow. Are we the kind of men that people would want to follow? Let's think more about that than we do trying to isolate and identify other peoples' faults. Let's think about this, am I somebody that someone would want to follow? That's what Paul is teaching us and the contrast is there are those we need to avoid. Are you one of those that people need to follow? Now he gives us some encouragement about thinking heavenly thoughts that will help us in our earthly life.

He now takes us to the idea of what it means to have a citizenship in heaven. Paul is going to tell us that we are going to go through a complete transformation. Let's take a look at some points of our heavenly citizenship. Well, first of all, we know that we have a dual citizenship one on earth and in heaven. Our heavenly citizenship ought to make us better people here on earth. How heavenly minded are you? Do you think often of heaven? Remember last week, a couple weeks ago we talked about taking the future into the present and the present into the past. That's what Paul is doing for us right now saying, if you are going to be better people on earth you need to think heavenly thoughts, and so our dual citizenship is in heaven. We are the original ETs...extraterrestrials. Paul is reminding us that the spirit-minded person is not attracted by earthly things of this world. We make our decisions on the basis of eternal values and priorities not on the passing fads of society. Here again, remember Romans 12:2a, "*Do not be conformed to the system of the world but by the transforming of your mind.*" It all starts with your mind. What you are thinking about? Paul is encouraging us to have heavenly thoughts about our heavenly citizenship because it is going to make us better people on earth. We will become the kind of people that people will want to follow. So, we take our future and bring down into our present, take our present, take it into our past. We live in a dual citizenship arena. Let me give you a couple of quotes about our heavenly citizenship. I always find people can say it better than I can. Best I can say, we are ETs.

Here's Richard Baxter... "In our first paradise in Eden there was a way to go out but no way to go in again. As for the heavenly paradise there is a way to go in, but no way to go out." Isn't that marvelous? There's a way to go into heaven, but there's no way to go out.

Do you understand God's eternal security? Our personal security we have in Christ Jesus. We need to think holy thoughts, men, so that we will become the kind of people that people want to follow.

John Owen says this, "Holiness is indeed perfected in heaven but the beginning of it invariably is confined to this world."

Tallis Wilson, "No man may go to heaven but has not set his heart there beforehand."

Men, Paul's going to encourage us to think heavenly thoughts. He's going to give us five reasons to do that. He tells us our citizenship is in heaven. In Philippians 3:20, the Greek word translated citizenship is the word from which we get the angriest word, politics. It has to do with one's behavior as a citizen of a nation. So when Paul is talking about our citizenship in heaven, he's going to give us some handles on what our citizenship is going to look like when we are in heaven with the heavenly hosts. Paul is encouraging us to have a spiritual mind to think thoughts

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that are heavenly. He does this by pointing out the characteristics of the Christian whose citizenship is in heaven, these five characteristics. Just as Philippi was a colony of Rome, on foreign soil, so the church of Jesus Christ is the colony of heaven on earthly soil. So, Paul teaches us about our future tense living.

First of all this, our names are written in heavens records. When a child is born, it's important to have their name written in a legal register. When we were reborn, our names are written in heaven. When God regenerates the lost sinner and the person puts their faith in the person and work of Christ and becomes a citizen of heaven, his name is written in the book of life. Notice Philippians 4:3. *"Yes, I ask you also true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life."* And when God is pleased to regenerate us and give us saving faith, our names are written in the book of heaven, the book of life.

This starts at the cross, men. Jesus says to us individually when I was on the cross, you were on my mind. That's why our names can be written in the book of life, because when Christ was on the cross you and I were individually on his mind. We need to think thoughts like that, men. It's going to transform our lives. Think heavenly thoughts. Having your names written in the book of life is the final determination for our entrance into heaven, it's like a passport to heaven.

Revelation 20:15 *"If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown in the lake of fire."* Men are you sure your name is written in the lamb's book of life? That's Paul's question to us to today. Do I know that my name is written in the book of life? Now when we confess Christ here on earth, he confesses our name in heaven. Notice Matthew 10:32-33, *"So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."* Men, when we confess our faith in Christ here on earth, Christ confesses our name in heaven to the Father.

There is one more thing I want us to notice about our names written in the lamb's book of life. This is found in Luke 10:20. *"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this that the spirits is subject to you but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."* The Greek word written in Luke 10:20 is the perfect tense. It means this, it is a once for all written and stands written forever. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that there's a once for all, and your names stand written in heaven. Because we've trusted Christ, our names are written down and we will enjoy glory with his merits forever. We will enter glory on His merits alone.

So, first of all, we just need to understand, men, that our names are written in the lamb's book of life and our names are written in heaven. And for that we can just trust a sovereign God to control our lives and be the kind of people that we need to be that somebody just might want to follow us. Somebody just might want to say, 'I want to follow you'.

Second thing Paul reminds us of is this not only are our names written in the lamb's book of life in heaven, we will speak heaven's language. The people who think about earthly things use earthly language and after all, what comes out of the mouth is the reflection of what's inside the heart. Notice Matthew 12:34-37 *"You brood of vipers how can you speak good when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good*

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*treasure brings forth good. The evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you on the day of judgement, people will give an account will every careless word they speak. For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned.*" How can an unredeemed person talk about things of the Spirit? They just can't do that. Out of the overflow of the mouth the heart speaks.

In my opinion, men, this is one of the best ways to determine a person's spiritual growth and spiritual maturity is listen to their language. What do they talk about? What's on their mind? Are they using coarse language? Are they respectful in their speech? You see, this is the reflection of who we are. I have a situation with a friend in his leading family that has just kind of blown it. His language is just foul language all the time. His kids just can't figure that out. They say, but dad goes to church but listen to his language on Monday through Saturday is totally different. You see, one of the things that happens to a man and a person of anybody redeemed by the blood of the lamb is their language is going to change because their heart is changed. Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. Listen to what people say and you will know their spiritual maturity. Paul reminds us to make sure that we have the right kind of words that we say. The people listen to our words and what do they think of us? Are the words we say ones that somebody would want to follow?

I have to remind you of this, 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, *"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him, but we have the mind of Christ."* You see citizens of heaven understand earthly things. Citizens of heaven understand spiritual things, and we enjoy talking about those spiritual things with each other in the context of our earthly life. That's what fellowship is, one of the ingredients of sharing our life with each other. And ministry is giving away to each other what God has given us. We just do that every time we come together in fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ. What do we talk about? I bet you just say that we talk about what is going on in the world and that's normal, that's natural, but there comes a time when we just need to share spiritual things together. It's a means of encouragement to do good works. How about 1 John 4:5 & 6, *"They are from the world, therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, whoever knows God listens to us: but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."*

I really don't get upset unless I've done something stupid. When somebody gets up and says I didn't like your message, I couldn't understand it. I said, "Are you a follower of Christ?" "No". "Then you will never understand it until that happens to you". So, I am not upset when people say I didn't like your message, I didn't like your sermon. They just can't understand it. Perhaps that may be an indication of where they are. Not judgmentally, but how do I speak to them in response to that? That's the key. I just to need to know where people are. We need to understand that people of this world cannot understand spiritual things. They just can't. But we think spiritual things and we need to talk about those things for the glory of God.

It's my personal conviction, that the last thing that a church should do is send out a survey asking people what they want. I mean it's the last thing the church ever ought to do, because many people inside the church don't know what the church is, and therefore, they don't what the

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church ought to be. The main people in the church are not even Christians and they don't even know it. So you are asking non-Christian people what the church should be. I can't understand that. That is the most ludicrous thing a church can do is send out a survey so they can tell us what you want. We need to give them what they need not what they want.

I was involved in a church that recently did that, sent out a survey. They came up with a whole different mindset of what the mission of the church is. It is totally different than what the scripture would say because they got their input from the people in the congregation, many of whom don't know if they are Christians or not. Many people don't even know if their names are written in the book of life. You see, that's the people that we don't need to survey. When actually the survey is found in the scripture, isn't it? The scripture tells you what the church ought to be. We don't need to figure a new model. We've got a good model to work on, just be obedient to it the way it was designed.

Well, Paul reminds us there are two kinds of people, the spirit filled and those who are not spirit filled and the difference is their eternity. One kind that is written in the book of life and one kind that is not written in the book of life. Speaking heaven's language not only includes what we say, but how we say it. We need to give as much emphasis on how we say things with the right spirit as the words that we use when we are called upon to speak. Colossians 4:6 *"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."* I figure our speech should glorify God in every conversation we have; now that doesn't mean that you have to quote the scripture and recite the beatitudes to them. That's not what I am saying. What I am saying is that we need to make sure we have the right spirit in our communication, just as the right words and especially with those people of the world.

My first year at my previous employer my boss called me in to his office for my yearly evaluation, my first evaluation, I had been there one year. So, he pulled out this piece of paper looks at it and says, "I have one problem with you." I said, "What is that?" "We've never heard you cuss." "I beg your pardon." [laughter] "We've never heard you cuss, you don't cuss. We can't figure that out. You're so compassionate, you're so concerned, you communicate so well but you never cuss." I said, "Well sir, if I were to cuss that would say more about me than the content of my speech." He said, "Well why don't you cuss?" [laughter] You know what I wanted to say!? [laughter] We had a wonderful discussion, and I just quoted this, *"Let your speech always be gracious seasoned with salt so that you may know how to answer every person."* (Colossians 4:6). Men, we need to be examples of correct speech because we speak a heavenly language. Our names in the book of life and we speak a heavenly language. We should glorify God in our speech and in every discussion we have with every person. It doesn't mean you should quote scripture. It just means you have the right spirit in communication with the person you are talking to. That's something that people need to learn to follow, that we have the right spirit.

Thirdly, we will obey heavens laws. Even though Philippi was in Greece, they were governed by Roman law, not Greek law. In fact, that is why Paul was put in prison when he visited Philippi. Look at Acts 16. Paul uses his Roman citizenship to guarantee his protection. Now, Paul has already warned us not to follow the wrong citizens. We're to follow him as he followed Christ, and follow those who are not enemies of the gospel. That's what made Paul

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different. He followed heaven's law and the love of Christ controlled him. II Corinthians 5:14, *"For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this, that one has died for all..."* What is it that controls your life, men? What made Paul different? It was the love of Christ that controlled his life. That word control is like taking a flooded river and putting boundaries on it so that you can control it. It goes in the right direction you want it to go. It's the picture of a stream going in the right direction. Paul says that's the stream of his life going in the right direction because he responds to the love of Christ. Unfortunately, there are those who are in the church whose conduct as well as their speech does not reflect heavenly citizenship. They may be zealous in their spiritual activities, but their lives do not share any of the control of the Holy Spirit. We will obey heaven's laws, and trust those laws to be completed in the person and work of Christ; that he obeyed them and we get credit for that. That's our justification. He's the perfect law keeper and the perfect Savior and the perfect justifier.

Next, we see this, we'll be loyal to heaven's cause. We'll be loyal to heavens cause. Now, I really struggled with this trying to figure out what is the cause of heaven or what is heaven's cause. I came up with a half a dozen different ones and I am sure you could do the same. But for me, when I boil it down to this, there is one thing and that is the cross. The cross is the theme of the bible, it's the heart of the gospel; it's the chief source of praise in heaven. Look at Revelation 5:8-10. So I am offering for your consideration that the great theme of heaven is the cross, and we reflect upon the cross, and its might, its glory, its majesty, its efficacious work on our behalf. That's the theme of heaven. The cross is the proof of God's love for sinners and it's also the proof of God's hatred of sin. The cross condemns what the world values, but the world judges and the cross judges mankind and pronounces the true verdict of guilty. You see the cross does all of that. In contrast to the citizens of heaven, Paul weeps for those people. As described, when he said, "Whose end is in destruction." The word destruction shares the idea of wasted idleness and lostness. In Mark 14:4, the word is translated waste. It means that Paul is saying this, they have a wasted life. Somebody who is not in Christ has a wasted life, and they have a wasted eternity. In contrast to the follower of Christ, the true child of God has a citizenship in heaven and has a bright future, but for the people of the world, just a wasted life. What should our response be, men? What's our response to that statement? You know somebody who has a wasted life? What's our response to that? Shouldn't we just be merciful? Isn't mercy our response? We don't judge them; just have mercy for their soul and give that to the Lord and maybe the Lord will have you give your testimony about your faith in Christ and lead them to the cross. What you do when you tell a friend like that, you will take them to the cross. You see the cross is the theme of heaven in my mind, because it is the focus of the gospel. It's the proof of God's love, and that's what we will celebrate in heaven's cause.

Lastly, I offer for your consideration, that we are looking for heaven's Lord. We are looking for heaven's Lord. People have a works-oriented salvation and are living in the past tense. Just like the Judaizers who were trying to go back to Moses and the law, but for true believers we live in the future tense. As we look forward to the arrival of our Savior, you will see there in chapter 3:20 (Philippians). Now we can talk about the theme of holiness, and the motivation to be holy. Holy living is our primary motivation because we see the anticipation of the Lord Jesus' coming. In other words, why does he teach the end times? It's not to figure out the date and time. It's to help us be prepared to see the Lord come and make us more holy. You

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see the thing that ought to teach us to be holy and to motivate us to be holy, is the coming of the Lord again, the second coming of Christ. So, we will be prepared when we stand before him, he can say, "Well done good and faithful servant." I read I John 2:28-29. This is the sanctifying power of the Lord. *"And now little children, abide in him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him."* Little children that's the word that means, little ignorant ones under instruction. Little ignorant ones under instruction, abide in him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

Men, what a future we have, what a future we have to look forward to. I John 3:1-3, *"See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are. The reason why the world does not understand us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself as he is pure."*

Thinking about the returning of the Lord ought to make us more holy so we can stand before him with confidence. Paul reminds us this men, and I close with this statement. Living in a future tense means letting Christ arrange things in our lives according to his proper reign. It means living with eternity's values in view. Let's take our future bring it to our present and take our present to our past, and live the life that people may want to follow for Jesus' sake and all the Brave Men said,

**Men:** Amen. [clapping]