

Discussion Notes
Philippians 3: 17-21
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Joanne Knight

Paul uses the Philippians understanding of their Roman citizenship, in our passage today, to help them grasp their true citizenship and what this means for them.

Paul is underlining certain things again for the Philippians because he knows they will serve them well. Using a term of endearment to capture their attention he instructs them to:

17...*pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example*

The early church needed practical guidelines for living, so Paul urged them to join together in imitating his behaviour, just as he did to the Corinthian believers. (1 Cor 11:1). By modeling Christ through his own life, Paul was able to give the Philippians a pattern to follow in the here and now, in their every day.

So what was Paul's life like? Philippians 3:8

Paul is concerned with knowing Christ. To know Christ is to be found in Him. Being in him leads us beyond the hope of "fire insurance" and going to heaven, to abundant life right now. John 10:10

Rainier's testimony spoke to both of these. Satan attempted to destroy his life through drugs and alcohol, but then Jesus got a hold of it and everything changed. He knows the love of the Father; he doesn't just know about it, he experienced it! He now lives a rich life as he serves and cares for others.

Paul had all the right credentials, but he counted them as worthless in comparison to knowing Jesus. He wants the Philippians to know Jesus and to do that they need to discard everything else.

What about us?

. Do we rely on our pedigree, our resume, our title, and our position?

If we were to pattern our lives after Paul's, what would they look like?

Surrendering our life to Christ, trusting him with everything does not take life away; rather it brings life, full life, exciting life.

Paul turns his attention on those who are not fully surrendered.

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 is heartbroken by those who are not truly following Christ. Their behaviour risks the integrity of the gospel and for Paul, whose life's work is spreading the gospel, they are quite literally enemies of the cross of Christ.

Paul brings the Philippians back with a BUT to contrast who they are with those he was just talking about.

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.*

Paul asserts here that the only citizenship that truly matters is the heavenly one. What does being a citizen of heaven mean, what does it entail? (Philippians 1:27) Our mindset will influence our behaviour.

We must not forget that we too are citizens of heaven. We cannot be overtaken by the temporal – we are to focus on the eternal and what truly matters – and that is that Jesus is returning!

When Paul writes, “we are eagerly waiting” he’s referring to the anticipation of not only believers, but also creation itself, because Christ’s return means the restoration and transformation of all creation! (Romans 8:19-22)

Paul is calling the Philippians to something greater than the here and now – he’s telling them to look ahead, to look to something much bigger than what they see in front of them.

This chapter concludes with an incredible promise!

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.*

When Jesus returns he will bring about the final transformation, bringing salvation to its climax!!! Our weak, mortal bodies will be changed into glorious bodies like his. This verse parallels chapter 2: 6-11. When Jesus returns it will be the opposite of the incarnation! Rather than him becoming human, it’s the believer who will be like him!

The gospels clearly speak of Christ’s resurrected body, the account of Thomas clearly demonstrates this. John 20: 26-29.

This is good news!! Jesus is coming back and when he does we will be transformed into his likeness, our bodies will be eternal and imperishable!

Joanne left us with some questions to think over and wrestle with this week. Use them in your life group for further discussion and personal reflection:

- . Is my life patterned after Christ’s? Am I fully surrendered to Him?
- . Am I believing and acting as a citizen of heaven?
- . Am I ready and eagerly awaiting Christ’s return?
- . Am I excited about the prospect of a new body?
- . Am I anticipating what living with Christ will be like?