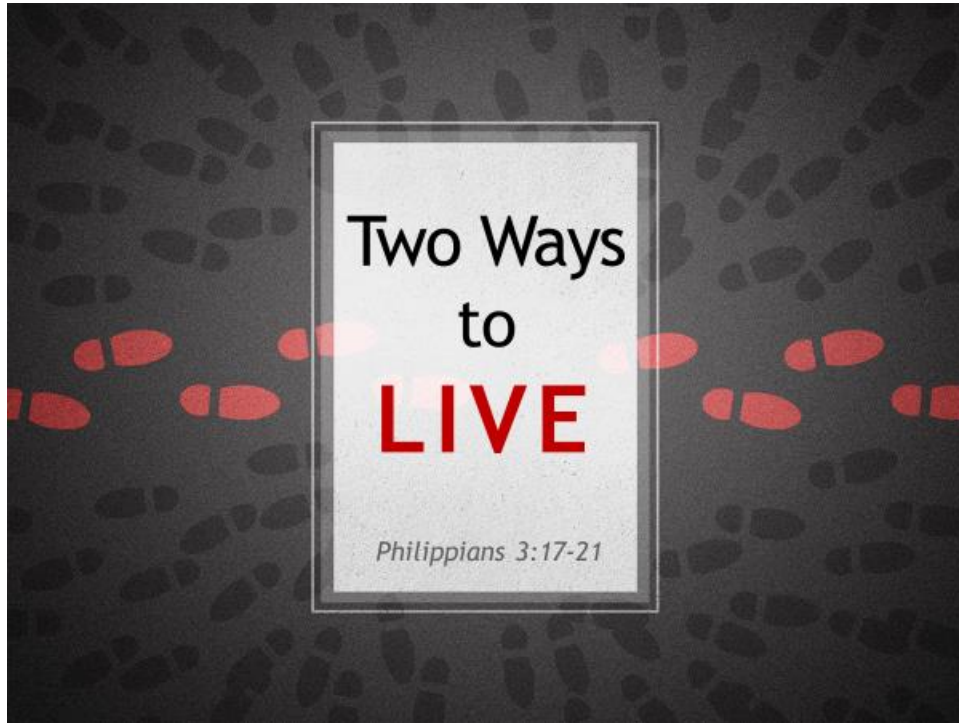


TBC SERMON NOTES & STUDY

October 11, 2020 – Dr. Bryan Ferrell, Senior Pastor

Video file: www.timberlakebaptist.org – (Or on Facebook & YouTube)



I. Sermon Text:

Philippians 3:17-21 (ESV)

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

INTRODUCTION: (Opening Discussion/Reflection)

1. Why are worldly people offended by the exclusivity of salvation in Christ alone?
2. How does an accurate view of yourself motivate you to share the gospel with others?
3. How is the self-love movement unbiblical and antithetical to Christlike living?
4. Describe how the church is essential to your sanctification.

I. Sermon Points: (Small Group Discussion Questions)

3 Practical Helps in the Practice of Christlikeness:

1. God Gives Us Models to Act Like (v. 17)
 - A. Is your life worthy of imitation? Why or why not?
 - B. Is the fact that your life is not perfect cause you to shrink back from discipling a less mature believer? How does discipleship sanctify both people in the relationship?
 - C. Pastor Ferrell said, “Appreciation of the truth is not application of the truth.” How do models help us avoid this error?
 - D. Do you have anyone in your life who is a pattern of Christlike living that you imitate?

2. God Describes a Mutiny to Avoid (vv. 18-19)
 - A. What do you picture when you hear “enemies of the cross”? How does Paul describe such a person?

4 Marks That Identify Enemies of the Cross

- They Face destruction
- Their Flesh is their god
- They Flaunt what they should be ashamed of
- Their Focus is on earthly things

- B. Do you understand gentle confrontation of a sinning brother or sister as your duty and a loving response to sin?
- C. Who is the ultimate authority for the believer? How does embracing this truth help me understand my desires rightly?
3. God Provides a Motivation to Anticipate (vv. 20-21)
- A. Are you content to wait for heaven to receive your reward?
- B. How does meditating on perfect worship of Jesus in heaven fuel your hope and motivate you to live for Him now?

REFLECTION - SMALL GROUP NOTES:

DEEPER STUDY #1 – (A Biblical Study on Philippians 3:17-21)

I. Pressing On: Marking Those Who Walk as Examples, 3:17-21

(3:17-21) **Introduction:** this is one of the most important passages in the Bible. It has to do with the example we set before the world and before our families and friends. The way we live and what we do influences people. We may not want to influence them, but it does not matter whether we want to or not: they are influenced. Family, friends, and children—everyone who knows us—watch us; and they follow both the good and the bad of our example. It may be conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional; we may be willing or we may not be willing for them to follow in our steps—it matters not—they follow our example. We influence people by how we live and by what we do.

- ⇒ If we follow good and do good, it encourages them to do good.
- ⇒ If we follow bad and do bad, it sets a pattern of bad before others. It even causes some (in particular, the young and immature) to think that since we did it and still got along fairly well, they can do it and get along fairly well, too.

The point is this: the life we live sets a pattern for others to follow. Others are going to follow us no matter what we do. This says something to us, something of critical importance: we must live lives on the highest plane possible. We must set the most dynamic example possible. We must set the most perfect pattern possible for others to follow. But it also says something else: we must follow after those who live on the highest plane of life. We must mark those who walk as examples and follow after the great traits of their lives. We must take those who live as examples and dissect the traits of their lives, and apply those traits to our own lives. This is the subject of the present passage: marking those who walk as examples for us all.

1. Reason 1: some walk as examples (v.17).
2. Reason 2: many walk as enemies of the cross (v.18-19).
3. Reason 3: the believer is a citizen of heaven (v.20-21).

1. (3:17) Paul— Testimony: we must mark those who walk as examples, first, because they do walk as examples. Note what Paul said: he and others followed Christ ever so diligently; therefore, they were dynamic examples as to how people should walk and live. When a person lives a life on the highest plane—when he lives like Christ said to live—he is an example. He is living just like we all should live: just as Christ said.

What did Paul mean? Was he claiming perfection—claiming to be the perfect pattern for men to follow? No! A thousand times no! In fact, the very opposite is true. He had just declared...

- that he could never stand before God in his own righteousness (Phil. 3:9).
- that he had not yet attained (Phil. 3:12).
- that he was not perfect (Phil. 3:12).
- that he had not apprehended that for which Christ had laid hold of him (Phil. 3:13).

What then did Paul mean? Just what he said. He was a dynamic example...

- in forgetting the things that were past.
- in reaching forth to the things that lay ahead.
- in pressing toward the prize, even the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul was a dynamic example in seeking to follow Christ. He was forever reaching forth, forever pressing to be like Christ. He never reached the perfect pattern of Christ—he could not, not as long as he was a man—but he pressed and pressed to be all he could for Christ. It is this that Paul sets before us as a pattern. We are to follow Paul...

- in forgetting the past, no matter how terrible it is.
- in reaching forth to the things that lie ahead.
- in pressing toward the prize, even the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We will never achieve perfection, not in this life, but we are to follow after Christ and seek to be like Him. Now note the point: when we see a person sharing Christ with such dynamic commitment and energy, that person is an example for us. We should follow that person. He is following after Christ, doing the very thing we should be doing. Therefore, he is a living example for us.

Note the word "example" (*tupon*). The underlying meaning of the word is that of an imprint or mark made by a blow or some mould or dye. The idea is that we are to be seeking Christ with such diligence that our example will be like a powerful blow being thrown at those around us. Take the most powerful boxing blow of the heavyweight champion and our example for Christ should strike others with just as much power.

Thought 1. No believer should ever claim or think that he has come anywhere close to perfection. But *every believer* should follow Christ with so much commitment and diligence that he is a dynamic example for others. Every believer should be able to say "follow me"—follow my seeking after Christ—my seeking to be like Christ.

"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (1 Cor. 4:16).

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" (Phil. 3:17).

"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:9).

"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thes. 1:6).

"Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" (1 Thes. 2:10).

"For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (2 Thes. 3:7).

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13).

"In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity" (Titus 2:7).

"But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (James 5:12).

2. (3:18-19) Testimony— Jesus Christ, Cross: we must mark those who walk as examples, second, because many walk as enemies of the cross. Who are the enemies of the cross? Many commentators say they are the hypocritical and false believers within the church, those who are nominal Christians. They say that the word "walk" is used of Christians in Phil. 3:17; therefore, it also refers to church members in Phil. 3:18. It is also said that Paul would weep only for false believers within the church.

It is true that Paul could have been referring to false and hypocritical believers within the church; however, every unbeliever both in and out of the church walks as an enemy of the cross...

- whether the leader of a nation or a movement who is set on wiping out the church and the cross.
- whether a professing believer who really doubts the substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Note something else as well: it is a common thing for believers to weep for the lost. Certainly Paul wept many times over the lost of the world and not just over false believers within the church. (Cp. Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34; Romans 9:1-3; Romans 10:1; 1 Tim. 2:1-4.)

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life

in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

Again, who are the enemies of the cross? It seems best to take the verse for just what it says: there are many who walk as "the enemies of the cross"—no matter who they are, whether within or without the church. Unquestionably, the enemies of the cross are many. Note what is said about them.

1. Their end is destruction (*apōleia* ^{PWS: 1003}). The word means perdition, destroyed, or slain; to lose one's well-being; to be wasted and ruined and given a worthless existence. It does not mean that a person will cease to exist. It means a person will be destroyed and devastated and condemned to a worthless existence. He will suffer waste and loss and ruin forever and ever.

If a person stands as an enemy of the cross, he shall be destroyed. It does not matter who he is, either within or without the church, he shall suffer perdition, that is, utter destruction. Who is an enemy of the cross? It is the person...

- who rejects the cross of Christ as the only way to God.
- who does not accept the death of Christ as payment for his sins.
- who does not believe that Christ died for him, that is, as the punishment for his transgressions.
- who does not believe that the penalty for his imperfection was borne by Christ on the cross.
- who does not approach God claiming that he is coming by the death of Christ—that is, that he wants God to accept him in the death of Christ.
- who claims that there are other ways to approach God—ways other than the cross of Christ.
- who considers the cross of Christ to be foolishness.
- who opposes and curses Christ and His cross.
- who persecutes and attempts to stamp out Christ and His cross.
- who denies and questions that Christ died for our sins.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46; cp. Matthew 25:25-45).

"But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation" (Mark 3:29).

"...he [Christ] will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" (Luke 3:17).

"But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and

anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile" (Romans 2:8-9).

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thes. 1:7-9).

"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people" (Hebrews 10:29-30).

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Peter 2:9).

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

2. Their god is their belly (*koilia*^{PWS: 349}), that is, their appetite, their sensuality, their desire for the physical pleasures of this world. Physical and material gratification is their god. They center their lives around...

- possessions and property
- houses and furnishings
- food and appetite
- comfort and plenty
- position and success
- pleasure and sex
- acceptance and social standing
- money and wealth
- honor and fame

Just take a moment and think upon any of the above, how some persons center and focus their lives upon such things. Some persons spend more time in front of a mirror or eating or thinking about acceptance or success or possessions or some business deal than they do in prayer.

The point is this: when a person has a craving and an appetite for such things, they become his god. The craving begins to consume his thoughts, energy, and effort. Before long his craving is taking up so much of his energy that he has very

little if any time for God or for anything else. His appetite and craving, or as the Scripture says, his belly, becomes his god. Marvin Vincent quotes the Cyclops in Euripides as saying: "My flocks which I sacrifice to no one but myself, and not to the gods, and to this my belly the greatest of the gods: for to eat and drink each day, and to give one's self no trouble, this is the god for wise men" (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol.3, p.452).

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:5-6).

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13).

"For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18).

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephes. 4:17-19).

3. Their glory is their shame. This simply means that men boast in their sins and shame. They boast in and pride themselves...

- in their comfort
- in their drunkenness
- in their gluttony
- in their conquests
- in their sex
- in their partying
- in what they eat
- in what they have purchased
- in their authority and power
- in how much they have

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Ephes. 5:3).

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence [desire], and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5).

"Let your conversation [behavior] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

"For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth" (Psalm 10:3).

"They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" (Psalm 49:6-7).

"Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain" (Proverbs 25:14).

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).

4. They keep their mind on earthly things. This is simply another way of saying that a person is worldly. He focuses his mind, energy and effort upon the things of the world. But note: the things of the world include much more than the physical and material gratifications of this world. Worldly things also include the commendable things that are accepted by society such as...

- religions and spiritual pursuits
- self-development programs
- rules of virtue and morality
- the pursuit of ambition or success
- employment and jobs and business

As stated, such things are commendable and some are even necessary for survival and health. But the point is this: the basis of our lives must be the cross of Christ, not the things of this world. The only hope for conquering the ills and corruption of society and the evil and death of man is the cross of Christ. Nothing on this earth, no matter how good and beneficial it is, can give us life—not abundant and eternal life. Only Jesus Christ can give us life that conquers all and that infuses us with life that lasts forever. Therefore, the focus of our lives must be Christ and His cross. Yes, we must give our attention to our jobs and families and to the other good and beneficial pursuits of life, but underlying everything we do must be Christ and His cross. He and His cross must be the consuming passion and purpose of our lives. The person who sets his mind on earthly things is an enemy of the cross of Christ.

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:5-6).

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

3. (3:20-21) Heaven— Believer: we must mark those who walk as examples, third, because the believer is a citizen of heaven. Note three points.

1. The believer's life is to be heaven-centered, for his citizenship is in heaven. The word "conversation" (*politeuma* ^{PWS:777}) means citizenship in this context. Remember that Philippi was a Roman colony and its citizens, although in Macedonia, were citizens of Rome. As pointed out earlier, the citizens of Roman colonies lived as Romans: they dressed as Romans, spoke the Roman language, lived by the laws of Rome, engaged in Roman pleasures and social affairs, and worshipped the Roman gods. Despite the fact that they lived in Macedonia, their citizenship was in Rome. (See note, Citizenship, Heavenly—Phil. 1:27 for more discussion; cp. Ephes. 2:6.)

The point to see is this: the Philippian believers knew exactly what it meant to live in one place and to be a citizen of another place. They knew exactly what it would mean to live upon the earth and...

- to dress as a citizen of heaven and not of the earth.
- to speak as a citizen of heaven and not of the earth.
- to engage in the pleasures of a citizen of heaven and not of the earth.
- to live by the laws of heaven as well as the laws of earth.
- to worship the God of heaven and not the religions and gods of this earth.

Thought 1. Believers are to live as citizens of heaven and not of this world. The point is forceful.

"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

"That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:30).

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephes. 2:19).

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:9-10).

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:13-16).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

2. The believer's life is to be focused upon the return of Christ. He is to be looking for the Lord's return—constantly looking—looking every day of his life. Lehman Struss makes a strong point in the following:

*"The greatest event in any country on earth is a visit from its chief emperor. History records the most elaborate preparations and memorials for such an event. Special coins have been minted, commemorative stamps issued, and highways built. Looking forward to the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is the highlight of Christian expectation. We should be dwelling daily in this thought of His return....Imagine how the residents in your neighborhood would feel if the President of the United States had announced that he was making a personal appearance in your community. I feel certain there would be some special preparations for his coming" (*Devotional Studies in Philippians*, p.207f).*

Kenneth Wuest points out that the Greek word "look" is made up of three words put together. There is...

- the word "receive" which speaks of welcoming as the welcoming of a guest. It also has the idea of preparation for the guest.
- the word "off" which speaks of withdrawing one's attention from other objects.
- the word "out" which has the idea of waiting for, of stretching out the neck and waiting out or for the return of Christ. (*Philippians*, Vol.1, p.102.)

Combined together, the word "look" (*apekdechometha*^{PWS: 2385}) means to yearn, to eagerly look and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus to take His dear people to heaven.

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44).

"And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13).

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-2).

"So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7).

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thes. 4:16-18).

"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13).

"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (1 John 2:24).

3. The believer's life is to focus upon the glorious body he is to receive when Christ returns.

a. Right now the believer's body is vile, that is, lowly and humiliating. The human body is so lowly and humiliating...

- because it has its origin out of the earth: it is nothing more than earthly chemicals or human flesh.
- because it is subject to sin and selfishness, evil and destruction.
- because it is so weak: it becomes sick and diseased, injured and maimed, aged and deteriorated.
- because it is corruptible and dying, aging and mortal, offering no hope of ever lasting beyond a few short years—no hope whatsoever.

b. However, note the wonderful declaration: the Lord Jesus Christ shall change the believer's body and fashion or make it just like His glorious body. The word "fashion" (*summophon*) points out a most wonderful

thing. The word means the permanent, constant, and unchangeable being of a person. Our bodies shall be fashioned just like the glorious body of Christ. Imagine! To have a body that is permanent, constant, and unchanging. (See note, pt.2—Phil. 2:6 for more discussion on the word *fashion*.) The believer will receive a spiritual body.

"There is a natural body [soma psuchikon] and there is a spiritual body [soma pneumatikon]" (1 Cor. 15:44).

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:21).

We shall be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).

"We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

c. How is such possible? By the power of God, the very power which is able to subdue all things to Christ. The very power that created the world and all that is in the world...

- is sovereign over the world.
- is able to control the world.
- is able to subdue the world.
- is able to recreate the world.
- is able to transform the body of man.

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:10-13).

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians.

DEEPER STUDY #2 (Advanced Exegetical Study on Philippians 3:17-21)

• **3:17** In 3:17 Paul exhorts all the Philippian Christ-believers to “become imitators together [συμμιμηταί] of me.” The noun συμμιμηταί (“imitators *together*”) is not attested prior to Paul and may be a Pauline coinage. But whether a neologism or not, Paul’s word choice will have made his point hard to miss: the *whole* assembly is to join *together* in following his example. Paul’s readiness to suffer in order “to know Christ” is to become part of the church’s corporate self-understanding or social identity. If some at Philippi have lost sight of this—Paul has asserted this ideal before (3:1b)—Paul insists that others have not (e.g., Epaphroditus), and they too, like Paul, are to be imitated: “and mark those who walk accordingly as you have us for a pattern.”

• **3:18-19** Paul supports the exhortation of 3:17 with two rationale statements in 3:18-19 and 20-21. Together they form a third rhetorical comparison. As in the earlier comparisons in 3:2-3 and 3:4-11, Paul begins with the position he rejects (3:18-19). His rhetoric is again abusive (cf. 3:2), so much so that it is now impossible to identify its targets without appealing to context. But since Paul has remained on topic since 3:1, it is reasonable to assume that he has returned to the group adduced in 3:2, namely, Torah-observant Christ-believers whose faith is no less evangelistic than his own but whose theory of salvation focuses on what Paul calls the “flesh” rather than “Christ.”

Paul has warned the Philippians against these evangelists before: “for many walk, about whom I have spoken to you often [πολλάκις].” He does so now “even weeping.” It is possible that Paul’s emotion is due to the presence of these other teachers at Philippi, but it is more likely that it simply continues his religious pathos and reflects his concern for the Philippians themselves, in whom he discerns an alarming misunderstanding of the role suffering plays in the salvation of the Christ-believer (cf. 1:29; 2:12; 3:10-11). Assuming they ever fully agreed with Paul, it would seem that the Philippians’ experience of actual suffering—both Paul’s and theirs—has led them to question his theology of suffering. Paul warns that this effectively puts them in the company of the Torah-observant whose strategy for relating to God he has taught them to eschew.

The list of insults that follows merits only brief scrutiny. “Enemies of the cross of Christ” reflects the fact that Paul’s competitors do not share his theory of suffering as presaged in the “cross” of Christ (cf. 2:8). “Whose end is destruction” reminds that the outcome of his competitors’ religious practices is not salvation but judgment. “Whose god is the belly and whose glory is in their shame” may be references to food practices and circumcision, respectively, but it is impossible to say with any certainty. Both are strikingly paradoxical. The first, “whose god is the belly,” renders even more pointed a sentiment from Paul’s earlier letter to the

Romans—“people like this do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly!” (Rom 16:18) —while the second, “whose glory is in their shame,” was no doubt chosen at least in part to contrast with “body of glory” in 3:21. Similarly, “who mind earthly things,” anticipates by way of antithesis “for our citizenship exists in the heavens” in 3:20.

• **3:20-21** The second part of the rhetorical comparison comes in 3:20-21. The difference is straightforward and stark. The “enemies” of 3:18-19 are occupied with “earthly things” (ἐπίγεια), while Paul and the Philippians possess a citizenship in “the heavens” (οὐρανοί). The enemies’ end is “destruction” (ἀπώλεια), while Paul and the Philippians await “a savior” (σωτήρ) (cf. 1:28; 1 Thess 1:10). The enemies’ “glory” (δόξα) is shameful (v. 19), while Paul and the Philippians stand to have their bodies transformed to be like Christ’s “body of glory” (σῶμα τῆς δόξης).

Verses 20-21 constitute one of the clearest statements of Paul’s mythology of salvation as metamorphosis: “who will transform [μετασχηματίσει] the body of our humiliation to be conformed [σύμμορφον] to his body of glory.” Believers who are *conformed* to Christ’s death in this life (3:10; συμμορφιζόμενος) will have their bodies *transformed* to be *conformed* to his supremely glorious angelic body in the next. In 2:9-11 it is God who subsumes all things to Christ; here it is Christ’s own power that does so: “in exercise of his power to subject all things to himself.” The expression “the body of his glory” (τὸ σῶμα τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ; cf. 1 Cor 15:40) may indicate that Paul imagined the glorified Christ to be not only God’s Name-bearing angel (2:10) but also the angel who carried the divine “glory” or *kābôd*.

Hermeneia - Philippians: A Commentary.

DEEPER STUDY #3 (Applied Theology Lesson)

1. Read the **WordTruth** article on (*Abiding in God...a Necessity for Christ-like Development*) and write out four bullet points for discussion and/or reflection on how this truth is pertinent to your own Christlikeness.

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