

Citizens of Heaven

Anthony Kim

Before we open up our Bibles this morning, I want to acknowledge a reality that we too often hide when we walk through these doors. Walking out our faith in a fallen world is deeply difficult. We live in a culture that tells us constantly we must perform, we must achieve, we must fix ourselves. It is a daily battle to leave behind our one self-justification type of life and replace it with trusting God and him alone in his word. Humans do not have to be trained to self-justify. It comes naturally due to sin. And if you walked in today feeling exhausted from living this life, I want you to know that your struggle is normal.

By struggle, I mean in the biblical expression framed as tests. You see this found in verses like in James chapter 1 beginning in verse 2 to 4 which encourages viewing trials as joy because it comes from God as a testing of your faith develops perseverance keeps you to not give up because we are ultimately sustained by not our power but by God's power and the Lord uses this. As Christians, we understand faith grows through testing.

And the Lord uses our absolute inability to save ourselves and continue to live the Christian life. And then we get to be seen of what God reveals to us of his infinite capacity to save us and continue to sustain us in the Christian life. This morning, I want to acknowledge a reality that is often said under a whisper. Walking out our faith in a fallen world is a journey of intense testing. If you are a believer here this morning, you know that you are tested by God constantly. But there is a reason. There is a good reason.

You see, in this letter of Philippians, the Apostle Paul does not present a life of ease. We have been walking through this now for the course of three chapters. Instead, he speaks from where? Where is his location? In a prison cell, having endured as his own words momentary and again light afflictions. That is his own words. He has concluded for the sake of what the gospel is important for us to be honest here. It is important for us to understand that these struggles are real. And if you feel the weight of the world and if you feel that you are being tried as it were by fire, you are exactly where the Lord can work.

See, if there was no struggle, if there was no testing, that is a problem. That is a problem. See, Paul himself as he writes these words is facing the possibility of death. Faith grows through testing, not by avoiding it. Paul's life displays what it looks like when God grants a person the grace to adopt the same attitude that was in Christ Jesus.

And what is that? An attitude of radical obedience to God the Father, even unto death. And so this text that we are going to read from this morning, we are invited to mark and to be inventive in seeing a pattern of what is the pattern of grace. There are those that are living by the patterns of grace and those are to whom we are to follow. And then he says to mark those that avoid the grace of God and he places them before us. It is not our own strength as a reminder that allows us to walk the path of grace. Rather, it is God providing us with examples of his power working through people, namely broken people and people that are struggling with tests of all sorts.

This is what we are going to see now as you open up your Bible with me to Philippians chapter 3 and we are going to be in verse 17 and we are going to go all the way to verse 21. And so if you can please go ahead and stand out of the respect of God's word. We are going to look at Philippians chapter 3 beginning in verse 17. I just want you to think and see two patterns. One is to follow, one is to avoid. And then we are going to see Paul lift our eyes to the glorious hope that anchors us, namely Christ coming. and he will transform us by his power. So beginning in verse 17, this is God's word.

Brethren, be followers together of me and mark them which walk so as ye have us. for an example. For many walk of whom I have told you often and I will tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame who mind earthly things.

For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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. May God bless the reading of his word. You may be seated. Verse 17 is as we are going to see is God empowers the pattern of grace. God empowers the pattern of grace. Verse 17, Paul writes, "Brethren, be followers together of me and mark them which walk so as he have us for example." Initially here in this text, you may appear as though Paul is calling us to a life of fleshly striving, as if we are expected to pull ourselves up and try harder to replicate his walk and Timothy's walk through our own strength.

But as one commentary rightly notes about this verse, Paul presents himself together with Timothy as a pattern. This is not pride but it is conviction by God.

He was following Christ who was his example. 1 Corinthians 11:1 he says be ye followers of me as even I also am of Christ.

Paul is not boasting here. He is not saying look at my strength. No rather he is saying look at what God has done in shaping my mindset.

Paul's willing to say follow me. My life displays what it looks like to adopt the attitude of Christ because after all we saw in verse 5-8 of chapter 2 the mind of Christ that we are supposed to adopt. So God uses the lives of mature believers namely in Paul and Timothy to paint a picture of what his grace for us is. See, we cannot imitate what we do not see and know. Imitation is you literally see and you know what to follow. And that is Paul and Timothy here. But the beautiful truth is that we do not imitate this pattern through our own fleshly striving. Not at all. It is God's grace producing Christ's mindset in him.

And in Timothy, he is a man who openly admits, by the way, in many other passages that he has written, he talks about his weakness. He talks about his needs. He talks about his longing for Christ. And despite of all that is going on in his flesh, he has a clear sense a clear sense of his limitations or rather his shortcomings and his eager straining toward a unreached perfection. We saw that in Philippians 3 12-4. The word that is used there was apprehended of Christ. And I want to just touch on this that I did not get to mention in my first sermon when I was preaching this text, but that word apprehended means to be seized. It means to be being seized by Christ. And not only just being seized, but seized for his purposes.

See, he indicates a total life transformation. Not just spiritually, but also intellectually in his mind as well as physically in his body. the way Christ suffered while he was on earth. You see, there are three verses to explain this total transformation that I just illustrated. 2 Corinthians 3:18 puts it this way. But we all with open face beholding as in a glass or a mirror the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord. What we see here in this text is the process that is known as sanctification. Becoming more and more like Christ where the spirit changes believers hearts and minds to match Christ character which is on ongoing of enablement by God's power within us again the Holy Spirit in us.

Then we look at Romans 8:29 which reads, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." And this verse means that God's ultimate purpose for believers is to transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. And the last one, Romans 12:2. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that is good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

And that text is talking about not living according to the world's standards, but by God's standards found in his own word. So what do we see here? the total transformation both physical, intellectual and spiritual spiritually and ultimately it is the Holy Spirit within us who conforms us to this exact pattern. You see Paul's humility is not contradicted by these words. Rather we see a clear consciousness of a direction and set of his life and it is what it is God that sets his direction. It is God who sets the pattern for his life to become

more and more conformed to the image of his son. See, God graciously provides the spiritual examples to demonstrate that his grace is sufficient. So when Paul says follow me, he is really saying follow the work of Christ in me. That is what he is saying.

So that is verse 17. And then he is going to in parenthesis he puts in verse 18 to 19. It is a thought within a thought. So he is saying this is how our example is according to me and Timothy. And then he puts this thought within a thought. Here are some patterns that you are going to see in those who you should avoid. So read along with me.

Verse 18 and 19 says this. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Verse 18 goes back to Philippians 1 15-16. He marked them, these people to avoid. He said, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife and some also of good will."

And so he is saying, "The one who preached Christ of contention, not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my bonds," meaning putting more pain upon his pain and suffering in prison.

And then we see beyond that in Philippians 2 verse 6 where it says who being I am sorry not verse 6 I made the mistake on the verse but continuing on in the text verse 18 and 19 let's focus in on this passage here we see that God rescues us from earthly ruin the sorrow of the earthly mindset.

So the one opposed to Christ's mindset has the mind of earthly mindset. These are the ones to mark and avoid.

So verse 18 and 19, Paul moves from the beauty of God's grace to a heartbreaking warning.

He says in Philippians 3:18, I want you to see that words even weeping. You see, he was talking about these people often. And that is the verses in first Philippians 1:15 and 16.

He is saying now you see their pattern how they started. We do not know exactly where they are, but he is telling them look they are on their way to destruction. That they are on their way to destruction.

And so he is saying I weep for them. He I weep for them because they are ultimately what does he say? The enemies of the cross of Christ. Not an enemy to Paul, not an enemy to Timothy, but ultimately an enemy of Christ.

I often say this, do not take things personally. Well, here is the text. They are ultimately enemies of the cross of Christ. Notice Paul's reaction. He does not look down in anger. Again, he is heartbroken. He is weeping for them. To think of these people causes him to weep. He weeps because God has revealed the tragic end of life. Focus solely on what? The here and the now. The here and the now. That is their focus.

And this passage, we must see what God is doing to protect our hearts. That is what he wants to do with us as believers. He is trying to protect our hearts because left to ourselves, we are prone to what? Self justification. That is our sinful nature. and serving our own appetites or desires.

And so he speaks more often about his feelings. There are other texts and I am going to go to them. Acts 20:31 says this, "Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I cease not to warn everyone night and day with tears."

And then we see in 2 Corinthians 2:4, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you."

These individuals are often those that are religious but lost, have adopted a mindset that opposes the cross.

And what does it mean to be enemies of the cross of Christ? You may ask. It is not someone who verbally say they hate Jesus. It is not someone who denies the gospel verbally. It is nuanced. They are those who rely on themselves ultimately and their earthly desires instead of resting in Christ. They might not say it, but that is ultimately what they are thinking in their heart and their mind.

There are certainly people who mouth full of biblical truths. Have you seen heard of those people? They can just preach the gospel like verses five and six of chapter 1. They can preach the gospel to and they can be saying it, but they do not actually reckon it to their life or think of it and live it as truth.

These are the ones that do not actually practically live the gospel. They just know how to say it, but they do not live it. And they so these are the ones that are ultimately trusting in their own selves and are selfseeking. Those are envious and causing strife. And so these are the ones to observe, watch their pattern. Are they living according to what they actually say about the gospel? Is Christ really dwelling in them by the spirit of God?

Because the reality is of the ones that struggle in this regard, this is what happens. the world presents the many attractions and these people go for them. They go and they just enjoy all the attractions of this world yet simultaneously contains many dangers for the

soul. But yet they do not see the danger. God does not they do not see the instruction written on the wall as it were. They just blindly go and just go after the world and they do not even discern. They do not even care if there is something dangerous behind those motives.

Other things, a reality of these individuals, they become wholly absorbed in the earthly pursuits and that that serves to wean their own soul away from the Lord from holiness and from their true home in heaven. This is their home. The temporal is their home.

Next, the deceptive desires of the flesh lure these people towards selfindulgence manifesting in gluttony, wild partying, drunkenness, lack of modesty, decency in their dress and extravagance. Everything has to be luxurious. Everything has to be perfect in a sense. And in the impurity of their speech is their lies, their conduct. Their conduct.

And so when we try to navigate life on our own strength, these are typically those in their own strength, they inevitably serve their own appetites. And the scripture reminds us that the to walk in the flesh is to have our appetite as our God. One commentator puts it this way that the appetites of their God is the God that they truly serve, not God, the real God of scripture. You see, they make their senses their gods. Their senses are they are great in their senses, but that is not a good thing, is it?

And so they preserve the proud look, the proud conduct, the attitude of one that is marked as one that is not of God, but their God is their belly, their senses. And they are proud of it. They are proud of it. They do not see any disgrace in it. No shame.

And their essence is they seek Christ without the cross. Comfort without surrender, blessing without obedience. Their God is their appetite. See, the enemies of the cross are often those who want the joys of Christ without the burden of the cross. However, God is the one who empowers the believer to see that the cross is not a sign of defeat, but the radical separation between the soul and a world that is passing away.

God is the one that sustains us. He keeps us anchored on the true foundation, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. As he said in Matthew 7, "The one that hears my word and does it is found on the foundation of the rock."

He protects us from the sand that drifts with the culture, just goes with the appetites of the world and is not anchored to anything but themselves. Praise God. He does not allow that to happen to us as believers. Amen. And so Paul says in Philippians 3:19, he says, "Whose end is destruction with weeping by the way, whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

This passage to those whom God has allowed to be ruled by their own sensual desires and worldly comforts, God just lets them go. He shows us that when we find our glory in things that should cause shame, we are at the lowest depth. That is what he means by minding earthly things. Just always on the things of this earth. That is all they think about. No heavenly thought, no resurrection, no second coming of Christ, none of that.

This passage is so alarming because again it is at the lowest depth when someone is minding these things. But even there his word reaches out to them. There is still grace. There is still grace. There is no destruction yet. They are on that trajectory, but there is still grace. There is still grace. You see, it is about being ruled not by the desires that God wants. He wants us to be ruled by Christ and his mind.

See, it comes down to trusting themselves or trusting in Christ. Following their example will lead to destruction. Their lives would be wrecked because of their continual bad choices in this life. And so he uses God uses this as a warning to the church because at the end of it all, if this is a biblical church, there will be lost among us. And so this text is to be preached in the church, particularly here at Calvary Road to preach this text. See, earthly mindedness always leads to destruction. Earthly mindedness always leads to destruction. Not because God is a cruel master, but because earthly things cannot sustain the soul. We were not created for the temporal. We were created for the eternity, for eternal things, things that of our heavenly sort.

You see, we need God. God is the only one that can step into our lives to reveal that this life is short. It is temporal and it is meaningless. At the end of the day, our meaning is not found on the things of this earth. Our meaning is found in our savior Jesus Christ, our Lord.

We need God to rescue us from the broad way, the way on which many walk along that leads to destruction. Following the words of the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:13, "Enter ye in at the straight gate. For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at. We cannot save ourselves from our own nature. Only God's merciful intervention can deliver us. Only God's merciful intervention can deliver us. And then this brings us to the next verse, verse 20. We see the end of those that are earthly minded. And he points us now to heaven. The exact opposite of earthly mindedness to live as citizens of heaven, to be secured in God, in our heavenly home and the reality of our true home, which is again in heaven.

Verse 20. Verse 20 says this, "For our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." See, our reality as believers is entirely different. It is as you recall in Philippians chapter 1 verse 27 Paul said this only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ as you recall in that sermon the word

conversation here does not mean spoken speech but rather refers to our conduct our behavior our manner of life and ultimately our citizenship.

Our citizenship shapes our identity, right? When we say we are Americans, we hold on to its values, its rights, right? His declarations. If you are living in another part of the world, your identity is that specific country. You are bound by those laws and those rules.

And just like mentioning about citizenship here on earth, same applied back in Philippi. I shared about how it is a Roman, it was a Roman colony. Now, we do not know too much about colonization because it does not happen now like it used to, but that word colony meant that they were part of Rome. Even though they were far away from Rome, a thousand miles or so away, they lived by Rome's customs and laws.

Likewise, when we live here on earth, our identity, our values, our hopes, our joy are shaped by heaven, not by earth. You see, let us look at the historical context. Philippi was a Roman colony in Asia Minor. It was far from Rome, but the citizens of this city had to live as citizens held up by the name of Rome. And then we by contrast as Christians we are not in this tenses in this in the context of were a colony of Rome as it were but we are called what is called ambassadors. That word ambassador means our true homeland is somewhere else. And where that is is in heaven. That is our permanent location. This is temporal. Everything here is temporal. Our possessions are temporal. Everything that we hold on to is temporal. So we are in essence this is our foreign land and that is our true home in heaven.

So hear this clearly. You do not earn your salvation by working for it. God ultimately grants it to us. Where Christ is that is our permanent home. Christ is there in heaven and he made the promise. I go to prepare a place for you. Christ prepared it. Christ secures it by what he did for us on the cross.

And God reorients our expectations. We are no longer looking to the earth for our ultimate satisfaction. Yes, it is okay to be satisfied in enjoyments of God's beauty. Absolutely. But that is not the thing that holds us to our permanency of our soul.

We are no longer looking to the earth for our ultimate satisfaction. Our hearts are so full are so full of our homeland that we long to move in there soon. Amen. That is why you see these expressions, Lord, come quickly. Lord, come quickly. This is why we expect the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says, "From whence," in verse 20, "From whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." We are looking forward to the homecoming. Verse 20, "It is he that is the goal towards which we travel on this earth." As soldiers, we promise to come soon. John 14:1 says this, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God,

and the dead in Christ shall rise first. He is the great deliverer who will set us free from the bondage of this world, the suffering and the sorrow of this present world. completed in its fullness.

The salvation of our homecoming is now in progress. It is in progress. The moment we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our savior and lord, it is in progress. Our homecoming is for sure. And so we as believers in Christ are waiting for the king to arrive. We do not wait in our own strength. God maintains our hope by reminding us that Jesus Christ is our savior. That is why he uses that word here. He is not talking about our salvation primarily. He is talking about he will deliver us. He will deliver us from this world, from the very presence, namely of sin and of evil.

This is a cursed world we live in. There will be one day a new earth where there will be no more sin and no more evil. You see even when we feel like strangers here God is the one who keeps our hearts full of our true homeland. And now we go into verse 21 where we see God's ultimate transformation. Verse 21. 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. You see here, we all know the frailty of our physical bodies. Here is the ultimate display of what God does. We do not change ourselves. We do not fix our vile which is corrupt due to sin bodies. These bodies are subject to diseases and pain and temptations. We are constantly being subjected by these things.

But God has promised a miraculous remaking. Amen. When the Lord Jesus comes to take the church to be with him, we are going to get a glorified body. And this body will know no more sadness, no more pain, and no more fatigue because it is not going to be our power, our own strength anymore. That is our sinful nature. We do not know how much God's power is really living in us, but it is there. But it is a mixture of our own strength. But God will ultimately it will be all of his power, all of his strength, all of his glory in this glorified body that he will give us. And how is this done? We are going to see how it is the entirety of the work of God.

Number one, God shall change our body. He will take this vile body of our current physical existence and transform it. Number two, God fashions it or fashions our glorious body in this way. He will provide a realized ideal. And who is that you may ask? The resurrected Christ. The resurrected Christ.

And number three, God exerts he will exert his power upon this body. This transformation is not going to be a natural process. It is going to be according to the working of his omnipotence. The very power that subdues, as he says, Paul says in this

text, the power that controls this whole universe is going to be the same power that is going to be worked on our glorified bodies by his mighty power.

He will raise this vile body from the grave and refine it and fashion it like unto the glorious body of Christ. This is ultimately our blessed hope. This is what we are hoping for. And it is truly blessed that the ultimate source of our end is not destruction but eternal life. Eternal life in this glorious body. And God you will use the whole power that subjects the entire universe to himself. Will use it for this completion of our salvation in our glorification. And let me just repeat the words of Philippians 1:6. Christ finishes what he starts. Amen. He finishes what he starts. Brothers and sisters, entire Christian life from the shaping of our minds today to the resurrection of our bodies tomorrow. The testament to what God does, not what we do. We do not have to exhaust ourselves trying to earn heaven. That never will enter our minds. We are already citizens. Mark that. Remember that you are a citizen of heaven.

By doing so, you will have the right perspective living this life in our bodies in the course of this world and all the things that we are bombarded with that all of it is like Paul says a light affliction. It is momentary. That is the only way he is able to do that because his mind is on Christ. So as we prepare to close, I invite you to consider these things, to meditate on these things, not just this morning, but throughout the week.

And I ask you, what is the one step of obedience you are Lord? So in your heart, what is it you are calling me to take today? Is there anything in this message that spoke and resonated with you? That God used his word, his spirit so that you may acknowledge him in all his ways, that you may d that he may direct your path. But it is based on trusting in the Lord with all of your heart. And do not lean on your understanding. Do not lean on the flesh. This is the way the Lord works.

And perhaps you are he has calling you to acknowledge a struggle that you are experiencing right now that you are kind of pushing it aside as it were. But trust the Lord in his sufficiency that his grace is sufficient in your weakness. You just need to be honest with the Lord and he will help you in your weakness. You see, the world does not want to acknowledge their weakness. They want to acknowledge your strength, do not they? But as believers, we are to always acknowledge our weakness because that is where grace is found. That is where grace is needed because we want him to sustain us and to keep us having the life of that looks more and more like Christ. Perhaps he is reorienting your mind away from an earthly thing. If there is something earthly here on this earth that you are just a grip on, do not make that mistake of making it your God. Those are strong words. These are words of scripture. See, when you put it as the word of God says, it is more clear, is not it? You see, the world says, "Chase after the things of this world. Do

not let anyone tell you otherwise." Scripture says, "No, that is destruction. That is destruction.

Perhaps he is calling you to simply rest in the fact that your citizenship is already secured in heaven. Maybe there is some insecurity that is going on in this room. Know that you are secured in heaven because Christ is there and he is the one securing you. And let me just say this is clarifying, is not it? that this is why we can be called believers that we think about these things. We do not just let these thoughts go. Paul, as he said, he is I am often telling you these things. Why? Because we have this battle of the flesh and the spirit. Always acknowledge that there must continue to be that battle until there is complete rest in our heavenly home. Perhaps you are here and you do not have any understanding what rest is. You have no understanding of what I am talking about a struggle and test from God. You have no idea what it means to have a mind of Christ. I also speak to you because if you do not have any of these thoughts, it is because you have yet trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior and lord. You have not trusted him to save you from your sin. Your sin is still your bondage. I speak to you. It is to you that Christ calls you to come to him at our heavy laden that he will give you rest. And the Bible says these words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Believe in him. Simply believe and he will save you. Amen.

Let us pray.

Father, thank you so much for all that we have in Christ. Thank you. It is not based on our efforts to live this Christian life, but it is all of what Christ has done for us and on the cross. Thank you, Father, for giving us a mindset of Christ so that we can live the life that pleases you because Christ is the one that is obedient to you and that we can have the same mindset perfected in us. Lord, we thank you for all the good things that you give to us in Christ Jesus. Help us, Father, to be secure in our citizenship in heaven. Help us to hold loosely to the things of this world and to know that Christ is the one that holds on to us.

I pray, Father, that you would bless to descend to my brothers and sisters in Christ. And I also lift up to you those that are not found in Christ. Lord, you know them, Father. And I pray that they would come to know thy son Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. that they would know that they can find rest in him because he is the one that did all the work of salvation for them on the cross once and for all. Help them to come as they are. For you has said that while we are yet sinners, Christ died for us. Father, bless to this end where we will rejoice in whatever you have for us because we will thank you in Jesus precious name. Amen.

Amen.

I want to just say a few words. If you are carrying any burdens in this room know that I am here available for you this morning afternoon. I am here for you. I will take the time to pray with you to personally counsel you and offer any encouragement that you may need. I am available. So, I will be here in the building standing right here for you to come by and I will be my pleasure will be to speak with you this afternoon.

All right. So, thank you. We will go ahead and close at this time.