

Lent 2  
Philippians 3:17-4:1  
February 28, 2010

Paul wrote, "Join with others in following my example. Take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. That is how you should stand firm in the Lord." On the other hand, the Apostle warns us against being like those who "live as enemies of the cross of Christ."

Clearly the focus of these verses of God's Word is to encourage Christians to live as Christians. But what does 'live as Christians' mean? And what does it mean to say many people live as enemies of the cross of Christ?

These words of God encourage us to

Live as People Who Are Citizens of Heaven.

How does God want His people to live? He wants them to live as citizens of heaven.

We should pay attention to the fact that our citizenship is in heaven. It's not going to happen. It already is! We are citizens of heaven.

The Apostle also lets us know the essence of heaven. It's where our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is. In fact, Jesus is the focal point of heaven.

Who is this Jesus who is in heaven? He is the One who, from heaven, came here once already. He came as the Lord God eternal in the flesh. He came to live and die here for you and me, for the world, for all. His sinless life is our righteousness. His death is payment for all our sins. Jesus is the One who rose from the dead after the voluntary giving of His life as the price for our forgiveness. Jesus Christ is the One who, after six weeks of infallible proofs of His rising from the dead, ascended into heaven. There, in His native, eternal glory, Jesus rules over everything by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control.

Think about that. In heaven, Jesus, our Savior, has the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control – everything. That's what it means to be almighty. Jesus is the Ruler of heaven! And our citizenship is in heaven with Jesus.

And from heaven our Savior is going to come a second time. When he does, Jesus will give to every single person who died in the faith or who is living by faith in our Savior a glorious body like His glorious body.

At present, we have a lowly body. Sin has made our body very lowly. Our current bodily life is temporary and troubled. Accident, injury, sickness, disability and pain are

reality. Death is too! The fact that sin lives in us only makes it all worse because sin has potentially sickened our souls to the point of death as well. That's our lowly body. But we have a Savior from sin, from death. He died and rose again. He lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, on God, now and forever! When He comes – and we eagerly await that – by His almighty power – He will transform our lowly bodies into bodies that will be like His eternal, glorious body. He'll share His glory with us.

We are strangers here on Earth, temporary travelers through. Heaven is our home, heaven where we have a Savior. His name is Jesus. He is the Christ, the One anointed as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

May all this help us view Earth and world as a desert drear by comparison. It is important that we not get too attached to earthly things.

Let us NOT have our minds on earthly things. What we have a passion for we will have our minds on. Let our stomach not be our god. Of earthly priorities, interests, cravings, desires, wants – i.e. earthly success, wealth, power, influence, happiness, and especially the epidemic of “Me-ism” – is what really runs my life, then my god is my belly, just as surely as hunger drives me to crave something to eat. If what I want is my god, my mind will only be on that.

Let my glory not be in my shame. That means that I glory in, delight in, brag about something that will only bring me shame. If this earth and its interests are my glory, then I will be shamed because this whole world is passing away and it certainly will not be able to help me when I pass away.

I **am an** enemy of the cross of Christ if my mind is on earthly things, if my stomach is my god, if I glory in anything other than Jesus. I am an enemy of the cross of Christ if I look to myself for salvation. On the cross, Jesus earned our forgiveness, new life and eternal salvation. That is why He is the Savior. Spiritual self-sufficiency is foolishness. Only Jesus has raised Himself from the dead, so only He has conquered sin. Sin is the cause of death. Satan uses sin and death to destroy people. This is why Me-worshippers have a destiny with destruction (hell).

Instead, let's follow Paul's example, which illustrates the pattern he and his co-workers have given to the Christians to go by.

Paul humbly confessed that, though a Christian and Apostle for a long time, he still had not reached the goal. He was still far, far from perfect. Let us confess that we are sinners.

Paul forgot his spotted past and strained forward. We can forget our faulted past with Jesus' forgiveness.

Paul pressed on. He strained forward just like we have seen so many athletes do at the Winter Olympics. Those athletes have worked and worked, trained, and practiced on and on. And during their event, they are focused. They put every ounce of strength into it. That's how we need to be as we struggle to overcome sin and Satan as we head for the glory Christ has for us at the finish line. Our glory is going to be far greater than a metal. It will be glorious life with Jesus.

Jesus has first taken hold of us by the Good News of forgiveness, life and heaven so that we can take hold of His forgiveness, life and heaven. The Father has called us, by the Holy Spirit – provided Gospel, to heaven. By faith in Jesus, we are brother and sisters of Jesus, the Son of God. We are royal citizens of heaven because of Jesus. This is how to stand firm in our Lord. This is how to live as citizens of heaven now! Amen.