

Philippians 3:15-21 - Citizens or Enemies

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Date: 24 November 2024

Preacher: Seth Campbell

[0 : 0 0] Philippians chapter 3 verse 15 to verse 21. All of us then who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

For as I have often told you before and now tell you again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame.

Their mind is set on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. He by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Great, thanks, sir. Over to you. Thank you. Really appreciate you guys coming tonight.

[1 : 1 4] It is an honor to be here. Steve, you kind of set me up great with all those questions, so we're going to go right into the introduction. As he was reading there, as he says, on page 1180, make sure that you're there.

We're going to refer back to the scripture just a few times here today, so I want you to see that it is in there. So as was mentioned, I am not from here. I am from the United States, from a small state called Arkansas.

And, well, I've lived in London now with my wife for three years, as this kind of already established. And one of the things that Megan and I truly love about London is leaving.

I say that jokingly. I love the cheap flights out of London specifically. My wife and I specialize in that 6 a.m. special from Stansted Airport.

You know, the London airport of Stansted. You have to travel an hour and a half to get to. We can leave, and, you know, you have to leave. You've got to get there early, so you're leaving like 2, 3 a.m.

[2 : 1 5] But honestly, it's not that bad because you have certain anticipation of where you're going, right? You are ready and excited to go on holiday for wherever you're going.

The problem is that normally if you take the cheap flight out, you're also taking the cheap flight back. And there's no anticipation and excitement when you're coming back in.

You just want to be home. Most of the time, when I go, I've spent too much money. I'm not well rested. I've tried to do too many things and packed into a short amount of time. And I just really want to sleep in my own bed.

I don't know if that's just me in here. So all of these things can add up for just wanting to get home quick. That is why I am thankful. If you've traveled recently, you know I'm thankful for this invention right here.

That is the automatic passport gate. And so if you've traveled, you've seen these, and if you've used one, basically you just walk up to the machine, put your passport on the scanner.

[3 : 15] It scans you, takes a picture of you. 10, 15 seconds, you're in, you're out. They are amazing. Because you just want to be home. You know, you just want to get through and be home.

But if you've also been to an airport before, you realize that not everybody gets to go to these gates, right? There are some people that go towards the automatic gates, and there's other people that have to have their passport checked by border control.

And when my wife and I moved here, this actually happened to her, not to me, but it happened to her. So when we moved in, she goes up to the border control, the automatic border control gates, puts her passport on, and it goes, you got to go see the border control guy.

And so after initial panic of, oh no, what did I do wrong? Megan starts, walks over to the border control guy, talks to him for a while, and then comes back. I got through, so I was just waiting on her.

So after she comes up, it's like, what happened? Are you a threat to national security? They said, no, when I came, basically they had to verify my visa. This is the first time that her and I had ever come into the country, so they need to verify her visa.

[4 : 22] But see, if you're a UK citizen, then you can automatically go through the gates. You can go through the automatic gates, it doesn't matter. Why? Well, it's because you have the right to be here.

You belong. See, when Megan and I moved from the United States to the United Kingdom, we had to have permission. Basically, the UK government looked at us and said, what can you bring to the table for us to take you in, right?

Are you going to be a burden? Or are you going to be a benefit to our country and our society? See, citizens don't have to answer that question.

You're either born into the community or you earned it from staying here or one other way. You get to be here. You don't have to answer that question. And that's what Paul is going to say in this passage.

See, citizens get to inherit the benefits of the society. And Paul is saying that citizens of heaven are going to get to inherit certain benefits. But there's also other people that actually live their life in opposition.

[5 : 26] And so in order to kind of grasp what Paul is saying here in Philippians chapter 3, we're going to divide this into two categories. There's supposed to be something else in there, but that's okay.

Citizens and enemies. So you're going to have two categories if you're taking notes. Citizens and enemies. But before we get into that, let me pray for us one more time. And then we'll dive in to the text.

Father in heaven, thank you so much for today. I thank you for the opportunity to get to preach. Father, I pray that I be the hands and feet of you, that these would not be my words spoken, that they would be yours. Lord, and I pray, Lord, that you just use me.

Pray that I be concise and clear. I pray all of this in your name. Amen. So we're going to start with citizens because that's where Paul starts. There's two marks of a citizen if you look in verse 15 through 17.

The first part, some things are not coming up there, but that's okay. The first part is sanctification. That's the word that's missing in that slide. We'll get that figured out. But sanctification is what Paul is saying, and he's saying becoming more like Jesus.

[6 : 37] That's just the simple word. Sanctification can be a churchy word. It just means becoming more like Jesus. And if you look at the text, we get this from the text.

Look at verse 15. Paul says, if you are mature, you take such a view of things. And when he says you have this mature viewpoint, what does he mean by mature? Well, we have to understand, like, who is Paul talking about here?

We let the text define the text. In verse 12, the Greek word for mature is the same one in verse 15 that's translated as perfect. It's translated perfect in verse 12, sorry.

So the Greek word mature in verse 15 is translated perfect in verse 12. So then we have to understand, okay, so what does Paul mean by perfect? We're kind of diving down here. Don't worry, we'll come back up. But Paul says in verse 14 that, and he explains what it means to be made perfect.

He says, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. So basically, what we're talking about here is a mark, the first mark of a citizen is one that presses on with a heavenward look.

[7 : 42] Not focused on earthly things, but focused on what is going to happen and what the Lord has promised in heaven. So now that we understand, like, what this mature believer is, we also need to understand what Paul is saying when he says such a view of things.

Again, the previous verses are going to help us understand. We don't take the text just out of context, but in context. That's why context is keen. In verse 7 through 14, Paul says, if you look heavenward, this life of a person that has such a view of things looks heavenward and is not focused on the earthly.

This is capped in verse 10 when Paul says, I want to know Christ, yet to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, I got to become like him in his death.

So citizens have eyes on their heavenly gain, not earthly reward. Basically, again, as I've kind of used the picture, focused up here, not on things that are happening.

That's the first mark of a citizen. The second mark of a citizen is one that holds true. Yeah, no. One that holds true to the things that have been attained.

[8 : 52] If you look in your Bible at verse 16, as I said, look back there, Paul says, live up to. Those three words in our English NIV translation is the Greek word stoiken.

And what that means, it literally means to follow. You see, this was a military term that kind of describes following in a line.

If you want to think about it, it's kind of like this picture here. Think about soldiers that are in sync when they're marching. So this would have been a vivid picture for the Philippians, if you think about it.

So the Philippians in Philippi was a Roman colony. What that means is that they were a Greek colony, they got captured. Rome made them a Roman colony, and a lot of veterans of the war decided to take land in Philippi.

So there was a lot of veterans and a lot of Roman soldiers. So the people of Philippi would have been very understanding of this picture here, of soldiers marching to and fro.

[10 : 01] And so these soldiers of Rome, you know, this is a picture of the Royal Guard in London. But the picture in Rome, this was also what they've been doing, walking step in step with each other.

So you think about it, there's a Roman historian named Vegetus. And in this, he wrote this three-volume manuscript. And basically, he talks about this stoicing, of this marching, of the Roman Empire, and how, of the Roman, sorry, not the Roman Empire, the Roman soldiers, and how important it was.

He says in that manuscript that the constant practice of marching quick and together, and nothing is more of constant, consequence either on the march or in the line, than that they should keep their ranks with the greatest exactness.

For troops who march in an irregular and disorderly manner are always in great danger of being defeated. So what is Paul saying when he's using this Greek word *stoiken*?

He's saying that citizens hold true. They stay in step with the words of Jesus or they will fall apart. So it's basically, Paul is saying that there's a picture here. And in verse 17, he's going to explain it further if you look in the text.

[11 : 15] Join with me in the example that I laid out. Paul is not being boastful here. He's not saying he's got it all figured out. In fact, again, context. In verse 13, he says, I have not taken a hold of this completely.

But that picture of *stoiken* basically is Paul standing here and he's writing a letter to the Philippians saying, follow in my footsteps. Be in step line with me right behind me.

Why? Because I'm following Jesus in front. I'm step, line, and hill. Paul is saying we all need to be in one line together, like the soldiers.

And so basically, if you're not in line, what did the Roman *vegetus*, what did the Roman tactician say? You're going to fall apart. And so that naturally leads into Paul's next argument.

So you have citizens of heaven, but then you also have enemies of the cross. In verse 18, we get this second category. So look back at verse 18. It says, For as I often told you before, and I'll tell you again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

[12 : 25] Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. So who's Paul talking about here? Well, we don't know for sure, but a lot of historians think that Paul is talking about Christians that were in the Philippian community that had fallen away.

And Paul describes them as people that their stomach is their God, they glory in their shame, and their mind is set on earthly things.

Does this sound familiar? Sounds a lot like London, doesn't it? The stomach is their God. Another way of saying that is their desires rule them.

They're never satisfied. It could be sexual desires. It could be power desires. It could be money desires. Whatever it is, they think if it's good for them, they should just do it.

Is that not what society is telling us around this? What about the next part? Glory in their shame. Anybody watch any rubbish TV lately? Like, whatever the Kardashians are doing, I can't keep up with them.

[13 : 33] Or, you know, Love Island or any of that. Those shows thrive off of the dysfunction. That's what's bringing people to those shows is to see how absolutely dysfunctional it can get, right?

And I'm not shaming anybody here. I've seen those things. But that's what makes them popular. They're actually getting glory for their shame. And if you look at verse 19, there's, Paul says, their minds are set on earthly things.

Whatever that is, one more pay rise, one more relationship, one more emotional or spiritual or physical high. Just one more. That's just what they want. One more something.

That'll bring me fulfillment. And this is quintessential London. I mean, every time you get on the tube, what is society trying to push you with the advertisements? Every time you open up your phone, get on social media, turn on the TV, what is society trying to tell you?

I'm trying to tell you this. This is a picture I took just in a shop the other day. Loving yourself is the best thing you can do. You are the foremost authority on your life. Do what makes you happy.

[14 : 42] Your desires are right. You do you is the classic phrase for this type of society, right? The British missionary to India, Leslie Newbigin, he described this as pluralism.

And he defines pluralism as there is no right or wrong styles of life. Perhaps the only thing that is really wrong is condemning as wrong the lifestyle of another in the field of personal values, pluralism reigns.

There is no right or wrong. If it feels good, do it. Can I level with you here for a second? Nobody actually believes this.

You're saying, you spent five minutes explaining it. What do you mean nobody believes this? Let me tell you. Follow my thinking here for a second. As was mentioned earlier, I'm an American, right? And like the rest of the world, except for any place that Britain colonized, Americans drive on the right side of the road, right?

So whenever I drive, I get in my car, I want to drive on the right side of the road. I desire it. I want it.

[15 : 58] It's the way that I was taught. It's the way I believe to be right. And a majority of countries do it that way. So what would you say if we hopped in the car to go on a road trip somewhere and I said, great, I'll drive and hopped in and started driving on the right side of the road.

The first thing would probably be, the joke would be on me because I would get in on the left-hand side of the car thinking that's where the steering wheel would be instead of the right. But if, say, I got that right and I was driving us straight into traffic, head-on collision incoming, what would you say?

You'd say I'm a lunatic, right? You would say I'm crazy. You'd say I have a death wish. And hopefully, you would take the wheel before my driving kills you, me, and whoever else is in that other car, right?

You would say, I'm wrong. See, my feelings do not matter when it comes to life or death.

There is an absolute right and there is an absolute wrong. So we're new to this relationship, right? It's the first time I've gotten to speak here. We'll see if it's my last.

[17 : 20] I want to make a slightly bold statement here. Our feelings, friends, do not matter when it comes to the merger of our two churches.

Let me clarify so that nobody mishears me. This is the prominent thing that's happening in our church culture right now, right? When I say our, I mean it. The people of West Kilburn Baptist Church, the people of Redeemer Queens Park, our preferences, our feelings, do not matter when it comes to the merger.

What does matter? That's the question that we need to be asking, right, in all of this. And it's the Lord and His mission. Do you know what the mission of God is? I had somebody ask me this question recently and I said, absolutely I know what the mission of God is.

And I said, it's the Great Commission. Yeah, yeah, it's the Great Commission. Love the Lord your God with all, nope, sorry, that's the wrong one. Make disciples, baptize them, and teach them, right?

I was wrong. And not that the Great Commission isn't a part of the mission of God. But the mission of God is to bring glory to Himself.

[18 : 41] Bringing glory to God matters over everything that we can do. As a people of Christ, we have to determine if we are going to live our lives as citizens of heaven by bringing glory to God or if we're going to live our lives as enemies of the cross doing what we want to do, what we feel is right and wrong.

So in our specific instance, as two Bible-believing churches that want to bring the glory of God in Queen's Park and Kilburn, what does that look like? Well, it looks like having a faithful gospel witness that is not just surviving in this community, but is thriving.

Guys, this is a picture that we can all get behind, right? This is a part of a community that becomes such a part, a gospel community that becomes such a part of the Queen's Park and Kilburn community that people cannot imagine a time when this church was not reaching the people of God and was not a benefit to their community.

I can't imagine a time when we weren't here serving them and bringing them the good news of great joy that will be for all people.

So how does this get accomplished? That's to be determined. I don't know. Could be emerged, could not be. But I pray that our feelings would not make this decision because our feelings can change really quick.

[20 : 13] Just a moment of personal awareness for the three people in the room from Redeemer. I'm going to be speaking on behalf of us here so that you can go up to them and ask if I'm wrong. But a moment of personal awareness.

Your feelings can change quickly because I've been a part of Redeemer for three years now. I know there's some things about us that we have some faults. We're pretty loud. We're not very tidy. And we're young, but we're old enough to think that we know what we're doing.

Right? Kind of like a teenager. And it won't take but two weeks if the merger does happen for somebody, for the flesh of yourself to go, this was a bad idea.

But in all of this, what is the Lord saying? What is going to bring him the most glory? That's the question we have to ask.

And if we go back to the passage as we're looking through, Paul does not leave it here. He does not say, hey, there's two camps. There's enemies and there's citizens. Hope you find the right one.

[21 : 19] Good luck. And walk away. No. Paul says there's a great promise for us. And if you look at verses 20 and 21, we'll unpack it. Verse 20 says, but our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Kind of go back to the illustration of border control. There we go. When Megan and I entered the country, what was the question they asked? What can you bring to the table?

What can you bring to the table? How does Paul say that we become citizens of heaven here? Look at 17. Paul says, follow his example. And what is Paul's example?

Well, it's not a what, it's a who. It's Jesus Christ. Jesus is a perfect example. So again, that picture of stoic in there, Paul is saying, follow me as I follow Christ, the perfect example.

So you're behind me, Philippians. Look ahead to a Christ. This marching in line that Paul is showing the Philippians. And so, how do we inherit citizenship in heaven?

[22 : 34] And that's what, that's what this sermon has all been leading up to, right? Well, you got to live a perfect life. You got to follow perfectly the example that Jesus has set, right? You got to have, be perfect in your relationship, perfect in your finances, perfect in your personal life, perfect in your moral life.

You want to be citizens of heaven? You better bring perfection to life. Or, you better be perfect in life, or else you're not getting in. Anybody else feel like the weight of the world just kind of descend on your shoulders?

Anybody else get a little nervous that I was going to leave it there? Paul was one of the most holy men in the New Testament. He left everything he knew to go spread the gospel to the Gentiles, and he could not live up to this expectation of being perfect.

Friends, I cannot live up to this expectation of being perfect. You cannot live up to this expectation of being perfect. But there is good news. It's called the gospel.

See, Jesus taking our, had a reward for living that perfect life, which was heaven, but instead of taking it, he died the death that you and I deserve so that we could have eternal life with him.

[23 : 46] And in the best deal in human history, we basically get to swap places, and now we get the reward that was promised to Jesus while Jesus took our punishment.

But he did not remain dead because he defeated death three days later, and so now, if we say yes to Jesus, say, Jesus, I trust you, I believe that this is true, I want to enter into a relationship with you, and I want to see my life change in that process of sanctification that Paul was talking about in verses 15 to 17, then we can get that reward that Jesus had.

And it's because of grace. Nothing we did but what God has done for us. If you look at verse 20, it says, we eagerly await a Savior in heaven.

There will be a day when it is too late to become a citizen of heaven. There will be a day when we die that we stand before a big gate.

And unlike border control, they're not going to ask you what did you do to deserve to be here? What can you bring to the table? They're going to ask who did you know?

[24 : 58] If you do not know Jesus, you're going to spend eternity away from his presence in a real place called hell. And that is the choice that is laid before us today and before everyone that we know are you going to be a citizen of heaven that walks differently, talks differently, and speaks differently?

Are you going to be an enemy of the cross? Living in your own feelings, following your own heart. That's the question that's for us today.

That's the question we have to answer in our own hearts. And all of our friends have to answer as well. Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you for today. Thank you for the opportunity to preach, Lord.

Again, I pray that any words that may have been confusing, Lord, that you clarify them or take them away. Father, I pray that your word would be prominent through all of this.

In your name. Amen. God love you. Amen. Thank you. Very■- Thank you.

[26 : 14] God bless you. God bless you, God bless you. Most of this know, heart and ouv■nh all of this areamazia. All of this have to stay for me, God bless you. Holy of thing. God bless you. Thank you. God bless you. All of this may be God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you. You can call us and God bless you.