



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Philippians 3: 17-21

2013

"Heavens Colony"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Mark, and good morning. We are, it does seem like, racing through the Book of Philippians, which is a great book. I think this book is a favorite of many of you, and so we have enjoyed going through it, and we come to the end of chapter 3, with verses 17–21 as our text. And it's one of the highlights of the chapter, where Paul reminds us of our identity. We live in this world, but we're not citizens of it. We're citizens of heaven, as he tells us. Philippians 3, verse 17,

¹⁷Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. ²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Philippians 3: 17-21

That's a glorious hope that we have. May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we do come to a great text of Scripture and we thank You for giving it to us. We pray that You would bless us as we study it and that You would reinforce in our thinking who we are. Reinforce our identity in this world; that we're not a part of this world, not essentially. We're in this world, but we're not of this world. We have a citizenship in this world and it's a temporal citizenship—and it requires us to be good, patriotic citizens. But our true allegiance, our ultimate allegiance, is to a higher government, Your government. We are citizens of heaven; what a great privilege that is. And it enables us to be good citizens in this world, so Father, help us to understand even more clearly our identity and the importance of knowing it, and living faithfully according to it. So guide us in our thinking.

Bless us spiritually, build us up in the faith, strengthen us for the day and the week to come, so that we would live as Your citizens, Your ambassadors in this world in which we are, bring glory to You in all that we do and be a help to those around us.

Bless us spiritually and bless us materially as well, LORD. We look at the prayer list in our bulletin, and we are reminded that we are frail creatures, and we are in the process, continually, of passing away—just as this world is passing away. And we need Your strength, we need Your help, and we need Your mercy.

And there are many who are in our church, or are friends of our church who are relatives that need Your healing mercy. We pray for them. We pray that You would bless them. We pray that You would give encouragement in the midst of physical affliction, that You would give strength in the midst of the stress and the strain of life, that You would give them the reminder of the hope that we have in Christ, and that this really isn't our home, and that we are passing through, and that we are to look to the kingdom to come. And that's where our hope is.

But even in the midst of this life, even those struggles and trials are good for us. We don't seek them, we don't invite them, but in Your providence they come, and they don't come without purpose. So LORD, I pray that You would encourage those who are in great difficulty, and encourage them and strengthen them, and use us to be a personal help to those around us.

We thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You that He's coming again, as Paul reminds us in this text. We thank You that that's where our hope is, and it's a certain hope; and it will be realized someday. So in the meantime, may we live faithful lives to Your glory and to the blessing of those around us.

Bless us now, LORD, as we sing our next hymn and I pray that You'd use us to prepare our hearts for a time of study and worship together. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) Growing up, we all had to learn dates. We didn't like doing that, but we had to do that. We had to learn dates like 1066, (at least if we studied English history). And of course, 1492, and then 1620, the date the Pilgrims set foot on Plymouth Rock. They established what became known as the Plymouth Colony, an outpost of English separatists—Calvinists in the New World. They were strangers in a strange land.

One of the first things they did was draw up the Mayflower Compact. It was an agreement they made to obey their government, and in which they wrote that their mission in this wilderness was, “for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith.”

Paul describes the church in a similar way in Philippians chapter 3, in verse 20, where he writes that, “...our citizenship is in heaven.” James Moffatt translated that, “We are a colony of heaven.” And that's what we are as, ‘strangers in a strange land.’ We are heaven's outpost in the world. We don't belong to this world; we belong to heaven. So, we are to be obedient to our heavenly government and, like the colony of pilgrims, be living for God's glory.

And that's what Paul urges the Philippians to do, here at the end of chapter 3. He has told them what is most important to him, knowing Christ—and that he was “pressing on” in that direction with that goal, toward the victory, the end which is victory, and the end which is the great prize of Christ—of seeing Him, of knowing Him fully, of being with Him. That was Paul's great ambition and he was single-minded about

it; "...one thing *I do*:" he wrote, "forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal..." (Phi 3: 13-14).

Now, in verse 17, he instructs them to follow his example; to become imitators of him. His life gives us a pattern to follow; but not his life alone. There were others who were living exemplary lives, faithful saints, and he instructs the Philippians to follow their example as well; "...and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." (vs17b). Who was he referring to?

Well, he doesn't tell us—but very likely Lydia, that Philippian jailer, maybe even that slave girl who'd been delivered of the demon, "Python", and others that we don't even know.

But in this instruction he gives, he's giving us a lesson as well. And that is, 'We are to be a people that aspire to that.' You and I are to be people who not only follow Paul's example, and others' example, but becoming an example ourselves to others around us.

But also Paul, in this, gives a simple definition of what the Christian life is: It's a walk; and it involves action and progress, just as walking does. Paul often describes the Christian life in this way. In fact, in the previous verse he used a word that means, '*to walk in a line*'. What literally Paul is saying is, 'keep living by the same standard', which means something like, 'marching...', (or walking), '...according to a standard—the standard of the Word of God.' It's descriptive of the course of a person's life or of a person's conduct.

And it's an expression that is very common in the Old Testament. In Psalm 1 we read in verse 1, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked..." He or she doesn't follow or act upon the evil counsel of others. His behavior, or his *walk*, (or her *walk*), is different from that. And so the Jews often referred to a person's 'practical conduct' as a *walk*.

In fact, that term in Hebrew, *halak*, 'walk', is a technical term for obeying the rules of Moses, the Law of Moses, and all of the traditions of the sages. In fact, if you were to go to the synagogue next door and you were to use that word, they'd know exactly what you meant—because that's their religion—it's a walk. It's following those rules—following those traditions. And Paul is using that word that was so common in his environment, of the Christian life.

But, of course, he has a different standard. He didn't say, 'Brethren, join in following Moses and observe all the rules of the rabbis.' We're not under the Law, we're not under traditions, of course. Romans chapter 7, in verse 6, "We have been released from the Law." We're no longer under that.

Now that doesn't mean that we're lawless. We aren't. We have the instruction of the New Testament. We have the leading of the Holy Spirit. In Galatians chapter 5, in verse 16, Paul tells us, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the deeds of the flesh."; 'You'll not carry out the desires of the flesh.' (vs17). The Spirit of God is within us, literally a real person: The third person of the Trinity—and He guides us, He leads us. He enables us to apply the principles of God's Word to our modern situations.

But also, we have the example of Christ. We have the example of the apostles and others to imitate. We have the example of men and women down through the ages, throughout the history of the church. We have the example of those around us, hopefully, to give us guidance in the way we live. We have Paul's example, and the faithful saints that were with him who were doing what he was doing—and that was 'pressing on to the prize of Jesus Christ.' (Phl 3:14). That's the example Paul was emphasizing: Not living for time, but living for eternity.

And there was an urgency about it. There's an urgency in his words here, because there were lots of examples out there to follow that were not good. That's always the case. But Paul had some specific people in mind, people he knew personally, or knew their kind, at least, and knew they could have a harmful influence on the church.

"Many," he says in verses 18 and 19, "walk...who are enemies of the cross...whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is their shame."

Who are these people? There are many of them. Who are they? Paul describes them, but he doesn't identify them, so we're sort of left to speculate a bit on that, (and some have done that in the context of chapter 3). You'll remember that Paul mentioned earlier the people he calls "dogs". (vs2). He's referring to the Judaizers, the legalizers. And so, when Paul describes them, (these people), as 'Those whose god is their appetite', or literally '*their belly*', this suggests that he's describing the legalists who emphasized the Jewish dietary laws. And I think that's a reasonable interpretation.

But the description fits more naturally a very different group; people who aren't for the Law but actually against the Law, what we would call *antinomians*, (that is '*anti-nomos*', 'against law'). They are people who are lawless—people who oppose all law and all moral constraints. It seems that human nature is pulled between these two extremes: between moralists and sensualists; between legalists and libertines; between people who want to live under law and those who want to live by desire. And it seems what this second group was doing was using divine grace and Christian liberty as a pretext, or a reason, for sin. Any call for personal discipline or self-denial was dismissed as legalism.

The human mind is very clever. Jeremiah talks about that in chapter 17, in verse 9, and how 'deceitful the heart is'. The human mind is very clever and very adept at rationalizing bad behavior; making excuses for sin and eventually justifying, and even defending it, from the Bible.

Peter warned of those kinds of people: People who twist the Scriptures, and specifically those who "distort" Paul's writings. There's an interesting statement in 2 Peter chapter 3, in verse 16, where he mentions the apostle Paul and those who distort his writings and the rest of Scriptures. And he says that they do so "to their own destruction." And Paul says the same thing of the people that he is describing. They have

no moral restraint; they indulge their appetites with food and drink and sex, and they boast about it. But their "end is destruction." (Phi 3:19).

This is really so contemporary that we don't need to give an explanation. People today are so open about behavior that, what, 40, 50 years ago, was not even mentioned in polite company. Now they publicly parade it—and do so literally. But that's the world. And there's a sense in which that really shouldn't surprise us. The world is like that.

Paul's concern here is not for the world. He's not trying to sanitize the world. The world is what it is. His concern was for the church, and protecting it from certain men who might bring the influences of the world into it, under the guise of the Gospel.

These individuals had a kind of swagger about them. They were confident; they "glory in their shame". (vs18). But Paul says that makes them "enemies of the cross." Their conduct and teaching denies the very power of the cross. The cross didn't liberate us to sin, just the opposite. In fact, Paul writes in Titus chapter 2, in verse 14, that Christ gave Himself for us that He might, "redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

Well that's the walk that he's talking about. The walk is being zealous for good deeds, and living them. These people weren't zealous for good deeds, they were zealous for bad deeds. They were evidently, we would assume, professing Christians but they had a sinister influence on those who were listening to them—and they kept unbelievers from becoming believers, from being converted.

A child of God bears fruit, not thorns. These 'professors', these 'professors of faith' were not genuine. And Paul says, 'Their end is destruction', (vs19)—not annihilation, but endless punishment. But until then, until they're removed, they were a real threat to the church. They're clever, they're convincing, and their message of freedom without restraint, well that appeals, doesn't it? That appeals to the flesh, and the flesh is very strong in every one of us. We're not yet delivered of it.

Paul talks about that in Galatians 5: This war between the flesh and the Spirit—it's real; it happens. We know that; it's a battle we face every day. And these individuals

were appealing to that. The danger they posed is evident from the numerous warnings Paul had given about them previously and he mentions that. (vs18). He reminds the Philippians that he told them about these people “often”. But he adds that he was warning them now, “weeping” as he did so, weeping out of concern for the Philippians and from the worry about the influence these enemies might have there in this church that he loved so much.

There are many dangers that face the church, and Paul was aware of them. In fact, he told the Corinthians that he felt concern for the churches “daily”, (2Cor 11:28): the church in Corinth, the church in Ephesus, the churches throughout Asia Minor and up into Macedonia. —He felt the concern for all of them. And he certainly felt that concern daily for the Philippians. He felt such concern he was weeping for them. Now that's the pastor's heart, really. He, daily, bears a concern for these people that he's led to the Lord, and that he loves so much.

But this is the way it is. Churches, every church; this church, your church, constantly face challenges from the world—and the ideas of the world. We can be easily influenced by the spirit of our age and become worldly. We're faced with that constantly.—And it's subtle. We don't even notice it sometimes, we're so used to it. We live in this environment, and it has its effect upon us. As a church, as Christians individually, we come under that influence.

That can be very difficult, because it's deceiving, and people are subtly caught up in it, and they become materialistic, and they even drift off into error, or into immorality. Christians fail. They stumble in their walk. The walk that we walk is a very narrow walk, and it's dangerous on both sides. On the one hand we have legalists. On the other hand we have libertines—and they have various influences. So we are in a narrow walk in which we must keep looking before us. We must follow the voice of the Lord, or we must follow the footsteps of those who've gone before us and lived a faithful life. And we must be conscientious about this because Christians stumble in their walk.

Paul knew that. He'd seen it. And he could explain it. It happens for the same reason these enemies of the Gospel became self-indulgent. They set their minds on earthly things. They valued the things that pass away, and had no concern for what is eternal. So, they live for temporal things. As the proverb says, "As a man thinks within, so he is." (Pro 23:7).

Life involves more than mental activity; it involves practical conduct; it is a walk. But our behavior is controlled by our belief. What fills our minds affects our conduct. The things a person desires determines the direction that he or she walks. These enemies of the cross are of this world, so they think like the world and they live like the world. And they will go the way of the world. 'Beware', Paul is saying, 'their end is destruction. Don't follow their path. Don't follow their example. Don't walk in their footsteps.'

Don't walk in their footsteps, don't follow their example because you're different. You're not like them; the child of God is different. And Paul reminds the Philippians of that in verse 20, and of why it is that they needed to imitate him: "Our citizenship is in heaven." We are not citizens of the world. We have a different allegiance, a different government, and different standards. Therefore, we are to walk differently. We're to behave rightly.

Paul chose his words carefully here, because he knew the word '*citizenship*' would resonate with the Philippians. Philippi was a city that enjoyed the privilege of Roman citizenship, (and it was a great privilege to possess Roman citizenship). In Acts 16, you'll remember, Luke recounts how, after Paul and Silas had been beaten and imprisoned unlawfully, the authorities in Philippi learned of their Roman citizenship—and they were terribly afraid and asked them to leave the city—but Paul wasn't going to yield to their request. But they were fearful because they had unjustly treated a Roman citizen.

Roman citizenship was a great privilege. It carried benefits and protection. It opened up opportunities for those who had it. Those who didn't have it, didn't have the opportunities that a Roman citizen had. The Christians in Philippi appreciated it; and so

when Paul spoke of our heavenly citizenship, they understood the significance of that: It was an infinitely greater privilege which not only reminded them of the benefits, but of its responsibilities because privilege always carries responsibility.

And that was very much on Paul's mind here. We need to know who we are and behave according to it. We have special privileges. We have powers that come with that privilege. We really do. Our citizenship carries with it real power.

But also responsibilities. This word, *citizenship*, also means *community*, and *commonwealth*, and has the idea of *colony*. (In fact, in Acts chapter 16, in verse 12, Paul describes Philippi as a "Roman colony".) Philippi was a miniature Rome off to the east in Macedonia on the northern part of the Greek peninsula. It was a Roman city in a Greek world.

The church is like that. So, as I mentioned earlier, James Moffatt translated verse 20, "We are a colony of heaven." We have a different government. We have a different God. The world worships its belly. Its god is its appetite. Our God is the LORD, the Triune God. —And we follow Him.

When the pilgrims came to America, they were citizens of England. At the beginning of the Mayflower Compact, they identified themselves as, 'Loyal subjects of our great sovereign lord, King James.' Well they were a colony in an outpost of England, on the shores of a wild continent, inhabited by natives who had no loyalty to England or to the king. In fact, they didn't know anything about him or care anything about him.

That's our situation as 'heaven's colony' in the wilderness of this world—we're aliens here. We have a different King and a different life. We are a bright, shining city on a hill. So, we're not to go native; we're not to conform to this world. And to prevent that, Paul reminds us of who we are, that we have a *citizenship*. It's not a natural citizenship: We weren't born into this; we didn't earn it by our deeds; this is something that was given to us by God's sovereign grace.

Paul explains that in Colossians chapter 1, in verse 13, how God delivered us "from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." We were taken out of one, and put in another. We were transferred from darkness to

light; from an evil domain to a glorious kingdom. And so now, we have great privileges through no merit of our own. Just as Roman citizens had important privileges, we do too.

They could appeal to Caesar, but we can go to Christ. Wherever we are, (in whatever distant or dark corner of the world we may be and whatever our circumstance may be), we can appeal to the Lord and know that He hears us—and He will answer. We can go to the 'King of kings and LORD of lords' at any time, and He gives us help in time of need. He may not give it to us in the way we want, or in the time that we want, but He will give it to us wisely and in the best way, at the best time. Our position is infinitely greater than that of any citizen of this world.

But again, it's all a gift of grace and blood, because Christ bought that citizenship for us. He bought us for Himself and for all of the glory to come.—And did so at a high cost, at a great price, that of His own life and sacrifice. And Paul told that to the Corinthians; he reminded them of that: He said, "You have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your bodies." (1Cor 6:20). This is very much what Paul was saying to these Philippians: 'You have been bought with a price. Now glorify God in light of that.'

Now that's one of the main motives that Paul gives throughout his epistles for good and right behavior. It's not warnings, [Though Paul gives warnings, and he's given warnings here in our text—and he gives them throughout his epistles. The Bible's full of warnings, and they're proper and they're right, and they have their place.], but the main motive that Paul gives for living righteously is this: It's God's grace. It's a reminder of what the Lord has done for us, who He is and what He has done.

He has bought us. He died for us. He obtained great privileges and blessings for us that are beyond anything that could enter our imagination. We can't even begin to comprehend what He's obtained for us.—And what is ahead for each of us is beyond our dreams.

What's our response to be to that? Well, it's to be response of gratitude. Understanding who Christ is and what He has done for us gives the desire to glorify God in our bodies, rather than "to glory in our shame." (vs19). So rather than "set our minds on earthly things", (ibid), we are to set them on heavenly things—on the Lord, the Lord of heaven, the Lord of heaven and earth. Put our minds on Him and what He has done—and who we now are because of Him. We are *citizens* of heaven—we are 'the colony of heaven' in this world.

A very important part of righteous living, a very fundamental principle of righteous living, is identification. It's knowing who we are, and reminding ourselves of who we are—and not forgetting who we are. We are citizens of heaven. Our hope is not in this world, not in this world's present condition. (That will change, for the King is coming and He will transform this world into His kingdom.) So our hope is, in a sense, in this world but not this present state of the world. It's in what is to come, and what the Lord will do when He comes. That's our hope. And that is what Paul reminds us of in the rest of the verse. From heaven, "we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." (vs20b).

Once again, Paul's choice of words was precise for the situation and would have attracted the notice of the Philippians. [Because the word, "Savior", was a title that Caesar used of himself. This was a very Roman town, and there was, (no doubt), emperor worship in this city of Philippi. They were very much aware of Caesar, and all of Caesar's titles. In 48 B.C., Julius Caesar was declared to be 'universal savior of mankind'; and after that, all ruling emperors were called 'savior'.] So Paul was saying, 'The real Savior is not in Rome, He's not in Washington, He's not in London, He's not in any human government. He's in heaven. And He will return to save His people, and deliver them from this evil age.' That is our hope, and that is a great hope. In fact, it's what Paul calls, in Titus chapter 2, in verse 13, "the blessed hope." And he says that we "eagerly wait" for Him. (vs20).

Do we? I'm sure we all believe that, and that is our hope, and we cherish that hope—but can we all say, 'Yes, that's me. I certainly eagerly await the Lord's return?' But, 'After retirement.' 'After my vacation.' 'After this or that.' —You know, we can become so caught up in what's going on around us that I'm not sure we can make that confession.

Now, I'm looking to my own heart. I sometimes ... well, often ... get my exhortations by looking at my own heart, because I know where I am. And I know how I have failed in that regard. I've told this story before, I think, on myself; but when I was growing up in junior high through high school, every Sunday night at 10 o'clock, we had to come downstairs and listen to Billy Graham's *Hour of Decision*.

And back in those days, in the 60s, he would often talk about the second coming, (and do so very effectively), and I didn't want to hear that. I believed it, but I thought, "Lord, I know You're coming, but can you wait till after football season?" And I did that all through high school—and I'd resist going down to hear Billy Graham. Well, that's an immature thought, but we can still have that kind of thought. Maybe I do and you don't, but I still have those kinds of thoughts to this day.

Are we eagerly looking for His return? Well, if we're not, maybe it's because we've set our mind too much on earthly things. Or maybe we haven't set our minds enough on heavenly things, on Christ, and all that He has gained for us. He is the Savior. He has delivered us from the destruction that is the end of all those who have rejected Him and chosen their own way, chosen their own walk. We don't deserve any '*better*'—(and we need always remember that), but we have '*better*'—by grace. And He has saved us to something great, something glorious.

Paul was thinking of that here. He longed to see the Savior, (the One who had done everything for him), and enter the kingdom—and that is what Paul was '*eagerly waiting for*'. The Lord—that was Paul's great ambition, for sure. He's made that clear: To see Jesus, to know Him better. He loved the Lord.—But he was also *longing* to enter that kingdom to come. He uses this word, "*eagerly wait*", of that anticipation in other

passages, and it's a vivid expression. It means something like 'stretching the neck', 'straining to look forward'.

In Romans chapter 8, in verse 19, Paul uses this word of the creation, which has been "subjected to futility". It's under the curse and it's "*anxiously longing*" for glorification. He personifies the inanimate world, (the world, the universe), as looking forward to our glorification, *anxious longing* for it, because that means its glorification. The curse will be lifted. The universe will be transformed and glorified. And that's the idea here.

The trials of life, the struggles we have, the setbacks, fatigue, illness, disappointments, persecution—all of that has at times, or should have had, the beneficial effect of causing us *to long for* the glory to come—and to disabuse us of the idea that this world is worth living for; that this world has all of the hopes that we dream of. It's what it promises—but its promise is a lie. And it's when we go through the disappointments of life, and when we live long enough to realize it just doesn't play out, that we realize our hope is not here. And by God's grace we have a greater hope, a real hope, an eternal hope that's beyond our comprehension.

Well, our hope is that we do have glory to come and that we will enter our rest. Our bodies will be resurrected and glorified. That's the blessed hope. Christ will bring it, and we should be eagerly anticipating His return—and looking for it.

Along the New England coastline there are a lot of old houses, a lot of them over 200 years old. And some of them have 'Widow's Walks' (maybe you've seen pictures of them or if you've been up there you've seen them). They're platforms on the roof with railings around them. And the story is that the wives of sailors would stand on these widow's walks, and they would search the horizon for their husbands' ships. Well, that's how we're to live. We are to be looking and hoping, actively, for our Lord's return.

This is not an excuse for indifference toward the world, and a kind of 'other worldly' attitude. In fact, the assurance of the Lord's return should motivate us to work hard in whatever your calling in life is. To be diligent in your labors in this world for your

employer or for those who work for you; to be earnest to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in whatever you do and to be a good citizen to the government of this world. And this should motivate that for we represent Him in this world. And as 'the colony of heaven on earth', we are to have an influence on those around us and be an example to the world around us. We are to be 'salt and light'.

But we're not like colonists who are trying to tame this land and change the wilderness into civilization. The Lord will do that when He returns. That's the promise of verse 21. We're looking for Christ, "who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." (vs21).

And He will do that. He will subject all things to Himself and transform them. That's our hope. Now we are in a humble state. The best of us, the most fit and healthy in this world, are in a humble state. And when you get to be my age you really realize that. You look in the mirror and you go, "What happened? It's changed overnight!" That's life. We're in a humble state—and it increases to be that. But that will change. That's what Paul's telling us. That will change. We will be transformed. We will be like Him.

Now Paul had 'a sense', (and I emphasize that), just a sense of what that was like. He met the Lord on the Damascus road. He met Him in the Lord's glory. He had a sense of that in this blinding light that knocked him to the ground and blinded him for three days. Whatever the transformation is, that Paul is referring to, (and as I said, he had sense of what it was like), whatever it is, though, it's beyond anything that we know. It is, 'from dust to glory'. And that includes everything, as I said, it will all be changed. How can we not eagerly, anxiously long for that?

This world is enticing, and there's a lot about it that's good. And a lot about this world that is to be enjoyed. Legalistic attitudes rob people of that, and that's wrong. Paul told Timothy that, "God...richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." (1Tim 6:17). There's nothing wrong with enjoying the good things of this world—doing it the right way, but

enjoying the things of this world. Those dietary laws don't apply to us any longer and we're to enjoy the good things that God has supplied.

But he also tells Timothy to warn the rich not to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches. —They don't last. As the Proverb says, “wealth makes itself wings.” (Pro 23:5). It disappears. —But even when it doesn't, even when it stays, (do riches), does the world really have that much to offer? It doesn't. Now I'm not being unrealistic. I know that riches give us a lot of nice things, enjoyable things, pleasurable things. They do. But do they fundamentally satisfy the soul? Were we made to feed ourselves on riches?

No. They don't satisfy. Only the Lord satisfies. And even when we are without much in this world, when we're full of the Spirit, when we're full of the Lord, when we're walking by the Spirit and we're following Him, there's joy in the midst of that. Listen to Phil Armstrong or Frank Denison talk about the poor Christians in Cuba and the joy they have—though they have few, if any, possessions. That's what the Lord gives. And that's what are to be living for and looking for and hoping for, the Lord Jesus and His kingdom to come.

What Paul was telling the Philippians, and what he is telling us is, ‘Christ is coming.’ That's a fact. The Greeks got it wrong. History is not time and events just endlessly rolling along without meaning. There is purpose. Everything is moving toward a goal—and that is the kingdom to come. The clock is ticking; Christ is coming; His reward is with Him, and it is near. How near, we don't know, but it is near. In the meantime, live up to your privileges and don't live down to the world's standards.

The natural man lives like the animals—he lives for his belly. We are different. —We are heavenly, not earthly. Don't be sucked into the habit of self-indulgence. Life is more than consumption. It is more than enjoying oneself. It's more than having fun. Life at its best, really, is service—serving others by serving the Lord.

So, glorify God in your bodies. You are 'a colony in this wilderness'. You are 'a city on a hill' —but we're to live that way so others will see it. Be as Christ to unbelievers, attracting some and repelling others. That's what He did, and that's what we're to do.

How do we do that? Well, we do that the way Paul has instructed us to do it. We do that by following the examples of godly men and women. 'Follow my example', Paul said. Walk in his footsteps. Pursue Christ—have that as your great ambition. And your ambition should be to make footprints as well, that others can walk in. That's what Paul is saying here.

Christians have a purpose. It's a serious purpose. It's purpose of eternal consequences. Don't neglect it. Our opportunity to do that is short. We don't have long in this world, so make the most of it.

Charles Spurgeon said that, "As citizens of heaven, we are here as recruiting sergeants for heaven." So if you happen to be here without Christ, we invite you to come to Him, become a fellow citizen, a citizen of heaven with us. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, and Savior of men. His death paid for all the sins of everyone who believes in Him. It is of infinite value, and He holds out His hands to you, and He gladly welcomes all who come. He invites all to come. So come to Him. He receives you. And at the moment you come to Christ, you're saved, you're justified, you are being sanctified, and you will be glorified. You are a citizen of heaven with a glorious future. May God help you to do that.

And He may help all of us to walk in a manner that's worthy of Him, worthy of our calling. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for this great text of Scripture. So much here: The warnings to beware of the insidious influence of the world, of false teaching that is around us, of just the influence of this worldly atmosphere in which we live. But also this great reminder of who we are, of our identity, that we are citizens of heaven, and we're

to live as that. Rejoice in it. And live to Your glory, and not glory in shame. We can do that only by Your grace. We ask for Your grace. LORD, transform our minds. Give us a desire to live for You, and the strength and the ability to do it. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(End of Audio)