

Living Up
Philippians 3:17-4:1

Intro:

I hope that you are all enjoying this series in the book of Philippians. I'm finding very challenging passages from the Apostle Paul, in particular, I'm being challenged with how to live out my walk as a Christian. If you remember the thesis of this book, Paul wants believers to always, no matter what happens, live a life worthy of the Gospel of Jesus. In all of our actions, attitudes, relationships, etc, we are to bring honor to the Lord and to the message of the Gospel!

Well, I'm not sure if you've noticed, but the last 3 sermons I've preached have had "life" in the title. For 2 weeks, the title was "The Life we Live," where we focused on how to live in community with others, following Jesus (our authority) in servitude, humility, and obedience, having maturity in our conduct, our attitudes, and our heart. Then last week, I talked about living forward, acknowledging our past as a part of what shapes who we are, but not dwelling in our past failures or still trying to glory in our past successes, but truly living forward, pressing on in faith and righteousness toward the high calling of Jesus!

This morning, I think Paul moves from addressing internal heart issues, to actually challenging us to consider the influences we have in our lives. He's going to set himself up as leader to emulate, not arrogantly, which I'll show you in a minute. But as one who is faithful to fully follow the leading of Jesus, which is the highest mark of a spiritual leader, I believe that Paul is someone we can follow.

Transition:

It's important to realize that life is complex! We don't live this life alone, without boundaries or guidance. It starts when we are kids, looking to our parents for guidance and boundaries. (Lucy asking me to talk about Jesus) We look to them as the ultimate leaders in our lives, fully trusting their intuition and guidance. The older I get, I've found that other voices play a stronger role in my life when it comes to spiritual guidance. Maybe a professor or advisor from seminary, a pastor that I'm connected to, or close friends that God has placed in my

life to challenge me. Perhaps it's because my parents don't share the same faith values that I have, or because we live in different states and I have access to so many strong spiritual leaders here in Springfield.

Nonetheless, I see in the passage we are reading today, Paul is showing us that as Christians, we are now and forever a part of the Heavenly Kingdom, and we must stand firm in that, looking to be encouraged in that by those who are our spiritual leaders. We'll see that Paul teaches that we should pursue the example of Godly leaders, guard ourselves from ungodly leaders, then confidently acknowledge that we live, even now, with a citizenship in Heaven!

Text: Read Philippians 3:17-4:1

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

I. Pursue the Example of Godly Leaders: v. 17

Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

***Paul is not setting himself up as the example in an arrogant sense. He's fighting the fight too, not having attained righteousness, but pressing on toward the high calling of Jesus (as discussed last week), but his willingness to press on towards Jesus is his example.**

***He said it this way in 1 Cor. 11:1 – Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (ESV) Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ (TNIV).**

***Paul availed himself in this way to Timothy. The relationship there was one of close influence, where Paul was able to invest**

personally in the life of Timothy like a “son,” which he referred to Timothy many times as...

***In that same way, Paul loved the Church like family, like his own children, and he availed himself as an example for living the Christian life – with transparency (previous verses prove that, Romans 7 speaks of that)**

***This is so important, that the examples in our lives are people who truly follow Jesus, who exhibit the character of Jesus, who model Biblical spirituality, who honor the whole Gospel, aren't divisive, negative, power hungry, they emanate the Fruit of the Spirit, treat people with respect and love, compassion and mercy, and understanding.**

***It's important to realize that not everyone that has a ministry, or speaks well, or preaches to large crowds is an example of a Godly leader or influence. Sometimes the most persuasive voice in our lives may not be a Godly influence, but one that damages our faith, or has a negative impact on us.**

***I'm sure this is true for most of us, but when I find the type of person that really fuels my faith, and “spurs me on to good,” like Paul talks about with Timothy, I go after relationship with that person. It just feels good to have that kind of influence and leadership. It's refreshing, it's warm, it's encouraging, and I leave times with that type of person feeling energized and ready for great things, not tired or worn down. (Mark H.)**

II. Guard Yourself from Ungodly Leaders: v.18-19

For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

*****Hear the urgency of Paul's heart! I really get the sense that Paul has cried and lost sleep for his church, which he loves, knowing that predators have come in to tear them down and destroy them!**

***According to a couple commentaries I've read, Paul is referring to Judiazers who taught the Old Covenant and the Law as a mandate to truly inherit salvation. The struggle with Judiazers is that they**

are claiming to be believers in Jesus, but they were “spiritual leaders” who wanted impose the yoke of bondage to the law.

*It’s like the reference I gave last week from a current TV preacher I heard; how you can make a demand on God to provide for your needs, take care of you, etc, as long as you aren’t “sippin’ and dippin,’ winin’ and dinin,’ and sleepin’ in a bed that don’t have yo’ name on it.”

*Either the grace of God is GRACIOUS, or it isn’t!

*I heard this a lot as a new believer, that you can’t maintain your salvation if you habitually live in a sinful lifestyle. Well, its implications are tough to deal with. First, it places fear in us to ever slip up and forces us to live in a vicious cycle of repentance, salvation, failure, repentance, salvation, failure, repentance, salvation... My only hope was that I died at the salvation part of the cycle. Then it placed a large amount of the responsibility for my salvation on my effort to be good enough, a sort of “works righteousness.” This made life really difficult to enjoy, since I was always nervous about “being good enough” and “doing enough” for God.

While being a “good Christian” is the goal, we have to be careful that we aren’t putting the cart before the horse. Our good works don’t produce faith in us! Our faith in Jesus and our commitment to him produces good works in us!

“The Cross is God’s sacrifice, not ours!”

*Paul actually lumps these types of people in with unbelievers, though. He says that they are carnally minded, and that their end is destruction!

*Ralph Martin says, “Their destiny is destruction, which means that, cutting themselves off from the only hope of salvation in Christ alone, they have no prospect except the doom which awaits unsaved humanity.”

*So, we need to be cautious about the influences that come into our lives, particularly when those influences are a source of bondage! Perhaps it’s bondage like we saw in the New Testament, where Christians were being forced to keep the law. Maybe it’s an influence that steals the life and energy from you, and makes you

feel like serving Jesus is a burden, or something that you're not good enough for.

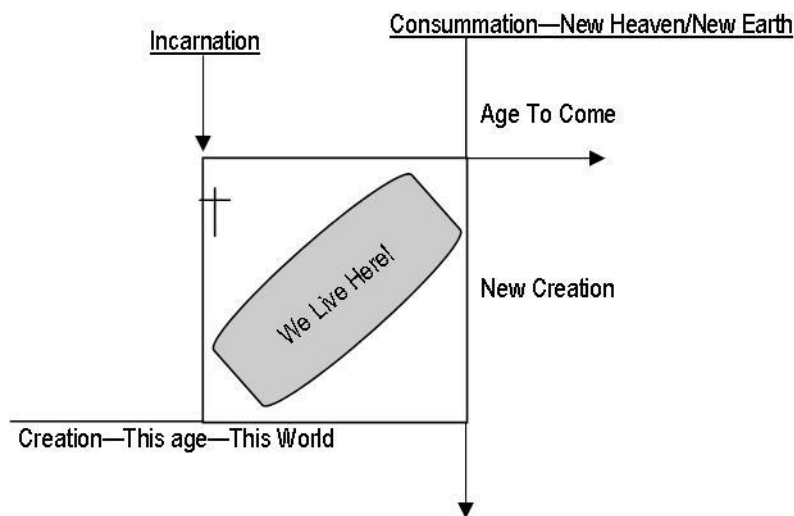
***We need to embrace Godly influences in our lives and guard ourselves from the influence of those who bring burdens, or guilt, or negatively impact our heart for the work of Jesus!**

(Recently, I came to realize that a very close friend of mine, who I welcomed in as a loud voice of influence in my life, was in fact negatively affecting my walk with Jesus, my appreciation for the place God has placed me and the authority God has placed me under, and even had a negative impact on my heart for this ministry.

III. Live as Citizens of Heaven! v. 20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

*****I love this type of talking from Paul! It's so encouraging to know that while we do live in the here and now, because we belong to Jesus, we more importantly live as part of the Heavenly Kingdom, the Kingdom of God!**



***We live in this realm, in between 2 worlds – living with sin and death, pain and hurt, but knowing that our true hope is in Christ, in the consummation of the age, when He returns, his Kingdom is complete!**

***This is why we are a new creation according to Paul, why we are aliens in this world,**

***Being citizens of God's Kingdom, we submit to God's rule and God's will! He is the King, we are his citizens! That is "Living Up!" (hence the title for this sermon)**

***From our current space, we await the return of Jesus!**

*****Discussion with Katie in Israel: "Did Jesus establish his Kingdom while on Earth?" Katie: Yes. Tom: He began and needs to complete it. BOTH ARE RIGHT.**

***Now, notice how Paul is Juxtaposing this idea of "Heavenly citizenship" against the carnal (fleshly, earthly) mindset of the Judaizers, the lesser leaders. I find it interesting that believers and "worldly" people really do, and SHOULD have different perspectives on life!**

***Paul is telling us to Live Up! Live as citizens of Heaven! Not as citizens of the worldly system! That being the case, we are to be about God's Kingdom, God's Mission, Loving God and Loving Others! Emanating the Fruit of the Spirit, not trying to step on others for our own promotion, not striving after worldly gain, for the sake of storing up earthly treasures, but truly loving God and living as citizens of Heaven, in the Already but Not Yet!**

Epilogue: 4:1

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.