

Philippians Chapter 3

Part 4

'Joy in spite of things'

Philippians 3:17 – 21 NIV

'¹⁷Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. ¹⁸For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who, 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.'

Here we are, nearly at the end of chapter three and at this point we need to remind ourselves of the four things we started with –

1. The single mind
2. The submissive mind
3. The spiritual mind
4. The secure mind

Which produce –

1. Joy in spite of circumstances
2. Joy in spite of people
3. Joy in spite of things
4. Joy in spite of anxiety or worry

Here in this passage most unusually we find Paul weeping – he does not weep for himself, but for believers who he says *'live as enemies of Christ'*. I suspect this has been the cry of Godly leaders through the ages, seeing their congregations living with their minds fixed on this earth and what it provides, rather than on their heavenly inheritance, living as he says, as enemies of the cross of Christ.

He weeps over the way some professed believers are living, they are not spiritually minded, they are earthly minded. Someone once coined the phrase *'You are too heavenly minded to be any earthly good'*. As I have gone on in my Christian walk I would say that you have to be heavenly minded **enough** in order to be earthly good. Unless we have the mind of Christ, understand His ways and what our call is in this earthly life, we will indeed be no good either to ourselves, or anyone else.

The word 'spiritual' has suffered as much abuse as the word 'fellowship'. Too many people think a spiritual Christian is an impractical and distant person who goes around in a dream. To be spiritually

minded means to look at earth from heaven's perspective. To connect with the Father to find out what the conversation is in heaven.

Colossians 3:1, 2

We need to be constantly reminded that we have a dual citizenship; we put our feet in two places at once, on the earth, and in the heavenly places. The knowledge that we have this heavenly place should make us better in our walk on the earth because the spiritually minded believer is not attracted by the things of the world. Spiritually minded believers make their decisions on the basis of eternal values, not on the passing fads of the world.

Lot chose the well watered plains of Jordan because he **saw** what was good with his natural eyes and greedily chose the best for himself, which turned to his loss because he camped by Sodom and Gomorrah – his values were worldly, his mind was on earthly things and as a result he lost everything, his daughters were compromised into sleeping with their father and Amon and Moab were the result, which today are part of the middle east crisis. His eyes were on earthly things – to his destruction and that of his progeny.

Moses however, refused the pleasures and treasures of Egypt because he had something better in mind. His reward -

Hebrews 11:24-26

Mark 8:36

Gives us the truth –

Philippians 3:20

The Greek word translated in some versions 'conversation' – the King James Bible puts it this way – or 'citizenship' in the NIV – is where we get our word politics and it has to do with our **behaviour** as a citizen of that nation. Paul is encouraging us to have a spiritual mind, and he does that by pointing out the characteristics of a Christian whose 'citizenship' is in heaven.

In other places where he talks about '*in Christ*' or '*in the Lord*' in the latter he speaks of our behaviour, in the former, our position. What he is emphasising is our difference in behaviour to those who are citizens of the earth. We should be marked out by our integrity, honesty and transparency because we are God's ambassadors on earth and an ambassador represents another country *and* its culture.

Question – how much would those around you recognise that this world was not your permanent dwelling place?

So Paul is encouraging us to have a spiritual mind by pointing out the characteristics of a Christian whose citizenship is in heaven.

Our names are recorded in heaven –

Philippians 4:3

Your name is in the Book of Life. Your citizenship is important. In the natural, when you travel to another country it is essential that you have a passport that proves your citizenship. Your citizenship is in heaven – it is on God’s record.

Revelation 20:15

That is what will determine your final entry into the heavenly country. Your name is written there, in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Your destiny is secure.

Luke 10:20

The Greek verb *‘written’* here in Luke, is called the *‘perfect’* tense and it means it is once for all written and stands written because we have believed on God’s one and only Son.

We speak heaven’s language –

1 Corinthians 2:1

‘[Paul’s Reliance upon the Spirit] And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.’

The unsaved do not understand the things of God.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16

The citizens of heaven understand spiritual things and enjoy discussing them and sharing them with one another.

1 John 4:5-6

But speaking heaven’s language does not only mean what we say, but how we say it. The spiritually minded Christian does not go about quoting Bible verses all day! They speak the wisdom of God with the mind of Christ. Love *precedes* wisdom; knowledge *follows* love – simple rule of the Spirit – everything in our lives *flows* from our relationship with Him. We receive knowledge through our intimate relationship with Him and wisdom how to relay that to those around us.

James 3:13

‘[Wisdom from Above] Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behaviour his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.’

2 Corinthians 2:13

Colossians 4:6

Ephesians 4:29

We speak and behave in a manner that glorifies God.

We obey heaven’s rules –

The citizens of Philippi were governed by Roman law, not Greek law, even though Philippi was hundreds of miles from Rome.

Philippians 3:17

When the Romans invaded a country they brought Rome and its customs to that place. They did not put a citizen of that country in rulership or leadership they set up their own –

Luke 23:7

‘And when he learned that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.’

In this passage, Paul warns believers about imitating the wrong kind of society – Paul is saying, *‘I am following Jesus so follow me’*.

1 Corinthians 11:1 NIV

‘Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.’

Paul knew full well he was an alien, a pilgrim and a stranger in this present world.

1 Peter 2:11

So we are seeing that Paul’s lifestyle was governed by heaven’s laws and that was what made the difference. He was interested in others, not himself, he was interested in giving, not getting, his motive was – love.

2 Corinthians 5:10-15 Amplified Bible

¹⁰For we must all appear and be revealed as we are before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive [his pay] according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil [considering what his purpose and motive have been, and what he has achieved, been busy with, and given himself and his attention to accomplishing]. ¹¹Therefore, being conscious of fearing the Lord with respect and reverence, we seek to win people over [to persuade them]. But what sort of persons we are is plainly recognized and thoroughly understood by God, and I hope that it is plainly recognized and thoroughly understood also by your consciences (your inborn discernment). ¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again, but we are providing you with an occasion and incentive to be [rightfully] proud of us, so that you may have a reply for those who pride themselves on surface appearances [on the virtues they only appear to have], although their heart is devoid of them. ¹³For if we are beside ourselves [mad, as some say], it is for God and concerns Him; if we are in our right mind, it is for your benefit, ¹⁴For the love of Christ controls and urges and impels us, because we are of the opinion and conviction that [if] One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵And He died for all, so that all those who live might live no longer to and for themselves, but to and for Him Who died and was raised again for their sake.’

By faith Paul obeyed the word of God knowing that one day he would be rewarded and though he was opposed and persecuted now, on that final Day, he would receive a crown.

Philippians 4:1

Philippians 3:18-19

Paul's source of sadness was over those who *professed* to be citizens of heaven but whose lives did not show it. They were zealous in their religious activities, but there was little or no evidence of the control of the Spirit of God in their lives. All they did was energised by their old ways of doing things and their glory was therefore their shame. Paul wept over them – we too must always check our motives for what we do – is it initiated and energised by the Holy Spirit – or by the flesh?

Paul was loyal to that one Master –

The cross of Jesus is the theme of the Bible and the heart of the gospel and the source of praise in heaven.

Revelation 5:8-10

This is the church in heaven after the rapture, or catching away – praising God. The cross is proof of God's love for a sinful and fallen creation.

Romans 5:8

The cross condemns what the world values – it judges mankind and pronounces the verdict – guilty -but in His great mercy, God doesn't leave us there, He gives us the opportunity to believe on Jesus finished work and grants us entrance into heaven. What a wonderful Saviour!

Hebrews 10:19-25

When Jesus said on the cross 'It is finished' He made one sacrifice for sin and ended the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.

Hebrews 10: 1 – 4

By His death and resurrection, Jesus accomplished a spiritual circumcision that rendered ritual circumcision obsolete.

Colossians 2:10 – 13

Everything that the Judaizers - those who wanted to perpetuate the Old Testament rituals - had advocated was eliminated by the death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus broke down the wall that was between the Jews and the Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:14-16

Paul is concerned because the Judaizers were rebuilding the wall that had been broken down. They were obeying carnal ordinances.

Hebrews 9:10 AMP

¹⁰*For [the ceremonies] deal only with clean and unclean meats and drinks and different washings, [mere] external rules and regulations for the body imposed to tide the worshipers over until the time of setting things straight [of reformation, of the complete new order when Christ, the Messiah, shall establish the reality of what these things foreshadow--a better covenant].'*

The cross is central to the life of the believer. We do not glory in men, religion or our own achievements, we glory in the cross.

Galatians 6:14

Paul was looking for heaven's Lord –

The Judaizers were living in the past, trying to get the Philippian believers to go back to Moses and the law, the true Christian lives for the future, anticipating the return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:20-21

We have completed Paul's example of himself and how we should follow – in this chapter Paul has described himself as an

- Accountant – verses 1 – 11- where he discovers new values
- An athlete – verses 12 – 16 - where he displays new vigour
- An alien – verses 17 -21 - where he experiences new vision

Looking for the Saviour, anticipating the return of the Lord Jesus should be the motivation that the believer with the **spiritual mind** possesses. It will motivate us to a dedicated life and service to the King of Kings.

1 John 2:28 – 1 John 3:3 AMP

²⁸*And now, little children, abide (live, remain permanently) in Him, so that when He is made visible, we may have and enjoy perfect confidence (boldness, assurance) and not be ashamed and shrink from Him at His coming. ²⁹If you know (perceive and are sure) that He [Christ] is [absolutely] righteous [conforming to the Father's will in purpose, thought, and action], you may also know (be sure) that everyone who does righteously [and is therefore in like manner conformed to the divine will] is born (begotten) of Him [God].'*

³*And everyone who has this hope [resting] on Him cleanses (purifies) himself just as He is pure (chaste, undefiled, guiltless).'*

The citizens of heaven, living on the earth, should never be discouraged because they know that one day Jesus will return so they should faithfully keep on doing what He has told them to do until that day, or until they go home to be with Him.

The **spiritually minded** believer does not live for the things of this life and the things of this world, they anticipate the blessings to come. This does not mean that we should neglect or ignore our daily obligations, but it does mean that we should –

Philippians 2:14, 15

Because one day we will have a glorious body like Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:42-53

If today we are living in the future, then we will be exercising the spiritual mind and living for the things which have an eternal value.

1 John 2:17 Amplified Bible

⁴⁷And the world passes away and disappears, and with it the forbidden cravings (the passionate desires, the lust) of it; but he who does the will of God and carries out His purposes in his life abides (remains) forever.'

That is the firm and certain promise for those who have a **spiritual mind**.

Amen.

