

A Heavenly Lifestyle

“For our conversation is in heaven”
Philippians 3:20

Introduction:

1. As we enter upon a new year (2008), we should soberly face the choice and challenge Paul gave us.
2. We cannot measure our Christianity and religion by any other standard than the pure word of God.
3. If we were to have resolutions for the new year, let us seek to emulate Paul and hate belly worship.
4. Paul was not afraid to repeat himself in matters that he deemed important and/or dangerous (3:1).
5. In this section of scripture he makes a contrast and extends a challenge to be like himself (3:15-21).

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

- A. What is the *therefore* there for? It draws a conclusion and comparison from Paul’s testimony.
 1. He counted all his accomplishments and learning among the Jews as nothing (3:1-7).
 2. He emphatically considered all things but loss and dung in comparison of Christ (3:8-11).
 3. His great ambitions in life were entirely wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ (3:8-11).
 4. He mightily pressed forward with all his might to fulfill God’s grace in his life (3:12-14).
 5. With this noble and spiritual example before us, Paul by the Spirit pursues our same zeal.
- B. *As many as be perfect* intends those spiritually minded and mature enough to understand.
 1. Paul is not describing absolute or spiritual perfection, or the exhortation would be vain.
 2. He has just declared that he himself was not perfect in an absolute sense or way (3:12).
 3. The false doctrines of the Judaizers are in mind, which perfect saints rejected (3:1-7).
 4. For those who think they have arrived, Paul urges them on to further growth in grace.
- C. *Be thus minded* makes Paul’s testimony our own goal. Paul’s zeal should be our mindset!
 1. Let us copy his frustration with his present attainments and his desire to do much more.
 2. If we were to have resolutions for life or a new year, let us copy Paul and his ambitions.
- D. If your mind is off track in any way, God will graciously reveal it to those following Paul.
 1. If you make Paul’s pursuit your pursuit – to win Christ – God will reveal any hindrances.
 2. If you are yet tempted by Jewish legalism, God will manifestly reveal the truth to you.
 3. If you think more highly of yourself than you should, God will teach you Paul’s humility.
 4. The path of the just is as the shining light that shines more and more (Pr 4:18; John 7:17).
 5. We should often examine our spiritual lives in any direction before God (Ps 139:23-24).

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

- A. *Nevertheless* creates a disjunction – though God will reveal more, let us agree where we can.
 1. Saints differ in knowledge, ambition, and practice; but there is still much to agree about.
 2. If God has not revealed everything to another, there is yet much revealed to both to share.
- B. All saints in a church have many things in which they can agree in knowledge and practice.
 1. It is the high calling of Jesus Christ for one mind, one heart, and one unity (I Cor 1:10).
 2. Though we may wait for others to catch up, there can be great unity in the things attained.
- C. Our pursuit of Jesus Christ should be with our brethren in mind by the one rule of scripture.
- D. This pursuit of Christ should be by His rules (II Tim 2:5) or with joint teamwork (Rom 15:1-7).

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

- A. The apostle Paul was not only a teacher of Gentiles, but also an example for their conduct.
- B. Paul declared here and in other places we should follow or copy his ambitions and lifestyle.
 - 1. Notice within this same book the degree to which he commended his example (Phil 4:9).
 - 2. He told the Corinthians to follow him as he followed Jesus Christ (I Cor 4:16; 11:1).
 - 3. Our Father kindly gave us human examples to follow (I Thes 1:6; II Thes 3:9; Heb 6:12).
 - 4. Paul's unique example extended to his ministers as well (II Tim 3:10-14; I Tim 4:12).
- C. This example of Paul's life was to be followed *together*, meaning in unity as far as possible.
- D. The saints who followed Paul's holy and zealous example were to be marked and followed.
 - 1. The adverbial combination of *so as* indicates following those who followed the apostles.
 - 2. Heretics are to be marked and avoided (Rom 16:17-18); saints are marked and followed.
 - 3. Those men and women in a church that speak and act most like Paul are to be followed.
 - 4. The holiest, purest, and wisest church members should always be the most popular.
 - 5. The worldliest, most carnal, and most foolish church members should be least popular.
 - 6. Marking good and noble men and following them is scriptural wisdom (Psalm 37:37).

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

- A. This and the following verse form a parenthesis. He will return to his thought of 3:17 in 3:20.
 - 1. The parenthesis creates a great contrast between Paul's holy life and belly worshippers.
 - 2. We will be one or the other, so we must face the comparison and answer the challenge.
- B. In the simplest terms, there are two kinds of Christians in every church, known by their *walk*.
 - 1. Paul just stated that the walk of the holiest members following him was to be followed.
 - 2. But even in the church at Philippi, there were many walking in carnal love of the world.
 - 3. Wise Christians carefully choose their examples and closest companions in God's church.
- C. Paul spoke often of the carnality of many Christians, though he did so with tears of grief.
 - 1. Does the carnality of Christians bother you? It should (Psalm 119:136; Ezekiel 9:1-7).
 - 2. The history of Israel under the Old Testament shows the carnality of many saints.
- D. Can such men be the elect of God? Barely. But we must allow for fruitless and carnal saints (I Cor 9:27; 11:30; I Thess 3:5; II Peter 1:9; 2:7-9; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; I Kings 11:1-12).
- E. If they include the elect of God, then "whose end is destruction" (3:19) must refer to temporal judgment, as with Lot, Samson, Sapphira, or Corinth (I Cor 11:30; James 5:19-20).
- F. No matter what a carnal Christian thinks or says of himself, Paul and God call him an enemy.
 - 1. A friend of the world – the lifestyle of the world at large – is God's enemy (James 4:4).
 - 2. Why an enemy? Because he is committing spiritual adultery by flirting with the enemy.
 - 3. Jesus Christ died to save us from the world, so playing with the world despises the cross.
 - 4. Jesus Christ died to save us from our sins, so that playing with sin despises our salvation.

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

- A. While Paul is describing these carnal church members, he defines them by four more facts.
- B. Carnal Christians, if God's children, *will be destroyed* practically; the unregenerate that creep into churches *will be destroyed* finally (I Cor 10:1-11; 11:30-32; II Thes 1:8; Rev 20:15).
- C. The religion of carnal Christians is only for their belly – sensual appetites, for they worship the satisfying of their lusts in pleasure rather than their souls with Christ (Rom 16:18).
- D. Carnal Christians will boast and talk of their worldly living as if it were glorious, when it is actually to their confusion and shame that they are so obsessed with the enemies of God.
- E. What is a belly-worshipping enemy of the cross of Christ? A person minding earthly things!
 - 1. Beware Christian! Do you get more excited about the things of this life than of heaven?
 - 2. What are they? House? Education? Profession? Wealth? Family? Landscaping? Vehicles? Clothes? Appearance? Athletics? Hobbies? Reputation? What are they?
 - 3. The big three – education, wealth, and body – have been here (Jer 9:23-24); yet many still seek them. You cannot take them with you, and they are worthless for the heavenly race.
 - 4. How do we mind earthly things? We think about them, pursue them, admire and desire them, pay for them, talk about them, require them, and measure by them.
 - 5. Our deceitful hearts exalt our earthly things as noble and despise those of others as carnal and base. There is no difference. No earthly thing has any virtue in our spiritual race.
 - 6. We must set our affections on things above, for you have a choice to set your affections, which includes much of your life, which should be aimed toward heaven (Col 3:2).
 - 7. Where are your treasures? Are they on earth or in heaven (Mat 6:19)? Face the question!
 - 8. No man can serve two masters (Matt 6:24). Things of life and eternity are opposites.
 - 9. The kingdom of God and His righteousness are to be sought before things (Matt 6:33).
 - 10. If you can see it, then it is something of the earth (II Cor 4:18). Look for invisible things.
 - 11. Is a demotion or a negative change in job or career a good or bad thing (Heb 11:24-27)?
 - 12. Are you gladder at a business success or at learning of Jesus Christ? Read Psalm 4:6-7.
 - 13. The wicked of this world have their portion in this life (Ps 17:14). It should not move us.
 - 14. Men that are truly after the Spirit of God mind the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5-9).

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

- A. This verse returns to Paul's exhortation to follow saints copying the lives of apostles (3:17).
- B. Here is the goal that Paul and great saints and we are to pursue – Jesus Christ and heaven.
- C. Belly worshippers have their mind and lifestyle in the world, but saints have theirs in heaven.
 - 1. The most important matters to a true Christian are the things of heaven and Jesus Christ.
 - 2. The lifestyle, priorities, and ambitions of a true Christian are to please God and Christ.
 - 3. The thoughts and knowledge pleasing a true Christian are learning of Christ and heaven.
- D. Those Christians with their lives dictated by heaven are expecting the coming of the Lord.
 - 1. Paul summarized his life as being very logically committed to Christ (II Cor 5:14-15).
 - 2. Based on what God has done for us, serving him is our reasonable service (Rom 12:1-2).
 - 3. If Jesus is coming from heaven, what true Christian wants to be found loving the world?

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

- A. When Jesus Christ appears, He will bring about the resurrection and glorify our vile bodies.
- B. Why would anyone in their right mind seek to satisfy a vile body that is to be destroyed?
- C. Jesus Christ will destroy all enemies and put them all under His feet, on which basis we live!
- D. Go back and see Paul's zeal about losing all for Christ to attain to the resurrection (3:8-11).

Conclusion:

- 1. There are two minds – the spiritual mind of Paul and the earthly mind of belly worshippers.
- 2. If you are not passionately consumed to know Christ experimentally, you worship your belly.
- 3. In this passage we have summarized the spiritual perspective we ought to have for our lives.
- 4. As we enter upon a new year (2008), we should soberly face the choice and challenge Paul gave us.
- 5. Is Jesus a coming King and Judge? Is heaven a real place? Our lives should reflect glorious facts.

For Further Study:

- 1. The sermon outline, "Exceeding Magnificent," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/exceeding-magnificent.pdf>.
- 2. The sermon outline, "Where Is Your Tent?" ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/pdf/where-is-your-tent.pdf>.