

Stand Firm

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 June 2020

Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] The following sermon is made available by Lakeside Bible Church in Cornelius, North Carolina.

For more information about our church or to find more recorded sermons, please visit us online at lakesidebible.church. We'd also love to connect with you on social media.

You can find us by searching Lakeside Bible NC on Facebook and Instagram. For specific questions about the Bible or our church, please email us at info@lakesidebible.church.

Philippians chapter 3. Let's start reading at verse 17. That's where we pick up. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example.

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

[1 : 13] For our citizenship is now in heaven. From whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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.

Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

And that's the phrase that we use as the title of our thoughts today, and that is stand firm. Stand fast. Building on his personal testimony throughout the chapter 3 of Philippians, Paul is now moving towards his conclusion of this section at least.

We'll get into his conclusion of the whole letter in chapter 4, but now he's moving into the conclusion of this section that really kind of acts independently within the book. It's a general discussion of salvation and what true Christianity is set against and contrasted with false Christianity.

And as he moves into this conclusion, what he's dealing with is the Christian's perseverance. He's encouraging them now, after he's discussed the truth of salvation, that these believers in Philippi would continue in the faith, that they would persevere in this truth that they have acknowledged and have professed.

[2 : 49] And the scriptures warn of, and many of us have witnessed of, people that make a profession of faith in Christ, but at some point along the way in their life, they deny that faith and fall away from what they had once professed.

And it's hard for us to imagine that. What goes on in a person's heart and mind that they would be confronted with the gospel of Christ and see, at least on the surface, the value that comes from a relationship with God through Jesus.

And then at some point, they completely abandon what at one time they professed to follow in faith. And this becomes a continual theme throughout the New Testament.

As the writers of the New Testament books and these pastors and these apostles, they continually encourage these believers to persevere. Continue in the faith. Continue in what you have acknowledged.

Continue in your faith. And these believers in Philippi were facing both hardship and temptation. Their hardship was related to the continued persecution of the church by both the Jews and by Rome.

[3 : 57] And Paul was even writing to them, as you understand, toward the end of a four-year imprisonment, he's writing this. And there would be great temptation to fall away in the midst of that kind of hardship.

Paul knows that. And he's encouraging them to continue in the faith despite the persecution. Their temptation came at the hand of the false teachers that we've studied in this book. That we're trying to draw them away from the faith.

And there's really two statements in the verses that we just read that I think points toward the fact that Paul is actually dealing with perseverance as he addresses these people as true believers. The first one's in verse 17.

Look at the very first word. He refers to them once again as brethren. And we've talked about before, this word for brethren in the New Testament is a reference to true believers.

So Paul writes to them assuming that they are the good seed, assuming that they are true believers that have truly followed Christ. And he's encouraging them to persevere in that faith rather than writing to them as if they are not true believers and trying to encourage them evangelistically in that sort.

[5 : 01] So we see now how his mind is really shifting. It's not that he's trying to call them to salvation. He's calling them to persevere. Brethren, he believes these people to be true Christians and he's encouraging them to persevere in that.

And then look at verse 1 in chapter 4. He says, therefore, because of all of these things that I have just written to you in chapter 3 but especially because of these last few verses, therefore, he says, stand fast in the Lord.

Stand firm. Don't waver. There was a serious concern for Paul. He wasn't writing to them as a leader that was concerned about losing his following.

He was writing these things out of a deep love that he had for these Christians. Look at the endearing terms that he writes in verse 1 of chapter 4. Look at all of this.

Six different times he expresses his love. Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, longed for, my joy, my crown, and then again, my dearly beloved.

[6 : 08] There's a deep love and concern for these people. There's a deep concern for their soul. And so he writes to them in this love and he speaks this truth in love as Ephesians 4 tells us that we're supposed to do.

But he speaks truth to them in these verses. He doesn't mince his words and he doesn't sugarcoat anything, but we see that all of this is coming actually from the depths of his love for these people. And it's indicative of a true servant of God to have that kind of heart. Paul essentially in these verses becomes the typical effective influencer as he coaches them to continue in the grace of God. In fact, coach probably would be the most appropriate title to give him in these passages. They describe as he instructs and warns and encourages them just like any leader that wants to see the best for his or her followers.

Think about the teachers and the coaches and the Christians and pastors that you've had in your life that did this for you, that they led you in this way. They instructed you.

[7 : 14] They told you what you needed to do and whatever it was you were pursuing. They warned you about the things that would derail your progress and then they would encourage you. They cheer you on, right? That's essentially what Paul becomes in these verses.

He instructs them first, this is what you need to do. Then he warns them about the potential things that would take away from that. And then he spends those last couple of verses in chapter three encouraging them, which is the awesome part of this passage that we study today.

In these verses, Paul reduces the likelihood of our perseverance to two things. He says that we're to follow the right people and we are to focus on our heavenly citizenship.

That if we are to persevere, it will be because we've followed the right people and we have focused, set our minds on heaven. Let's first look at the instruction to follow the right people.

Look with me at verse 17. He says, brethren, be followers together of me. The word translated as followers here, it means to imitate or to be an imitator of others.

[8 : 22] And there is a sense in which imitation can be merely external and really of no benefit to us in our Christian faith. But what Paul is calling them to in this passage and by extension calling us to in this passage is emulation.

Now, what I mean by that is to say that imitation could be simple mimicry. We could find a Christian or we could find somebody that we're impressed by in some way and we could pattern our methodology and we could pattern our actions purely externally after this person.

But that's not exactly what Paul's calling these people to do. He's calling them to emulate him, which means to match or even surpass someone by means of imitation. So what he really wants for them to do is take what he just wrote about his passion in following Christ.

And it wasn't that he was concerned about them behaving like he behaved, but that they would believe like he believes. And so he's saying, be followers of me, church.

Be followers of me as I pursue Christ as the singular lifelong focus of my life. Follow me in doing that. He wasn't trying to build his following further.

[9 : 32] There wasn't an egotistical means of writing these verses. It was directly related to the previous verses. In fact, look with me at verse 13 and 14.

He said, brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, I'm not perfect, but this is the one thing that I do. Forgetting those things which are behind me, that is all of those accolades that he had listed earlier in the passage, forgetting all the things that I once thought as valuable and necessary in my life, and pressing forward, reaching forth unto those things which are before.

And he says, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Now, at first glance, it may seem that Paul is being a bit egotistical.

Well, that's not at all what he's being. He already mentioned in chapter one, if you remember back in his writings from prison, he mentioned that he didn't care that people followed other preachers, so long as those preachers were directing them to Christ.

He was only concerned that the Philippians emulate him insofar as he emulated Christ. And he set the premier example for this. Think about the Philippians as they would go through this persecution and hardship.

[10 : 47] When they would have the Romans that, in Philippi, that would try to devastate their beliefs, or when they would have the Judaizers that were plaguing the church at this point to come in and try to devastate, when they would be threatened with physical harm because of their faith, who would they then look to as an example?

How about the man that spent the last four years in a prison chained to a Roman guard, but all throughout that stayed faithful to the Lord? It's not that he's building a following. He's saying, look, when you go through hardship, follow me as I have followed Christ.

When things get difficult, don't give up. Don't abandon the faith. Follow me. Follow the example I have set for you. What about when the false teachers really began to bear down, and with their eloquence of speech, they tried to use their words to deceive us and to trick us and to turn us away, and he says, do what I have done.

Stay passionately faithful to the gospel, the simplicity and effectiveness of the gospel of Jesus Christ that you have come to believe and that you have seen God use in your life. He says, follow me.

And we come to a passage like that, and we immediately have to ask ourselves, who are we following? Are we emulating people that emulate Christ? And then we immediately have to ask ourselves the question after that, is my life worth following?

[12 : 09] Could I look at my kids and say, Ashlyn, Harper, follow me. Follow me as I follow Christ. In the way that I pursue Christ with my life, that's the way you need to do it.

I wonder how we could answer that question. It's a convicting thought, isn't it? What if everybody in our church decided this week that you were gonna be the example that they followed in the way that they lived out their faith, in the way that they dealt with hardship, in the way that they dealt with temptation, in the way that they dealt with false teaching, in the way that they studied their Bibles, in the way that they prayed?

Would you feel comfortable enough to be like Paul and say, follow me? Not because you want a following of your own, but because you know your eyes are set first on Christ.

And anybody that comes and follows you as an example is actually gonna wind up following Christ as their example. That's what Paul's saying. Look at this next phrase. He says, mark them which walk so, as you have us for an example.

Now this is a further proof, I think, that Paul wasn't trying to preserve his own personal following. Mark here is the same word used in verse 14 that we read just a moment ago.

[13 : 22] Paul said, I'm pressing toward the mark. It means to set one's gaze. And as we understand Paul's testimony there, he was saying, I have set my gaze in this race of the Christian life.

I have set my gaze on Christ. I've set my gaze firmly fixed on him. I'll turn neither to the right hand nor to the left. I will pursue Christ as the singular, passionate focus of my life.

And then he turns and he uses the same exact word for the way that we're to view others and follow others by example. He says, set your gaze on other believers that are passionately setting their gaze on Jesus Christ.

Same word. Mark them. Mark them. Take notice of the people in your life that are truly following Christ. Ultimately, our gaze is to be set on Christ.

But here we're told that a means of getting focused on Christ is actually by setting our gaze on others who are passionately pursuing the Lord. And the truth is, godly examples are a gift from God.

[14 : 25] And we need to seek them out. And we need to follow them and set our gaze upon them. Well, who exactly is it that we're supposed to mark? How can we find such people to emulate in following Christ?

And the clear direction here is found in the word walk. Look with me again at 17. Brethren, be followers together of me and mark them which walk. This refers to outward behavior that reflects an inward belief.

In fact, lifestyle reflects the authenticity of professed belief. Jesus said you will know them by the fruit of their life, which is another way of saying talk is cheap.

Talk is cheap. It doesn't matter what a person says if their example in their life does not follow what it is that they profess.

Yes. Identifying godly examples is not just a matter of how they talk, but how they live. In chapter one in verse 28, if you'll look back at it just real quickly, I said I wasn't gonna review and this is why because it all gets sprinkled in anyways.

[15 : 37] Remember what Paul said in verse 28 of chapter one. In nothing, be terrified by your adversaries. Now their adversaries were severe. Their adversaries meant potential death.

And torment for the faith. Now imagine if Paul had said that, but what everybody knew to be indicative of Paul's character was that when he actually faced that kind of persecution, he typically cowered away and softened up on his stance on the gospel.

You ever known anybody like that? They talk real big when they're around other Christians, but when they actually come to confront an unbeliever that's contesting their faith, it's easy for them to kind of cower back and maybe soften their stance on the gospel.

And Paul's saying, no, that's not what we're following. We're following people whose walk matches their talk. Their behavior is actually a reflection of what they're saying, of the inward faith.

And so essentially, he's not saying again, mark them because of what they say. Mark them because they live out the truth of the gospel. And so when Paul said that the Philippians had us for an example in verse 17, we think that this certainly would have included Timothy and Epaphroditus, which we met in chapter two, which tells us something specific about who we can follow.

[16 : 59] Paul was an apostle that they were to emulate. Timothy was a pastoral figure that they were to emulate. But do you remember who Epaphroditus was? Epaphroditus was just a church member.

He was their messenger to send Paul this gift, to send Paul these words of encouragement, to check up on Paul. Epaphroditus, as far as we can tell, maybe he was an elder in the church, but as far as we can tell, there's no other description of him.

Guess who he is? He's just a Christian. He's just a faithful believer. So how do we find people to follow? We don't just look at leadership or people that have a title or people that have a position. We find people who walk the talk, who not only proclaim the gospel, but they live the gospel, and then we're immediately encouraged by the fact that we don't have to be in a position to be one of those people.

Just because you're not in a position of authority or have a title that indicates leadership doesn't mean you can't be a spiritual leader. Seek out people to emulate and then commit to be a person worth emulating.

[18 : 02] As Kent Hughes says in relation to this, the apostle is calling the Philippians to join together in imitating both himself and the collective pattern of his fellow soldiers, including the men and women in the Philippian church who walked according to the example of those who indeed pursued Christ.

And so Paul gives this instruction. Follow the right people. But then comes the warning. Look at verse 18. For many walk who are actually the enemies of the cross of Christ.

As often is the case, Paul's instruction is set within the context of a warning. It's necessary for us to set our gaze on those who are passionately pursuing Christ because our paths will inevitably cross those who are actually enemies of Christ and the gospel.

Sometimes those enemies are obvious. They come in the form of atheism and agnosticism and other forms of religion. Sometimes they're not so obvious.

They come with the label of Christianity. And they claim that Jesus is the one that they follow. The warning that Paul gives here indicates that our vigilance is absolutely necessary.

[19 : 28] It implies that this is a constant danger for us. Why? Look at the verse. For many walk. Many people walk. This isn't something that's gonna come up once or twice in the course of your Christian life.

This is something you might deal with every single day. People who take on the name of Christ, people who take on the label of Christianity, but they're far from friends and followers of Christ. They're actually enemies of the cross. And as we have come to understand in recent days, many of you that have watched that documentary that I recommended to you a couple of weeks ago, American Gospel, shows this clearly.

How easy it is to be deceived by those who take on the name of Christ who are actually enemies of the cross. So be vigilant, Paul says. Set your gaze on those who are truly following Christ so that it's not easy for you to be turned away to those people that are not following Christ, that are actually enemies of the cross.

What makes someone an enemy of the cross? Any belief that takes away from the sufficiency of Christ in salvation is an enemy of the cross. Any belief that minimizes the significance of sin is an enemy of the cross.

[20 : 42] Any lifestyle that does not reflect the truth of the gospel is an enemy of the cross. And I believe here Paul's warning these Philippians again about the Judaizers.

Remember, it's not that they denied Christ completely. They claim to be followers of Christ. They just didn't believe that Jesus was enough. They thought that it took morality and adherence to the law in order to truly be saved.

Jesus is a part of that for them, but he's not all of that for them. Look at this next phrase that Paul says in verse 18. He says, Many walk, of whom I have told you often, this is a continual warning in the scriptures, and then he says this, And I now tell you even weeping.

He stirred emotionally in this moment. Why? Because he loves these people. He's concerned that they continue in the faith.

Think about who he may be referencing here. He says, I've told you often, perhaps the Judaizers that were plaguing the church, perhaps the false teachers that were leading them away, were actually people that at one time were professing Christians in the Philippian church.

[21 : 55] And then to magnify that warning, he says in the very next verse, whose end is what? Destruction.

Contributing to the seriousness of the warning is the shocking proclamation of the eventual demise of those who deny and abandon the gospel. rather than eternal life, the path of these enemies of the cross actually leads to eternal destruction.

And anyone that will follow their path will face that same devastating end. This phrase is so important because it speaks to the reality of eternal hell. And it reminds us that there's no such thing as close enough when it comes to salvation.

Jesus can't be a part of your belief. He must be your belief. True salvation only comes to those who will forsake all and follow Christ as Lord.

There's no goodness in us. There's no religious work so effective that we could ever earn salvation. It only comes to those who will abandon every work of morality and religion and trust in the death and resurrection of Christ alone for their salvation.

[23 : 18] As C.H. Spurgeon said, if Christ be anything, he must be everything. If there is anything of value in Christ, if he is who he said he was, he must be everything to us in salvation.

He cannot be just a part of it. He cannot be just a form of obtaining salvation. He must be our salvation. And our culture of tolerance would say that these people are perfectly fine because they have Jesus as a part of the equation.

But the Bible says unequivocally that their end is destruction. It's destruction. And that reminds us that we need to be careful not to affirm an individual's salvation when the scriptures clearly deny it. Again, Paul's saying this with love, but he's saying it with boldness too. Perhaps the shock that came to these Philippian believers as the letter was read to them, as they pictured the people who had now mingled the truth of Christ with the false way of the Judaizers, and they're thinking, really, the destruction?

I thought that maybe they'd be okay because they said they're followers of Christ. But they weren't true followers of Christ. And Paul says their end is destruction, and if you're deceived by them, your end will be destruction as well.

[24 : 41] It wouldn't lead to a lesser Christian experience. It would lead, ultimately, to a denial of the faith and the true gospel. Well, how do we identify who these are?

Paul helps us here, and quickly, we'll just contrast and compare the walk of an enemy of the cross with the walk of a follower of Christ. Look again at verse 19.

The first thing he says is indicative of the enemy of the cross is that their God is their belly. In other words, they are consumed with their own satisfaction and pleasure. When it really comes down to it, what they're looking for, what they're even looking for in Christ and in the church is pleasure and satisfaction, fulfillment.

Well, what does the follower of Christ do? Verse number 10. In other words, the follower of Christ comes and says, even if it means suffering, I will consume my life with pursuing Christ.

The enemies of the cross are concerned with their own fulfillment. The followers of Christ will sacrifice every pleasure that they have in order to know him and to follow him and to conform their lives to him.

[25 : 55] The second thing Paul says is indicative of an enemy is that they glory in their shame. They take pride in their goodness and self-righteousness. They're proud of their religious works. They're proud of the morality that they've developed.

But what does the follower of Christ do? Look back at verse three. That rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. The true followers only boast is in the cross of Christ.

They recognize there's nothing good in them. They are Mephibosheth that comes to Christ and says, who am I as an unworthy dog to receive your kindness? Not a look at what I've done to earn what Christ is giving.

Finally, Paul says, they mind earthly things. Their focus is on the pleasure and concerns of this life. They're looking for their best life now.

When the scripture says that this life is awful, anything that good comes to us now is of God's grace. Our best life isn't now. Our best life is to come as he gets to here in just a few moments in these next verses as he begins to talk about heaven.

[27 : 07] But the people that are enemies of the cross may have Jesus as a part of their equation, but what they're really concerned with is earthly things. They're wrapped up in everything that's happening in this life when the true follower of Christ does what?

Verse seven. What things were gained to me, I counted loss for Christ. They leave the cares and the concerns of this life behind in order to know and follow Christ.

You see the difference in these two people? One is completely consumed with self, while the other is completely consumed with Christ Jesus. That's the difference between a follower of Christ and an enemy of the cross.

So set your gaze, church, on the followers of Christ. Pursue Christ and set your example as other Christians in this room that sit around you every week that are worth emulating in their life, the way they walk with Christ, the way that they follow the Lord.

Emulate them. Stay off the social media if you got to. Avoid the clickbait if you have to. Stay off of YouTube and the Christian radio if you have to.

[28 : 09] And look out people that you can see the evidence of the fruit of their life in your local church and emulate them. Follow Christ as you pattern your life after other Christians that are faithfully following the Lord.

Well, that's a little bit about his instruction and warning. Look at verse 20. I love this. This is so encouraging. For our conversation or our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Like any great coach, Paul has given his instruction and he's issued his warning. Now he endeavors to cheer them on and encourage them as they persevere.

Have you ever had someone truly encourage you in something that you are ready to give up on? Bob, perhaps you dealt with this in your basic training for the Navy. Maybe somebody would tear you down real hard and then they'd try to build you up right when you're ready to give up, right? You ever had experiences like this before? It doesn't look like it right now, but I do like to run even though I'm not very disciplined at doing it very much right now. And Andy and I have had the opportunity to run some races over the last couple years, some hard races, some difficult ones. [29 : 18] And anytime I would do that and I would get in one of these training programs, I was very careful to follow the instruction to do the right things and to train the right way. And I was careful to heed the warnings that if you're gonna run the right way, you're gonna have to cut out some things.

You're gonna have to cut out some eating and some things that would derail that. But when it came down to race day, the big races, there's inevitably a moment in the race where you're thinking, why am I doing this?

What do I possibly have to gain from this? This is hard. I'm miserable. I don't really like to sweat all that much. There's a lot of people around me and they're getting too close. There's just a lot of things that I don't want. Why am I doing this?

Why am I doing this? And in those moments, what would always be encouraging, what helps get you to the finish line is all of the people that line the roads and they're cheering, right? They're cheering. They're encouraging on. They've got their funny signs or they're doing whatever.

Inevitably in those races for me in the long ones, at some point along the race, Julie and the girls would be waiting. Somewhere on the course, usually probably about halfway through. 13, 14 miles in, Julie would be there and she'd be waiting.

[30 : 22] And I would run through and I knew she'd be there. And all it took was for me to see her. I knew why she was there. She was there to remind me, to cheer me on, but to encourage me on all this work that has gone into this day.

All of this training that has gone in. And what she essentially does is she sets my focus back on the finish line. I'm gonna finish the race. I'm gonna finish what I'm doing. That's what Paul's doing here in this passage. He's instructed them.

He's warned them. And now he takes two verses and he just gets their mind focused back on the finish line. Think about heaven, he says. Keep your mind set on what is to come.

It's gonna get hard. Things are gonna be miserable for a little while. There's gonna be a lot of temptation, but stay focused on heaven. And look at how he does it. For our citizenship is in heaven, he says.

This is our citizenship. In contrast to the enemies of the cross whose minds were set on earthly things, he reminds these believers that their true citizenship was actually in heaven, not Rome.

[31 : 23] Now what's listed as conversation here is a form of the same word that's used in verse 27 of chapter one. Just flip back a page and look at it there. Remember we talked about this on living a life worthy of the gospel in verse 27.

He says, only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ. The root of this word is the word polis. It means city. It's the same word that we get our English words, police and metropolis and politician and things like that.

It's a reference to a city. And what Paul is saying in verse 27 of chapter one is he's using a verb that says that our behavior is to be like what we claim we are.

We are citizens of heaven, therefore we are to act like Christians is what he's saying in chapter one in verse 27. When we get to chapter three in verse 20, he's not using the verb form of this word, he's using the noun form of this word, which essentially is just reminding these believers that you belong to heaven.

He's not telling them to do anything in that verse. He's just reminding them, hey, heaven is your home, not Philippi, not Rome, not the United States.

[32 : 32] It's heaven is your home. In 127, he's calling them to live like Christians. In chapter three in verse 20, he's calling them to long for home, long for home.

Ashlyn can get homesick sometimes when she goes off for a few days and she'll get real weepy and we'll have to call her on the phone and try to comfort her in those ways. What is it that she's longing for? She's longing for home and everything that comes with it.

It's not that she's not enjoying her time with Papa and Nana in Gastonia. It's just that where she really wants to be is home. That's the picture Paul's painting here when he says your citizenship is in heaven.

He's saying it's not necessarily that you're gonna hate everything that happens on earth, but remember, this is not home. This is not home. Don't mind the earthly things. Don't get so wrapped up in the politics.

Don't get so wrapped up in everything that's happening here that you forget that this isn't home. Heaven is home, long for home. D.A. Carson wrote a fantastic paragraph about this.

[33 : 37] Here's what he said. Genuine spirituality cannot live long without an attitude that is homesick for heaven, that lives with eternity's values in view, that eagerly awaits Jesus's return, that anticipates the day when Christ himself will bring everything under his control and will transform our lowly bodies so that we will be like his glorious body.

And he says thoughtful Christians will not see themselves, first off, as citizens of Great Britain or the United States or Canada. We are citizens of heaven. Only that citizenship has enduring significance.

And he says happy is the believer whose epitaph was the couplet. Of this blessed man let this praise be given. Heaven was in him before he was in heaven.

What a great statement that is. That's what Paul's getting them to think of. Our heavenly citizenship reminds us that everything in this life that we have to endure is only temporary.

This will come to an end. Coronavirus will end. It may be through death, but it will end. And if your citizenship is in heaven, what awaits you is perfection and the glory of Christ.

[34 : 53] What awaits is far better and is worth the struggle of persevering in the faith. You don't need your best life now. If this is the best life that we can come up with now, then what's the point of all of this?

What are we following Christ for? The best life is ahead. And so he reminds them, hey, long for home. This will be over soon.

Heaven's real and it's coming. Your citizenship is there. Keep your eyes focused on that. Secondly, he says, we look for the Savior. Look at verse 20 again. Our citizenship is in home.

Out of that place or is in heaven. Out of that heaven is where we look for the Savior, the Lord, Jesus Christ. This name for Christ is so significant.

Lord Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus Christ. Yahweh, Jesus, Messiah is what it is. He's everything.

[35 : 51] This is everything that he says that he is in chapter two and that great few verses there about the deity of Christ. What did Jesus tell his disciples in John 14? He said, I go to prepare a place for you.

And I will come again and receive you unto myself. Why? That where I am, you'll be there also, he says.

What exactly is heaven? The Bible uses the term in three different ways, actually. Sometimes when it says heaven, it's a reference to the sky that we can step out and see.

Sometimes when it says heaven, it's a reference to outer space. Most of the time, it's a reference to the place where God dwells. And Paul here is referring to that place where not only God dwells, but where the believer will find his ultimate and eternal dwelling as well.

There's really not a lot that we know about heaven. John gives us the best description that he can in the book of the Revelation. But what he uses there is really mostly metaphorical language.

[36 : 58] Streets that are like unto gold or a river or a sea that is like crystal. And he does his best to picture for us, but really, we don't know what heaven will be like. But that's not the point. Paul doesn't say, our citizenship is in heaven from which we look for streets of gold.

Or our citizenship is in heaven from which we look for mansions. Or our citizenship is in heaven from which we look for pearly gates. Or our citizenship is in heaven from which we look for yada, yada, yada.

He says, our citizenship is in heaven from where we look for Christ. What is heaven? Heaven is where Jesus is. there's one thing that we're absolutely certain about, that we will be with him there. We long for heaven, not because of the fanciful descriptions of its beauty, but because we long for Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

And this makes sense, right? If our singular pursuit in the Christian life is to know and conform to the person of Jesus Christ, then it's not to experience material blessing.

[38 : 06] So then the prize of heaven then also is not material blessing. The prize of heaven is Jesus. Look again at what Paul said in verse 14.

He said, I press toward the mark for the prize. I've set my gaze on the goal in order that I may receive the prize. The goal and the prize in that verse is the same thing.

Jesus is the goal to know him and to conform my life to him. And he's also the prize. That when this life is over, what is heaven? It's Jesus. It's Jesus.

How awesome is that? We're to look for him, to eagerly await his return. What motivates us to persevere?

It's this promise of being with Jesus for all of eternity. There's some people that find this description of heaven disappointing. And if that disappoints you, that heaven is really the presence of Jesus, I think it would be worth it to examine your life to see if you're actually an enemy of the cross rather than a true follower of Christ.

[39 : 25] If Christ is who we follow, then he is the ultimate prize. Everything else that comes with heaven, the beauty and the significance, the blessing of it, is secondary to Christ.

He's the goal. He's also the prize. Finally, we'll be done. Who will change our vile body, Paul says in verse 21. Who will change our vile body unto his glorious body.

We've talked about the three tenses of salvation and how they're represented in this passage.

There's past tense, that is we have been saved. That's justification, that's the moment of conversion and regeneration.

Then we talk about sanctification, that is we are being saved. God is continually and progressively fashioning us into the likeness of Christ. And then there's glorification.

That's verse 21. This is our future glory. This is when we will be saved, ultimately and finally, once and for all. Once we get the justification, the other two are guaranteed.

[40 : 22] That's the blessing of it. But what does he say will happen in this glorification? He will change our vile body unto his glorious body. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead will transform us ultimately into his image and glory.

That's what he says in verse 21. According to the working, that is the power, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Well, what is the ultimate fulfillment of that? He has subdued death even unto himself.

So that Paul can reflect back on the earlier parts of the passage and he can say that I may know him in the power of his resurrection. Why? Because the power of his resurrection means that we will get new bodies.

Because of that power, we will get to experience a complete transformation in eternity. The scriptures teach us that at death, our spirit goes to be with Christ in heaven, but our body is laid in the grave.

Marty and Faye is going to a funeral today. They're gonna see this. That body, if that person was a believer, their spirit is with Christ today. Their body's here and their body's gonna go into the grave. What happens when Jesus returns, the Bible says, is that those bodies are resurrected and then are transformed, that we are given a new body.

[41 : 39] What kind of one? Like in verse 21, that's fashioned like unto his glorious body. We get one that's fit for heaven. One that has no sin.

Neither does it suffer the effects of sin. There's no sickness. There's no pain. There's no more death. It's a perfect body, meaning that it will be free from the possibility of sinfulness.

What a glorious future that is. What a glorious future that is. What a motivation to continue in the faith. Heaven's our home. We get to be with Jesus.

And when we're there, he's gonna give us a body that is fit for heaven. There's a lot of passages we can turn to that we won't do that that talks about this. I would like to point out 1 Corinthians 15 though.

Here's what Paul says. He says, this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

[42 : 37] And then he says, behold, I show you a mystery. This is hard to understand, but this is what will happen. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And then he finishes all that up. He's referencing the same glorification. He finishes all that up with another motivation to persevere. Here's what he says. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, be unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain.

This toil of this life, the struggle of the temptation, the struggle of the hardship and the persecution is not in vain because at the end of this, God is gonna transform us all.

[44 : 01] So stand firm, Paul writes to these Philippians. A few weeks ago, I came across this hymn.

I think it was actually Ravi Zacharias just before he passed away. He had posted this hymn that was one of his favorites. It was written by an English Puritan named Richard Baxter in 1681. And it's called, Lord, It Belongs Not to My Care. The entire hymn is really fantastic. I would encourage you to look it up. But here's what he says in the last stanza. And I think it's so fitting for this discussion.

Baxter says, My knowledge of that life is small. The eye of faith is dim. But tis enough that Christ knows all.

And I shall be with him. I don't know a lot about heaven. Eternity will tell that story for us. My eye of faith can at times be dim.

[45 : 04] And sometimes it's hard to stay the course. But for me, it's enough that Christ knows what I do not know. And all of these things are under the subjection of his power.

And I'm comforted by the fact that in heaven, whatever it may be like, I'll be with him. We must first know what it is that we're to stand firm on.

That's why Paul spends most of chapter 3 defending the gospel, refuting the Judaizers. Once we've settled our theology, we must know how to continue in that truth.

That's by following the right people. Keeping our mindset on heaven. On the future. True Christians will persevere. But this is how they will persevere.

Following the right people. Keeping their focus on heaven. And I think we should examine ourselves. Who are we following? And where's our focus?

[46 : 11] I think we should rejoice in the glorious future. I don't preach on heaven enough. I told Julie the other night, I've been excited to get to this. I should have broke this up into two parts, but I didn't want to do that because I wanted to get to this today.

Because there is such a glorious future that awaits us. And I can exhort you every week, but if I don't take the time to point you back to the rejoicing of heaven and of Christ, then that's not very much fun, is it?

But the Bible talks about it all the time. And we should rejoice in that future. And rejoice in that glory. And then we should commit to stand firm on the gospel.

And at times that will mean weeping. Weeping for those we love that have turned away. It requires vigilance to mind and guard our influence.

But we should commit to standing firm on the gospel. Thank you for listening to this sermon made available by Lakeside Bible Church. Feel free to share it wherever you'd like. Please do not charge for it or alter it in any way without express written consent from Lakeside Bible Church.

[47 : 21] Don't forget to visit us online at lakesidebible.church or find us on Facebook and Instagram by searching for Lakeside Bible NC. If you live in the Charlotte or Lake Norman area, we'd love for you to attend one of our worship services.

We meet every Sunday morning at 10 a.m. We'd love to meet you.