

Living in the Future Tense

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[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome to our time in the Word this morning. In his book, *First Things First*, Stephen Covey writes about Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychologist who survived the death camps of Nazi Germany. Frankl made a startling discovery with those who survived the brutal times in that death camp, and he found something that was pervasive throughout most of those who survived. This is what Covey writes about what Frankl discovered. He said he looked at several factors, health, vitality, family structure, intelligence, survival skills. Finally, he concluded that none of these factors was primarily responsible. The single most significant factor, he realized, was a sense of future vision, the impelling conviction of those who were to survive that they had a mission to perform some important work left to do. Survivors of POW camps in wars since Vietnam and elsewhere have reported similar experiences. A compelling future-oriented vision is a primary force that kept so many of them alive. Today, if you have nothing to live for in the future, life can seem hopeless. If there's nothing that you see as future potential, future opportunity, or a reason to get up in the morning every day, that would be a very, very hopeless existence.

But not for the followers of Jesus, because we have something for which to live. Let's take a look at what the Apostle Paul writes to the Philippian believers. We begin this morning in the book of Philippians. We're still in chapter number 3, in verses 17 through verse 21. Verse 17 begins with, Brethren, join in following my example. A note to those who so walk as you have us for a pattern. 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 set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body, that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself. Let us pray. Father, use this time in your word this morning to teach us, to instruct us, to instruct us, and to provide hope, provide a realization that we have something to live for.

We have something in the future that will help us to not only survive, but thrive in our present time. Teach us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. At this point in Paul's letter, it says that he is weeping. Now, we ask ourselves, why is that?

[4 : 08] I believe it's because he wants the Philippians to follow after Christ and use himself, use him as the example.

But not everyone was following Paul's example. Not everyone was following the example of Jesus Christ in the Philippian church at this time.

And we can't be sure, but it's likely that these verses, verses 18 through 19, describe the Judaizers, those who had come into the church at Philippi and were trying to cause them to revert back to Judaism and the rites and the rituals that went along with that.

And Paul is writing to professed followers of Jesus Christ and not people outside the church. And these Judaizers, these who came into the church and tried to add works to their salvation, were, in Paul's words, enemies of the cross, in that they added the law of Moses to the work that they were supposed to be doing.

Just as many today are saying that our works are important in that they bring us closer to God in order for us to be able to be deserving of God's love or deserving of our salvation.

[5 : 43] And there can be nothing further from the truth. These Judaizers and their obedience to the Old Testament dietary laws, as we see in verse 19, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who set their mind on earthly things.

Their obedience to the dietary laws of the Old Testament would, in effect, have made a God out of their belly. We can look at Colossians chapter 2, verses 20 to 23, in reference to that.

Also, their reference to emphasis on circumcision, would amount to glorying in that which they ought to be ashamed. Galatians chapter 6, verses 12 through 15, talks about that as well.

And these Judaizers were not spiritually minded. Just like the Apostle Paul in his references in Philippians being spiritually minded, these Judaizers, these people who wanted to add works to salvation, were more earthly minded.

They were more concerned about things that we can do and things that would have been prideful things that Paul said were worthless.

[7 : 12] They were holding on to earthly rituals. They were holding on to beliefs that God had given to Israel. And they were opposing the spiritual blessings, those who were being spiritually minded, and those things that we have in Christ.

Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3, Colossians 3, verses 1 through 3. To be spiritually minded simply means to look at earth from heaven's point of view.

In our time right now, and many who are getting frustrated with being stuck at home in the midst of this coronavirus, many are wondering how can they go on and how can they continue.

Many business people are concerned about if they can keep their business alive. Many people are and have lost their jobs and are experiencing financial burdens right now.

How can we continue? That is on the mind of so many right now. But if we can look at, and if we're followers of Jesus Christ, and if we can look at our present circumstances with a future-oriented vision, what are the things we are experiencing now, and how do they relate to our relationship with Jesus Christ.

[8 : 49] And when we look at things from a heavenly perspective, how can it help us get through today?

To be spiritually minded, as we said a moment ago, means to look at earth from heaven's point of view. We can be occupying our mind with the things that are above.

You say, well, that's easy to say, but that doesn't help me pay the bills. If we consider that we're here in our citizenship, we're going to get into that in a moment, but our citizenship is in heaven if we're a follower of Jesus Christ, and we are not to set our mind on earthly things, it means that if we understand that as part of God's family, it's part of God's economy, when we trust him for our needs, and we also see that in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we see that in the Gospel of Matthew, is that if we put our attention on things that are above, these things that we need, housing, food, clothing, all of these things will be taken care of if we put the things of God first in our lives, because God loves us, because God loves you.

He is going to make sure that you have that which you need, and that is going to be taken care of. But also, on the other hand, D.L. Moody used to scold Christians for being so heavenly minded that they were of no earthly good, and I believe that exhortation still needs to be heeded.

We can't have our head in the clouds and think that everything is going to be hunky-dory, everything is going to be great, and God will just drop manna from heaven for us.

[10 : 54] We need to do our part. Like we said in last week's message, that letting go and letting God is a nice-sounding bumper sticker, but we need to do what is God's will in our life, do that which God has called us to do, do those things which God says are simply wise, but then leave the rest up to God.

God will take over. God will take up where we leave off and our abilities leave off, and we need to understand that God can take care of us.

As we see here in verse 17, we are to follow Paul's example, walk not as those that he's talking about, the Judaizers, but hold him for a pattern, and Paul says, he even says, he says, now I tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, those who put too much emphasis on this world.

He says in verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven. So let's take a look at why we as followers of Jesus Christ can have a future and how we can have a future-oriented vision.

First thing that we see is our names are on heaven's record. No matter what we're experiencing right here and right now, we can know that our future is secure.

[12 : 37] Our names are on heaven's record. In Philippians chapter 4, verse number 3, Paul said, and I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers.

And here's the good news. He says, whose names, those followers of Christ, whose names are in the book of life.

These Philippian believers were privileged to be Roman citizens away from Rome. When a baby was born in Philippi, it was important that its name be registered on the legal records.

And also, when the lost sinner in Christ, when we trust Christ as our Savior, we become a citizen of heaven.

And our name is written in the book of life, according to Philippians chapter 4, verse number 3. And we understand that citizenship is important.

[13:47] When we travel to another country, it's essential that we have a passport to show our citizenship, show that we belong to a particular country.

None of us want to suffer the fate of Philip Nolan in the classic tale, *The Man Without a Country*. Because he cursed his country's name, Nolan was sentenced to live life aboard a ship never again, to see his native land, or even hear the news about what was going on in that country and its progress.

For 56 years, he was on an endless journey at sea from one ship to another and finally buried at sea. He really was a man without a country.

But your name and mine, if we're a follower of Jesus Christ, is written in the book of life. And this is what determines our final entrance into heaven.

When we confess Christ on earth, he confesses our name in heaven. and our name is written down there in heaven and stands there forever.

[15:02] Dr. Warren Wiersbe tells about his friend in Washington, D.C. who arranged for his oldest son and him to tour the White House.

She told him to be at a certain gate at a certain time at 8 o'clock in the morning and to be prepared to show evidence of who they were. Dr. Wiersbe tells about his son and him arriving at the gate and the guard politely asking their names.

They told him, they told them to show their credentials. He said, yes, sir. And Warren Wiersbe and his son did so and they said, thank you, you may enter.

they got into the White House because their names were written down on the proper list and their names got on that list through the intercession of another.

So it is with our entrance into heaven because we've trusted Christ, because our names are there, we will enter into glory because of the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[16:16] that's how we can have a future orientation. We have a home prepared for us. We have a place that we're headed and we know we're going to get there one day.

And the second thing we do is we speak heaven's language. We speak the language of heaven.

We see in 1 John chapter number 4 verses 5 and 6, John but they are of the world.

Therefore they speak as of the world and the world hears them. John's talking about those who are outside of the family of God. Paul was talking about these people who had come into the Philippian church trying to get their attention off of Christ and back onto themselves.

Paul said they minded earthly things. John said they speak as being from this world out of this world and the world understands them hears them.

John says in verse number 6 we are of God. He who knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us.

[17:32] By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. speaking God's language not only involves what we say but as well how we say it.

The spiritually minded Christian doesn't go around quoting Bible verses all day but is careful to speak in a way that honors and pleases God.

We're told that let our speech always be with grace seasoned with salt that we might know how to answer every man.

None of us should ever say now take this with a grain of salt because that involves a certain amount of speculation or potentially even error but we're to put the salt into our speech.

We talk like citizens of heaven just like someone can probably tell where you're from by the way you talk your accent the words that you use.

[18:38] We have a future vision. We are headed towards heaven and the way we live on planet earth is we're living like citizens of heaven. The next thing we see is we obey heaven's laws.

We obey heaven's laws. The citizens of Philippi were governed by Roman law. not Greek law even though they lived hundreds of miles away from Rome.

As a matter of fact this was the policy that Paul referred to when he said I'm a citizen of Rome and what that did was that protected his rights as a Roman citizen.

When he was first jailed in Philippi Paul himself used his Roman citizenship to guarantee his protection under that Roman law.

in verse 17 Paul warns the Philippian believers against imitating the wrong kind of citizens. Look back at verse 17 in chapter 3 of the book of Philippians.

[19 : 45] Paul said brethren join me in following my example and note those who so walk. He says for you have us as a pattern.

He said be followers together father of me. And of course Paul was a follower of Christ so this admonition here wasn't egotistical.

Paul knew that he was an alien here on earth in this world, a pilgrim and a stranger. His life was governed by heaven's laws and that's what made him different.

But Paul was concerned about others. He wasn't merely concerned about himself. He was interested in giving and not just getting. According to 2nd Corinthians his motive was love and not hatred.

By faith Paul obeyed the word of God knowing that one day he'd be rewarded for that. People might persecute him now but he knew that in the final day of reckoning that with Jesus Christ he would be the winner.

[20 : 54] And we're sad to say that there are those today just like the Judaizers in Paul's day who would profess to be citizens of heaven but who live lives that don't show it.

Maybe they're zealous in their religious activity but really don't have a relationship with God. Maybe even be very strict in their religious traditions but there's no evidence that the Holy Spirit is residing with them.

All they do is energized by the flesh and they get all the glory. And then next we see we are looking for heaven's Lord.

We're looking for heaven's Lord. Verse number 20 and verse 21. For our citizenship is in heaven from which we also eagerly wait for the saviors.

The Judaizers were living in the past tense trying to get the Philippian believers to go back to Moses, go back to the law. But Paul wanted these Philippian believers to live in the future tense anticipating the return of their savior according to verses 20 and 21.

[22 : 13] He says in verse 21, who will transform our lowly bodies that it may be conformed to his glorious body according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself.

Paul was anticipating the return of Jesus Christ for his own. In verses 1 through 11 in chapter 3 we saw Paul the accountant and he had discovered new values.

in verses 12 through 16 as the athlete displaying new vigor. And now we see Paul as the alien and he experiences here a brand new vision.

He says we look for the savior. It's with anticipation and longing for the coming of Christ that motivates the believer with the spiritual mind.

And there's a tremendous amount of energy in the present power of a future hope. What can get us through today? Realizing that there's a better tomorrow.

[23 : 23] What gets us through the sadness and the anxiety of the moment now is a realization that there's a better tomorrow.

It may not be the calendar date tomorrow, but it's knowing that there is a better future coming. and with Jesus Christ, we know that this existence and this experience today won't last.

And we have the ability to be controlled by him. And we know that one day there is a better tomorrow.

Because Abraham looked for a city. He was content to live in a tent. Hebrews 11, 13 through verse 16. Because Moses looked for the rewards of heaven, he was willing to forsake the treasures of earth for a time.

Because of the joy that was set before him, Jesus was willing to endure the agony of the cross. And the fact that Jesus is returning is a powerful motive for dedicated living today, devoted service today.

[24 : 40] And every man, woman, boy, and girl who has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure.

The citizen of heaven living on earth should never stay discouraged because he knows that his Lord is coming back one day.

And he knows that he gives us the power, the strength, the vigor to live a victorious life today.

Keeps on doing his job, lest the Lord return and find us idle and find us not doing his will.

We see that according to Luke chapter 12 verses 40 through 48. The spiritually minded believer doesn't live for the things of this world.

He anticipates the blessings of the world to come. We know that could be tomorrow. That could be next year. We really are not sure. This doesn't mean that we neglect our daily living.

[25 : 47] This doesn't mean that we stop saving for the future or stop living in today or neglect their daily obligations for family and other things.

but it doesn't mean that today is governed by what Christ will do in the future. And Paul mentions that we're going to have a glorified body one day.

Verse 21, he will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body according to the working by which he's able even to subdue all things to himself.

Today we live in a body of humiliation. We get sick and we make mistakes and we sin. The word humiliation is the word that's translated vile in Philippians 3 21, but when we see Jesus we'll have a body of glory.

It'll happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. At that moment, everything in this world will be worthless to us because we are going to have a glorified body living in the presence of Christ and they will be just as they ought to be.

[27 : 12] If we're living in the future tense, then we'll be exercising the spiritual mind and living for things that really matter. When Jesus returns, he will subdue all things to himself.

That word subdue means to arrange in ranks. Isn't that our problem today? We don't arrange things in their proper order.

We put things that waste away, we put things that fail us at the top of our value system. When in reality, only the things that will last for eternity are the things that really and truly matter.

often our values are twisted. Consequently, we waste our vigor on useless activities and our vision is clouded and we're not looking in the future.

When we're living with eternity's values in view and daring to believe God's promise that whatever we do for God will last, we need to be understanding that that will provide us and that will help us when we have that future vision.

[28 : 30] Are we living in the future tense? We talked a few messages ago about not living in the past. Don't let the past hold us back, but also don't let the present keep you down.

Don't let the present keep you anxious or wondering how we're going to survive. Look to the future. Know that God can provide a better tomorrow.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your provision. Lord, be with us today. Be with us as we live for you as citizens of heaven and that we are aliens in this world.

Lord, we thank you for what you are going to accomplish in our lives. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless.