

***Our Citizenship is in Heaven***

Philippians 3

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Introduction: Paul encourages the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord despite the fact that there will always be threats to the church. In this particular instance, Paul warns against those whose confidence before God is based on their good works rather than the finished work of Christ. He demonstrates the folly of self-salvation by describing his religiously rich pedigree and erstwhile notable achievements, neither of which measured up to the righteousness obtained through faith in Christ. He then calls upon the Philippians to be forward-looking in their faith, which is made visible by their lifelong pursuit of Christian maturity. By following his example of living for Christ and dismissing those who live for themselves, the Philippians can be assured that Christ will transform them, thus making them fit for heaven.

01. Rejoicing in the Lord is the best antidote for discouragement in the church. Christ gave His life for the church, sent His Spirit to sanctify the church, and will return for the church.

02. Repentance from sin includes rejecting our good deeds apart from Christ as well as our bad deeds against Christ. We cannot exercise saving faith while still focusing on ourselves.

03. Resting in our past accomplishments is the surest hindrance to future growth. Christ has made us His own therefore we are called to become more like Him.

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1. How would you outline the gospel from this chapter? What evidences can you find that point to our condition apart from Christ? What evidences can you find that point to our standing in Christ?

2. Note the use of terms like “evildoers,” “dogs,” and “enemies” that describe gospel opponents. How does Paul’s language in this regard strike you? Is he being unkind or is he using this language to underscore the seriousness of their error? Can you identify with Paul’s concern for the lost with tears in his eyes?

3. John Wesley concluded, upon his study of Philippians 3:12, that Christians can attain perfection in this lifetime, namely freedom from known and willful sin. Most Christians believe he missed the point, citing 3:20-21 as the counterpart to perfection this side of heaven. What is the proper balance between striving for holiness in this lifetime while at the same time accepting the fact that we will not reach perfection until Christ transforms us? In what ways are you making progress in the Christian life?

4. Paul’s exhortation to “join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us,” reminds us of the need for mature Christians who model the faith. Who do you look to as models of Christian living? Could others look to you as a model of Christian living? Remember, this is not a call to perfection but a reminder that our consistency or inconsistency impacts how others view the Christian life.

5. Our citizenship is in heaven, but our current address is in this world. How can we be both heavenly-minded and earthly good? What do you anticipate life to be like when your “lowly body is transformed to be like his glorious body”?

For Further Reading: Ray Ortlund, *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ*. Crossway, 2014.

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