

Series: Side by Side  
Message Title: **Focusing on Eternity**  
Date: Sunday, May 6, 2018  
Scripture: Philippians 3:17-25  
Speaker: David H. McKinley  
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

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## Introduction

“Difficulty breeds doubt and disillusionment.”

While I have seen many come to Christ through hardship, I have also watched as people have wandered and walked away from the Lord in hardship.

Have you ever doubted God, His Word, your faith? We all have a tendency to doubt in the dark! Living in a world so pervaded by dark places and spaces, we often find ourselves lacking peace and perspective.

Paul wanted to encourage the Philippian believers in hardship, and so he made it personal.

“Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers,

join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things" (Philippians 3:17-19 ESV).

Philippians 3:15-16 = maturity theme

When you are struggling, you need the awareness and encouragement of others who have struggled like you. Examples: Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, etc.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too" (2 Corinthians 1:3-5 ESV).

Paul is saying that we need to get our eyes off of those who have wandered from Christ and get our eyes on those who have walked and continue to walk with Christ.

This why Paul used the circumstance and uniqueness of the experience of the Philippian people to illustrate a greater truth. They had unique standing and privileges as Roman citizens as we will discuss a little later. Paul took the positional privileges of the Philippians and used it to describe our lives as believers.



## **Remember This World is Not Your Home**

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21 ESV).

Philippi was like living in Rome except in miniature. The Philippians were under Rome’s care, their conduct was governed by Roman

law, and their hopes centered on Rome's glory.

"Here was a picture the Philippians could understand. Philippi was a Roman colony. Here and there at strategic military centres, the Romans set down their colonies. In such places the citizens were mostly soldiers who had served their time—twenty-one years—and who had been rewarded with full citizenship. The great characteristic of these colonies was that, wherever they were, they remained fragments of Rome. Roman dress was worn; Roman magistrates governed; the Latin tongue was spoken; Roman justice was administered; Roman morals were observed. Even in the ends of the earth they remained unshakably Roman. Paul says to the Philippians, 'Just as the Roman colonists never forget that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship.'" —William Barclay

There is great emphasis on "our" distinction from those whose god is their belly and whose end is destruction. We are not part of that culture.

This is not your life and you will not experience your best life now! But there is a life to come, there is a hope to sustain, and there are promises yet to be fulfilled. The key for all of us is to focus on eternity. That sounds pious, but it is truly practical and helpful. Live in the future tense!

Paul is saying to this congregation that they are a colony of Heaven on earth. They are identified with heaven just like a baby born in Philippi has its name written in the record books of Rome. Their name is written in the record book of heaven and that is where their protection and privileges lie.

It is amazing how often we allow ourselves to get all worked up over the things of this world and completely forget that our life and hope is in the next.

Paul was reminding these believers they did not belong to the paganism and godlessness of the world around them. Paul identifies those around us as:

- Destined for eternal hopelessness
- Driven by sensual appetites
- Deceived in moral darkness
- Dedicated to material things

Long before Paul challenged this, the Psalmist captured it in one of my favorite and frequently read Psalms:

“Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked... They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth... And they say, ‘How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?’ Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning... But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task... Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:1-3, 9, 11-14, 16, 25-26 ESV).

What a reflection of life for so many of us today. We struggle to follow Christ and watch

as many seem to run the pathways of rage in the world. We wonder if we've got it wrong and they've got it right. But remember, there is an end for them and an outcome for us.

*This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through  
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.*

*The angels beckon me from heaven's open door  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.*

*Oh Lord, you know I have no friend like you  
If heaven's not my home then Lord what will I do?*

*The angels beckon me from heaven's open door  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.*

Jim Reeves, Country Pop, 1962

(Died in private plane crash in 1964 at age 40)

But note, Paul's attitude and response was not one of self-righteous condemnation. No. He spoke of those in this condition with "tears"—because of who we are and what we know, we should not gloat over their destruction, but weep over the coming judgment.

"And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15 ESV).

**Live in the Future Tense**

“await” (anxiously await—stand on tip toes). The Bible is not just a book of inspiration; it is also one of anticipation. “It ain’t over!”—bad grammar, but great truth!

Christ is the King of Heaven and we anticipate the glory and victory of His kingdom.

“And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies... But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Romans 8:18-19, 23, 25 ESV).

... “so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:7-8 ESV).

“For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness” (Galatians 5:5 ESV).

... “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13 ESV).

... “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him” (Hebrews 9:28 ESV).

... “keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life” (Jude 1:21 ESV).

The Bible is filled with a message of anticipation of an event yet to come! Paul says to not look at the time line of human brokenness in history, but to look through the telescope of God’s final work in Christ.

The truth is, everyone is waiting on someone or something—living with some future hope.

It is easy to look at the world around us and those who live for the moment. There are many who walk with a simple mindset (“earthly things”)—those who live for pleasure and think, “*Why bother to seek*

*the Lord or to follow Christ?"* Abraham and Moses provided pictures of contrast to this conformity we struggle to cast off today.

"For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God... By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:10, 24-27 ESV).

In the end, what you see is what you get. If all you see is this life are pleasures and treasures of this world, that is what you will pursue and get, but remember "in the end" it will not last, it will not satisfy, it will not endure. But when you see the invisible and grasp the eternal, it changes everything.

"This life is temporary; heaven is forever. Keep that reality right in front of you."

—James MacDonald

## **Fix your Hope on Transformation, not Reformation**

Everybody seems to have interest in reform. There is much that needs to be reformed, but more to be transformed.

Presently, our bodies are weak, susceptible, vulnerable, and carnal. So easy for us to fall prey to the dictates of the body that war against the soul.

Clark Kent = Superman

Bruce Wayne = Batman

Peter Parker = Spiderman

Suddenly common people become super heroes! In each case they are not reformed, they are transformed.

I am not trivializing the transformation of Christ, but trying to help you look at where people spend millions of dollars and hours being entertained with the idea that some superhero transformation can bring social reformation. The truth is, God offers us real transformation—powerful transformation in Christ.

Let me give you an amazing example through David (diagnosed with ALS) and Cindy Wolfe. “As in my email two years ago, this information can be shocking to read. But none of it is shocking to God. He knows. He cares. That has been my mantra throughout this disease. Things you can pray for us:”

- To hold fast to God and His understanding
- To have peace with God’s timing
- For physical comfort for David
- To glorify God in all things
- To love each other unconditionally
- For protection from the evil one who wants to destroy

Yet one day this will change. Christ will transform, not just reform—transform our bodies like that of His own. Only God can transform a human soul and ultimately a human body into something glorious.

We will share new life, transformed life from a supernatural source. Paul referred to this in Philippians 3:10:

... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death.

—Philippians 3:10 ESV