

50-03-03.wpd --Living Strong to the Finish
Advent, example, the lost, 2nd Coming, resurrection, standing
Phil 3:17-4:1
We stand firm in living like Christ by eagerly awaiting His return.

INTRODUCTION:

--[For the last few years, a popular theme of humor has been to write out things that God might say to our modern world. One of these I saw recently, "*Don't make me have to come down there!*" -- GOD.] That falsely portrays God as reluctant to come down to us. Christ's *1st Advent* shows how God loved us enough to *come down* and become human to save us our sins. That's the "*Good News*." His *2nd Advent* will finish our salvation by resurrecting us into a brand new world. When He comes down that second time, He examine us to see what we did with that "Good News." "*Don't make me have to come down there!*" isn't characteristic of God, but it does imply something true: *God is concerned about what we are doing down here*. We may believe the Gospel, but are we living the Gospel life? **HOM.idea.**

I. Gospel Truth Must Be Demonstrated by a Gospel Lifestyle, v.17

A. Humans are born imitators ... God built us to learn by example.

1. Infants and toddlers learn everything by imitating others. This is especially true of talking. You won't get far by teaching a toddler the rules of grammar. "*If a child ain't supposed to say 'ain't,' then he ain't supposed to hear it!*"
2. Paul was not boastful in telling Philippian believers, "*Join with others in following my example, brothers*" (He was not like the parent that says, "*Do as I say, not as I do!*") There was no hypocrisy in his appeal, rather he had left them an example of following Christ-- 1 Cor 11:1, Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.
3. What was one of those examples? Acts 16:22-25, The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be **stripped** and **beaten**. After they had been **severely flogged**, they were **thrown into prison**, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them **in the inner cell** and fastened their **feet in the stocks**. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. (They had suffered injustice, just as Jesus did, yet they stood their spiritual ground. People saw that, including the jailer who was converted that night, along with his whole household. The church in Philippi knew the Apostle Paul's example.)

- B. When Jesus said, "*Follow Me*," He was not giving us just a list of mental concepts to believe in but a "pattern" to live by.
 1. Paul was a master of theological doctrine, but his exhortation was to "take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you"
 2. When the church's major emphasis is "*doctrine*," its time is spent in discussion and its energy is wasted in dissension. But when we live out Christ's example, then the Gospel becomes a living testimony, an "embodied" message, "*the word become flesh*."
 3. *Doctrine* is essential for building a safe home for faith, but unless faith is lived out, the house is empty. (The *Sermon on the Mount* is all about a way of living, and Jesus concluded it a warning--Mat 7:26-27, "...everyone who **hears** these words of mine and **does not put them into practice** is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

TRANS: Jesus left us a pattern to follow. If we lived out just one facet of His example, such as His forgiveness ("Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."), the impact on society would be tremendous! The key is remembering that the injustices and hurts of this life are temporary. Jesus is coming back! **We stand firm in living like Christ by eagerly awaiting His return.**

II. A Gospel Lifestyle is Lived in Gospel Hope

- A. **The Gospel hope** is a destiny not just of going to heaven, but to be resurrected in human bodies to reign with our resurrected Lord over a renewed creation-- Rom 8:22-24a, We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the **redemption of our bodies**. For in this hope we were saved. (It's a *bigger salvation* than most realize!)
 1. A Gospel lifestyle, lived in that Gospel hope, means living as the people of the future-- **v.20a**, "*our citizenship is in heaven*."
 2. When we pray, "Thy kingdom come" we're praying for Christ's 2nd Advent, but when we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven", we're praying for the fruits of His 1st Advent to be realized today!
 3. How that passage quoted ends-- Rom 8:24-25, For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. (We

ought to be the most patient people on the planet, because our waiting time is so immeasurably short in comparison to our glorious destiny in eternity!)

B. The Gospel hope runs upstream against the popular current,
because "*many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.*"

1. Paul mentions their lifestyle *in contrast to the lifestyle lived in Gospel hope*: "...their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things." (they hate "the cross of Christ" because it condemns their lifestyle, while Christians embrace His Cross because it frees us from worldly living-- Gal 6:14, May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.)
2. Paul says that "*their destiny is destruction,*" unless they come to faith in Christ, but even though he had severely suffered because of such people, he speaks of them "*even with tears,*" as one who truly followed Christ's compassionate example of loving His enemies. (This is an example in Paul's life that we need to imitate, too.)

C. The Gospel hope is worth waiting for. Why?

1. **Because** of the One we're waiting for ("*our citizenship is in heaven*" only because our King is there waiting for His 2nd Advent.)
2. **Because** this world is out of control *ecologically, politically, morally, and relationally*, but upon our King's return, we will witness "*the power that enables him to bring everything under his control.*"
3. **Because**, when He gets back, Jesus "*will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*" (Upon His return, [Rev 21:4], He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.)

CONCLUSION:

--The New Testament was meant to nurture a life of faith in Jesus Christ that the world can see and be attracted to. Being correct in doctrine is important, but right doctrine is meant to undergird a Gospel lifestyle of **living like Christ**, and we do that **by eagerly awaiting His return**. As Paul concluded, "*that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!*"

Phil 3:17-21 (NIV) Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. {18} For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. {19} Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. {20} But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, {21} who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Phil 4:1 (NIV) Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!