Philippians 10-07-23b

Let's pick up our study now in Philippians chapter 3. If you haven't noticed already, Paul's vocabulary is drawn from the world of athletics. You probably kind of surmised this or picked it up when he talks about attaining something, pressing toward the goal marker, running, pushing hard. People talk when they're running about pushing themselves.

You have to set a moderate pace. You have to leave yourself enough energy to finish strong, but you press. They're running the Tour de France and I haven't seen or monitored any of that, but I hear people talking about it and about how the race is really won in the mountains and they're dueling it out, riders competing to see who, I guess they actually figure out the wattage, I believe it's watts per kilogram or something, they figure out the lighter you are and the stronger you are, the better you'll do.

These guys are putting out enough wattage and riding these bicycles each day to power a house, lights and refrigerators and everything. It's incredible, but the lighter, really wiry, strong guys tend to win, so you want to go for lean strength. The imagery, the vocabulary here that Paul uses is of a runner running a race and looking for the finish line markers.

In the ancient world, they didn't have a lot of high tech stuff, but they would have a couple of slaves or a couple of officials or whatever standing, garbed in a special way so that from a distance you could spot where the finish of the race was. You're not trying to run into those guys, you're not happy to see them wanting to shake their hands, but you know that they represent the finish and you want to go to and through. I want to read you something that I found here on this that I think is kind of helpful in capturing Paul's thought.

In keeping with the vivid imagery drawn from the Greek games that pervades this section, there is a view here represented by the upward call of God. The word for upward is ana, which means up or again, and then the call of course is kleiseos, so you have the ano kleiseos, the up calling of God to Theou. In the ancient world, for example, in the Olympian games, they had a number of different cyclical games in the ancient world.

The most famous are the Olympic games. The Olympic games started out mainly as foot races. All of these other things were added later, curling, we do that in the modern day.

They didn't know anything about curling in the ancient world. They were largely foot races. Track and field events were almost the entire Olympic games.

These foot races were presided over by a judge. He's sitting there at the goal watching to see who comes across first. He's called the agonophates.

Think about that, agono, agoneo, to strive, the agony, the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat. Well, in the ancient world, agony was the good part. The agonoeto, he's the judge at the finish

line, and then there were chief judges that would preside over the whole thing and hand out the prizes and stuff.

They were called the helenodikai, and of course, the helenes were the Greeks, and dikaios is the word for to judge or to be righteous, to be approved. The helenodikai were the chief judges. After each event, and this is a guy named Glotz, G-L-O-T-Z, writing in the Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines, which, that's just the name of it.

Thankfully, a guy who could translate has cited this in his work, a guy named Colange. This is what Glotz had to say. After each event, they had a herald announce the name of the victor, his father's name, and his country.

And so, after his name is called as the victor, and his father's name is given, and his country is given, then they would bring him forward, and the athlete or the charioteer, whatever event he was in that he had won, he would come and receive a palm branch at their hands, the helenodikai would favor him, they would all march forward in their stately robes, and they would hand him this leaf. You know, the palm branch, they're literally growing on trees in the ancient world, they're not rare, but it is the ceremony, it is the recognition that it represents, this palm branch. You remember the victor's crown, the wreath of laurel, or whatever it might be, and the thing itself is insignificant in value, but what it represents, and you see this reflected in Revelation, the rewards for overcomers, the white stone, you know, you can go to the beach and pick up white stones all day, but this particular white stone as a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ, I mean, you can only imagine, the Lord Jesus Christ himself is going to come up to you personally by name and hand you this gift, the significance of it is just, it just practically brings you to tears even thinking about it, that the Lord Jesus Christ would consider you worthy of a gift from his own hand, because of your faithfulness and because of your recognition of his work and your desire to enter into it and to reflect his glory, it's just, it's a stunningly great thing.

I don't care where the rock comes from, in terms of its original source, but if it comes from the hand of the Lord Jesus, it's suddenly invested with a whole fresh meaning. I've often thought about this, have you ever gone into some, I've been in all kinds of corporate offices and rich people and what not, and lawyers, and you go in there and there will be a little fishbowl or something, and inside is a baseball, and well, you know, it's on a little stand, well it's a baseball, you can buy one for six bucks, but this baseball was hit out of the park by Babe Ruth, or Sammy Sosa, or somebody, Hank Aaron, or somebody hit this thing out, and the guy was there and caught it, and this ball has significance because of the event with which it is associated, because of the person that hit it. Here's Emmett Smith's jersey that he wore in the NFC Championship game, signed by Emmett, personalized to this guy, hanging on his wall in a big glass case, it's just a shirt, except for who wore it, on what occasion, and that person gave it to this individual, it just transforms it.

I have a copy, Dr. Criswell wrote a book called Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors, well they've

made tens of thousands of copies of that thing, I've got a copy, but my copy was given to me by Ann Criswell, and she wrote in the front of it, and she wrote a little message to me in the front, well, it transforms that book, it is unlike any other copy, and it's special to me, very special, because of that. Who gave it, on what occasion, for what reason, what is the significance, what is the sentiment that was in the front, well, this is what Paul is talking about when he says, I press for the prize of the upward call, this vocabulary, and it's hard to get across in English, but in Greek, all of the people who heard this, the Philippians, when they heard this letter read to them, when it was brought to them probably by Epaphroditus, they were imagining the last time they saw the games, and this, the one that won the race, that persevered, that ran the hardest, and looked at the goal markers, and ran through and finished, and after they'd stopped breathing so hard, and calmed down a little bit, their name is called, their father's name is called, their country name is called, or their province, their city state, whatever they're from, they've just covered themselves and their origins with glory, and they walk up, and here are these officials, huge crowds around, and they hand them the palm, and he says, you know what, that's the call of God, the judgment of God, in recognizing my race, that's what I'm running for, I want God to come up and be pleased, and hand the prize. That's the subtext in this.

I do not count myself to have apprehended, I don't think I've got the race won, just because I don't see anybody to my right and my left, and I think, hey, you remember the tortoise and the hare, you know, the rabbit sleeps under the tree, and the turtle walks by him, crawls by him, I guess, are tortoise and turtle the same thing? Probably not, but you get the sentiment, and in the same way, Paul says, I do not count myself to have apprehended, I forget those things which are behind, and you've heard innumerable stories about somebody who is actually winning a race, but they get worried that somebody's coming up from behind, as they look over their shoulder, and they break their stride, and then they sure enough lose, if they had just kept pushing to the tape, and hadn't worried about what was behind, they would have won, but they lose their focus, their concentration, and they unconsciously slow down, and if they see somebody coming, well then they get rattled and lose, and he says, look, I'm just focusing, I'm looking at that goal marker, and I'm thinking about the prize, I'm pressing toward the prize, and that's the purpose of the call, God has called me. Can you imagine God basically calling you to the finish line? You know, a lot of people cheer, cheer on somebody who's engaged in an athlete contest, people cheering for Chris the other day when he was swimming, cheering, I don't know if the person can even hear him, but if you can, and you think, you know, the people I know are here, and I want to do my very best in that light, it's an encouragement that people are there, and they're rooting for you, well, guess what? God is calling, God is cheering, and God is going to come up and award the prize, that's what Paul is talking about here, and he says, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, therefore, all of us, Paul says, look, he doesn't say, I'm up here and you mere mortals, you pathetic Philippians, come up here and see if you can ever catch me, he says, let all of us, he includes the Philippian believers, he says, look, all of us are mature, all of us understand what's at stake here, let's all have this attitude, this mind, let this mind be in you, he's talked about that a lot, let's all have this mind, what a great thing to be part of a group

that understands this, and if in anything you think otherwise, if you think that there's some other goal, by the way, I didn't give you the second prong of the argument right before the break, I said there were two things when Paul said, not as though I have already attained, and one of them is, he doesn't say, I have arrived, I have accomplished it, I'm just resting on my laurels, I've got my one medal and I'm clutching it to my breast, and for the whole rest of my life, I'm going to define myself by my victory, you know, this is always kind of pathetic if you see somebody that had an accomplishment and that's their defining characteristic from then on, it's kind of like these movies about the woman who had been asked to marry somebody and for some reason he didn't show up, or he died on the way, or he ran off, and she's sitting there in her wedding dress the whole rest of her life, she's an 89 year old lady sitting there in her wedding dress, moldy old cake, you know, she's just defined by that one moment. Somebody maybe accomplished something in their youth and forever after all they want to do is just cling to that and bask in its glory and try to never change their look, and you see these old pruney guys that went to number one on the rock charts when they were 19 and now they're 91 and they're still wearing their mutton chops and their wig and their long pointy collars, and it's really kind of pathetic that you just have one thing and that's what defines you, and Paul says, look, I don't count myself as having attained, I haven't gotten there and I'm going to rest on that.

There's a lot of things you could say, good or bad, about a lot of different people, including Sir Paul McCartney, I'm sure there's many negative things you could say, but he said one thing that impressed me, he will ever be immortal and famous in human terms for being one of the Beatles, but he's done a lot since then, and when recently Cirque du Soleil came out with a thing, and they put a bunch of Beatle music together, the original guy that did all of their arrangements, George Martin, came back and arranged this stuff for Cirque du Soleil, it was a big long deal, point is, Sir Paul and Ringo, the only two staggering around Beatles that are left, showed up for the thing, and Yoko and Sons and Hangers-On showed up for the thing, and saw the Cirque du Soleil, but they were talking to Paul afterward, and this music had been remastered and somewhat redone, and they were all sitting listening to what they had done 45 years ago, music they had made 45 years ago, and they were talking to Paul afterward, and I admired him because of his humility, he said, you know, I was listening to the music thinking, boy, you know, that is really good, that is a really good band, and he said, it's almost like I'm listening to somebody else, it's like a different person, and I can appreciate it from the outside, he doesn't really consider himself to be the young man that made that music, he's an old guy making a different kind of music, listening to the young guy saying, yeah, that guy's good, I really like that, I appreciate its quality, and he's not ever more saying, hi there, I'm Paul the Beatle, you know what I mean? He's moved on, he's done other things, he's more or less forgotten what is behind, I don't think you could ever forget being one of the Beatles, but he said, I actually have a hard time remembering that I'm one of those guys, you know, the Beatles are such an iconic thing, and he said, I have a hard time remembering that, hey, that was me, I was actually one of those guys, because he's moved on, he's living, he's gone forward, he's lived an additional set of decades, and he's continuing to, you know, create and do

things that he enjoys, and this is what we are called to be, it doesn't matter if God does accomplish a great victory, if we manage a great victory by faith, or if we have a spectacular catastrophic failure, it's in the past, we lean forward, we stretch toward what's ahead, the Apostle Paul had wonderful great victories, he healed the sick and raised the dead, he had wonderful triumphant preaching episodes, he was also stoned and left for dead, and locked up and beaten three times with forty stripes minus one, and persecuted the saints, and hounded people out of house, home, and property, and did grievous wrong to God's people, he says, all of that stuff, good, bad, and otherwise, I'm looking ahead, what's left to me, what can I still accomplish, where's the potential? Have this mind, as many of us as are mature should have this attitude, don't bog down in the past, good or bad, and the prize of the upward call is ultimately, what is this prize? Is it inheritance, is it space travel, is it a big mansion, is it streets of gold, or wings, or what is it? It is God's approval, the prize at the end of that upward call, the prize that is beyond that goal marker is well done from God himself, and you can't appreciate it unless you're mature. Baby believers, immature believers, even intermediate believers don't really get this. You remember what John says over in his epistles when he says, I write to you children, I write to you fathers, I write to you young men, and if you turn over to John, I want to show you that John understood this very same thing.

In chapter 2 verse 12 of 1 John, 1 John 2-12, there's a section here, these three verses, 12, 13, and 14, John says, I write to you little children, why? Because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. What is the most compelling truth for us when we first come to Christ, and when we're at an early stage of our enthusiastic Christian experience? It's such a wonderful deliverance to be released from the power of sin, to realize that there is a different kind of life. We've been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, into the kingdom of love.

It's a wonderful thing. And John says, you little children, I'm writing to you because this is what is most significant for you. Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He says, I write to you fathers, why? Because you have known him who is from the beginning. You know the Father, and knowing the Father is what creates this tremendous desire to receive his approval. He says, in verse 13 of the second half, I write to you young men, because you have overcome the wicked one.

This is experiential victory in time. This is wrestling against the principalities and powers. This is applying the word of God in daily circumstances, and laying hold of righteousness by faith, offloading sin, laying aside the weight, the sin that entangles us and besets us, and running our race, moving down the road, getting on the narrow road through the straight gate.

That's the young men. This is your vigorous middle ground of spiritual growth. And he goes on from there, and he says, I write to you little children, because you have known the Father.

I have written to you fathers because you have known him who is from the beginning. And I've exegeted this at greater length, but suffice it to say that it is the province of the mature to truly know him who is from the beginning. You have known him who is from the beginning.

It's not just the Father. As a little child, you know who your Father is. You appreciate him.

No man can come to the Father but by me. It's the first truth you learn as a believer. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you're saved.

You are brought to the Father. So he says, I write to you little children, because you have known the Father. You've recognized him, and you've come to him through Christ.

But I write to you fathers, he says the very same thing in 14 that he says in 12, or 13. I write to you fathers because you have known him who is from the beginning. This is the depth of God the Father.

This is the breadth that you have entered into eternal life and the eternality and the power and the scope of God the Father. I've written to you young men because you are strong and the word of God abides in you. This is how you grow.

This is how you get to be a father, by overcoming the evil one, by having the word of God abide in you, and overcoming the wicked one. And you don't lose any of these earlier attributes. The things you gain as a child, you keep.

The things you gain as a young man, you keep. When you get to be a father, you know him who is from the beginning. This is what Paul is talking about in Philippians chapter 3 verse 16.

Let us, to the degree that we have attained, whether we're children, whether we're young men, whether we're fathers, you know, older and mature in the faith, let's walk according to this standard. Let us walk according to this standard. Measure the success of a day.

Measure the success of an endeavor. Measure the success of a conversation. Measure the success of a quiet evening or a busy task by this rule, by this standard.

Let us all have this attitude. So then he goes on in verse 17 and says, Brethren, join in following my example and note those who so walk as you have us for a pattern. Now, why would you want to note people that are walking in this way? Well, if bad company corrupts good morals, what does good company do? Good company is going to emphasize and reinforce good thinking.

Sometimes you may be tempted to falter some false perspective, some bad viewpoint, some deleterious thinking may get into our minds. But when you're associated with someone who is strong, they may be able to speak a quiet word of encouragement or speak the truth in love in such a way, you know, two are better than one and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. I will never forget in high school, there were several of us that kind of got together and were friends.

We'd gone to school together. Some of them had gone since first grade. I got there at the fifth grade and the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth.

We got into high school in eleventh and twelfth grade and we'd known each other for years and we had sort of a friendly competition for grades and we would study together and we would quiz each other. We would help each other out working homework and it was fun because we were all kind of in it together. We were trying to take courses that were above our level because our school was so small they couldn't offer them every year.

And so we had to take matrix algebra as tenth graders when we were really supposed to take it as seniors. There were two or three of us that were in with the seniors even though we were tenth graders. And we thought, you know, we got to try to make it here.

We got to stick together and help each other out. And it was a wonderful stimulating kind of camaraderie and both a friendly competition and a great team effort in terms of study and helping to explain things. And if one of us would get a grip on a thing, we'd say, well, you know, it works like this and explain it to the others.

And there was one friend of mine in particular that really wasn't very academically strong. He wasn't gifted in the area of math especially, but he was our friend and one or another of us could find a way to explain it to him. And he got great grades.

He made A's in math and science courses because he was hanging out with the right people and he could get it. Well, when we graduated, I'll just talk about a group of four of us. Three of us went to college and prevailed, graduated, got our degrees and so on.

He didn't because apart from the group, his academic momentum just cratered. There wasn't anybody there to explain it. He lost the purpose for it.

He didn't have an ambition of his own and separated from the group, he just kind of stalled out. I ran into him seven or eight years later. He was exactly like he was the day we graduated from high school, wearing the same clothes, doing the same job, driving the same car.

It was like going back in time almost a decade. And I felt so sad for him because he just kind of got stuck. If he had maintained associations like that, he could have continued to kind of benefit and maybe eventually gain some momentum of his own.

There is strength in a group and strength in having the same mind and it will help us through weak times. Obviously, all of us have to eventually have our own individual momentum, but it's a wonderful aid when all of us are going to miss a step, all of us are going to falter, all of us are going to have bad days. But our fellowship is a blessing and there is ministry and there is encouragement through that which every joint supplies.

Every part of the body of Christ is essential to every other part and we bless each other, we strengthen each other, we minister to each other through our fellowship, through just presence, through conversation, through just even wordless encouragement. And that's what Paul is talking about, join in following my example. He doesn't say each of you follow my example, he says join, join together.

Let's all together have this mind, let's go there together as a one another type group. Sometimes your group is just one other, it's not one another, it's just one other, it's me and one other. Hey, Jesus said it only takes two, where two are gathered, I'm in the midst, two or three, that's all it takes.

And if you're in your, I think many of us, I've certainly had several extended periods where there wasn't even an other, it was, Jake Hess used to sing a song called You and Me Jesus, and that's kind of how it was. I went for years on end, it was just You and Me Jesus and me and a tape recorder or me and a bible, me and a study book or something. But typically God will make fellowship available, and what a privilege and what a blessing it is to be cultivated, it is to be treasured and cherished, and just that recognition can slow us down from a multitude of sins.

That's what he's talking about. Let us walk by this rule, let us be of the same mind, let us join in following the example. And note others that walk this way, take notes, seek them out, become companions.

Isn't it interesting that after Jesus' resurrection on the road to Emmaus, there wasn't one guy walking along, there were two. Peter seldom went anyplace by himself, John is with him. The disciples, Jesus sent them out in pairs, he didn't send them out individually, he could have covered twice as much territory if he had split them all individually, he said, you twelve go out in twelve different directions, but he sent out six teams.

There's a reason for that. We benefit from fellowship, from joining together, and note those who so walk as you have us for a pattern. If you remember the ending of Romans and a couple of other places in Paul's writings, he names believers and he says, greetings to the following people.

It's no accident. Why did that get included in inspired scripture? We don't know Tychicus or Phoebe or a lot of these other people, why are they mentioned? It is a reminder that Paul is sort of offhandedly recommending these people. These are people you want to watch and if you're looking for somebody to associate with, if you're looking for somebody that sets this example, here are some.

Seek these people out. If you don't know them, go meet them. Fellowship with them will be a blessing to you and a benefit to you.

Because, verse 18, many walk of whom I have told you often. There is a huge idea, or the idea is

circulating hugely or widely, that it is unchristian to say anything negative about anybody. Well, if there is a denomination or if there is a church or if there is a group or if there is an individual teacher who is prominent or publishing a book, you shouldn't say anything bad about them.

You know, God will judge. Judge not lest you be judged and the judgment of worth you judged. However, Paul the Apostle says, many walk of whom I have told you often.

I have told you about these people and I tell you again now with tears in my eyes, they are enemies of the cross of Christ. It is not for the purpose of denigrating a specific individual. It is not for the purpose of casting stones just for the sake of tearing somebody down.

One of the cheapest, most mean things you can do, mean in the sense of tacky and low brow, is to try to raise yourself up by tearing somebody else down. And that's not what Paul is doing. He says, I tell you this with tears in my eyes.

I have told you about these people often because they are enemies of the cross of Christ. Their fate, their ultimate destination is destruction. It's the opposite.

What did Paul say he wants to attain to? If by any means I may attain to what? The resurrection. The resurrection is the opposite of destruction. Entering into things eternal.

Laying hold of things eternal. Eternal inheritance. Eternal glory.

Eternal fellowship. Eternal relationship. These people walk in a way that leads to destruction.

Their way seems right to them, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly.

What does the belly mean in the ancient world? It is the emotion. Whose God is their emotion. The word here in Greek is koileia.

This is your coiled up stuff. Your guts. Whose God is their guts.

There's a word in Greek that means you are good gutted towards someone. It means you feel really good. You are very kindly disposed towards them.

This is the seat of feeling. Whose God is their feelings. This is probably the best translation.

If you want to cross that belly, put feelings. Just like the song. Imagine the first few lines of the song.

Who is that guy? Eric, what's his name? Feelings. Tune and all. That's their God.

What does it mean that your God is your feelings? What does God represent? Choose you this day whom you will serve. Whom you will please. Whom you will honor.

Whom you will put first. Well, what is my goal today? I want to feel good. I do not want to feel bad.

I will do things that are satisfying to me. My sense of satisfaction. My sense of well being.

My sense of joie de vivre. My personal sense of accomplishment. My personal sense of being on top of things.

On top of the world. Of being well thought of. Of being satisfied with myself.

I want to feel good. If that's your God. If that's what drives your decisions and your thought processes and defines your goals and underlies your values and defines causes you to set your priorities.

Well, I'm going to do this or that. I'm not going to do this or that because of how I will feel. What's the problem with that? Think to what he said back in chapter 2 about putting the interests of others ahead of your own.

Many times if you're going to actually, actually, hear me now, if you're going to actually put somebody else's interests ahead of your own, it almost always doesn't feel as good as putting your interests ahead of theirs. There's only one piece of pie left and you really, really love that pie. It's your favorite.

You've been looking forward to it all day. You thought, you know, I'm going to eat just a small portion here. I'm going to let everybody else eat all the main course because I'm saving room for that pie.

Oop, only one piece left. You go ahead. That doesn't feel good.

What feels good is, thank you very much for that pie. That feels good. You're in a discussion and you get a little irritated.

You get a little impatient. I'm speaking now from personal experience. It might feel really good to just finish that thing off with a zinger, to just cut somebody off at the knees.

It feels good, but it is not good. If, on the other hand, I bite my tongue and I do not avail myself of this very obvious opening where I've got a little piece of history that I can slip in there and say, oh yeah, right, just like last Wednesday, and hurt somebody's feelings, drag up some old bone that should have been buried a long time ago, well, I don't get that momentary feeling of satisfaction, which is going to be immediately followed by come back words. Why did I do that? How stupid am I? But feelings become our God.

When we say I will do what feels good, I feel good. Feelings can't think. Feelings can't reason.

Feelings cannot apply the word of God. Did you realize this? If you go by your feelings, you can't both go by feelings and apply the word of God. This is a mistake the charismatics make.

Well, if it feels good, it must be God's will. Sound the buzzer, wrong answer. Usually the will of God doesn't feel so good.

Ask Joseph. Ask Job. Ask David in the wilderness.

Ask innumerable Old Testament parties. Ask Paul sitting in prison. Ask him as he's last of the post getting, you know, lick 34 out of 39, how good it feels.

Ask John in the days before his head was cut off. Ask the Lord Jesus when he didn't have a place to lay his head. How's it feeling in the garden the night before the arrest and trial and crucifixion? How does it feel to see people you've taught and taught and taught and taught miss it so that tears come to your eyes in John 11? How does that feel? Well, why did Jesus persist? Why did all those Old Testament parties mentioned in Hebrews 11 persist? How did it feel when Abraham was going to Mount Moriah? How did it feel when he was taking Isaac up the side of it? How did it feel when Isaac was laying on the altar? How did it feel when he raised the sacrificial knife? It didn't feel good at all, but it's one of the greatest victories of faith in the whole Bible.

And it didn't feel good at all. I doubt that it felt good afterwards. Whose God is their feelings? Choose whom you're going to serve.

And if it's not going to be your feelings, it's going to take some tough love. You know, they say, you know, I saw a picture of Whitney Houston when I was in the grocery store the other day. That poor girl, sadly, you know, she's a believer.

And I have nothing but pity for what she's done to herself. But she sang a song, I think, that said, you know, I could barely get through the thing. Just right before I turn it off is the line where it says, the greatest love of all is the love you have for yourself or some such thing.

Do you remember that song? The greatest love of all is I love me. I've never heard the rest of that line because when she says the greatest love of all, I switch it off. I don't really know how that goes.

I just remember the sentiment. And the essence of what Paul is saying here is, note those who are walking well, who've got their priorities straight, who have this mind in them that he's been talking about for the last many verses. Many walk, they are enemies of the cross.

God is their feelings. Their glory is in their shame. And you think about Paul and he says, you know, I was glorying in being a Pharisee and righteously prosecuting people who were breaking the law, capital L. And now Paul is ashamed, deeply ashamed of what he formerly was most proud of.

He was a star rocketing through the heavens of the Pharisees when he was persecuting Christians. And now he's ashamed of it. And he says there are people that are still stuck in that mode whose glory is in their shame.

People say the stupidest things as believers and they think that this is elevating them to a spiritual height and it's shameful. It's pathetic. Not only to us, but especially in God's eyes.

It is so far from God's plan who set their minds on earthly things. Hasn't this been the theme of everything Paul has been talking about? If you set your mind on earthly things, of course you would want to be delivered from prison and not go to be with the Lord. Of course you would not care if the gospel is being preached.

Just get me out of here. I'm tired of being chained up between these sweaty Romans. I'm tired of being incarcerated.

I'm tired of having my freedom restricted. I want to go see my people. I want to go feel good.

I want to go be comforted and embraced. Paul says, no, I'm having a great time. The gospel is being preached.

It's kind of funny to see people trying to preach against me and what they're doing is spreading the name of Christ and stimulating interest. People are asking questions and by any means, Christ is preached. This is great.

They're just increasing his notoriety. It kind of reminds you of these filmmakers. They make a really horrible film and they want to get the Christians mad at them because that just makes the publicity go like wildfire.

Paul basically says the same thing. He says, look, you've got to get your mind off of earthly things and look at it from the heavenly perspective. If you've got your mind set on earthly things, if your feelings are your God, if you are glorying in your shame and you don't even know it, you're an enemy of the cross.

I cannot imagine a worse fate for a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, someone who is saved by His blood, headed for eternal life, than to actually be an enemy of the cross. Why does it say an enemy of Christ? Enemy of the cross. Because the cross is the starting point.

The cross is the pinnacle. The cross is where death changes to life. The cross is where resurrection is made possible.

There is no resurrection if there's not the cross and the full completion of the work of the cross. That's what makes resurrection possible. Everything Paul is talking about in attaining to the resurrection and the power of the resurrection and coming to know God and coming to know Christ hinges on the cross.

You're an enemy of all of that when you miss it in this fashion. Why? Verse 20. Our citizenship is in heaven from which we all so eagerly wait for the Savior.

It's one thing to say it. It's another thing for it to be true. But I think it is true for a lot of you.

I know it's true for a lot of you because I've talked to you and we've been together a long time in the study of the word. And isn't it interesting that the further along we get, the more real the return of the Lord Jesus is and the more eagerly we look for it. We look around and we see the civilization around us literally going to Hades in a hand basket.

And instead of getting depressed and instead of getting chagrined and instead of mourning and trying to go throw a tea bag somewhere, we say, you know what, I'm just more and more eager for the Lord Jesus to come. The more I see things heading down, the more excited I get because it's a sign that these are the latter days. And they've been the latter days in every generation.

Everybody's in the latter days. The closer you get to the end of your life, the more you're in the latter days. And it's been the same.

The spirit of antichrist has been at work in every generation. And if it's 300 more years before the Lord Jesus returns, these are still the latter days. And the more we see things deteriorate and the more we see the contrast between the earthly mind and the God of the emotions and the heavenly things and the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more eagerly we look for his return, the more eagerly we look for our being united with him.

Our citizenship is in heaven. Everything we're investing in, our home, our future, our loved ones, our expectations, our dreams, our enthusiasm, our hope is in heaven. We're citizens there.

I will tell you, when I was traveling around the world going all these God forsaken dirt floor places, bad water, can't trust the people, get taken to the cleaners by the cab drivers, your stuff gets stolen if you so much as blink, I couldn't wait to get back to the States. The Beach Boys had it right. I couldn't wait to get back to the States, not for the girls, but for everything, for everything that's here.

Nothing will make you appreciate being an American like being someplace other than America, gracious sakes. Europe is just a falling down crumbling pile of destitute, despicable, empty, hollow ruins. There's nothing in Europe I want to see.

There's no place I want to go. This, and in the United States, I'm sorry for anybody elsewhere, but the state of Texas is the greatest state in the Union as far as I'm concerned. I love it here.

This is where my citizenship is, and if I'm away, I can't wait to get back. Well, when you are heavenly minded, when you've got the attitude and the mind that Paul is talking about here, that's how you feel about where the Lord Jesus is and where the future is and where these incredible,

unimaginably great potentials are. That's our citizenship.

That's where we're from. That's where we're going to be. This stuff here, I can take it, I can leave it.

From which we also eagerly wait for the Savior. That's the greatest part of it all, is the Lord Jesus is there and He is coming to take us and receive us to Himself so that where He is, there we can be also. That's the prize that's the goal.

To not only see Him, have Him come and get us, but that it be a warm welcome that He be glad to see us and we're glad to see Him. I am telling you, the vast majority of believers are going to be scared out of their minds when the Lord Jesus comes back and are going to be ashamed in the day of His coming. What a tragedy.

After talking and singing about the rapture and everybody will be happy over there, when the Lord Jesus actually comes back and you're scared out of your mind, you've got a raggedy little old pathetic robe of righteousness that barely covers your nakedness and you can't wait to be far away from the Lord Jesus because He's just scary. You don't really know Him. You don't understand what's going on.

The whole thing is a mystery. It isn't what you expected. I thought we were going to be in the field of daisies and the gentle Jesus and here there's bloodshed and nuclear waves coming off everything and seven months to bury the dead and judgment and loss and stuff going up and wood hay and stubble fires and the smoke ascending.

This is just awful. This isn't anything like what I expected. Well, what's the matter with you? You should have gotten with it and if you knew it, you'd be glad.

You'd say, Amen Lord, pile it on. Let's get on with it. It's all a matter of knowing.

Little kids get scared to death by what they do not know. Adult people are excited by the very same things because they've got a frame of reference. They've got knowledge and they have capacity to enjoy things that would frighten a three-year-old out into cardiac arrest.

Well, we want to be those that are looking forward, leaning forward, pressing to get across that line, to see the Lord Jesus, to see the glory of God the Father, to go where our citizenship is. It's all the difference in the world. Does a three-year-old understand what citizenship is? No.

Can't. Impossible. Can't explain it.

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? If that doesn't get you excited, you just have not yet arrived at that place where you can appreciate it. This is the creme de la creme. This is the pinnacle.

There is nothing in the universe better than this, to be transformed, to be transported out of the body of this death and be like the Lord Jesus and enter into eternity. There is nothing that approaches it. What can you compare to this? What do you want to stack up against this? What 25 things do you want to stack up next to the joy of meeting the Lord Jesus and having it be a warm, happy family reunion where he is as glad to see us as we are to see him and to know what is going on, to get the picture, to be ready to mount a white horse, grab a sword and a shield and go trompling down to the earth and start hacking and slashing and making the plan of God come true.

I don't know about you, but to me, that is an aspiration devoutly to be wished. That is where we will end here at the end of Chapter 3. We will pick up at Chapter 4 next time. We will close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the wonderful potential, the incredible opportunities that are ours because of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for revealing these things to us through the pen of the Apostle Paul. Thank you for giving us your Spirit that enables us to transcend the limits of our mortality and our earthly understandings and our earthly frame.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will cause us to be ever mindful of our opportunities, our potentials, our privileges in the Lord Jesus and that day by day we will enter more and more fully into that heavenly citizenship and await with great eagerness the return of the Lord Jesus so that the next phase of our existence can begin in earnest. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.