

NOTES FOR SPEAKING

Meeting: Freshwaters Christian Fellowship

Date & Time: Sunday 17th January 2010

Title: Phil 3:17-21

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Introduction

In our passage this morning Paul is encouraging us to be careful who we imitate. We should seek to imitate Paul and those like Him who seek to live as followers of Christ – putting into practice in their daily lives what they believe and teach.

We should not, however, follow those who are hypocritical – saying one thing but doing another.

People who may be full of knowledge about God and His ways but who refuse to live according to what they preach.

Phil 3:17-21

Copy Me!

Paul begins this passage encouraging the Philippians to ‘**pattern your lives after mine**’ and ‘**learn from those who follow our example**’. Paul says don’t **just do what I say – do what I do** – what you have seen in me imitate. What are the things from Paul’s life which we can and should imitate:-

1. Repentance – turning around to follow Christ no matter how we used to oppose Him
2. Passionate concern and love for the church
3. Dependence upon God & the Holy Spirit.
4. Readiness to share the gospel in any and every situation
5. Willingness to face hardships
6. Readiness to correct and challenge others
7. Faith
8. Willing to lay down his life.

Take note of how people live

Remembering that Paul is the greatest teacher of the truth that we are saved by faith – Paul says in effect **don’t just judge a persons faith by what they say they believe – but take into account how they practice what they believe**. Let’s remind ourselves again from **James 2:14-20**. If faith is alive it will inevitably produce actions – if our actions do not line up with faith – then our faith is dead and useless.

Paul was warning the Philippians against those who may have eloquently proclaimed their faith, but whose way of life showed that their faith was dead. It is the same message that Jesus proclaimed – **Matt 7:15-20**.

It’s worth looking at the 3 things that Paul highlights:-

1. V19 - Their God is their appetite

This first thing is to do with satisfying the desires of our flesh – or as Paul puts it making our appetite our God. Things such as **greed, lust, jealousy** come under this heading -Paul is talking about those who put the satisfaction of their own selfish desires as the most important thing in their lives – those who worship the satisfaction of those desires above God.

Who is our God? – do we want to please ourselves and our own desires above pleasing God? Are there any particular appetites which we need to lay down and ask God to help us to be rid of them?

2. V 19 - They brag about shameful things

Paul is talking about those who have such a distorted view of right and wrong that they actually brag about things that any decent person would be ashamed of. Sometimes at work, or at the gym or in other places you can overhear such talk – perhaps people talking about their latest sexual conquest – sometimes about how they have abused someone – often you hear from men boasting about how they beat someone up – sometimes it is about language, or getting drunk – I'm sure we all have different examples. How should we respond when people are including us in such conversations – are we willing to be salt and light in those situations. What could we do?

I think I would include within this category crude jokes – sometimes verbal, sometimes through e-mails etc – do we join in, or even initiate such jokes, or would we rightfully be ashamed of such things.

What do we boast about, if anything – **2 Cor 10:17** says '**As the Scriptures say, "The person who wishes to boast should boast only of what the Lord has done."**' - what we speak out is very important as we represent the Lord.

3. V19 - They think only of this life here on earth

The last thing Paul highlights is those who think only of this life here on earth – their perspective is limited to the temporal and the material. If we believe that this life is all there is then our attitude and actions will reflect this. With no sense of either **reckoning or reward** in the next life then we will focus only on what we receive and can get away with in this life. **With no objective sense of right and wrong then our values will be based upon the opinions of those around – or upon our own selfish desires.**

Col 3:1-4 – We need to have a focus on the reality of heaven – upon our Lord who leads us and upon the reward He holds for us. We need to be ready to live lives as the great men and women of faith described in **Heb 11** – who were willing to face hardship and persecution in this life for they knew their reward was in the life to come.

Having a heavenly rather than an earthly perspective also brings direct benefit in this life as well as in the life to come. It gives us **a context of hope for the future** as we trust in the goodness of our loving heavenly Father – rather than as sense of hopelessness and despair when things are going wrong around us.

It gives us **a sense of security and peace** as we live our lives within the safe boundaries the Lord has provided for us.

It gives us **a sense of humility** – man and the achievements of mankind are not the be all and end all but there is a great and awesome, loving and faithful God who is working out His purposes and His plans will never be thwarted.

It gives us the opportunity to enjoy the pleasure of relationship with God that is far and above any earthly relationship because it fulfils the longing of our spirit.

V20 - Citizens of heaven

There is a theme running through the bible of pilgrimage. Abraham was called to leave his home in Haran and travel to a land he did not know – for the next 1,000 years the Israelites lived as nomads, with a slight interlude of slavery in Egypt.

Let's read [Heb 11:13-16 & 1 Peter 2:9-12](#) – we are first and foremost citizens of heaven. We are not to settle for this life and the limited pleasures of this life. Instead we are to keep moving on in faith, living according to the laws, customs and values of our homeland – and of Jesus our King.

V20 - Eagerly waiting His return as Saviour

Do we eagerly await Jesus return as Saviour? You will remember that Luke spoke about this a little while back – **the culmination of all things at Christ's return**. The time when **justice will be completed**, the time when **our present world and its kingdoms will come to an end and God's kingdom will be established forever**. A time when **those who are alive will be caught up to join those who have died in the faith**. A time when **the devil, his demons and those who reject Jesus as their saviour will be judged and condemned**. A time when **those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and saviour will be granted their reward**.

Do we live with a sense of expectancy and even immanence – could this happen in our lifetime? Ever since Christ ascended to heaven there has been a sense amongst His people the church that He could come back at any time. I don't think that's because each subsequent generation has got it wrong – I think it's because God wants us to live with that sense of expectancy – and that sense of this life being temporary. **He wants us to live lives prepared for Christ's return – and He wants us to reach out to others as if this was their last opportunity to respond.**

We have nothing to fear in Jesus return – let's look forward to it and be ready to welcome our Lord and Saviour, our friend and King.

V 21 - Resurrected Bodies

Finally Paul talks about the resurrected bodies we will receive like Jesus own. Some people have a view of either us becoming disembodied spirits or as angels with wings sitting on the clouds and playing harps – neither of these views are biblical.

Paul tells us that our new bodies will be like Jesus. Recognisable **as the disciples recognised Jesus**. **Physical and tangible as Jesus ate and drank with the disciples** after His resurrection – and as Jesus invited Thomas to touch His wounds. But Jesus body was also **supernatural – able to appear and disappear from view and of course eternal**.

If you want to learn a little bit more about our resurrection bodies then read [1 Cor 15:35-58](#).

V 21 – Bring all things under His control

Make no mistake Jesus is Lord – at the moment Jesus invites us to acknowledge Him as Lord through His mercy and grace – but there will come a day when all of creation will be forced to acknowledge Him as Lord by His power.

Part of God's great plan which will never be thwarted is to make all things subject to the Lordship of His Son Jesus Christ. There is no power, whether men or nations, whether the devil and demons – no power can resist the almighty power of God and so all will one day be subject to Jesus.

Conclusion

Who are you modelling your life upon – the heroes of this present age, celebrities, movie stars, sportsman, many of whom imbibe the spirit of this age more than the spirit of the age to come? Or do you model your life on the heroes of the bible, or upon those you respect in the faith today?

Are we settlers? – living as if this life is all there is, or are we pilgrims, knowing that our real home is in heaven and that we live by the values of our eternal home – not the temporary one we are living now.

Are we eagerly awaiting Christ's return, living as if it were imminent, being ready to meet our Lord at any time, eager to reach out to others because we have such a sense of the immanence of Jesus return? Do we look forward to Christ's return with eager expectation or with fear?

Let me read this passage from [Ephesians 1:9-11](#)