

One of the saddest things that can be said about us Christians is that our behavior is sometimes indistinguishable from those in the world around us. We fight amongst ourselves, just like people in the world. We hold grudges, just like people in the world. At times, it seems like it is very important to us have the best material possessions possible. When we do these things, we are living as though we belong to this world. But we do not belong to this world. In our passage for today the Apostle Paul says that we are citizens of heaven. So let’s not live as though we belong to this world. Instead, let’s live as citizens of heaven. Today our theme is:

Live as Citizens of Heaven

- 1. by following godly examples**
- 2. by eagerly awaiting the Savior.**

First, **Live as citizens of heaven by following godly examples.** We often learn by example. The apostle Paul knew that and so at the beginning of our passage the apostle Paul urges us to follow his example: **“Join together in following my example” (Philippians 3:17).** Before we think about *Paul* as an example to follow, I would like to back up a couple of chapters in Philippians to the place where Paul urges us to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

In Philippians chapter 2, Paul tells us, **“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant ... he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-7).** Live as citizens of heaven by following the example of Christ. Christ made sacrifices to serve others. He gave the enjoyment of his glory in heaven to come and serve us. Follow his example by making sacrifices to serve one another. If you are a husband, how can you make sacrifices in order to serve your wife and your children. If you are a wife, how can you make sacrifices to serve your husband and your children. If you are the oldest child in your family, how can you give up your privileges in order to serve your younger siblings. Living as citizens of heaven while here on this earth means making sacrifices to serve others. Let’s live as citizens of heaven by following godly examples, most of all the example of Christ.

The Bible also urges us to follow the example of other Christians who are following the example of Christ. In our passage for today Paul tells us to follow his example. **“Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters” (3:17).** Paul often urges the people in his congregations to follow his example. In 1 Corinthians 4:16 he says, **“I urge you to imitate me” (1 Cor 4:16).** In 1 Corinthians 11:1 he says, **“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).** There are many ways in which we can follow Paul’s example, but there’s one way I want to focus on today. Let’s follow Paul’s example by making it our highest priority in life to know and to be like Christ. In the verses before our passage in Philippians Paul said, **“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ and be found in him” (Philippians 3:7-8).** Let’s follow Paul’s example by making it our highest priority to know Christ and become like Christ. We know Christ when we come to worship and Bible class and read our Bible at home. We become like Christ when we sacrifice for the good of others like Christ did. Let’s live as citizens of heaven by following godly examples like the example of Paul.

Paul also urges us to follow the example of other Christians. He says, **“Just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do” (Philippians 3:17).** The Bible urges us to look to other Christians as examples to follow. For example, in many places the Bible urges pastors to be examples for the people they served. Your pastors strive to be examples of Christian conduct. Look to other Christians that you respect and follow their example. Follow their example of godly conduct. Follow their example of sacrificing to serve others. Live as citizens of heaven by following godly examples.

Paul urges us to follow godly examples because he knows that there are many bad examples that will try to influence us. He says, **“For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.” (Philippians 3:19).** There are a lot of bad examples in the world that can influence our behavior. There are many TV shows which glorify things that are shameful. There are many people in this world who would say that you have to put yourself first and do what’s best for you. But that type of thinking is antithetical to the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ means putting others first and doing what’s best for others. So let’s live as citizens of heaven by following godly examples: the example of Christ, the example of Paul, the example of other Christians. Live as citizens of heaven by following godly examples. And secondly, live as citizens of heaven by eagerly awaiting the Savior.

Paul writes: **“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ” (3:20-21).** Christ is our Savior, He has already saved us from our sins. Through faith in Jesus, we are citizens of heaven right now. It says, “our citizenship *is* in heaven.” Christ has already saved us from the guilt of our sins and he will save us from our lowly bodies.

And what is that great future hope? Paul writes: **“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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” (3:20-21).** Christ has already saved us from the guilt of our sin by his death on the cross. When he returns on the last day, he is going to save us by transforming our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body. Right now we have lowly bodies. Sometimes our bodies feel strong, but then at other times we are reminded of how frail our bodies really are. But our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead in glory and as God he has divine power that enables him to bring everything under his control. And that means that we have a real Savior from cancer. We have a real Savior from heart disease. To be residents of heaven we are going to need bodies that are fit for heaven. And when Christ returns he is going to give us those. He’s going to transform these lowly bodies to be like his glorious body.

Since we have such a great future hope let’s stop setting our hearts on things in this world and instead live as citizens of heaven. Like our passage says, **“Their mind is set on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:19-20).** Since we are citizens of heaven let’s stop being so caught up in the things of this earth, things like our material possessions and our success on this earth. Instead, let’s set our minds on heavenly things. Paul tells us to do this in Colossians chapter 3, **“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:1-4).** Let’s live as citizens of heaven by eagerly awaiting our Savior.

And as we eagerly await our Savior, let’s show great and overflowing love for our fellow citizens of heaven and for all people. Notice the overflowing love that Paul has for his fellow citizens of heaven: **“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends” (Philippians 4:1).** Look what affectionate terms Paul uses as he talks to his fellow Christians. He calls them brothers and sisters. At the seminary that I went to everyone called each other “brothers.” Maybe we should get into the habit around here of regularly referring to one another as brothers and sisters. Paul says, **“You whom I love and long for” (Philippians 4:1).** We long to come to church not just to worship the Lord, but to see one another. This past Wednesday we heard Jesus’ command to love one another. Well, as we eagerly await our Savior, let’s love one another. Let’s follow the example of the cross of Christ by sacrificing for one another and by putting one another first. It is a tragedy that many times the behavior of Christians is indistinguishable from those in the world. And it’s a tragedy because we need to show those in the world what they’re missing out on, and what they’re invited to be a part of. So let’s live as citizens of heaven by following godly examples and by eagerly awaiting the Savior. Amen.