

How does a believer make it all the way?

OUR Citizenship Philippians 3:15-4:1

Jim Kimbriel

June 27, 2004

Two dates stand out in my mind as pivotal in formation of my life. October 21, 1969 and February 8 1989. Almost twenty years apart these dates stand out in my mind as bringing great joy and anxiety.

February 8<sup>th</sup> 1989 Dr. Hartman handed me a baby girl we named Kristine. I was 26 at the time and saw the future in the eyes of this newborn baby. I saw grade school, pony tails, bike riding, driving, graduations and a wedding. It was so intense. I was shaking and flushed and overcome with emotion. Two days later they released us from the hospital with no instructions to get her to the wedding I envisioned. They gave us the number of a lactation specialist. We dressed her up and took her to the home we had built and then just looked at each other and at her. OK now what? At that point the big question was, "Can we keep her alive until adulthood?"

It seemed to be going well until night number two. Kristine had fed well, and had seemed to thrive on the attention, then it happened. She threw up all she had eaten. We panicked. Now what? We laugh now, but that night we thought, Oh no, she is going to die. We called my mom who lived next door. She said, It's OK. She will be fine. How did she know? Because her three children had thrown up and lived. So Kristine is still alive and we think we can get her to adulthood in OK shape. Now our questions are not about survival, but about, character, godliness, wisdom, life shaping events and so on.

The other date is 1969-The night I trusted in Jesus for my eternal destiny. Great Joy, but I experienced great anxiety thinking many times over the next years "How am I going to make it all the way?" This one time shot seems woefully inadequate. I need some help here. At times it seems like survival as a Christ follower is my main concern, and at other times it feels like fine tuning in a particular area. Bit by bit God has filled in the pieces of the picture and helped me, and today we look at how Paul shaped the Philippians thinking in this area of standing firm until the coming of Christ.

Throughout Philippians Paul has directed our attention to Jesus and the pursuit of knowing him. Our God is personal and knowable. Paul would have died trying to obtain approval of God through works as seen in the first half of Phil 3. He had it all. But it was not what he longed for. He needed a

God who is personal and who understood him. He needed a Holy God who would die for him and let him be known by Paul and all others.

Please Stand for the reading of God's word

Philippians 3:15-18

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

17 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 now and 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 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.

4:1 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!

Live what you **Know**

Live like the **Examples** of godly living around you

Live **aware** of heretical influencers \_these are people whose practice is counter to the cross

Live your **citizenship**-Expectant of His coming

Expect his transformation

Before we look at this in closer detail I want you to look at this entire text as one living in the east. As far as china, or India or Israel. To help you, I have bolded the communal implications that are expressed in the plural. Paul is not addressing individual Philippian Believers, but the gathered church in Philippi. Read it as US. The church here. This is not just about you, but rather about us.

**All of us** who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point **you** think differently, that too God will make clear to **you**. 16 Only let **us** live up to what **we** have already attained.

17 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 now and 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 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.

4:1 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!**

How do we stand firm until that great day of Christa appearing?

First we are commended to

Live what you **Know**

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

This is Paul's attempt to encourage them in the activity that God has already done in them. Many times we get the impression that Paul is always correcting believers that we think that He is only seeing faults. Here we see Paul's great confidence in God's work in the Church, in every believer's life. For Paul the great corrector of wrong thinking is the Holy Spirit. Once I know the consuming person of Christ I must act. My great inadequacy is not that I do not know enough, but that I don't practice what I have already learned. I don't consistently live what I successfully lived yesterday. Can I live today? I did it yesterday. Can I love my neighbor as myself? I know it is possible.

Paul does not intend this as a condemnation, but as encouragement. Like he said to Timothy, "Fan the flame".

Live like the **Examples** of godly living around you

One Example in history catches us.

We drove to him. He is having his meal. He jumps to his feet, there he is. Shakes my hand like an old friend. And those big blue eyes. Like Stars. He is glad to see me. I am in heaven. That man has got everything to be a king. A born Tribune. He elsewhere describes him as "Holy and untouchable". He stated after a speech by Him that he had spoken "profoundly and mystically, almost like a gospel"

Joseph Goebbels From his diary

We drove to Hitler. He is having his meal. He jumps to his feet, there he is. Shakes my hand like an old friend. And those big blue eyes. Like Stars. He is glad to see me. I am in heaven. That man has got everything to be a king. A born Tribune. Elsewhere Goebbels describes his feelings for the Furrer as “Holy and untouchable”. He stated after a speech by Hitler that he had spoken “profoundly and mystically, almost like a gospel”

Live what you **Know**

Live like the godly **Examples** around you

Live **aware** of heretical influencers \_these are people whose practice is counter to the cross

Live your **citizenship**-Expectant of His coming

Expect his transformation

**Be imitators with others who imitate me. Other believers and other churches that follow my teaching and my life.**

**As I imitate Christ- Follow me**

**In chapter 2 he called us to follow Christ’s example**

**To follow Timothy’s Example and to follow the example of Epaphroditus.**

**a. Follow my example of Confidence in Jesus and his Work 3:1-11**

**b. Follow my example of genuine spiritual interest for the body**

**Paul Genuinely cared for those that were influencing Philippian believers to follow a wrong practice in faith.**

18For as I have often told you before now and say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. This phrase With Tears is the kind of emotion that accompanies the death of a loved friend our family member. Paul was the example of concern for the eternal destiny of those around him. He knew these people and he loved them—in spite of their sin. He wanted them to change their practice and avoid eternal consequences.

Who are the Godly examples in our church that influence us towards living our lives in the shadow of the Cross?  
Who practices the teachings of Jesus In front of you.

The other night I spoke with one of our missionaries and they were experiencing opposition. In the conversation they said, “Jim, we are not here because we were hired for a job. Implied in the conversation was the idea that they were there doing what their God deserves. The praise of these people and the obedience of this missionary that could think of no better way to spend their time.

That missionary is one of God’s examples for me to follow. Our Church is packed with people like that missionary. Kerri and I are in a very critical time in our lives- we need direction for the future. Four couples are guiding us in the decisions that will determine the expenditure of our energies in the coming years. Our church has many godly examples. Who is guiding you? Who would cry over you if you left the way of Jesus?

### Enemies of the Cross

Follow my example—because when the truths about the cross and the second coming are grasped, then a way of living will follow. Paul is saying that his way of living is a direct result of the cross and the second coming. Those two realities are grounded in the relationship with the Christ of the cross and the coming Christ. Paul understands the correlation between the belief and the action. In Titus he says, ”some profess to know God, but they deny him by their deeds” 1:16 and 2:10

Paul does not take delight in warning the enemies of the cross rather it is in LOVE that he sheds tears for these individuals. Paul knows and loves these people, but in his description there is a warning. Which brings us to our third area of standing firm.

Live what you **Know**

Live like the godly **Examples** living around

**Live aware of heretical influencers \_these are people whose practice is counter to the cross**

Live your **citizenship**-Expectant of His coming

Expect his transformation

Let us look at a pernicious destructive model that was present in Philippi. There were those in the city that were thinking themselves believers, but not members of the church there. They were close enough to the Philippian believers that they would recognize them and be influenced by them. These are people that were enemies of the cross—in other words, by their daily living they spurned the cross and did not accept its implications for a transformed life. Christ's death was ineffectual for their lives. They lived as if Christ had never been crucified.

**What is the destiny of those that Spurn the effects of the cross?  
Our text seems to assert that their goal was eternal condemnation.**

“Their destiny is destruction”

Their behavior says it all—We are at war with the cross—Oh it may appear that we are religious, but the cross holds no place in changing our daily living.

**1. Their appetites and emotions have taken on a place of lordship and worship in their lives.**

They are self indulgers

They worship their sensual nature.

They are the center of all that matters.

No particular sense of being in a community.

Paul does not particularize their pet sensualities. They could have been Drug addicts, fornicators or any number of self-indulgents. The broad generality is used so that there is no room for escape. The warning is not against a particular sin but against the sin of pandering to self. Even the most advanced saint struggles with the demands of their body and must attend daily to saying no to the flesh.

The great theme of Paul's letters is moving forward together in unity in becoming conformed to the image of Christ. Isn't that THE CHURCH.

There may be differences of opinion, but that is not the standard for creating Spiritual Virtuosos.

Christians need to be united in the contest in which we are all engaged, working towards the same goal, and ready to help one another, especially by bearing one another's burdens.

**These hedonistic virtuosos behave as they choose. They boast of their liberty and freedom—and they play liberally the trump card of**

**Christian GRACE. And all that oppose them somehow just don't "understand".**

**Their immoral practices-"implied are sexual in nature" do not bring them shame, but instead they end up boasting in them.**

**2. They have reversed moral standards. "They glory in their shame"**

In other words, they exalt things and practices which they ought to be ashamed of, but are not. Shame is one of the taboo words. People do things that they ought not to do. Things that are not in conformity with God's moral standard. At that point there should be shame, resulting from guilt feelings. Then through repentance the shame is lifted. Instead, Paul is showing us a person who indulges their appetites then justifies them and even glorifies them. Isaiah saw people that called "Good evil and Evil Good." Isaiah 5:20 He noted two aspects of their reversal of the moral code. "They put darkness for light and light for darkness, they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

Light and dark are objective realities.

The entire community could verify light and dark, but they instead renamed them and redefined them. So that they could do as they please. Sin was not sin and righteousness was no longer righteousness.

Bitter and sweet are individual preferences, by using this illustration Isaiah was showing how the moral code had become rooted in their individual preferences.

8% of American Teens say that music piracy is wrong. While 80% of teens who have bought praise music in the last six months who also engaged in some sort of music piracy in that time.

This glorying in shameful things is the pathway for those that are enemies of the cross.

The cross was necessary for the payment for absolutes being violated. Sin had to be atoned for, not gloried in.

There is the temptation to think that it has never been this bad. That humanity is progressing towards even more evil and reidentification or reinterpretation of the moral code.

**3. The things of earth totally occupy their thinking.**

**Romans 8:5-6**

A mind focused on the things of this world rather than on God. Earthly things are not the practical affairs of everyday living, but truly those things that pronounce a life in opposition to God—Col 3:1-11 “Sexual immorality, lust, evil desires, greed, anger, Rage, malice, slander and filthy language.” These things flow out of a life that at its core is against God. At the center of their being the place shaping their attitudes and behavior, the place where their worldview exists is the notion that the ways of the world are the best. “The world is best”, “The offerings of this world satisfy.” “The world is my ultimate destiny. This is where I belong.” These are the attitudes that are prevalent in our culture. Christ following only plays well to the poor. We are wealthy enough to simulate paradise. Romans 1:18

The sinners rebellion is to deny God and live life to self. This is the path of destruction. Enemies of the cross believe a few penitent moments and a few good works will overcome any fault God might find with them. Paul realigns the thinking to let the Philippians know that the God of the universe will not stand for a reevaluation of His moral code.

**Paul sums up the person that is Self fulfilling in their actions, glorying in those things that should be shameful and earthly in their thinking. He says that they are enemies of the Cross. Their destiny is destruction.**

Live what you **Know**

Live like the **Examples** of godly living around you

Live **aware** of heretical influencers \_these are people whose practice is counter to the cross

Live your **citizenship**-Expectant of His coming

Expect his transformation

Destiny informs living

This word only is used here and has direct political overtones.



Paul is pointing us back to the direct daily every day practice of having Jesus rule us as our King.

Those In Philippi got it. They were a city governed as if it were on Italian soil. It was a colony by proclamation of Octavian in 42 BC. They knew what close political identification looked like. Paul is now calling them to the reign of the King of Kings. They together could display the Reign of Jesus in a thorough going Roman city.

Again it is possible to live the illusion that the world is our destiny. Even as Christians we can think this is our final place, all our meaning is captured here. The mystery is that this is not all there is. The kingdom of Heaven is a present reality that determines our ongoing existence and how we will live in this world. Paul uses the present tense so that the Philippians knew that the transformation of Status had taken place at their conversion. We Are Citizens of Heaven---The commonwealth of Heaven.

1. "But our citizenship is in heaven." "Our real place in this universe" We belong in the presence of our king. We find fulfillment in living for our king. We experience true grace when we sorrow over sin, repent of sin and seek righteousness. We demonstrate the fullness of that kingdom when we love others and fulfill the great command of our king.

2. In that place dwells the one whom we love. "Our Only satisfying relationship in this universe" 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,

3. In that place we will receive our original design.  
(Jesus Christ) will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

As CS Lewis has said, "When we stand before God on the final day, all external advantage and disadvantage will dissolve, and our true selves, the part of us that chooses good or ill, obedience or disobedience, will remain. Then we will see ourselves as we really are, and this moment of revelation will contain surprise." Mere Christianity p. 86

Christ's resurrection insures our resurrection-

Our bodies of weakness, corruption, frail, subject to decay and mortality, must be transformed into powerful, incorruptible, enduring, immortal bodies. And that is what we will look forward to today. The resurrection of the body is not an isolated event but the last act in the drama of redemption.

Bishop Hadley Mould died in 1920. In January 1919 he wrote to a nephew: "I have often prayed that daily, and to the end, I may live as in a tent pitched between the cross and the grave of our Lord-The EMPTY cross, symbol and seal of his finished work of sacrifice and redemption, the EMPTY grave, likewise the evidence and pledge of his eternal victory for us over the last enemy, death, and of our life hid with him in God. May your tent be ever there also."

Let us Live what **WE Know**

Let us Live like the **Examples** of godly living around you

Let us Live **aware** of heretical influencers \_these are people whose practice is counter to the cross

Let us Live Our **citizenship**-Expectant of His coming  
Expect his transformation