

Following Healthy Role Models

Phil. 3:17 - 4:1, 9

Phil. 3:17-4:1 “Brothers, join in imitating me, & keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you & now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, & they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, & from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love & long for, my joy & crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved....What you have learned & received & heard & seen in me—practice these things, & the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 3:17-4:1, 9)

I Imitating Paul and those whose living is a healthy example

A Imitating the mindset of pursuing and gaining Christ.

Note: A Call to Follow Paul’s Example of Commitment to Jesus as Lord. Paul calls the Philippians to imitate him, a common theme in his letters (cf. 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7-9). Paul’s intent is not for the Philippians to focus on him per se but rather for them to join him in humble, radical dependence on Christ. ESV

- “Join in imitating”-- be fellow imitators.
 - “keep your eyes on”—“look at, fix your attention upon, mark & follow”
 - “the example”— (Greek: *tupos*) the type, pattern, example (Rienecker)
 - Paul was physically remote (in Rome), but he was assured some in Philippi were following his e.g.
 - In contrast to “enemies of Christ’s cross” (3:18) **Note:** The ‘enemies of the cross’ could be the Judaizers of 3:2 or [more likely] “worldly” people in general. Their destiny is final judgment (destruction), they worship themselves (their belly), & they are consumed with earthly things. ESV
 - 1 Some people’s living is against the cross of Christ
 - 2 Their end is destruction
 - 3 Their god is their belly—belly, stomach: “the term includes all that belongs...to the bodily, fleshly life of man & therefore inevitably perishes.” (Rienecker)
 - 4 They glory in their shame
 - 5 They set their mind on earthly things
 - a “Needing” a certain standard of living
 - b Overly consumed with success and career advancement at the expense of everything else.
 - c We need food, clothing, housing, but should not be overly consumed with them.
- B Not separating our physical life from our spiritual life.
- C Glorifying God in our body (1 Cor. 6:13-20)
- 1 Our body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord
 - 2 We will be resurrected
 - 3 Our bodies are members of Christ
 - 4 Our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit
 - 5 Our body does not belong to us.
- D Embracing the cross of Christ in our life and living (being conformed to His death 3:10)
- E Who is your pattern? Who are you following? (Paul is remote, others are nearby)
- 1 Is your pattern a follower of Christ or is it some unbelieving person?
 - 2 For different aspects of your life, who is your role model?
 - 3 Note to parents, kids will not always follow you; get them related to healthy role models
 - 4 Observe others & follow them (4:9; Heb. 13:7; 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:10-11; 1 Pet. 5:3)

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Note: While Paul is not yet perfected, he is confident enough in his Christian walk to ask the Philippians to *join in imitating me* & other mature Christians. Much Christian growth comes through imitating other Christians ESV

- 5 Practice what we have heard and seen, imitate their faith
- 6 We don't follow perfect persons, but we follow aspects that we should follow.

F Could you say to others "imitate me?"

- 1 Aspire to be a pattern to others, therefore I live my life a certain way (1 Tim 4:12)
- 2 Examples of others (e.g. observing others in marriage, family)

II Our citizenship is [or exists] in the heavens (3:20)

In Phil. 1:27 Paul wrote: "*Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel*", which can also be translated "*only behave **as citizens** [Greek *politeuesthe*] worthy [of the gospel]*," a phrasing that nicely captures Paul's play on words there & [here] in 3:20, Paul writes, "***our citizenship** [Greek *politeuma*] is in heaven.*" ESV

A Living according to our heavenly citizenship versus the "earthly citizenship"

- 1 One the job
- 2 In your home with your family
- 3 With your neighbours
- 4 Morally, ethically
- 5 With strangers
- 6 Behind the steering wheel

B We eagerly await for our Savior *from* the heavens (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

- 1 Meeting the Lord – greeting and escorting into the city
- 2 Christ is coming to the earth; we are not going to heaven.
- 3 A new earth is coming (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1)

III Our body will be transfigured at the Lord's coming (3:21)

Note: Those who follow Christ's example of service will share in his vindication & glory as well. [Complete] perfection will come only at the resurrection (cf. 3:11-12; 1 Cor. 15:12-28). ESV

*"The Lord Jesus Christ...will **transfigure** our lowly body to be like his glorious body"* (3:20-21).

Transfigure: Greek *metaschematizo*—to refashion, to change the outward appearance or form (Reinecker) "completely changed in form" (John M. Keith). "Our whole perishable person will be transformed (*metaschematizo*, Phil 3:21) into a new & imperishable [person] that will be qualitatively different from the first. It will be—thank God—better!" [Davies & Gregersen *"Information & the Nature of Reality,"* p. 359]

- A At the Lord's coming we will be resurrected (1 Cor. 15:23)
- B Our body will be transfigured to be made like His body
- C It is the final aspect of our salvation – the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23)
- D Our body matters to the Lord; take care of it. It matters today and in the future.
- E The state of our physical body affects our soul and our spirit.

Heaven Is Not Our Home—N. T. Wright

When Paul speaks in Phil. 3 of [our] being "citizens of heaven," he doesn't mean that we shall retire there when we have finished our work here. He says in the next line that Jesus will come from heaven in order to transform the present humble body into a glorious body like his own. Jesus will do this by the power through which he makes all things subject to himself. This little statement contains in a nutshell more or less all Paul's thought on the subject. The risen Jesus is both the model for the Christian's future body and

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the means by which it comes. Similarly, in Col. 3:1–4, Paul says that when the Messiah (the one "who is your life") appears, then you too will appear with him in glory. Paul does not say "one day you will go to be with him." No, you already possess life in him. This new life, which the Christian possesses secretly, invisible to the world, will burst forth into full bodily reality and visibility. The clearest and strongest passage is Rom. 8:9–11. If the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus the Messiah, dwells in you, says Paul, then the one who raised the Messiah from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies as well, through his Spirit who dwells in you. God will give life, not to a disembodied spirit, not to what many people have thought of as a spiritual body in the sense of a non-physical one, but "to your mortal bodies also." The first letter of John declares that when Jesus appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. The resurrection body of Jesus, which at the moment is almost unimaginable to us in its glory and power, will be the model for our own [resurrection].

Salvation is NOT “going to heaven when you die”

Most Christians today...[think] that salvation consists in "going to heaven when you die." The way we now understand that language in the Western world is totally different from what Jesus and his hearers meant and understood. For a start, heaven is actually a reverent way of speaking about God, so that "riches in heaven" simply means "riches in God's presence." But then, by derivation from this primary meaning, heaven is the place where God's purposes for the future are stored up. It isn't where they are meant to stay so that one would need to go to heaven to enjoy them. It is where they are kept safe against the day when they will become a reality on earth. God's future inheritance, the incorruptible new world and the new bodies that are to inhabit that world, are already kept safe, waiting for us, so that they can be brought to birth in the new heavens and new earth.

I've often heard people say, "I'm going to heaven soon, and I won't need this stupid body there, thank goodness." That's a very damaging distortion, all the more so for being unintentional. There are several important respects in which it's unsupported by the New Testament.

- First, the timing: In the Bible we are told that you die, and enter an intermediate state. Paul is very clear that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead already, but that nobody else has yet.
- Secondly, our physical state: The New Testament says that when Christ does return, the dead will experience a whole new life: not just our soul, but our bodies.
- Finally, the location. At no point do the resurrection narratives in the four Gospels say, "Jesus has been raised, therefore we are all going to heaven." It says that **Christ is coming here**, to join together the heavens and the Earth in an act of new creation.

God will give us new ‘Hardware’ to run our ‘Software’

Our culture is very interested in life after death, but the New Testament is much more interested in what I've called the life *after* life after death — in the ultimate resurrection into the new heavens and the new Earth. Jesus' resurrection marks the beginning of a restoration that he will complete upon his return. Part of this will be the resurrection of all the dead, who will "awake," be embodied & participate in the renewal. John Polkinghorne, a [University of Cambridge] physicist & priest, has put it this way: "*God will download our software onto his hardware until the time he gives us new hardware to run the software again for ourselves.*" That gets to two things nicely: that the period after death is a period when we are in God's presence but not active in our own bodies, and also that the more important transformation will be when we are again embodied and administering Christ's kingdom—N. T. Wright

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“The final outcome is that the ultimately consummated Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God becomes the Bridegroom and the aggregate of the overcoming saints becomes the bride of the universal romance between the redeeming God and His redeemed man as the conclusion of the entire Scriptures (Rev. 22:17). **The conclusion of the entire Bible is a couple, which is the consummation of the universal romance of the redeeming God and His redeemed man. The Bridegroom is God as the consummated Spirit, and the bride is the aggregate of all the overcomers.** This is all accomplished by the additional section of the sevenfold intensified organic salvation of God.” [W. Lee, *Divine & Mystical Realm*, Chapter 5, Section 6]

“**In God's romance He desires to be one with man.** He carried this out by becoming the same as man. God, because of His heart's desire, became a man in incarnation, and He contacted man by the way of a romance. Before God opened up in the New Testament what was on His heart, both angels and men did not know what God was doing (Eph. 3:9). They did not realize that their God was becoming a Husband to marry a wife. **This Husband was divine and the wife He was going to marry was human.**” [W. Lee, *Crystallization-Study of Song of Songs*, Chapter 9, Section 1]

“Just as it was not good for Adam to be alone, single, so it is not good for God to be alone, to be a ‘bachelor.’ Without His chosen people as His bride, God is ‘single.’ He is only half of the universal couple. I realize that this thought is frightening to the doctrinal or theological mind. When they hear this, some may say, ‘Are you teaching that God in Himself is not complete? How can you compare God to a bachelor or to one half of a melon? This is heresy! No one should follow such a false teaching! God is almighty, perfect, and complete. As the great One, the King, the Ruler in the heavens, He is the object of worship. We have been created by Him, and we must prostrate ourselves before Him in worship.’ Of course, God in Himself is complete. However, many who use the truth of God's completeness to argue against the revelation in the Bible concerning the universal couple see only the outward appearance of the Word. They know only the feathers and the skin. If we grasp the inward reality of the Word, we shall realize that God will never be satisfied with mere outward worship from His creatures. We shall know that, deep in His heart, He wants a bride.” [W. Lee, *Life-Study of 2 Corinthians*, Chapter 21, Section 2]

“**The God revealed in Genesis 1:1 is a ‘bachelor’ God.** We may also say that He is the unprocessed God, the “raw” God. **The sixty-six books of the Bible reveal the process through which the ‘single’ God has passed.** First He created the heavens and the earth as the environment for this process. One day God was incarnated; He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem. Certainly this was part of the process... The Spirit is the ultimate expression of the Triune God. This Spirit includes all that Christ has achieved, attained, and obtained. This all-inclusive Spirit also includes all that Christ is. Furthermore, this Spirit has a counterpart, an increase, an addition. This means that the Spirit has something to match Him. **God is no longer single, no longer a bachelor, for He has a bride to match Him.** For this reason, the consummate revelation in the Bible is that of the all-inclusive Spirit with the bride.” [W. Lee, *Life-Study of 2 Corinthians*, Chapter 21, Section 3]

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