

Sermon Notes
Good News Church
Joy in the Journey
“Citizens of Joy - The Joyful Example to Follow”
Philippians 3:17-21
Ray Souza
3-22-26

- Good morning Good News Church. Your friend Ray Souza here. I hope you are enjoying this Series Joy in the Journey. Joy is a weapon in the Christian Life, and we need to make sure we have it and use it. **Nehemiah 8:10** says: *“The joy of the Lord is our strength”*. When sadness is all around us...!
- The book of Philippians, known as the “Epistle of Joy”, was a New Testament letter written by Paul from prison, emphasizing that true joy is a choice rooted in Jesus Christ rather than circumstances.
- For this series we are using Warren Wiersbe’s book “Be Joyful”. I hope you are enjoying the book, it is a great read. Drue has been doing a great job catching us up weekly. I am going to jump right into our text today just for time’s sake.
- **Philippians 3:17-21** - ¹⁷*Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸*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. ¹⁹*Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set 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.*****
- **V.17** – Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters! How many people that you know could truly say this same thing as Paul? Follow me! Pattern your lives after mine, and those who follow our example. That is a bold statement, isn’t it? But it is coming from a guy that we know for a fact, had a tremendous transformation in his life. A guy that humbled himself before the mighty hand of God. A guy that openly confessed to us in last week’s message, in **3:12** – *“I don’t mean to say that I have achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection.”* A guy that considered everything a loss to gain Jesus Christ, to get to know him.

- This boldness could only be achieved by one thing, following Christ. That's exactly what He said in **1 Corinthians 11:1** – “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”
- So, our main example to follow is with no doubt Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ himself left us some great other examples for us to follow. Paul was one, Timothy was another one. Epaphroditus was another one. Not perfect people, but followers of Christ people. They were Disciples of Jesus Christ, who followed in his footsteps. Jesus chose them and trained them to intentionally learn his teachings, and become more like him in character, thought and action. And then Jesus sent them to replicate the same thing. (**Matt. 28:19-20** – “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teach them do to everything I have commanded you”).
- Personally, I am so thankful for those who followed Jesus Christ and were used by him to challenge me to follow Him as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Again, they were not perfect people, they were just followers of Christ people.
- The reason why we need great examples to follow, besides obedience to God's call, is that we have enough bad examples in this world and there are many that are following them.
- **Philippians 3:18** – For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ.
- Maybe these were Judaizers who added the law of Moses to the work of redemption on the cross. Or maybe these were professed Christian teachers who turned liberty into license and used grace as a pretext for sin.
- These men were not spiritually minded like Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus; they were earthly minded. They were holding on to earthly rituals and beliefs that God had given to Israel, and now they were opposing the heavenly blessing that the Christian has in Christ. (Eph. 1:3; 2:6; Col. 3:1-3).
- The sad thing about these bad examples, is that they were present within the Church or very close to it. They were not outsiders, but insiders with a different and confusing agenda.
- Paul was in tears for them, for they were lost when they thought they were found. In tears because they were causing great harm among the churches of God.

- They were enemies of the cross. A more subtle or indirect enemy, making the cross not a big deal, just foolish thing.
- **1 Corinthians 1:18** – *“The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed to destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.”* **V.22** – *It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom.* **V.23** – *So, when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it’s all nonsense.* **V.24** – *But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.*
- **Philippians 3:19** – *“Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.”*
- Four characteristics of these enemies of the cross: 1. They were lost spiritually – “Their destiny is destruction”. 2. Their priority is their own desire. What makes them happy. Their appetite, their feelings. 3. They glory in their shame, bragging and celebrating shameful things. 4. They are not heavenly minded. And they are followed and exalted!
- Now Paul goes back to the joyful examples worth following.
- **Philippians 3:20** – *“But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.”*
- **Wiersbe** - The Greek word translated “citizenship” or “conversation” is the word from which we get the english word politics. So, we could also read: *“Our politics or conversation is in heaven, from where we eagerly wait for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*
- Now, this politics, or conversation, or citizenship has to do with one’s behavior as a citizen of a nation. Paul was encouraging us to have the spiritual mind, and he did this by pointing out the characteristics of the Christian whose citizenship is in heaven. Just like Philippi was a colony of Rome on foreign soil, so the Church is a “Colony of heaven on earth.” Think about that!
- The citizens of Philippi were privileged to be Roman citizens away from Rome. When a baby was born in Philippi, their parents registered them on the legal records. (We did that we both Matthew and Marcus). In the same way, when a lost sinner trusts Christ and becomes a citizen of heaven, his name is written in

“The book of Life” (Phil. 4:3). When he confesses Christ on earth, Christ confesses his name in heaven (Matt. 10:32-33).

- Citizenship is important, it’s a very big deal. Never before this topic was so hot in our country and the world as it is now. And so should be even more important for the believer as a citizen of heaven living here in this “Colony called Earth”.
- Because we are a citizen of heaven, we speak heaven’s language. Those who “mind earthly things” talk about earthly things. What comes out of their mouth reveals what is in their heart (Matt.12:34-37). The citizens of heaven, understand spiritual things and strive to live it out by example and to share it with others. They are heavenly minded. What comes out of their mouth also reveals what’s in their heart. And hopefully that is Christ, the love of Christ, the Good News of God’s plan that can really make a difference in the life of people here on earth. No wonder they are called the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13), the light of the world (Matt.5:14).
- **Colossians 4:6** says: *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man”*.
- The citizens of Philippi were governed by Roman law, not Greek law, even though they were located hundreds of miles away from Rome. We do respect and obey the laws of the country we are in, but in our mind and hearts we are governed by a higher law that directs and informs our thinking, our actions and our behavior. Paul was governed by heaven’s laws and that made a difference in his life and others around him. We are called by God to live the same way as heavenly citizens, with heavenly conversation, and heavenly politics.
- **Philippians 3:21** – *“He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control”*.
- What a great promise of a great future for the citizens of heaven! Differently than those who live for their appetite, whose end is destruction, there is a great eternal future for the believer, and they are eagerly waiting for that to take place with the returning of their savior. What a bright future!
- Wiersbe said: “There is tremendous energy in the present power of a future hope.” Because Abraham looked for a city, he was content to live in a tent (Heb.11:13-16). Because Moses looked for the rewards of heaven, he was willing to forsake the treasures of earth (Heb.11:24-26). Because of the “joy that set before him” (Heb.12:2), Jesus was willing to endure the cross. The fact that

heaven is real, and Jesus Christ is returning is a powerful motive for dedicated living and devoted service today. More than a destination, heaven should be a motivation!

- Don't be discouraged when this world doesn't seem so homie, be reminded that you are in a foreign land, and that your Lord is one day going to return. Be spiritually minded, look up and anticipate the blessings of the world to come. Don't ignore or neglect your responsibilities and obligations here on earth, but do them today governed or directed by what Christ will do in the future, in our final home destination.
- Know more about our blessed promised future, let's have a great expectation in our hearts, for He is coming and he will give you a new glorified body, like the body of Christ. Live today in that future tense! Be another great example, just as Paul, a disciple used by Jesus Christ to bring him glory, change and to inspire others to follow him.
- And know for a fact, that when he returns, He will "subdue all things to himself", he will be the only one to finally fix everything, to finally establish justice, to finally bring everything under His control. And that is real Good News for us today! Let's pray.