

Heavenly Minded - Earthly Good, Philippians 3:20-4:1 – February 17th, 2019

- I've been looking forward to today's text for several reasons, not the least of which is it's about the glory of heaven that awaits.
- However, in order to better understand what the Apostle Paul is saying to the Philippians, we need to know a bit of the context.
- This because, Paul, by the Spirit, words this in such a way that the Christians in the church of Philippi, would have understood.

- Notice Paul's reference in verse 20 to our citizenship being in heaven as opposed to those whose mind is set on earthly things.
- The Philippian Christians would've understood this because Philippi though far from Rome was considered a colony of Rome.
- The reason this is significant is that they would consider themselves as citizens of Rome, which was greatly valued and prized.

- The second detail in his wording is also in verse 20 where he says we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The reason this is important is because the Philippians as Roman citizens would eagerly await a visit from the emperor in Rome.
- It's important to note Julius Caesar was given the title of "the universal savior of mankind," which led to Christian martyrdom.

- The third detail is in chapter four verse one where Paul refers to his joy and his crown in his exhortation to them to stand firm.
- This is important because in that day, they had what we know today as the Olympics and would award the winner with a crown.
- What Paul is saying is they were his reward and his crown, or trophy, if you prefer, and he longed for them in his love for them.

- With this context we're now better able to make the connection between what I'll call earthly situation and heavenly anticipation.
- Perhaps better said, our present situation on earth is directly proportionate to our anticipation of heaven, as citizens of heaven.
- In other words, the more heavenly minded we are, the more earthly good we become, which is contrary to a well-known quote.

C. S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity* said it this way, "A continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth and you will get neither."

Vance Havner of this wrote, "If you are a Christian, you are not a citizen of this world trying to get to heaven; you are a citizen of heaven making your way through this world."

- Here's where I'm going with all of this, if I am a Christian, then I am a citizen of heaven, and my life on earth should evidence it.
- The problem is that some Christians want our heaven on earth, which explains why it is that they will live for the things of earth.
- Conversely, there are other Christians who live their lives in light of heaven, which explains why it is that, they long for heaven.

Matthew 6:19–21 - 19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- This begs the question of how do we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven in order for our heart to be where our treasure is.
- To answer this question, we need look no further than to our text, where Paul says he loves and longs for his joy and his crown.
- Namely, that which he invested in and knew he could take with him to heaven, which were the people he influenced for eternity.

The story is told of an old missionary couple that, for many years, ministered in Africa and had returned to New York to retire. They had no pension; their health was broken; they were defeated, discouraged, and afraid. They discovered they were booked on the same ship as President Teddy Roosevelt, who was returning from one of his big-game hunting expeditions. No one paid any attention to them. They watched the fanfare that accompanied the President's entourage, with passengers trying to catch a glimpse of the great man. As the ship moved across the ocean, the old missionary said to his wife, "Something is wrong." "Why should we have given our lives in faithful service for God in Africa all these many years and have no one care a thing about us? Here this man comes back from a hunting trip and everybody makes much over him, but nobody gives two hoots about us." "Dear, you shouldn't feel that way", his wife said. He replied "I can't help it; it doesn't seem right." When the ship docked in New York, a band was waiting to greet the President. The mayor and other dignitaries were there. The papers were full of the President's arrival. No one noticed this missionary couple. They slipped off the ship and found a cheap flat on the East Side, hoping the next day to see what they could do to make a living in the city. That night the man's spirit broke. He said to his wife, "I can't take this". His wife replied, "Why don't you go in the bedroom and tell that to the Lord?" A short time later he came out, but now his face was completely different. His wife asked, "Dear, what happened?" "The Lord settled it with me", he said. "I told Him how bitter I was that the President should receive this tremendous homecoming, when no one met us as we returned home. And when I finished, it seemed as though the Lord put His hand on my shoulder and simply said; "But you're not home yet."

I'll close with an excerpt from *The Story of Mankind* by Hendrik Willem Van Loon, "High up in the north, in the land called Svithjod, there stands a rock. It is a hundred miles high and a hundred miles wide. Once every thousand years a little bird comes to this rock to sharpen its beak. When the rock has thus been worn away, then a single day of eternity will have gone by.