

Introduction: One of the greatest gifts in life is a mentor who is a friend. In my twenty-two years in the corporate world I was on both sides of mentor-friend relationships. Over a period of fifteen years my first three bosses gave me the freedom to do my assignments without hovering over me; but, whenever I got stuck, they were always available to share their wisdom with me and give me advice. And, as time went by, we also got to know each other as people. *** The biggest mistake I made as a rookie supervisor was, while giving an assignment, to take too much time trying to explain how to overcome obstacles I had faced when I was doing the task I was now assigning. Thank God, I was soon trained that I needed to simply say: Here is your assignment, here are your tools, do your best, and if you get stuck I am here for you. More often than not, when one of my people encountered a problem, it was a real problem that I had never encountered before. It was a great joy to guide them based on my experience, and solve the problem together. *** In some ways this is the relationship the apostle Paul had with the church in Philippi. Paul came to Philippi some fifteen years after he had encountered the risen Lord Jesus. The church was founded in suffering after Paul was imprisoned after leading Lydia to Christ. (*Acts 16*) And from the beginning they were full partners with Paul in The Gospel Mission, and he was confident The Lord would complete His work in them. (*1:3-6*) *** Still, Paul had concerns for them. This letter has been called a 'friendship exhortation'. And this is what today's passage illustrates. He begins by twice using the friendship pronoun 'we'. He considers himself one with the saints (*1:1*). But, he follows this up with two exhortations that they follow the example of him and his team of church planters. Their reward will be the transformation of their humble human bodies to the glory of Jesus' resurrected body. *** Let's now look at the details within this broad outline.

I. May the mature share in Christ's sufferings, and may we who have attained this so conduct our lives. (Verses 15-16)

A. Therefore, as many as are mature, may we think as Christ, and any thinking differently, God will reveal to you what is right. (*Verse 15*)

1. Therefore, as many as are mature, we are thinking this. (*Verse 15a*)

The way of The Cross: He is bringing to a conclusion his three part teaching. He began with a command to rejoice IN The Lord (*verse 1*). Then he said by sharing in Christ's sufferings and death, they will be resurrected from the dead (*verses 10-11*). There is joy in suffering IN Christ, and saints growing to mature thinking IN Him can have joy together in all circumstances.

We together: He begins the paragraph 'we have this thinking' and ends 'we have attained the same'.

2. And if you are thinking anything differently, this also God will reveal to you. (*Verse 15b*)

Confidence: Paul is confident that if some of the members of the church cannot yet affirm his teaching that The Holy Spirit will reveal the truth of it to them. God has revealed Himself and His ways in Scripture which is inspired of The Holy Spirit. (*2 Timothy 3:14-17*)

God's revelation: Whenever we disagree over matters of doctrine, may we determine to seek answers in God's revelation in His Word while praying for guidance from The Holy Spirit.

B. However, into which we have attained, to the same conduct ourselves. (*Verse 16*)

Attain: This word can mean to come upon, as when Jesus said His driving out of demons meant The Kingdom of God had come upon them. (*Luke 11:20*) Paul used this word to describe how far his team had come in preaching The Gospel. (*2 Corinthians 10:14*) He said Israel did not come to righteousness by pursuing the Torah. (*Romans 9:31*) In his testimony he said the same was true of him (*verses 2-6*).

Conduct: This word describes how soldiers march. Christians are always engaged in spiritual warfare and must march in step with their general: Christ! (See *Galatians 5:16-26*, 'keep in step with The Spirit'.)

II. Give attention to pattern your walking according to our pattern, because many are walking as enemies of The Cross, thinking earthly things. (Verses 17-19)

A. Brothers, you must imitate me, pay attention to our (Paul's church planting team) pattern. (*Verse 17*)

1. Brothers, you must become imitators of me. (*Verse 17a*)

Paul: Paul had just given his testimony of the need to be fully identified with Christ (*verses 7-11*). He wrote to the church in Corinth to be imitators of him just as he was of Christ (*1 Corinthians 11:1*). And before that, he urged them to have the same mind as Christ (*2:5-11*).

2. You should look carefully to those walking according to the pattern they have seen in us. (*Verse 17b*)

Observe: They are to intently observe how Paul's evangelistic church-planting team was living their lives, and do the same.

B. Because, as I have been telling you with tears, many are enemies of The Cross, thinking earthly things. (*Verses 18-19*)

1. Because many are walking, as I have been telling you often; ... (*Verse 18a*)

Visits after founding: This implies Paul paid them many visits. He visited Macedonia at least two times after planting the church (*2 Corinthians 7:5; Acts 20:3*). He would have surely visited Philippi. He wrote of plans to visit Macedonia (*1 Corinthians 16:5*).

2. ... but now, also weeping, I am telling you: (*Verse 18b*)

Weep over those in danger: All who have the mind of The Lord Jesus weep and are deeply moved to groans over ignorance and error. (*John 11:32-38*)

i. The enemies of The Cross of The Messiah (Christ). (*Verse 18c*)

Who: These enemies may be itinerant preachers of The Gospel teaching that those with faith in God, but not embracing The Cross, are right with God. They interpret and apply Scripture based on their own feelings and desires.

Application: Christians must die to their sins on The Cross on which Christ died for their sins. (*Romans 6:5-14*)

ii. Of whom the end is utter destruction. (*Verse 19a*)

Word play: The word used is the same word used for perfect maturity, making a sharp contrast.

iii. The 'god' of whom is the stomach. (*Verse 19b*)

Chrysostom: In 400 AD, John Chrysostom preached: A flooding sea harms the shore less than a flooded belly harms our bodies and souls. Set a bound to your belly as God sets sand to the sea.

iv. Who glory in the shame of them. (*Verse 19c*)

Shame: They glory in their gluttony and living opposed to The Cross, not knowing their shame!

v. Who are thinking earthly things. (*Verse 19d*)

Earthly: James wrote that those who have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in their hearts are acting in earthly wisdom, not heavenly wisdom (from God – *James 3:13-18*).

Application: In light of this, may we all commit to NOT being earthly enemies of The Cross of Christ. Let's embrace The Cross.

III. Because our citizenship is in heaven, from which our awaited Savior will change our humble body to the same as His glorious body. (*Verses 20-21*)

A. Because our citizenship is in heaven and we are waiting expectantly for The Lord and Savior. (*Verse 20*)

1. Because our citizenship below is in the heavens. (*Verse 20a*)

Dual citizenship: Philippi was a Roman colony in Macedonia. Its people were proud Roman citizens. But Paul is reminding them that, even while they are still living below, their true citizenship is in the heavens. Everyone IN Christ has dual citizenship.

Higher allegiance: All with citizenship in heaven must carry their cross, just as Jesus commanded (*Luke 9:23-25*).

This may require giving up some rights that are given to citizens of their country. To be more specific:

Carrying The Cross of Christ will separate 'cultural Christians' (Christians in Name Only – ChINO's) from 'saints', from those being made holy IN Christ: by Grace through Faith.

Application: Let us realize that even though we have dual citizenship, we must make every decision based on our citizenship in Christ's Kingdom, even when it means taking up His cross of death.

The ID card for citizens of heaven is the cross they carry

2. From which heavens also, a Savior we are awaiting expectantly: The Lord Jesus Christ. (*Verse 20b*)

Wait in expectation: Paul wrote this about waiting for the return of the Savior, 'awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ' (*Titus 2:13*).

Names: The Savior is fully named in this sentence. Jesus (Yeshua) means Savior. Christ is used for The Messianic King. And, most important, He rules as Lord over all He created.

B. He will transform our humble body to the same body as His according to His power over all. (*Verse 21*)

1. Who will transform (change) the body of our humiliation. (*Verse 21a*)

Humiliation: This is the third time in this last paragraph that Paul has identified with the saints in Philippi by using 'we'/'our'. Our bodies on this earth will deteriorate and die.

2. Conformed to the glory of His body. (*Verse 21b*)

Glorified resurrection body: We will have bodies like Jesus' resurrected body that could materialize in a room with locked doors to proclaim peace. (*John 20:19*)

Mature saints are waiting for transformed bodies from The Lord

3. According to the working of His power to also subject everything to Him. (*Verse 21c*)

Sovereign: When The Lord Jesus Christ returns He will exercise His power to make everything He created to be subject to Him. People who refused to be His subjects while living on earth will, sadly, be subjected to eternal separation from Him. But, maturing saints, who chose to be IN Him while being below the heavens, will rejoice in being subjects of their sovereign Lord with transformed bodies.

Mature saints are waiting for transformed bodies from The Lord

Application: Let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of The Lord, knowing our toil is not vain in The Lord – the last sentence of The Resurrection chapter. (*1 Corinthians 15:58*)

Exhortation: Finally, let us imitate those maturing in Christ-likeness by fulfilling His last commandment to make disciples of people of all nations.

Conclusion: Citizens of heaven carry their cross, as Jesus did, as they are growing to maturity IN Him. But, they must leave behind the earthly things opposing The Cross of Christ as they die to their sins while waiting in expectation for their Lord to transform their humble bodies to the same form as His glorified body.

Mature saints are waiting for transformed bodies from The Lord