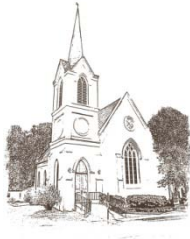


A New Heaven, a New Earth, and a New Resurrected Body

Philippians 3:20-21

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Let us get our bibles out and turn to Philippians chapter three this morning. I would like to continue where we stopped last week. This chapter is a wonderful chapter in the bible. It contains the personal testimony of the apostle Paul at length: that he was once a self righteous hypocrite, a sinner who everybody thought was upright and righteous on the outside, but inside he was full of covetousness and envy and jealousy of others, complaining against God and man. But he found Jesus Christ on that Damascus road where Christ appeared to him, and it changed him from self righteousness to humility before the Son of God. Christ not only forgave him his sins through His death on the cross, but He gave him a gift: the gift of Christ's own righteousness, which He lived out on earth, as a gift to Paul to make him acceptable to God. That excited Paul. But that is not all he thought about: not just his salvation on the Damascus road, but the completed salvation that Christ accomplished for him; that he was living in now and would experience one day; the resurrection of his body from the dead and the amazing completion of that salvation that Christ accomplished when He rose from the dead. Paul thought about these things all the time and so he wrote this chapter:

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the Power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction,

whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” (Philippians 3)

Paul was consumed both with the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ: this was the central part of the gospel for him, the good news. And he was also consumed with living out the implications of these great truths and teaching others to do the same. Before he believed he had heard of the crucifixion of Christ as the Messiah, supposedly to atone for sin, but he thought he did not need atonement. He thought he was good enough for God. He did not understand the evil of sin and God’s hatred of it. He thought he was righteous enough to pass through God’s judgment. In fact, he thought it was blasphemy to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, that He was really just a man. He had heard about the supposed resurrection of Christ, but he didn’t believe it. He did not believe that the tomb was opened and Christ rose from the dead and walked out and Mary Magdalene and Peter and others saw Him. He believed rather, that the disciples stole the body. But then he saw Stephen, the deacon, stoned to death for the truth that Jesus Christ was God’s Messiah. He heard Stephen say that he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and Paul was holding the clothes of those that were stoning him. It bothered him, but he still did not believe. He would not reject his self-righteousness.

But finally, Christ appeared to him on Damascus road and he saw with his own eyes that Christ has indeed risen from the dead. He heard Christ’s own voice speaking to him and calling him to repent and believe and follow him. And as a result it changed him from being a self-righteous hypocrite to being a humble sinner who knew it took the death of one so great: of God the Son, to atone for his terrible sins. He loved Christ from then on, and he saw that Christ is the one who created the world out of speaking; that he is going to judge the world in righteousness as God the Son, and as a result he had found this great Lord to be his humble savior, and he loved Him for it. He believed everything that Christ taught him, including the fact that He was coming again on the clouds of heaven; and that He would raise the dead bodily: believer and unbeliever, from the grave, from the fishes of the sea and that they would all stand before God on that final day of judgment and give account for their lives. Those who were in Christ Jesus and who followed God on earth would enter into an eternal blessedness, but those refused to follow Christ Jesus would enter into condemnation and eternal punishment for their sins.

Paul believed all that, because he saw Christ rising from the dead. So with Paul there were only two great truths in life from that moment on: either Jesus Christ was raised from the dead or there was nothing...nothing. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul detailed how foolish it is to believe that Christ rose from the dead if he did not. And he said of all people that are most to be pitied and felt sorry for it would be Christians if he did not rise from the dead, because they had put all their hope and all the goodness of trying to live for God on that hope and that truth: that He rose from the dead. If He did not, they were all fools. He said that all that remains if Christ did not rise from the dead...of all the philosophies and all the religions in the world, self righteous every one of them...all that remains is this: let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. That is the only other valid philosophy of life. Either Christ rose from the dead as God the Son and head of the universe and the only Savior to bring forgiveness, eternal life

and peace with God, either that, or there is nothing. The party lifestyle, the party culture: go to it if Christ did not rise from the dead. What a wasted life and miserable; no hope without God in the world. Yet, that is all there is.

After His crucifixion, three days later, Christ appeared to Mary and then to the twelve, and then to more than 500 brethren at one time, (most of them were alive when Paul was alive), bearing witness that they had seen the Son of God with their own eyes, alive from the dead. These witnesses went out into the world and preached of this great truth, the ultimate truth for all men. Many believed and came. Paul lived everyday in the resurrection of Christ. This was the truth on which he built his life. It meant his life had purpose: that there really is a God and to live for Him on earth means something after all. It meant that others without Christ were destined to a judgment without a Savior and it motivated him to tell them of the “Good News” of Jesus Christ. It helped him to deal with his own sins when he was tempted knowing that Christ was risen and coming again, and as this letter testifies, it enabled him to be joyful, and peaceful, and content, and happy in every circumstance of life, even in jail, separated from friends, and forgotten by friends.

He said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me; I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I am.” This peace of mind, this joy that he had in all of life, came from his belief in the resurrection of Christ. But not just the resurrection but all the truths that are associated with it. For Jesus Christ taught that he would come again and that when He came to end the world as we know it, that he would raise the dead to stand before Him. Paul looked forward to that. He said it is worth it to give up whatever people vainly think is important in life to follow Christ and to attain to the resurrection of the dead; to know him, to know that I have a future in him, to look forward to when there will be no more sin and sickness and death and sorrow, and raised from the dead in a new and glorious body, free from the decay and weakness of this flesh, he rejoiced always. He wanted them to understand that that was the source of his joy in jail; he wanted them to understand how to live like that themselves, so he said in verse 20: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into the conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to Himself.”

He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and has all power; and as much as people think that they control their own lives they really know that they control nothing. Deep down they know that, but He controls everything and is bringing it to the completion when all will stand before Him and bow the knee to Him as Lord and face the consequences of their lives; for He is almighty. It is this great truth that Christ is coming and will raise the dead, that Paul wanted the Philippians to understand and quit grumbling and complaining. He said do all things without grumbling and complaining. Do all things without disputing. Quit making mountains out of molehills and molehills into mountains. Get the big picture: what is this universe about? What is time about? What is history about? And he said it is about Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, who has come and humbled himself to suffer as a man and atone for the sins of men and bring them to glory; bring them to eternal life.

And it is this truth Paul said and taught men, that enables them to live on earth with joy in every and any circumstance; to find meaning in life and its trials, and to become a person who is like Jesus Christ in your character: that loves God with all you heart and loves your neighbor as yourself; and becomes a person that is part of a solution to this world instead of part of the problem.

Last week several of you asked me questions about the resurrection of the dead. What will our body be like, we who believe in Christ when we are raised from the dead? What will it be like to live in this New Heaven and this New Earth which will come when he comes? So this morning I want to bring out a few answers, hopefully, as best I know anyway, of some of the questions you asked me. The main question is this of which there are four or five parts I will bring to you this morning: The main question is this, when Jesus Christ returns and makes all things new, what will it be like to live in the new heavens and new earth in our new resurrected bodies?

Now the bible doesn't tell us everything about that, but it does tell us some things, and the first thing that it tells us is this: that Jesus taught that when he returns the world will end and that he will gather all people who have ever lived, those who are living when He returns, those that are buried in the ground or eaten by the fishes of the sea, they will be gathered before Him in resurrected bodies for the final judgment of God where all will give account for their lives. And he taught that all those that loved Him in this life and rested their hope of mercy before God on His work for them, will stand before Him with a resurrected body and enter into a new life in a new heaven and a new earth; to live with Him in joy with an immortal body that will never die or decay, with no more sin in the soul or the thoughts or feelings; that it will be a place of the resurrected body, where we live in the presence of God forever and together with all those who love Jesus Christ.

Those who rejected Him he said in Matthew 25 will be raised from the dead as well. Those who would not submit to Him as Lord in this life and make themselves right with God and live for God instead of themselves; they will also be raised from the dead. They will hear these words from Him: depart from me ye who practice evil into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and His angel. Those are the words of Jesus Christ, not some flaming preacher that shouts at the top of his lungs. They are the truth. There will be that occurrence on that day and all those who refused to follow Him on this earth will experience His wrath.

So, as you sit here today which one are you? Which group will you go into? For as sure as you are sitting here it is as real that Christ is coming personally on the clouds of heaven to destroy this earth by fire and to make a new heaven and new earth which only righteousness dwells. You will stand before Him and give an account for how you lived and whether you love Him and whether you followed Him, or you just lived for yourself.

The second thing that we need to understand about the resurrection of the dead is that at the same time of Christ return the apostle Peter taught that Jesus would destroy the world. That is would not be destroyed until then. That He would destroy the world by fire as we know it and re-create the starry heavens that we see and the earth that we live on and make a new universe in which there is no sin and death and sorrow and suffering and tears and evil.

Turn with me to 2 Peter 3 if you have your bible. Peter makes it very clear what will happen on that day. He says in verse 10 about the Lord's second coming:

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Since all these things will be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,

because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him, (that means when He comes), to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.”

And then he explained that these things are hard to understand; that Paul wrote about them; and they are hard to understand at times. Many people distort them, Peter says in this verse. They distort about the coming of Christ and what will really happen, but the message is simple: Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, is alive and as sure as He rose from the dead He is coming again. He has power to subject all things to Himself as Lord. When He comes He will destroy the universe He created by the word of His mouth with fire, and He will raise the dead to stand before Him. That is very simple.

Do you believe this? Do you believe this will really happen? Most people in the world today do not believe this. They may even look upon Christ as a great teacher and prophet, but they don't like this idea of God's judgment upon their lives and upon their sins. They don't like the idea that there will be people in heaven and people in hell, and yet these are the very words of Christ and His apostles. It is what they taught. It is the true reality that is behind the scenes of this life. If you let the scenes of this life be your god and blind you to the truths that Christ taught, you will suffer for it. But if by faith, you look through the scenes of this life and look into the empty tomb of Christ and believe He is not there because He is risen and He is coming, and trust in Him for your future, you shall be one of those who enter a new heaven and a new earth where only righteousness dwells. You will be thankful even more for Him than you are now.

What do you believe? What difference does it make in your life when you think about what you are going to do; what you are going not to do; that Christ is alive and coming again?

Well third: this new heaven and new earth refers to all created things. Things in the starry heavens and the universe that we explore with Hubble telescopes, as well as things upon the earth; as this creation is cursed by God after Adam broke God's law and sinned against Him, so Jesus Christ who is called the last Adam, will make all things new. He will destroy this fallen world and eradicate it from sin and weakness, and he will make all things new again in which there is nothing wrong, nothing sinful, no death, no decay, no reason for tears. This means that believers will live in a new creation beyond the earthly paradise of Eden where Adam and Eve lived with all of the wonderful plants and animals that God first created. No more thorns and thistles in the ground. They will explore and enjoy in their resurrected body this universe with minds that are no more clouded by ignorance and sin, full power of mind and body like Christ had after his resurrection.

I still do not understand all of that but I know this: when the doors were locked, Christ in his glorified body of flesh appeared through the doors to them. There are things that we do not fully understand: that eyes have not seen and ear has not heard all that God has prepared for those who love Him. But the powers of mind and body in the resurrected body are beyond our wildest dreams. And to explore with full understanding the rejuvenated universe, and to see the earth without all the decay and death around us, will bring joy and delight to us every day with every new discovery of God's greatness and power and goodness to us.

I believe that we will live in perfect harmony together. That we will enjoy, I believe, even the animals living in perfect harmony together. We will enjoy the presence and kindness of God face to face as Adam and Eve walked in the cool of the day in the Garden of Eden with Him. We will see Him and we will see in His eyes the mercy and grace and love that brought us to himself in His fullest measure. And each day will be a day where we discover more of His great kindness and goodness that thrills our hearts and counts us thankful to be in His presence eternally. There are many things that are hard to understand about this, but we will sing with voices from the heart, our thanksgiving to Him, knowing that it brings Him pleasure and joy. And as we sing those great hymns and songs of praise to Him it will bring our hearts to fullness with thanksgiving and joy as we delight to give Him the honor and praise that He deserves.

There are many things that are hard for us to understand because we live on earth: a fallen world and those who do not believe in Christ think that the view of the new heaven and the new earth is silly and foolish, but it will not be silly when we all stand before God and see the truth with our own eyes and wish that we had listened to the words of Jesus Christ in earth. Do you believe this is going to happen? Do you think about it? Paul thought about it every single day! It was at the heart of his faith, not just the beginning of the forgiveness of sins, but the consummation of Christ's honor, glory and return when he would be raised from the dead free. Free of sin and weakness at last. Free to understand everything with his own mind and see the face of Christ. Do you yearn for this? The older I get the more I yearn for it. And if you are a believer in Christ today, He has promised that it is yours in the future. So, he wants us to live upon it today, to believe it today.

Fourth, the book of Revelations describes this blessed estate after the resurrection of the body in the most beautiful of terms, both relationally and physically. Relationally, Revelation 19 says: we will sit down with Jesus Christ and eat at the great supper of the Lamb, the great marriage supper of the Lamb and that figure of Him being our bridegroom and us being His bride whom He loves and cherishes and gave Himself for, as any husband should; that that wonderful figure will come to completion at the marriage supper of the Lamb when we sit before Him and experience the unfettered, infinite love of our bridegroom for our souls and see that He delights in blessing us with gifts of joy. That is just the beginning. That is the where relationally we shall see Him and be happy in His presence and love forever.

But not only that, physically we will live in a great city of joy together with Jesus Christ our King in the new Jerusalem described in the most glowing of images that we can imagine in Revelations 21. When David made Jerusalem it became the type or the symbol of where God lives: in the temple with his people all around him. And in the prophets, this Jerusalem that was destroyed because of its sin was promised to be destroyed to an even greater glory that she ever had. And the Jews in Jesus day were expecting Him to come and make Jerusalem like that. This great city where everything was pleasure and joy and luxury, but He didn't do that so they killed Him. But God promised to fulfill that promise of the Jerusalem to come. When we die we go to be in the heavenly Jerusalem, but when Christ comes physically, He will build a physical Jerusalem.

In Revelations 21:1, if you will turn there with me, we have a description of this New Jerusalem; and you need to understand that there are many symbols that are in the book of Revelations, for instance, this holy city, the New Jerusalem, is really the people of God. But they are also coming to live in a physical place.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.’

And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’”

Jesus Christ commanded John to write these words that are faithful and true for you to believe in Him and build your life upon, instead of wasting it upon yourself. And he calls us to believe this beautiful picture he draws in these last two chapters of the bible: what it will be like to live with God, raised from the dead ourselves, in a new creation that we have never experienced before. This New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven to the new earth is the Jerusalem above which every believing soul enters at the point of death. But when Christ returns in glory, body and soul will be reunited, and the heavenly Jerusalem comes down to the new earth as our eternal dwelling place in the recreation. Somehow, heaven and earth are united as the dwelling place of God’s people forever.

This city is described in the most glorious terms in Revelations 21: beautiful, as far as our imagination, as far as the materials that we know are precious on earth. It is the most beautiful picture that we could imagine as earthly beings. It has the brilliant glory of God’s presence shining through it all: God’s shining brightness and light: pure and good and righteous and holy. Its walls are made of crystal clear jasper, whatever that is, so that God’s light shines through everything. It is entered, this great city, by twelve gates. Each named for a tribe of Israel. Each guarded by an angel. Each a great pearl as a gate, each great pearl as a gate representing Jesus Christ as the pearl of great price: the only way to enter into the paradise of God. The city has twelve foundation stones in its wall: each a huge precious jewel. Inscribed upon each is one of the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, meaning that there are only twelve Apostles; that there were no more and shall be no more after their death in the first century. That means that all the truth that God has for us to know has been inscripturated by inspiration through these men to teach us what the bible means, Old Testament and New Testament.

This city is laid out like a perfect cube. Some people think that it was laid out this way because the Holy of Holies in the old temple, where the Ark of the Covenant was placed, where God would only be approached once a year by the High Priest to sprinkle blood upon the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat was a perfect cube. Only this cube is not just for high priests. It is for all who have loved Jesus Christ to enter into His presence. It is 1500 miles wide, 1500 miles long, and 1500 miles high. That is pretty big! It is amazing in its beauty. It is made of gold that is transparent and shines with the light of God within. Its streets are paved with gold for saints to walk upon into the presence of the Lamb. There is no temple in it because the Lord God himself and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has not need of the sun or the moon to shine upon it because the glory, and brightness, and purity of God illuminates it supernaturally. And its lamp, that shines the brightest, is the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for us. There is no night there, and the gates will never be closed, and all nations and races will

enter in and live in the presence of the Lamb forever in peace and joy. It is what every heart on earth hopes for.

Why do we think wars are fought? Why do we think people keep seeking pleasures or happiness? They are looking for something—they know not what. But God has put it in the heart of every soul to know that there is a God, to know something is not right in this world and their own heart. And they hope for something better—they just don't know what. This is what they hope for: to be restored to God, restored to each other, to live in love in life together. And coming from the throne of God in that place and the throne of the Lamb is the river of the water of life, clear as crystal is says in the middle of the street. This represents Jesus Christ as the water of life who said, "Come to me and drink and you will never thirst." It is the most wonderful picture that life is there forever; that we will quench our thirst in the love of Christ.

The tree of life is on both sides of the rivers, somehow, and it bears twelve kinds of the fruit each month of the year, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. It is the most wonderful paradise, the most glorious existence without sadness or evil or sin: a life of total joy. In Revelations 22:3-5 it says, "There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and its bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; they will no longer need to have the light of the lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever."

This is what Paul thought about in jail. He did not just think of the cross and how Jesus died for his sins. He didn't even just think of the resurrection. Having a full understanding of scripture, his mind raced through history from before the foundation of the world when God chose him in Christ, to that time in history when Christ came and accomplished his salvation upon the cross, to the resurrection of the tomb and its implications, to the future when no longer will he be sitting in jail separated from friends; impoverished, forgotten by friends, but that there was a day coming when that which he had been taken hold of by Christ, he himself would take hold of Him; and that he would enter into this new wonderful creation made possible by the Son of God. As he thought about that, jail wasn't so bad.

What if friends forgot him? Christ never would. What if he suffered physical ailments? He would be healed. What if he died in jail and was forgotten by men? He would never be forgotten by God the Son who would usher him into this glorious city of light. That helped Paul. That helped him to quit putting his hope in the idols of this world: comfort, the obsessive seeking of pleasures of this life for meaning and happiness, the hopeless pursuit of putting our very soul into the work we do as if that is all we are, of making life what we possess and who loves us and who hates us. No, he saw that he had been given a gift and that he had a future. Therefore, he was joyful in jail and could bare a Christian witness to each soldier chained to him, to each person that visited him; that there is a God and that Christ is risen, and that there is truth. And to build your life upon this truth brings a peace that passes understanding, a joy that cannot be quenched by the sorrows of this world, and brings hope that this God who is in control of everything has a purpose of being in jail. And one day, he will understand perfectly.

He wanted the Philippians to understand this, to live like this, to believe everyday so that they could experience the same kind of joy that he had in jail even though they were outside and free. And so he said in verse 20: "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His

glory, by the exertion of the power he has even to subject all things to himself.” He wanted them to believe that and live on it no matter what has happened during every day.

Fifth, Paul wanted them to remember what God had saved them from as well. He had saved them from themselves and their own self rule, which was hopeless: a person without wisdom making decisions about their life. And also he wanted to save them from their sins condemnation before God, and he wanted them to understand what God had rescued them from. He had saved them not only from hell, but from themselves and the sins that destroyed their life and manufactured more unhappiness around them; that in following Christ, they had given up self centeredness and selfishness, and learned how to love even their enemies instead of hate them—that makes a difference.

In Revelations 21:7 Jesus Christ said through the apostle John: “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake of fire that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into the city, but only those whose names are written in the Lambs book of life.

Then he said in Revelations 22:14, “Blessed are those who washed their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.” Now these are the words of Jesus Christ. The city is for those who has loved Him and lived for Him. And outside one is left to one self. And so He said of them: let the one who does wrong still do wrong, and the one who is filthy be filthy still. And let the one who is righteous practice righteousness still, and the one who is holy still keep himself holy. Because when He comes, we will stay in the state in which we were found forever.

Paul wanted them to remember this, so that they would appreciate what Jesus did when He laid His hands upon pieces of wood and nailed to the tree. But even more grievous and suffering to Him was when God the Father at that moment of atonement poured out all of His hatred against all of our sins upon the Son of God. And He suffered in soul the absence of God and the rejection of God His Father for the first and only time in His life, as if He were the sinner himself. In that suffering, He made atonement for our sins. And not just atonement but purchases this eternal redemption which the rest of the bible describes. Do you love Him for that? Do you believe this is true? Is this the thing that is substantial and real in your heart and mind, in your relationship with God? Is this the future you want and love and desire that enables you to live on earth with faith and trust instead of bitterness and despair? You see, this is the gospel.

It is not just the forgiveness of sins and wiping the slate clean by the blood of Christ shed. It is not just the gift of righteousness which covers us. It is the transformation of all that was sin in us into the glory of the sons of God in the eternal new earth and new heavens. It is in believing that, that we can learn to put hatred and bitterness against others to death and love our enemies as God loved us when we were His enemies, and count the most precious things in this life as those things that are yet to come, instead of living and dying on whatever is happening now. This is where joy begins; thanksgiving, happiness begins: at the feet of Christ who has accomplished a full salvation for His people.

How do you respond to this message today? Yes, it is Easter, the day of resurrection, but do you really believe it? Is it a truth more true than other things you think are true? Do you live upon it? Do

you believe that Jesus Christ is really the Son of God and the only Savior for sinners? Do you really believe that He rose from the dead, and in believing that, that He is alive today, and you can know Him and live for His glory on earth, and know His presence and His help every moment? Do you really believe that this life is not what life is about, but that there is a future so happy and glorious that it is foolish and silly to waste our sadness and our bitterness and anger on this life? Do you really believe that?

If you do believe these things, an amazing thing will happen to your soul: as you believe them day by day you will find yourself being transformed from a person of worry and fear and bitterness and anger; a person who is attracted to the power of sinful pleasures in this world, to a person who is thankful and gracious to others and kind as God is kind to you; and cares more about others needs than your own. How wonderful that is in a marriage. How wonderful that is in a church. And what a difference it is from the way people live in the workplace-all because of Jesus Christ.

Does that make you want to live for Him? Does that make you want to be a husband that loves your wife as Christ has loved you: undeservedly, unconditionally, graciously, sacrificing all that he has for you? Does it make you want to be a wife that loves your husband in spite of his remaining sins because this beloved Savior has called you to bring love into his life instead of hate? Does it make you young people, believing that Christ is risen that He is coming, all of these things are true...does it give you a heart that wants to honor and love your parents and minister to them instead of complaining and grumble against them?

You see it makes a difference what you believe. And if you believe in Jesus Christ, and what he has done for sinners, and is yet preparing for them, it will make you live on earth with greater hope and have a peace that passes understanding of your circumstances and a joy that no one can take away. Think about these things, believe them, and keep on believing them every day, for they are true. It will give you joy on earth. It will cause you to persevere in transforming your life into something that brings honor to God: a Christ-likeness of love toward man, and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness, faithfulness and meekness and self control, the kind of things we would love to see in others toward us. We just don't like to do these things ourselves, but if Christ is your treasure, if He is that great pearl of great price through which you enter into the new heavens and the new earth and the new Jerusalem, you will change on earth to become like Him. Then your life will be worth something and make a difference.

So Paul said, "Our citizenship is in heaven, which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into a conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power He has even to subject all things to Himself." It was because of this that Paul repeated himself throughout the letter of the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord at all times."