The Christian Worker

Philippians 3:15-21

Introduction:

First – in order to be a Christian worker, you must be a Christian.

Second – in order to be a Christian worker, you must work, i.e. be doing something.

All good chiefs were once good Indians.

I. The Measure of the Christian Worker – 3:15-16

The measure is not according to man’s standard, but God’s. God’s standard is found in Christ:

* His holiness – He, alone, kept the Law in its entirety.
* His dedication – He did not stop short of the cross.
* His Love – He so loved the world – no exceptions.

A. Live Up to Your Aptitude – 3:15

1. We Must Remember

“Therefore let us, as many as are ﻿﻿mature, ﻿﻿have this mind;”

What is “this mind” τοῦτο φρονῶμεν (think this) “this” refers back to v.14:

“I press toward the goal for the prize of ﻿﻿the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

There is no good time to take your eyes off the prize. That is why we must remember where we are and take the initiative in the work of the church. Be leaders and teachers.

If we don’t remember,

2. God will Remind Us

“and if in anything you think otherwise (ἑτέρως, a different thing) ﻿﻿God will reveal even this to you.”

 a. God reminds us in the Word –

Much of the N. T. had been written by this time, but it had not been distributed very widely. So there was need for this Word (Philippians) which Paul had written to them and sent by Epaphroditus. They would receive copies of other Pauline Epistles before long. God would use that Word to help them remember.

b. God reminds in the woodshed –

Hebrews 12 is the best of God’s “woodshed” chapters. v. 6 – “For ﻿﻿whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”

These learning experiences tend to get our attention.

B. Live Up to Your Attainment – 3:16

“Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already ﻿﻿attained, ﻿﻿let us walk ﻿﻿by the same ﻿﻿rule, [let us be of the same mind] (T.R).

Just as, no one is so mature that he can just coast the rest of the way, So also, no one is so immature that he cannot get started on the way.

If you are saved you have position with God. That is where you start, “Walk by the same rule” means to walk in line with the others; following the leaders - as long as they follow Christ.

II. The Model for the Christian Worker – 3:17-19

A. The Good Model – 3:17

1. Paul

“Brethren, ﻿﻿join in following my example,”

Paul calls them “brothers” as he does in v. 1 and 13. It denotes intimate, spiritual attachment, as well as his unity and equality with them.

Paul is not bragging when he says, “Follow my example.” He used to brag about his work in Judaism, but he found out that it was all rubbish. What he does now is only what Christ by His grace has worked through him.

2. Those who Follow Paul

“And note those who so walk, as ﻿﻿you have us for a pattern.”

Paul certainly intended that Timothy, Epaphroditus be among those who followed him. But there were others, right there in Philippi, and in Ephesus, and in Jerusalem, and in Rome, and in Twin Lakes Baptist Church. Follow them “As you have us (Paul) for a pattern”

B. Bad Models – 3:18-19

1. Their Profession – 3:18

“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* ﻿﻿the enemies of the cross of Christ:”

When Paul says, “I have told you often,” I believe that he is stating a fact. When he says, “I tell you even weeping,” I believe he is stating a fact.

There were many of these people and they distressed Paul. They are enemies of the cross of Christ. Of course, it is not the tree or the nails used to make the Cross; it is what the cross stands for that they are against. This opposition to the cross in Philippi is mostly Judaistic. They insisted on the keeping of the law, either to replace the cross or to complement it.

2. Their End – 3:19a

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“whose end *is* destruction” (perdition)

They are headed for spiritual, moral, as well as physical ruin. It may come in this life; it is certain to come in eternity, unless they, like Paul, turn to Christ in humble faith and receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

3. Their God – 3:19b

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“whose god *is their* belly,”

a. On the one hand:

This could refer to teachers who serve up false doctrine and dissention in churches as in Romans 16:17-18:

“Now I urge you, brethren, note those ﻿﻿who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and ﻿﻿avoid them. ﻿For those who are such do not serve our Lord ﻿﻿Jesus Christ, but ﻿﻿their own belly,”

b. On the other hand,

Food was involved in some of the false teaching:

1) The Judaizers taught that the O.T. dietary laws were to be followed. And

2) The heretics at Colossae caused Paul to warn that church, ﻿why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” ﻿which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? (Colossians 2:21-22)

Since it is Paul’s terminology and since they are both sin and harmful to the church, why not take it as both- spiritual and physical food and avoid both.

4. Their Shame – 3:19c

“and ﻿﻿*whose* glory *is* in their shame”

Paul seems to have in mind the Judaizers who gloried in circumcision. They gloried in the physical sign and ignored the spiritual significance as it related to the cross. Instead of giving glory to God these teachers heaped praise on themselves. Ironically they prided themselves in the things they should have been ashamed of. They even gloried in their proselytes:

Galatians 6.13

“they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast (glory) in your flesh.”

5. Their Mind – 3:19d

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“who set their mind on earthly things.”

God does not want us to ignore earthly things. After all, we live on the earth. But here Paul warned against depending on earthly things to gain merit with God.

III. The Motivation of the Christian – 3:20-21

A. The Challenge – 3:20

1. Our Citizenship – 3:20a

“For ﻿﻿our citizenship is in heaven,”

In 42 B.C. Antony and Octavian fought a battle against Cassius and Brutus. Octavian’s side won and Octavian, (later Augustus Caesar) in celebration, gave the city of Philippi the status of “Roman Colony.” This involved:

* Freedom from Scourging –
* Freedom from arrests (except in extreme cases)
* Right of appeal to Caesar.

Philippians were Citizens of Roman We are Citizens of Heaven

1. Rome was their native land. 1. Heaven is our native land

 They lived in Macedonia. We live in the USA.

2. Their names were on the roll in Rome. 2. Our names are on the roll in Heaven.

It was a gift. It was a gift

3. They dressed like Romans. 3. We dress like Heavenly people.

4. They spoke the language of Rome. 4. We speak the language of Heaven.

 Among ourselves, not to others.

5. They lived by the laws of Rome. 5. We live by the laws of Heaven.

 But, Rom 13 -

6. They enjoyed the protection of Rome. 6. We enjoy the protection of Heaven

Paul was a citizen of Rome and he used it for the glory of God. He was far more proud of his heavenly citizenship.

But for now, we are strangers and pilgrims on this earth. We are ambassadors of heaven (2 Cor. 5). We must not disgrace our homeland. The thought of that land and that King will influence our lives:

It will determine:

 What we say,

 Where we go,

 How we behave,

 What pleasures we allow,

 How we invest our talents and gifts,

 What we do with our money,

 How we treat each other,

 The amount of time we spend in worship, service, Bible study, prayer.

It will also show how true the next sentence is:

2. Our Savior – 3:20b

“We also ﻿﻿eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,”

The king is coming back – soon. He came the first time as the Lamb of God. He was crowned with thorns, mocked and nailed to a cross. He rose from the tomb and returned to His home bruised and battle-scarred, but victorious. He is coming back twice:

The first time, to take His church back (I Thess. 4:13-17; I Cor. 15:50-54). The second time: to put down all rebellion, deliver His chosen people, Israel and to set up His Kingdom and reign for 1,000 years on the earth.

B. Our Comfort – 3:21

1. He will Change our Lowly Body – 3:21a

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“who will transform our lowly body”

He created it to begin with, but it wasn’t lowly then; we messed it up, in Adam. He will transform it. It will not be thrown away but changed. Same body- new form, better form. That is why there must be a resurrection.

2. He will Conform it to His glorious Body – 3:21b

“it may be ﻿﻿conformed to His glorious body”

It will be like His body. In I Cor. 15 Paul tells of 7 changes that will take place in our bodies – all in the twinkling of an eye.

3. He will Conquer All Things – 3:21c

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“according to the working by which He is able even to ﻿﻿subdue all things to Himself.”

It’s as if Paul and the Holy Spirit heard your (and my) --

Question: How can that happen?

Answer: It’s Jesus. He created all things. By Him all things are held together.

Colossians 1:15-18

“He is able to subdue all things to Himself. Amen!”

Conclusion: