

**19 – whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.**

Now Paul continues with his description of those who are “playing religion” but who have never received the life-changing power of the Spirit, for their “religion” is for outward show or conformity to an outward “religious observance” while never having a genuine renewal of heart obtained through the exercise of true, saving faith in Yeshua.

*whose end is destruction* – While the goal to which such people hope to attain is God’s blessing, their attempt at gaining God’s favor through man-made “religion” has just the opposite reality. The true “destination” or “goal” (τέλος, *telos*) to which they are heading is that of destruction (ἀπώλεια, *apōleia*). While this Greek word can carry the sense of “complete destruction” or “annihilation,” Paul uses it to describe “total ruin” in the sense of receiving the complete opposite of what they think will be gained by their “exterior-religious masquerade.” Rather than gaining favor with God and eternal life with Him through their religious activities, they will be met with the awful and eternal wrath of the “three-times holy” God expressed in the eternal agony of hell.

Note Calvin’s description:

He adds this in order that the Philippians, appalled by the danger, may be so much the more carefully on their guard, that they may not involve themselves in the ruin of those persons. As, however, profligates of this description, by means of show and various artifices, frequently dazzle the eyes of the simple for a time, in such a manner that they are preferred even to the most eminent servants of Christ, the Apostle declares, with great confidence, that the glory with which they are now puffed up will be exchanged for ignominy.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the Scriptures make it clear that the future awaiting those who have no saving faith, is that of experiencing the eternal wrath of God’s infinite holiness. Note the following scriptures:

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting abhorrence. (Dan 12:2)

<sup>1</sup> Calvin, *Philippians*, p. 108

These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Matt 25:46)

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (Jn 4:24)

Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. (Jn 5:28–29)

While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. (1Thess 5:3)

These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. (2Thess 1:9–10)

... *whose god is their appetite* – Here Paul uses the word “appetite” as a metonymy, i.e., a figure of speech by which an associated attribute is used to identify a specific entity. The Greek word translated “appetite” is *κοιλία* (*koilia*) which carries the meaning “belly, stomach,” but was also used to describe the “seat of inward life, of feelings and desires.”<sup>1</sup> Whereas in our modern western thought, we often think of the “heart” as the place from which our feelings and desires come forth, in the ancient semitic culture, one’s feelings and desires proceed from the lower extremities.

Note also Paul’s use of the same metonymy in Romans:

Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. (Rom 16:18-19)

Thus, Paul is simply stating in his epistle to the Philippians, that

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1 BDAG, “κοιλία,” p. 550.

those who are simply “playing religion” rather than repenting of their sin and accepting God’s saving grace by faith in His Messiah Yeshua, are actually motivated by what pleases them and fulfills their own selfish desires. They seek to fulfill their own desires as though this is the very essence of serving God, for they believe “religion’s primary good” is to give them what they desire. Once again, the so-called “prosperity gospel” in our day is one of the modern versions of what Paul is here describing.

... and [whose] glory is in their shame – Here, once again, it appears that Paul is using the word “glory,” δόξα (*doxa*) as the opposite of what “glory” truly is, that is, he is contrasting the unbelieving “religious” person with the true spiritual fruit of one whose life is being transformed by the indwelling Spirit, having been “born again” through saving faith in Yeshua. In contrast to the glory of God which rests upon the true believer in Yeshua (cf. v. 21), the self-centered “glory” of man-made “religion” will ultimately result in utter shame when Yeshua proclaims, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matt 7:23, cp. Matt 25:41; Lk 13:27).

... who set their minds on earthly things. – Once again Paul uses the verb φρονέω (*phroneō*), as he does in 3:15, which describes not merely the act of “thinking” but rather that which is one’s ultimate desire and thus that to which one gives their primary focus. Moreover, Paul uses the same word to describe the “mind of Messiah” in 2:5–7, i.e., the very model of Yeshua Who “emptied Himself, taking on the form of a servant,” in order to fulfill the will of His Father to make atonement for all whom He would redeem unto eternal life with Him. As the hymn writer put it:

“May the mind of Christ, my Savior, live in me from day to day, by His love and power controlling all I do and say.”<sup>1</sup>

This description of the “religious unbeliever” should encourage each one of us to examine our own desires and efforts to live our lives to the glory of God and to seek His purpose for oneself as the primary and over-arching desire and goal in all aspects of our lives.

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1 From the hymn, “May the Mind of Christ My Savior,” written by Kate B. Wilkinson.

**20 – For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Messiah;**

*For our citizenship is in heaven* –The Greek word that stands behind the translation “citizenship” is the noun *πολίτευμα* (*politeuma*), which has as its base meaning “commonwealth,” and is found only here in the Apostolic Scriptures. It is cognate to the verb *πολιτεύομαι* (*politeuomai*), “to be a citizen,” etc.,<sup>1</sup> which Paul uses in 1:27, where he writes:

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ....

As noted in the commentary on that verse,<sup>2</sup> the phrase “conduct yourselves” could more specifically be understood to mean “to act as a citizen.” Philippi, a colony of Rome, was in Macedonia and was therefore removed geographically from the borders of Rome, yet had been awarded the status of *ius italicum* (“Italian law”), which was the highest legal privilege obtainable by any provincial municipality. Therefore the citizens of Philippi were equally citizens of Rome with the same rights and privileges of any Roman born in the imperial city.

Using this metaphor to describe the status of believers in Yeshua, Paul is reminding his readers and us that our “citizenship is in heaven.” In this admonition, Paul is helping us to lay hold of who we are in Yeshua, and what this means for our daily living upon this earth. As “citizens of heaven,” we have been given both an eternal and grand privilege as well as a responsibility to honor and reflect the King of Whose “country” we are citizens. Surely such a “citizenship” grants us tremendous privileges and blessings, but it also requires us to live as true citizens who not only are grateful for such a status but also seek to honor the King by Whose power our citizenship has been granted.

By emphasizing the fact that we who are “in Messiah” are citizens of heaven, Paul is not diminishing the reality that we are also citizens of the earthly realm in which we reside. So to the extent that human governments do not require of their citizens that which is contrary to God’s commandments, believers in Yeshua ought to live in obedience to the laws their government establishes.

Yet the primary point of Paul’s words here is that since we are ultimately and finally citizens of heaven, we are to live in such a way as

1 BDAG, “*πολιτεύομαι*,” p. 846. See comments on 1:27 above on p. 57.

2 See comments on 1:27 above on p. 57.

to obey and honor the Lord Who is the sovereign King of our heavenly abode. As Gordon Fee comments:

Paul is not herewith renouncing their common citizenship in the earthly “commonwealth” of Rome; on the contrary, that citizenship is what will make the present sentence ring the changes for the Philippians. Citizens of the Roman “commonwealth” they may well be, and proudly so; but the greater reality is that they are subjects of the heavenly “Lord” and “Savior,” Jesus Christ, and therefore their true “commonwealth” exists in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

...from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Messiah – It is in the heart of every true believer that they continue to anticipate, wait and long for, and have increased joy regarding the promised coming of Yeshua. Even as we daily strive to have our faith strengthened to serve Him, to rely upon Him, to honor Him, and to be living witnesses of His grace, so we who belong to Him must constantly be living in anticipation of His coming when we will see Him just as He is.

Paul’s language here emphasizes the “already” but “not yet” aspect of our salvation in Yeshua. We experience the “already” now, for by His grace and the indwelling Ruach HaKodesh, we are enabled to grow in becoming more and more like our Savior, to experience His presence with us as we grow in our practical understanding of who He is and what He has done for us.

Yet there is a “not yet” aspect to our faith and our walking in this world as those who have full assurance that He is coming as He promised. For though by faith we know His coming is sure and that one day we will see Him face-to-face, we still long for that day to come and for eternity to be ushered in. We can see now, here in v. 21, the motivation for the imperatives Paul gives us in v. 17 and the declaration in v. 18.

*Commands:*

- join together in following my (Paul’s) example
- keep your eyes on those who live as we do

*Reasons:*

- many walk as enemies of the cross
- our citizenship is in heaven

Surely the motivation Paul gives to us in this verse is that we are to

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Fee, *Philippians* in *NICNT*, p. 378.

continue becoming more and more who we truly are in Yeshua, and we do this through obedience to God's word as we aid one another through the example of our own obedience to God in all aspects of our lives. This emphasizes the importance of regular fellowship with other believers by which we encourage one another to remain strong in the faith, to serve and help one another, and to live with the anticipation of Yeshua's return.

Paul states that our anticipation of Yeshua's return ought to flow out of an "eager" expectation. The Greek word for "wait eagerly" is *ἀπεκδεχόμεαι* (*apekdexomai*), found five other times in Paul's epistles.

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. (Rom 8:19)

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Rom 8:23)

But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. (Rom 8:25)

so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, (1Cor 1:7)

For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. (Gal 5:5)

It is often the case for many who are believers in Yeshua, that when life is going along well without too many difficulties or concerns, the return of Yeshua receives less emphasis and anticipation. Given this general trend, it seems likely that God allows difficult times to come upon His people so that they reassess their desire for Yeshua's return and long for it all the more.

But the Scripture's emphasis upon the return of Yeshua ought all the more to cause us to make this wonderful truth a regular subject of our thoughts and meditations, and thereby to have a growing anticipation for His return. As John writes in his first epistle:

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope [fixed] on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1Jn 3:2–3)

**21 – 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.**

Having emphasized the “eager expectation” for the return of Yeshua in accordance with the promise of His return, Paul now reminds the Philippian believers and us, of the transformation that will take place for all who are His.

This transformation will change the “body of our humble state...” which translates the Greek phrase τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν. The key word is ταπεινῶσις (*tapeinōsis*), translated by the NASB as “humble state.” But what is it by which our body, the very creative work of God Himself, is labeled by Paul as in a “humble state”? The Greek word *tapeinōsis* can also be understood to mean “a state of humility.” So what is it that has caused the creation of God Himself, as He fashioned the human bodies of Adam and Chavah (Eve), to become “humiliated” or in a “state of humility?” It is, no doubt, the sin that entered the world, and that sin of Adam was passed on to all mankind, as Paul himself states in his epistle to the Romans.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned (*and the proof is that all sin.*) Rom 5:12

It is therefore the very reality of “death” that is passed on to all mankind as a result of Adam’s sin, that is overcome in an eternal way for all who are in Messiah Yeshua. Some may argue that even those who spend eternity in hell are still alive. In a physical sense that is true. However, the biblical definition of “death” also may encompass “spiritual death,” i.e., eternal separation from God, as we read in the Gospel of Matthew when Yeshua described the plight of the unbelievers on the day of judgment.

Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ (Matt 7:22–23)

Therefore, the transformation for all who are true believers in Yeshua, which Paul is teaching us here, is when mortal is transformed to be immortal, that is, when sin and death are taken

away and those who belong to Yeshua will live forever with Him, never again to struggle with the sinful nature nor to face death.

Paul makes this clear in 1Corinthians:

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. “O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” (1Cor 15:53–55, quoting Is 25:8 and Hos 13:14)

... *into conformity with the body of His glory* – Yeshua, the eternal Son of God, could never have been overcome by death since He is eternally holy without sin. His death upon the cross was allowed because He, as the incarnate One, submitted to death for the sake of all He would save by paying for the penalty they owed for their sin and rebellion against God. He proved His power over death by His resurrection on the third day following His execution.

Thus, the transformation of the human body of all believers at the time of Yeshua’s coming will not be “simply a superficial and outward change of form, but a complete change of inward nature and quality.”<sup>1</sup> We will be like Him, for we will see Him just as He is.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (1Jn 3:2)

... *by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself*. – Yeshua, the Creator of the World together with the Father and the Spirit, has all power in heaven and earth to bring about God’s all that God has ordained. Nothing can stand against Him. All things that exist in this universe are subject to His power and purposes, and thus it is by His omnipotent power and majesty that all those for whom He has died and whom God has brought into His family by His grace through faith, will be transformed to live forever in the beauty and glory of God and thus forever to extol His infinite power, love, and glory.

Here we see yet another clear statement of the Scriptures that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are infinitely one.

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1 Peter Thomas O’Brien, “Philippians” in *NIGTC* (Eerdmans, 1991), p. 465.