

Place: Lurgan Baptist 29:3:2015

Reading: Philippians 3:17-21

THE JOURNEY TO JOY

14. WHAT A DAY GLORIOUS DAY THAT WILL BE

In the year 1899, two famous men died in the U.S.A. The one was an unbeliever who had made a career of debunking the Bible and arguing against Christian doctrines. The other was a Christian. Colonel Ingersoll, after whom the famous Ingersoll lectures on immortality at Harvard University are named was an unbeliever. He died suddenly, his death coming as a tremendous shock to his family. Indeed his body was kept in the home for several days because Ingersoll's wife could not bear to part with it, and it was finally removed only because the corpse was decaying and the health of the family required it. At length the remains were cremated, and the display at the crematorium was so dismal that some of the scene was even picked up by the newspapers and communicated to the nation at large. Ingersoll had used his great intellect to deny the resurrection. When death came there was no hope, and his departure was received by his friends as an uncompensated tragedy.

In the same year the evangelist D.L. Moody died and his death was triumphant for himself and his family. Moody had been declining for some time, and his family had taken turns to be with him. On the morning

of his death his son, who was standing by the bedside, heard him exclaim, “ *Earth is receding, heaven is opening, God is calling I must go.*” “ *You're dreaming, father,*” the son said. Moody answered, “ *No, Will, this is no dream. I have been within the gates. I have seen the children's faces.*” For a while it seemed as if Moody was reviving, but he began to slip away again. He said “ *Is this death ? This is not bad, there is no valley. This is bliss. This is glorious.*” By this time his daughter was present and she began to pray for his recovery. He said, “ *No, no Emma, don't pray for that. God is calling. This is my coronation day. I have been looking forward to it.*” Shortly after that Moody was received into heaven. At the funeral the family and friends joined in a joyful service. They spoke. They sang hymns. There was that note of victory.

My is it not wonderful to realise that as we go out to the cemeteries to look at the graves of our parents, sisters, brothers, loved ones, friends, we hear the Lord Jesus say, “ *because I live ye shall live also.*”

(Jn 14:19) Paul is thinking about “ *that day,*” in this paragraph of Scripture. “ *What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see.*” The sad thing is this. Not all who sing it will share in it. For did you notice that Paul is “ *weeping,*” here ? How strange in a letter filled with joy to find Paul weeping. Is he weeping over himself and his difficult circumstances ? No. He is man with a *Single Mind* (Ch 1) and his circumstances do not discourage him. Is he weeping because of what some of the Roman Christians are doing to him ? No. He is man with a *Submissive Mind* (Ch 2) and will not permit people to rob him of joy.

Why then is Paul weeping ? Because he is a man with a *Spiritual Mind* (Ch 3) and he's heart-broken over the way some professing Christians are living, people who mind “ *earthly things.*” Now whether these people were corrupt Judaizers or Greek teachers who taught that in Christianity all law was gone and they could live as they pleased is of little significance. They professed to be Christians, but they were not the real thing. They looked genuine, but they lacked reality. They posed as friends but practised as foes. In sharp contrast to these *False Brethren*, Paul speaks of *Faithful Brethren* when he says, “ *For our conversation is in heaven*,” the false brethren were heading for destruction, the true believers were heading for salvation, one was worshipping their fleshly appetites, the other was looking for the transformation of the body. One group were “ *earthly minded,*” the other was “ *spiritually minded.*” My what a solemn day that will be when false believers will end up in hell, what a sweet day that will be when faithful believers will end up in heaven. You see, Paul speaks here of,

(1) A CONSISTENCY WE NEED TO MAINTAIN

He says, “ *For our conversation is in heaven,*” (3:20) This could be translated, “ *Our citizenship is in heaven,*” Or as Moffatt renders it, “ *a colony of heaven.*” The old English word “ *conversation,*” means walk and not talk. The emphasis here is not on language but on lifestyle. Paul is saying,

(a) OUR DIGNITY IS GLORIOUS:

“ *Our citizenship is in heaven*,” Or “ *Our homeland is in heaven.*” We are a colony of heaven on earth. Now this would have special meaning to the people at Philippi, because Philippi do you recall was a Roman colony. (Acts 16:12) That meant that it was “ *a Rome away from Rome.*” You see, the Emperor organized “ *colonies,*” by ordering Roman citizens especially retired military people to live in selected areas so there would be strong pro-Roman cities in these strategic areas. Though living on foreign soil, the citizens were expected to loyal to Rome, to obey the laws of Rome, and to give honour to the Roman Emperor. In return they were given certain political privileges, one of which was exemption from taxes. So Philippi was a little piece of Rome in the midst of Greek culture. In these Roman colonies the people never forgot that they were Romans, they spoke the Latin language, wore the Latin dress, and insisted on being stubbornly Roman however far they might be from Rome.

Now says, Paul “ *Just as you are a little colony of Rome in Philippi, never forget that you are a little colony of heaven on earth.*” We are here, and, at the same time we are there. We are in two places at once. A young woman completing a job application came to the line asking for her permanent address. She began to list her street and house number but paused for a moment. Then, with a smile she wrote one word, “ *heaven.*” A one time famous China medical missionary, Dr. Duncan Main, was told that the Chinese equivalent of his name was “ *Dr. Apricot, of Heaven Below.*” My that is applicable to every

Christian, for “ *our citizenship is in heaven.*” You see, *our names are on heaven's record.* When a baby was born in Philippi, it was important that its name be registered on the legal records. When a lost sinner trusts Christ and becomes a citizen of heaven his name is registered on heaven's record. (4:3) We **also speak heaven's language.** Those who mind “ *earthly things,*” talk about earthly things, after all what comes out of the mouth reveals what is in the heart.

(Matt 12:34-37) But the citizens of heaven understand spiritual things and enjoy sharing them with one another. (Eph 4:29) My we **obey heaven's laws, we are loyal to heaven's cause and we are looking for heaven's Lord.** Do you recognise your position this ? Do you realise that your dignity is glorious ? Do you see that you are a “ *little bit of heaven,*” on earth ? (a) And therefore,

(b) OUR DUTY IS OBVIOUS:

Paul has already referred to it when in (1:27) he said, “ *Only let your conversation (your citizen behaviour) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.*” In terms of this context this means we are to be,

1.Examples not Excuses:

Paul is not being egotistical when he says in (3:17) “ *Be followers together of me*,” The word “ *ensample,*” is the Greek word **tapor**, and it refers to an impression, or mark that is made by a blow. It was the impression made by a signet ring, or a seal. Paul is saying that he has left his mark for others to follow. If

we're going to choose a role model or hero, the apostle Paul would be an excellent choice, because of the example he has left or the impression he has made. Sam Gordon in his book on Philipians says, “ *The reason why Paul was able to give them such a gentle nudge was because of his closeness to Christ, his communion with Christ, and his consecration to Christ.*” Oh, the power of a godly example. Do you recall the words of H. W. Longfellow ?

**Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And, departing leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time**

**Footprints that perhaps another
Sailing o'er life's solemn main
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother
Seeing, shall take heart again**

2.Faithful not False:

For Paul brokenhearted as he was speaks of those in (3:18) like this, “ *For many walk*,” they are spiritual masquerades. “ *Wolves in sheep's clothing,*” is how our Lord described them. (Matt 7:15) And what damage such people do to the Lord's name and cause.

3.Spiritual not Sensual:

Do you see what Paul says in (3:19) ? Their principal concern was their belly, that is, all sensual indulgences. They had and eat, drink, and be merry

lifestyle. But Paul reminds us that we are citizens of heaven and our conduct must match our citizenship. Think about your conduct. Does it match your citizenship ? Are you unshakeably committed to Christ, even in those remote areas of your life where no one else sees you ? How about in the everyday affairs where life is just normal and routine ? Can the waitress at the restaurant tell by the way you treat here that you are a citizen of heaven ? Can the people on the motorway tell a difference by the way you drive ? Does your conduct match your citizenship behind the doors of your home ? *Whose morals do you observe when you're on a business trip away from home ? How do you treat others on the phone or at work ?* Several years ago there was stationed in the city of Karlsruhe, Germany about eleven thousand Americans who were connected with the army.

Soldiers had brought their families and there were little American villages on the slopes of the Black Forest. Daily they would have listened to the American Forces Network Radio Station and those soldiers and wives and families were repeatedly urged to live exemplary lives, they were warned against the soldier's sins of wine, women and winnings. The reason given was always the same, "*Don't forget you represent the United States of America.*" My do you forget at times where your citizenship lies ? Yes, our dignity is glorious, but our duty is obvious. (1)

(2) A CERTAINTY WE NEED TO RETAIN

And the certainty or truth is this. Jesus Christ is

coming again. I heard about a Sunday School teacher who was teaching her class about the wonders of heaven. When she finished she asked, "*Class, how many of you want to go to heaven ?*" All the children raised their hand except Billy. The teacher asked him, "*Billy, don't you want to go to heaven ?*" He replied, "*Yes, I'd like to but my mum told me to come straight home after church.*" My when it comes to heaven do you not think that our hearts should beat faster with every passing day ? His advent is imminent.

**Signs of the times are everywhere
There's a brand new feeling in the air
Just turn your eyes upon the eastern sky
Life up your heads redemption draweth nigh**

Do you see how Paul puts it ? "*From whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.*" (3:20) Another translation puts it like this, "*We are looking forward to His return.*" That refers to eager, earnest expectation, fervent desire. The expectation of the Lord's personal and imminent return gave joy and power to the early believers. Can you imagine that as they lay in prison, suffering and tormented, often near death, they looked for His coming and thought that perhaps in an instant and without warning the Lord Jesus would appear and call them home. Can you picture them as they entered the arena to face the lions ? Or as they looked up in their cell to face the executioner, many would have thought with joy in their hearts, "*perhaps this the moment in which Christ will return and even now before the beasts can spring or the ax can fall, I shall be caught up to meet Him. And*

the world will find this cell or this arena empty.” My ... is this not the Christian’s expectation ? “ We look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.” Now this truth has,

(a) A SCRIPTURAL BASIS:

We are told today by many, some of them within the church, that belief in the return of Jesus Christ is a preposterous doctrine or at best a “*pie in the sky,*” philosophy. But it is hard to see how any professing Christian can dismiss it. Of the 929 chapters in the Old Testament, there are 1,845 references to the return of Christ. Of the 260 chapters in the New Testament, there are 318 references, or 1 out of every 30 verses. For every prophecy on the first coming of Christ, there are eight on His second coming. My the return of Jesus Christ is mentioned in every one of the New Testament books except Galatians, which was written with a particular problem in view, and the very short books as 2nd and 3rd John and Philemon. The Saviour Himself spoke often of His return. He said, “*If I go ... I will come again.*” (Jn 14:3) Paul’s letters are also full of the doctrine. To the believers at Thessalonica he wrote, “*For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with shout,*” (1 Thes 4:16-17)

Peter called the return of Jesus Christ our “*living hope.*” (1 Pet 1:3) Paul called it our “*blessed hope.*” (Titus 2:13) And John wrote, “*Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him.*” (Rev 1:7) And here Paul says, “*We look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.*” My it’s the picture of a child with

his nose pressed against the window pane looking for daddy to come home. Is this your attitude ? Is your eye strained for the Saviours return ? (a)

(b) A PRACTICAL IMPORT:

Indeed as Augustine has said, “*The date has been concealed so that we might live each day as though the following might usher it in.*” Dr. Paul Rees tells how that some years ago he was motoring with a friend over a long, long road in central India. For miles on end the tree’s that bordered the road bore a special mark. His friend explained that this was part of an extensive preparation that was being made for the arrival of the Maharajah of the province. A Princely visit was soon to take place and this was part of the recognition that was accorded to him ! My are you so living that when He appears you may be unashamed before Him at His coming ? The Christians of the first century anticipated that His coming would be in their lifetime. We too hope that He will come in our generation. Never before have there been so many signs to herald His coming. The rebirth of the state of Israel, the coming together of the nations of Europe, a permissive society, the spread of false religion, apostasy in Christendom, and lukewarm-ness within the church.

My it is the growing conviction of many that the sandglass of prophecy is running out and that the return of Christ is near. Yet strangely enough never has such looseness in Christian living prevailed. How is this reconciled with the expectation of the Lord’s

return ? Is it that much of our belief in the Second Coming is superficial ? That we do not sincerely believe that He is coming soon ? Whatever the answer, one thing is sure looseness in Christian living is incompatible with the hope of our Lord's return. John tells us that this “ *blessed hope,*” has a purifying influence on all who cherish it. “ *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.*” (1 Jn 3:3) Tell me, what impact has the hope of the Lord's return made on your life ? Has it motivated you to be more like Him, to live more with Him, to labour more for Him ? (a) (b)

(c) A CENTRAL FIGURE:

Do you not catch some sense of Paul's longing to see Christ by the fact that he gives Him his full title, “ *the Lord Jesus Christ.*” (3:20) My He is the central figure. Its Christ who stands as the supremely attractive element in the Christians hope. I tell you we look forward to many things, deliverance from sin, meeting the saints of bygone days, the glories of heaven, reunion with our loved ones who have died in Christ. But above all “ *We shall his lovely face, some bright, golden morning.*” My is this your prospect ? You see, He is not only “ *A Saviour,*” (Lk 2:11) and as here “ *The Saviour,*” (3:20) the only one, “ *for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:12) But can you go further and say, “ *My Saviour,*” ? (Lk 1:47) Or would His return find you unprepared to meet Him ? Yes, there is (1) (2)

(3) A CONFORMITY WE NEED TO EXPLAIN

You see, Paul was excited not only about the return of Christ, but also about the redemption of the body. He reminded the Philippians that when Christ returns, He will “ *transform our lowly bodies.*” (3:20)

(a) " Our lowly body," That's THE PRESENT:

Or “ *The body of our humiliation,*” now there is nothing vile in the organic construction of our bodies. (Ps 139:14) But our bodies have been humiliated by sin, and therefore are subject to disease and death. This body only stands the wear and tear of seventy odd years. (Ps 90:10) I mean our earthly bodies are limited. When people ask us how we are doing as we grow older, we answer, “ **Fine,**” but it is a relative answer.

**There's nothing whatever the matter with me
I'm just as healthy as I can be
I have arthritis in both my knees,
And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze.
My pulse is weak and my blood is thin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.**

**Arch supports I have for my feet,
Or I wouldn't be able to be on the street
And every morning I'm a sight
Sleep is denied me, night after night
My memory is failing, my heart's in a spin,
I'm practically living on aspirin
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in**

**The moral is, as this tale I unfold,
That for you and for me, who are growing old,
It's better to say, 'I'm fine,' with a grin,
Then to let them know the shape we're in**

(b) “ His glorious body,” That’s THE PROSPECT:

From the time He emerged from *the Womb*, the Lord Jesus had a perfect body, free from any taint of sin, free from any disease or deformity. From the time He emerged from *the Tomb*, the Lord Jesus had a glorified body. It could appear or disappear, it could come and go untrammelled by space, matter, or time. Do you recall the body of His Transfiguration splendour, the body of His Resurrection wonder, the body of His Ascension beauty, what glory. And my body is to be something, somehow, like that. Amazing. No more aching brows, no more swollen limbs, no more bad backs. no more dim eyes. “ *His glorious body,*” no more sickness, sorrow, or pain. John says, “ *We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him.*”

(1 Jn 3:2) I heard the story of a country yokel and his son who went to the big city for the first time. They had never been off the farm before and were amazed at the things they saw.

They were standing in the lobby of a down town building when they saw this old woman with a walking aid stepping into the elevator. The door closed and in a few minutes the door opened again and out stepped this beautiful girl. The farmer turned to his boy and said, “ *Son wait right here, I’m going home to get your Mama and run her through that thing.*” My

one of these days we are going to be changed. We will be given a real body, a redeemed body, a recognisable body. But how can we be so sure this will happen ?

(c) “ According Himself, ” That’s THE POWER:

The world looks at the cold corpse in the coffin and says, “ *That’s the end.*” Paul looks at the living Christ and says, “ *He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.* ” Unbelief looks at the corpse, faith looks at the Creator. Unbelief see’s a dead body in a coffin, faith sees a risen, triumphant, omnipotent Christ.

“ *Able to save,*” says (Heb Ch 7) “ *Able to succour,*” says (Heb Ch 2) “ *Able to subdue,*” says (Phil Ch 3) The word “ *subdue,*” means, “ *to set in array, to put all things in place.*” How comforting it will be to see the Returning Christ bring order out of chaos in this world, and fashion us “ *unto His glorious body.*”

(1) (2) (3)

What a day, glorious day that will be. Lord Shaftesbury the great English social reformer, said near the end of his life, “ *I do not think that in the last 40 years I have lived one conscious hour that was not influenced by the thought of our Lord’s return.*” I think of a clock in Strasburg, Germany and around the dial of the clock are these words. “ **One of these hours our Lord is coming.**” Do you believe that ? Are you living in the light of that ?