

July's Teaching Theme: The Way of the Exile

讲员 Speaker: Linghui Peter Tian

题目 Topic: We are citizens of heaven

经文 Scripture: Philippians 3:17-21

Monthly Idea: This month's teaching theme is a continuation from last month with "Exile" and "the Way of the Exile." The human condition is one of exile as we live in homes that are characterized by brokenness and situated in a world of brokenness. "Exile" also becomes a key identity marker for the Christian, as we give our allegiance to another Kingdom - the Kingdom of God. As "exiles" allegiant to another King and the ethics of that Kingdom, this calls us to be people of consistent love and justice. We are to seek the welfare of our cities but never give allegiance to the nations.

To continue this journey we are going to look at Paul's message in the book of Philippians. The whole book shapes the mindset of the Christian living in the "Way of the Exile," particularly in areas where the idol of "nationalism" has a stronghold (much like our current state in the United States.) The Christian is an "exile" in the sense that they are "citizens of heaven" and thus their primary allegiance is to King Jesus. This shapes the way they live and interact with the powers of this world.

Resources:

Video: [Bible Project Philippians](#) (9:13) [English]

Vidoe: [Bible Project Philippians](#) (8:44) [Chinese]

If you don't watch the video as a group make sure you watch it as a leader for context for discussion questions.

Important Notes (from Pastor Will):

- "Heaven" shouldn't be read as the modern concept of "somewhere we go in the sky" but "heaven" as the fullness of the Kingdom of God. Look in verse 20, "we eagerly await a Savior *from there*..." fitting in with the idea of the Biblical narrative that Jesus is coming to us to establish the Kingdom of God ("The New Heaven & New Earth"). This should help shape how we understand being "citizens of Heaven." (Recall "Heaven & Earth" were united in the beginning and will be united again when Jesus returns)
- 4:1 "Therefore" (because of this reality of being citizens of heaven not of nations of the earth primarily) you must "stand firm in the Lord," living by the ethics of the Kingdom of God, not the nations of the world.
- Also, it is important to note the nature of suffering for the follower of Jesus. We are not exempt from suffering but may even participate in it more as we strive for the "upward call of Christ Jesus"

- “Maturity” is being transformed into the image of Jesus, which Paul indicates is a process that we continually strive in as we await the Kingdom of God in it’s full. The process of becoming “spiritually mature” is a race. Paul recognizes that he hasn’t and can’t reach full “perfection” until Jesus returns and is honest with his imperfections, yet his imperfections do not keep him from striving toward the goal of “spiritual maturity,” or “perfection.” This balance is the attitude of the Christian.
- “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead” is a fitting word picture of the runner, running a race with every fiber focused on the finish line, refusing to look back over her shoulder. This is the only place the word “straining” (ἐπικτεινόμεαι) occurs in the NT - meaning to “exert oneself to the uttermost.” (BDAG)
- It is important that we don’t over-spiritualize our understanding of “heaven” and having our minds set on “heaven.” If “heaven” is to be understood as the Kingdom of God that Jesus claimed was “here now” and will be fully here when he returns, our mindset on “heaven,” must also carry the tensions of the present and future. Thus we look forward with an enduring hope that Jesus will return and make all things right while simultaneous in our prayers and actions creating space that look like “heaven on earth,” (Recall the Lord’s Prayer - “your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”)
- The “enemies of the cross” are those who are self-indulgent, unwilling to walk in the sufferings of Christ. The self-indulgence of these people expresses itself in their appetites, their pride, and their mind: their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.
- Remember, the “third way” holds tension as does here. Yes, we are allegiant to King Jesus alone and thus we reject the idol of nationalism, as the people of God are transnational. This, however, does not mean we can’t love our country or that we shouldn’t “seek its welfare” as Jeremiah (29) says (even though political means), but that we do these things as “exiles” from the Kingdom of God. (Remember back to the story of Daniel and his friends under Babylon).

Discussion Questions:

- (1) Read Philippians 3:10-4:1 together. What observations do you make and what stands out to you? Summarize the passage.
- (2) 当时腓立比的信徒在哪些方面出现了问题？这对我们今天的信仰、生活、和服侍有哪些提醒？What were the problems for the church of Philippians? What are the lessons/cautions from the Philippians to our beliefs, life, and services today?
- (3) 如何理解保罗在13节所强调的“忘记背后”，这对我们正确看待自己过往（失败/成功）的经历有哪些帮助？How to understand Paul's saying in Philippians 3:13 "forgetting the past"? How does this verse help us to face our past (failure/success) correctly?

- (4) 如何理解保罗所讲的"许多人行事是基督十字架的仇敌"? 这对我们的信仰生活有哪些启发? How to understand Paul's "many live as enemies of the cross of Christ" in Philippians 3:18? Any insights into our life in faith?
- (5) 如何理解保罗在20节所强调"我们却是天上的国民, 并且等候救主"的"等候"二字? 作为天国子民, 你是如何在生活中"竭力追求"的, 或者你将会怎么做? How to understand the word "await" that Paul emphasized in Philippians 3:20 "our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ"? As a citizen of heaven, how do you "press on" in life? What should you do?

Sermon Summary (Elder Yin):

天国的子民

☞ 亡后神要带我们回家进了应许之地。因为我们是天国的子民。

保罗批评非利比教会。

非利比教会防备1, 犹太主义的基督徒。2, 迷失方式受希腊文化影响(基督教诺斯蒂主义)物质主义, 和禁欲派和纵欲派。3, 服事中也出现了问题(结党, 自私)

以上就是被掳, 思想行为的被掳。需要从流放中回归

一, 天国子民应效仿保罗的榜样, 3:17:效法我。效法他: 忘记背后努力面前。忘记=忽略不重视。不重视他的背景。好人, 学位, 出生。背景使他离开神。直到大马士革才真知道神。洛加说放下自己理性时才能真正来到神面前。一定要放下自己才能认识自己的罪需要神。

正在逼迫教会, 不是忘记而是成为我们的动力, 永恒价值更重要。虽然我们有犯罪的过去。今天我们得救的人, 不要让魔鬼控告得逞

二, 天国的子民应防备十字架的仇敌, 非3:18-19。

流泪=忧伤悲叹痛惜哀痛。

神的子民.行为如何? 十字架显示人的堕落和人来到上帝面前唯一方试是信, 十字架显示上帝的绝对公.义圣洁.上帝无私的爱。

十字架的仇敌, 纵欲主义和犹太主义者。看, 想无意义的事情, 关心地上的事, 关心外在的事, 分裂为了小事, 相互攻击, 不要低估撒旦的力量。无论出发点如何好, 但使人跌倒和分裂就是不从神那里来的。为软弱而放弃一下自己觉得正确的理念, 象保罗在吃肉事件上表现。撒旦就是在我们不知不觉的时候攻击我们。

三, 应该热情等耶稣基督再来。

世界是暂时的。目光将来, 注目将来, 对现在不再在乎了。这里3:20等候意指: .在世上等神来的时候, 为神工作。忘记背后努力面前。徒26:19。神要求保罗所做的。等待候和神子民的责任不冲突。大使命和大戒命是我们要做的。保罗经历这么多苦但还是竭力为神事奉。活出上帝对他的呼召

总结

We are citizens of heaven

Peter tian

Philippians 3:17-22

Pastor Tian has been compelled to preach new sermons because of the 2020 theme of LCCC

Jeremiah 29:10 tells us that Israelites were waiting for the return back home after 70 years in captivity.

Because they were Israelites, not Babylonians, God promised them to be back to the promise land. Today we are temporarily living in this world, 70-80 years, but we also will go to heaven eventually.

How to prepare us? The answers are in Paul's letter to Philippians. Paul's teaching still apply to our life today.

In Philippians, Paul began with thanks to the church of Philippians, for their help while he was in prison.

Paul listed 3 deviations in church of Philippians: faith, living and serving

3:2-3 watch for dogs:

the Jewish Christians felt superior to other Christians, they believed the others should also follow the Jewish laws on top of being saved by grace.

3:19, the challenge of Greek culture: stomach (food) satisfaction, in shame, minds on the earthly things.

Physical things were considered all bad, sexual desire and appetite were considered evil. After being saved by grace, they considered complete, therefore could do whatever, because this body belonged to the world, the spirit with God was considered most important

2:2-4 While serving, self ambition or vain conceit, look into self interests

Legalism

When a person's life cannot be guided by God, he is living in captivity

How Paul lead them walk out of these issues

1. Follow the example of Paul

3:17 from a sinner, used by God, forget what's behind, focus forward, like a runner in a race

Paul wanted the church to learn from him, to forget whatever behind him. Like we delete a file from a computer the deleted file could still be restored, meaning controlled or a slave of the past—the glory or shame

Before Paul's conversion, he was proud of his blood of Benjamin, his identity of citizen of Rome, his education of studied w Gamaliel, believe: in regard to the law a Pharisee, as for zeal, persecuting the church, as for legalistic righteousness faultless

Yet, Paul didn't benefit from all above, Paul's change in the day on the road to Damascus

3:8 all his gains he considered disadvantage

Brother Jia considered reasoning was his worst enemy of coming to faith

Acts 8:3 probably Paul's worst regret was his persecution of church. If he indulged in his past, so heavy, how could he untangle and move forward.

None of our work has eternal value, unless used for God's kingdom

Example of a brother who sinned, therefore unable to face God, even not go to church

Remember you are child of God, scold Satan away

2. On guard against enemies of the cross of Christ

Paul, weep, mourn, lament, for them

Like Jeremiah wept for the Israelites; Paul saw believers not behaving like ones, he wept

Who are the enemies of Christ? The thoughts & behaviors against the truth

The truth is nothing else can save us, the legalism believed that believing alone is not enough, need to do things as necessary for salvation

The only way to God is by faith

The cross reveals God's absolute justice, holiness and unselfish love

Satan wants us to focus on things meaningless, different opinions, divisions in church over trivia matters, focus on self

Anything to divide church is not from God

About eating food offered, to eating certain food, for the benefit of brothers, can I put down my strong opinions? It doesn't mean I am not strong just because god see unity more important than other things
Chapter four, coworker argument broke the unity of church. Endanger the church.

3. Eagerly waiting the second coming of Christ

3:18-19 people focus on earthly things, 3:20-21 we are foreigners, travelers of this world, should focus on the future. Because of the hope, we await, the life today we wait for the coming of Christ. Eye on heaven, pay lighter attention to the issues today

But not do nothing

3:17 follow the example of Paul. Seek and press on, to take hold of that for which Jesus took hold of me
Acts26:19 obedient to the vision, preach gospel to the gentiles, turn them from darkness to light, from power of Satan to god, receive forgiveness of sin and sanctified by faith

The great commandment and great commission

In summary, citizens of heaven follow the example of Paul, let your past past; should be on guard against the enemy of Christ, not flesh, Satan; should eagerly await for Jesus second coming. Try best to run for the goal. Pressing on and take hold of what Jesus gave us. Our responsibility in this world. Our enemies are not our brothers and sisters, our family, but Satan behind all.