

# Partakers of Grace as a Growing Citizen

sermonaudio.com

*Partakers of Grace*

By Rob Green

**Bible Text:** Philippians 3:12-21  
**Preached On:** Sunday, October 11, 2015

**Faith Church**  
5526 State Road 26 E  
Lafayette, IN 47905

**Website:** <http://www.faithlafayette.org/church>  
**Online Sermons:** <http://www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette>

I travel internationally about one time per year through the ministry and really through your generosity and this year I had the opportunity to speak in Brazil at a biblical counseling training conference that involved several individuals whom you know. Many of you will remember Sasha and Anna Mendez and Sasha is a graduate of Faith Bible Seminary, one in our first cohort. He's a pastor at a church in Brazil and a leader in the biblical counseling movement. I had the privilege of serving with him as well as several of our missionaries, people like Bill Moore and Randy R. and Al Yoder, and it really was amazing to watch them not only work but to see them work in their culture. Normally they're here giving us a couple of minutes or an update of some kind explaining what the Lord has done, there I had the privilege of watching them serve right where God has planted them and to see how God has worked in their lives and has really expanded their ministry in exponential ways.

But in the course of my travel, I was reminded of something: that I am not a citizen of Brazil. Here's how I knew that: I had to get a Visa. My ABFs were actually praying the week that I'm supposed to leave, my Visa had not come yet and they were praying like, "Oh man, Lord, would you please grant that Visa," because I really wasn't interested in having this conversation, "Yeah, Sasha, yeah, I know I agreed to serve with you but I'm like too much of an idiot to get a Visa." My being an idiot aside, because I was not a citizen, I didn't have the right to go into their country until they said I could. That kind of hurt my feelings. I don't know about you but that kind of hurt my feelings. I thought, you know, I'm a pretty nice guy. You ought to let me in anyway.

Well, this trip, that would not be the last time my feelings were hurt because then we landed in the capital of Brazil and I get off the plane and I'm ushered into a line called "Foreigners." Foreigners. There were like two agents working the foreigner line. The citizen line was moving so fast that they were done with passport control, they got their bags, went through customs and they were kissing their honey while I was still in line. Again, my feelings were kind of hurt about that. You see, there was something about being a citizen.

Now, of course, when I landed back in the good ole US of A, I received the citizen treatment which in my case meant that I got in the slowest line known to man. For

passport control, I was selected for customs for additional search and seizure and my name was being called out over the entire cotton picking Atlanta Airport to tell me that my plane was going to leave without me if I didn't get there in like now. But at least I was in my country where I am a citizen and, of course, that experience aside, being a citizen does have its blessings, doesn't it? It's awesome as it is to be a citizen of the United States, what if I told you that either you are or you could be a citizen of a better country? Wouldn't that be awesome? Wouldn't it be awesome to know that you could actually be a citizen of a country or you are a citizen of a country that's even better than ours? And what if I told you that not only does that matter for eternity but it actually makes a difference in how we live today? That would be cool too, wouldn't it?

Well, with that in mind, please turn in your Bibles to Philippians 3, beginning in verse 12. Philippians 3, beginning in verse 12. That's on page 155 of the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you and as you're turning there, I would like to remind you a little bit of the argument of the book of Philippians really through several passages that we have been thinking about and really Pastor Viars encouraged us the very first week to select one passage of Scripture and to be memorizing or at least to be meditating on it each week. So here are several of the important ones that we have gone through already that really trace through the argument. First of all, be confident in this very thing that, "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ." Just reminding ourselves of God's continual work in our hearts. Then 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Recognizing that there are some things a whole lot more important than others and at the top of the important list is Christ. Then 1:27, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel." Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel, reminding us again that there are some things that we get passionate about, there are some things that we get excited about, but there ought to be one thing that we get most excited about and that is the Gospel itself. Then Philippians 2:4, "do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Reminding us that really Gospel centered people do care about what's going on in the lives of others. Then verse 14 of that same chapter, "Do all things without grumbling or complaining so that you can appear as a light in the world." In other words, naturally appear as lights in the world. We only do so when we exhibit the proper attitude towards our circumstances, that is, without grumbling or complaining but instead trusting in the Lord. Then Philippians 3:8, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord." In other words, again, emphasizing the significance of Christ first.

Now, you turn to Philippians 3 and let's read the text. This is the word of the Lord.

12 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. 13 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, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 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;

Meaning, "If you don't agree with me, like get on my page."

16 however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. 17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. 18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 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.

I'd like us to think, especially using that last phrase, "as a citizen of heaven," to think about this notion: the grace to be a growing citizen. The grace to be a growing citizen and in particular, to consider five ways in which this text can help us be a growing citizen by the grace of God. Here's number 1: rest in God's grace so that you can humbly evaluate your current spiritual condition. Rest in God's grace so that you can humbly evaluate your current spiritual condition. I say humbly evaluate because I don't know about you, but here's how I prefer to do it: I prefer to humbly evaluate you and then pridefully evaluate me. Here's how this works. When I think really carefully and critically about your life and I really just go humbly before the Lord, here's what I find: you're struggling. I mean, just be frank with it, you're just struggling and some of the things that you might be struggling with are things like worry or things like anger or things like laziness or things like bitterness. Those are just areas that, well, you know, you just need to take a step of growth in. Well, when I pridefully evaluate myself, I think, "Well, you know, I'm doing pretty well, thank you very much." So that gives me the opportunity to think of myself rather highly and to think of you as, well, you just, you know, quite frankly, need to humble yourself before the Lord so that you can take the next step of growth in your sanctification process.

But humble evaluation is very different, isn't it? Humble evaluate is exactly what Paul does in verse 12 where he says, "You know, I'm not done. I haven't fully attained what I have been designed to attain. I have not been perfected in Christ yet." And as we think about Paul saying that, just remember where we've been already. Remember his religious heritage that he laid out in chapter 3, verses 1 to 8. Remember that Jesus actually saved him and so he could be dwelling on all of the great things that Christ has done for him. He's actually writing from prison and why did he get to prison? Because he was sharing the Gospel of Christ. You notice he didn't get there because he did something wrong or evil, he did something because he was committed to the Gospel and here's this guy writing in prison for the Gospel. He could probably say a few things about his own growth and maturity, couldn't he? "Here's what God has done in my life. Here is how I have grown. Here is how I have matured."

Yet what we find is him humbly evaluating himself and coming to the conclusions that he's not as far along as he really needs to be, in fact, he says in verse 8 that he really has this goal that he has counted all things as loss for the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. He says, "Do you know what? Here's what it was worth: it's worth suffering the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 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." He says, "I'm willing to evaluate myself humbly and say, 'Yeah, I have some growing to do. I have some maturing to do because I don't know Christ as well as I should. I haven't experienced the fellowship of his sufferings like I can and that's where I want to get.'" You see, if we're willing to do that same thing, then we're going to come to some conclusions ourselves like understanding there is always room for growth in our life too.

Now, I get it, who is honestly going to say that they are done growing? None of us are, right? We're not really going to say, "Well, okay, yeah, I'm done growing." But please listen to this: it's easy to admit that you need to grow. It's easy to admit that. I mean, how many of us would really honestly say, "Yup, I know the Bible exactly like Jesus wrote it. I've got it all down, every single verse, every single line, every single precept. Got it all"? Or who is going to say, "Yup, my prayer life, man, it is perfect. 100% out of 100. It is perfect"? Who is going to say that they serve exactly the right amount that Jesus would want? Or who is going to say they have completely eradicated sinful anger from their heart? Or struggles with forgiveness? Or issues of generosity? Like, who is really going to say that? None of us, right?

But it's one thing to admit it and it's another thing to do something about it and we have lots of experience with this. I mean, how many times have we been told that we need to eat healthy and exercise? We've been told a lot, right? And we're like, "Yeah, I know but I still like the Snickers bar, okay? And I'm probably going to eat one today and I'm probably going to eat one tomorrow and it's going to be alright." I'm told that I really shouldn't be eating just that. I'm supposed to be eating like kale and I'm supposed to be eating like nuts and flax seed and all this other stuff. That's what I'm supposed to be eating but I'm probably not, right? I'm probably just going to enjoy some of this other stuff too. What about exercise? "Well, yeah, probably ought to. Yeah, probably right. Every day I don't is probably one less minute off my lifespan. Alright, I get it." But we don't do anything about it.

That's really how we come to the same conclusion with our own spiritual life. "Yeah, I need to grow. I need to pray more. I need to pray more effectively. Yeah, I need to serve. I need to serve better with a better attitude. Yeah, I need to read the Bible more. I need to understand it more. Yeah, yeah, yup, you're right, I do." But it's not really something we do anything about, you see, because we're not really ready to humbly evaluate ourselves. We're not really ready to get to the place where we're saying, "Oh God, you have got to help me. I know that I am not fulfilling my responsibilities as a husband like I should. I know and I'm asking for your help and I'm asking for your help today because when this happens, it just frustrates me. When this happens, it irritates me and even if I never say it,

it just boils in my own heart and, Lord, that's not going away unless you do something to help me. Man, Lord, I am not the mom or the dad that I should be and I know it. I know it. I spend way too much time on myself and not enough time disciplining my kids. I know it but now, Lord, I'm asking you to help me do something about it because sometimes they drive me crazy. I didn't ask for them to be like this. They're different than me. I didn't ask for that and yet you want me to do something and, Lord, I'm begging for your help." You see, if we don't come to that conclusion, then we'll just continue to admit that we need to grow without actually growing.

It also is reminding us in this passage that the standard we use is the perfection of Christ. He says, "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." The standard that he's giving is Christ himself. Perfection. Not just better than So-and-so. Not just better than yesterday but Christ, perfection. I think all too often we have this notion of, "Hey, well, as long as I'm doing better than So-and-so or as long as I'm doing better than I did yesterday, okay, well, that's great so I'm done. I don't need to take another step. I took all the steps I need to take." It's kind of like the Christian version of the scales and what we say to an unbeliever is, "Look, God is not going to look at your life and say, 'Well, you did more good than you did bad so you're in.'" And yet sometimes we use that exact same argument in our own life not to take another step because we're doing okay. "I'm sure better than that guy. I'm sure a whole lot better than that guy. So, do you know what? Quite frankly, everybody in my life ought to think they've got it pretty good." Instead of thinking, "Man, I've got to grow. Man, Lord, I'm just not there yet." It's way too easy to think, "Man, everybody ought to be pretty excited about where I am."

The standard that Paul is using is the picture of Christ, the picture of perfection, because biblical Christianity is not simply a bunch of dos and don'ts, it's about a personal relationship with a perfect Savior, with Jesus who is the King; with Jesus who is the Savior; with Jesus who is the sacrificial lamb; with Jesus who is the light of the world; with Jesus who is the bread of heaven; with Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. That's what we're talking about and it matters because we have a relationship with a person, not just a list of dos and don'ts, and what he promised is he said, "Come boldly before the throne of grace so that you may receive mercy and find grace to help in your time of need." In other words, come asking for help. I think as we look at verse 12, humble evaluation just says, "Man, God, I am not where I need to be," which is exactly why Paul prays the way he does, asking that our love may abound yet more and more in true knowledge and all discernment, Philippians 1:9.

Here's the second thing: first of all, to really evaluate where we are and to take a step of growth resting on God's grace; but then number 2, to rest in God's grace so that you can properly put your past in its place. So you can properly put your past in its place. It says in verse 13, "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do," so I'm not done yet but here's what I do do, "I forget what lies behind and I reach forward to what lies ahead." So logically we have humbly evaluate our condition and now what we're encouraged to do is to put our past in its proper place and Pastor Viars wrote a book on this subject called "Putting Your Past in Its Place." It's available in the

resource center if you'd like to study this issue more carefully, but what I'd like us to focus on is what does Paul mean by "forgetting what lies behind"? What does he mean when he says that? Surely Paul is not talking about the fact that he couldn't remember and the reason is because he actually does remember in Philippians 1:1-8. He actually tells us about his past and so it's not just a matter of what he forgot, it's a matter of what he views as important. You see, dealing with our past really is not denying it, it's simply counting something else as more important. The Apostle Paul did not forget what he had done; he understood full well his past and recounted his past in several passages of Scripture, Philippians 3 just being one of them.

But here's what he means by "forgetting what lies behind": it means, first of all, that he refuses to rest on his successes and we shouldn't either. By God's grace, Paul does experience a number of successes and in his word, he actually explains several of those successes. There are times when he even calls for people to change because he doesn't want his ministry to be done in vain and so he says, "Guys, please get it together so that I don't even think of my ministry as being in vain." So did he care about success? Yes, he cared about success, but he doesn't just simply rest on those successes or use them as an excuse to say, "Well, I've gone far enough."

You know, that is sometimes how we function. It is sometimes how we choose to think. I mean, God has given this church a lot. He has provided resource after resource in a great many ways. Provided people with skills in business and construction and management and human resources and financial resources and it's easy to say as an individual, "Well therefore I just don't have to serve any more. After all, I served in Living Nativity last year so I'm good. Or I served in the musical so I'm good. Or Christmas for Everyone so I'm good." Or it's easy to say, "Well, do you know what? I was in children's ministry the last five years and so I am done with that. I did my children's ministry duty. Now I'm done." It's easy to say, "I don't really have to serve on the next project because, quite frankly, I served on the last one. It's time for someone else to take a turn."

That's not really how Paul chooses to function. He doesn't really say, "Well, do you know what? I've gotten like a number of churches done already and, you know, every time I go and plant a church, everybody beats me up. I'm kind of done with the like beating up thing. I've been whipped a whole bunch of times. I've been beaten with rods a whole bunch of times. I've been shipwrecked a whole bunch of times. I think I can put my suffering for the cause of Christ on anybody's account and say, 'Alright, let's compare,' and I'm going to come out on the winning side." But that's not how Paul functions. He just doesn't think like that. The fact that he was beaten, the fact that he is in prison, the fact that he has been shipwrecked, the fact that he has lost his life or almost lost his life on a number of occasions does not mean that he says, "I'm done. I fulfilled my mission. I am totally done." His mission was fulfilled when God said his mission was fulfilled and not until that time. I'm not sure that's always how we function. Sometimes we say, "Well, we're kind of done. We've accomplished everything we need to do."

Then at the same time, we also know this: that Paul is not crippled by his failures and nor should we. So on the one hand, Paul is happy to discuss his successes, on the other hand,

he is also happy to talk about his failures. You know, I wonder when Paul wrote in verse 6 that he was a persecutor of the church, I wonder when he penned those words whether or not he remembered certain faces. Whether he remembered hearing the voices of wives or children who were crying as their husband was led away. I wonder if he ever heard the screams of those who were beaten. I wonder if he became nauseous as he reflected on the day that he held the coats for the men who killed Stephen by stoning him to death. I won't get an answer to those questions because the Bible doesn't tell us those answers but I do get an answer to a very important question and that is: did Paul's ugly past serve to cripple him for the future? And what's the answer? Not at all. The answer is no. It did not cripple him and yet he had a fair bit of bad past too. Yes, he's got the positive and he also has the negative and as he thinks about his own negative past which is pretty negative, he doesn't say, "Well, do you know what? The failures and the fears that I have had in my past disqualify me from doing anything. They disqualify me from serving the Lord. They disqualify me from seeking to take the next step of growth. I mean, after all, I mean I was all the way back there and the fact that I'm here is an amazing miracle in and of itself."

That's not what he does and, friends, that's what he means by "forget what lies behind." It doesn't mean that we take an eraser to all the things that God has done in our lives or allowed to happen in our lives. It doesn't mean that everything in the past is like forgotten and it means you can't remember it. It means that something else is counted as more important. It means we don't rest on our laurels thinking that everything is done. It means that we're not crippled by our past thinking that, "Well, God can't possibly use us now." The past is not a ball and chain that you have to carry. That was the purpose of the cross. Jesus paid it all. All. "All to him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain but he washed it white as snow."

If you're here and you have trusted in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, man, isn't that freeing? Isn't that encouraging? That I really can forget what lies behind? And if you have never come to that place, friends, I want you to know that you can do that today. You can be freed from your past. You can be freed from the ugly weight of guilt and shame. You can actually become not only a citizen of the US but you can be a citizen of a better country and that is a citizen of heaven. Romans 10 says it this way, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. With the heart a person believes resulting in righteousness and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation."

Well, living as a growing Christian means you're going to rest in God's grace so that you can humbly evaluate and seek Christ in your need, and it means we'll put our past in its proper place, then it's also going to involve this: to rest in God's grace so that you can passionately pursue Christ. It's interesting how the verbs in this text sort of drive us to passionate pursuit. He says in verse 12, "I press on." In verse 13, "reaching forward." In verse 14, "I press on." The effort is exhausting and if we're being honest, then quite frankly, there are only a few things that we give this kind of attention to. There are only a few things that you can work this hard at where you're pressing on, you're reaching forward, you're pressing on.

Too often I think we say, "I'm working on it." Where the "it" is whatever we're supposed to be doing but, quite frankly, we're not really working at it very hard. We're not really pressing on. We're not really reaching forward. We're not really pressing on, we're just kind of standing there hoping it's going to hit us and what he says is, "No, no, no. I'm pressing. I'm moving forward." There is a difference between just talking about, "I'm working on it," and someone who is actually taking concrete steps in order to work on it.

You know, for some, the appropriate response or one of the appropriate responses today would be, "You know, I'm going to be more committed to reading my Scriptures. And, you know, I don't have to wait until January for the new Bible reading plans to come out in order to begin." For some it's going to be prayer. For some it's going to be service. You know, there is an opportunity right now. You've got Living Nativity sign up sheets in your program right now. You can get that done today and all the people who are organizing will bless your soul.

The Apostle Paul, his heart was really about knowing Christ more and the reason he wanted to know Christ more is because he says this, "Because Christ passionately pursued me too." He says, "I want to lay hold of it for which Christ has also laid hold of me. Because Christ passionately pursued me, I want to passionately pursue him. He's the one who took the initiative. He's the one who paid the price." You know, as we think about that reality, what he did for us, it should encourage us to pursue him. I just think if we just took a few minutes and we completed this sentence, "I am blank." Just took a few minutes to write down the answers to that question in your life, "I am blank." What would you record? Well, Scripture would record this, for a genuine follower of Christ, one who has repented of their sin and trusted in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, "I am redeemed. I am adopted. I am a friend of Jesus. I am reconciled. I am free. I am prayed for. I am in his presence. I am loved. I am regenerated. I am rescued from wrath. I am an heir." All because Jesus pursued you. Because he pursued you, all of those things are actually true and that should encourage us on the other hand to pursue him.

For the Apostle Paul, that's why he could look at his past, both the good and the bad, and count it as loss. That's why he could humbly evaluate his own spiritual condition and say, "Lord, I'm still needy. I still need you." That's why he could put his past behind him and not rest on his successes or cower under his failures because he understood that Jesus pursued him and is calling him to pursue Christ in return. Then because this prize is the greatest source of joy and encouragement, here he says, "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." What is that prize? What is it he is really reaching toward? What does he want? What is the fulfillment of his work and his passionate pursuit of Christ? It's to know him. It's to be found in him. It's to love him. It's to experience his joys and blessing and Paul understood this: that he understood that the greatest source of joy and encouragement did not come from his circumstances, it came from his relationship to Christ.

And after spending four years wrongly imprisoned, you might think that would be kind of challenging to get your head around, especially when you were cold. Especially when



you were bored. Especially when you were frustrated at the incompetence of people who were above you. Remember, Paul is in Rome because he appealed to Caesar after having been imprisoned by Felix and Festus for a number of years. You see, for Paul to live as a growing citizen meant that he was not only going to humbly evaluate his condition, and so should we, it meant that he would not only put his past in its place, like we should, not only that he would passionately pursue Christ, but also that he would rest in the grace of God so that we can follow proper examples.

Notice what he says again in verse 15, "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." In other words, he says, "Now, I want you to rest in God's grace so that you can follow the proper examples." He says, "Brothers," he appeals to them as a family member. He says, "Hey guys, I want your attention here. I want you to follow the right examples. Join together in following my example." Just as we had seen earlier in the call to follow his example in chapter 2. Timothy, as well as Epaphroditus, now he comes right back to that same issue again and he's saying, "Guys, I want you to be united in agreeing to following the examples of people like me because I am suffering, yes, for the cause of Christ, but I'm also actively pursuing Gospel ministry while I'm suffering. I'm making it my goal or my purpose to be Christ like, to experience the fellowship of his sufferings and to know him more and so I want you to do the exact same thing. I want you to follow in my footsteps. I am out ahead. I want you to walk in my steps." He says, "I want you to carefully watch how godly people live." He says, "Observe," verse 17, "those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." So observe, pay attention.

When we go hiking in the mountains, sometimes we come across an area that has snow on it and you think, "Man, this is like an awesome sledding hill," except you're going like 40 miles an hour down this thing and at the bottom are rocks. That's normally not a great place for things to be so you don't really want to slip and so here's how you walk across: one person leads, dig their feet in so that there is a nice little stepping pad, the next one and then what do the people do behind? They just follow right in the same steps, right? Because those are the locations that are safe and if you don't do that and you misstep and you start to fall and you get out of control, you're in big trouble. And what Paul says is, "Hey, I want you to observe. I want you to pay attention. I want you to put your foot in my path. I want you to take the next step. Look, carefully observe what I am doing and I want you to follow right after me because what I'm doing is seeking after God and I want you to do the same." It's like that ten year old who carefully watches his coach to learn how to correctly swing that bat or to make that shot or a worker who is carefully watching how to run that press or that powerful saw so that he's not injured. Instead, what Paul wants is them to carefully watch their faith so that they will be functioning just like the Apostle Paul did.

Then he says at the very opposite end of that, he says, "I want you to ignore those who are merely pretending to be Christians. In other words, I want you to ignore those whose message is very different than their lifestyle because here is the proper judgment about those individuals, their end is destruction. Their god is their appetite. Their glory is their shame." He says, "What I want you to do is I want you to ignore all of those examples, at least for the purpose of adopting them, that are wrong." You know, friends, there is absolutely no worse condition for a person to be in than to think that they're a believer in Christ when they're not. That's the worst condition. I much prefer talking to individuals in our counseling ministry, if I ask them, "Why should God let you into his heaven?" and they simply say, "He shouldn't," that person is far closer to the kingdom of God than the person who's going to give me 14 reasons why God should let them into his heaven because they get it. There is no worst condition to be in than to be in a condition where you think you're okay when you're really not. That's why we often talk and use the phrase, "Do you know that you know that you know?" One commentator said this, "Those who deliberately indulge in sin and repudiate the will of God, deny all that the cross of Christ stands for." They deny all that the cross stands for.

So when he uses the phrases, "their end is destruction, that god is their appetite, that glory is their shame, that they think about earthly things," what he's describing is a person who is pretending to be a Christian who really isn't and when he writes to the church he says, "Hey, you need to be careful of those. Yes, you need to care about them. Yes, you need to evangelize them. Yes, you need to demonstrate compassion to them in the sense of winning them to Christ but, no, you do not follow their example."

We're going to rest in God's grace, first of all, in humbly evaluating. Then in dealing with our past. Then passionately pursuing Christ. Then following godly examples. Then last: to rest in God's grace in order to appreciate your heavenly citizenship. Verse 20 says, "For our citizenship is in heaven." Here's what's so shocking about this phrase to this church. Paul had been to Philippi before. In Acts 16, he goes and he wins a number of people to Christ and the leaders of the town get very upset and they actually say that, "Well, he is teaching stuff that is not lawful for Romans." So they beat him and then they throw him in prison and the next day they learn that Paul is actually a Roman citizen. So, first of all, apparently it wasn't all that bad for Romans and, second of all, you're not allowed to beat a Roman citizen without a trial. So the leaders, they get how Rome works. As long as you're in the graces of your boss, you're good. If you're not in the graces of your boss, you're dead. They all got that. They all understood it and the last thing they wanted was for Paul to go whining to their boss lest they lose their head over it.

So they say, "Well, let him out of jail." And what does Paul say? He says, "Forget that. Then come and walk me out, for crying out loud." Who could say that? Answer: a citizen and only a citizen could say that. The city of Philippi had earned their citizenship through military battles with the Romans. They had earned them through blood so do they care about their citizenship? Absolutely. How does Paul end up in Rome? He's imprisoned by Felix and Festus for over two years and finally he says, "Do you know what? You two goofs, I am so sick and tired of you," and he appeals to Caesar and that appeal to Caesar lands him in Rome and now he's writing to the church back at Philippi. Does the church

at Philippi know that Paul values his Roman citizenship? Yes, they watched him use it on multiple occasions in their city.

Then here's what he says to them, because they would be pretty proud of their citizenship too and here's what he says to them, "Our citizenship is in heaven. So, yes, we're Roman citizens. Yes, I get that and we are going to use our citizenship to its fullest value. Yes, great. But remember this, Philippi, Philippians, our citizenship is in heaven and when it's in heaven, there are a couple of things about that citizenship that are unique and really important and really valuable." He says, "from which we eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." In other words, he gets really excited because Christ is returning for all his citizens. "Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory." In other words, what he says is, "God is also going to transform our body too." In other words, what he's getting at is saying, "Hey look, the citizen peace that you have right now, it's even better than you realized. Yeah, you're a Roman, that's great. It comes with privileges, yeah, that's great. But there is one citizenship that's even better and that's the citizenship of heaven."

So let's just encourage ourselves that because of what Christ has done, that we're willing to humbly evaluate; we're willing to put our past in its place; we're willing to passionately pursue Christ; we're willing to follow the right examples; and we're willing to appreciate being a part of a better country.

Let's pray.

*Father, we want to thank you for the reality of your love and grace in our lives. Lord, thank you for the truth of the Gospel that allows us to repent of our sin and to become a citizen of heaven. Lord, thank you for all the benefits that come with that citizenship. Lord, we ask that you would please help us to then respond properly to it, that we would seek to be a growing citizen, that you would help us to not only acknowledge the fact that we need to grow but to cry out for your help in order to grow. Lord, we also pray that you would help us as we look for ways to put this into practice this very week, committing ourselves to taking necessary steps to follow the right examples, to have proper judgments about what's going on in people's lives so that we can respond properly either to follow directly in their footsteps or to simply seek to win them to a saving knowledge of Christ. Lord, I also pray that you would help us to value, to appreciate our citizenship because you are returning and, Lord, we want to be found faithful when you do so we ask for your help in Christ's name. Amen.*