

Friday– Apr 11

“... our citizenship is in Heaven...”

Paul reminds his readers that Christians do not live in *THIS* world, but choose to live in a *dual-existence BETWEEN this world and God’s world*. As disciples of Christ, we are not citizens of *THIS* world, but are citizens of Heaven– and thereby called to the standards and laws of Heaven.

‘*Earthly living*’- meaning the over-indulgence of excess, so commonly practiced in Roman society (and our own), is *NOT* what God calls us to. We are called to live in temperance and moderation, so that others can benefit. Rev John Wesley made the choice to find a moderate comfort in life, living well on his income, but not in excess. He found comfort, ease and moderate provision, but beyond that, he gave everything else to help others. John wasn’t into a mathematic tithe, but simply measured his own needs and gave the rest to others. Towards the end of his career he was nearly ‘reverse-tithing’ (if we were to look at the math), giving 90% of his income to serve others, while living on 10%. John didn’t live this way because he had some notion that he ‘had to’, but because he appreciated the joy of helping others.

In turn, God continued to bless Rev Wesley’s success and also blessed THOUSANDS of other lives! John was building Heaven on Earth!

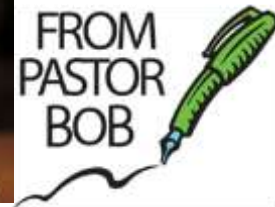
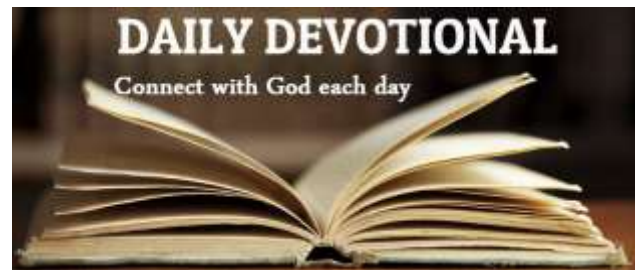
Prayer- Mighty God, help me to see my blessings.

Saturday– Apr 12

“...will not only transform but completely refashion our earth bodies...”

There is a promise here of hope and fulfillment, that could not have been given to the slaves or free-people of the Roman era, and cannot be fulfilled by the cheap promises of our modern, materialistic world. The Roman world (much like our own) continually pointed out how very *inadequate* everyone was; making the rich and the poor alike know how very *insufficient a person’s individual failings made them*. Roman culture (and our own) promised the false hope of a more improved station, but in reality, *always delivered more and more examples of a person’s inadequacy*. Paul shows that Christ does not offer false promises, but delivers on His ability to *NOT JUST* transform a person’s life, but to completely refashion their brokenness, creating a place of acceptance and belonging, not just here on earth, but for eternity in Heaven. In Rome, a free slave would always still be looked down upon, even *WITH* their citizenship. In Christ’s family, we are ALL equals. Paul uses this truth to point out the obvious flaw in the *Gnostic Christian’s theology*. Sin *IS* relevant, because it is through our mistakes... our repentance... and the renewal of our lives that we grow *BEYOND* sin (with Christ’s help). We serve to *HELP* one another *NOT* sin as much, thereby growing stronger as a family of faith. Church isn’t for ignoring sin– it is a place to overcome it– with Christ and one another!

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to see my blessings.



**Philippians 3:18–4:1**

Amplified Bible (AMP)

<sup>18</sup> For there are many, of whom I have often told you, and now tell you even with tears, who live as enemies of the cross of Christ [rejecting and opposing His way of salvation], <sup>19</sup> whose fate is destruction, whose god is *their* belly [their worldly appetite, their sensuality, their vanity], and *whose* glory is in their shame—who focus their mind on earthly *and* temporal things. <sup>20</sup> But [we are different, because] our citizenship is in heaven. And from there we eagerly await [the coming of] the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>21</sup> who, by exerting that power which enables Him even to subject everything to Himself, will [not only] transform [but completely refashion] our *earthly* bodies so that they will be like His glorious *resurrected* body.

**4** Therefore, my fellow believers, whom I love and long for, my delight and crown [my wreath of victory], in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.



## Monday– Apr 7

**‘...I have often told you...’**

Paul is writing to his church family in Philippi, a Christian community that he got kick-started around 50AD. It was predominantly a Gentile (non-Jewish) community. It was started with the help of Lydia– a local merchant, who was the first Christian in Europe (Acts 16:14). Just after this, Paul exorcised a demon from a slave-girl (getting Paula and Silas landed in prison), which led to the conversion of their Philippian jailer to Christianity! Women were a big part of the church at Philippi, particularly women slaves and women who had been forced into temple prostitution (which was a HUGE thing in the Roman empire). The Philippian church worked to raise money and housing to free these women. The church existed as a ‘oasis’ (of sorts) within the Roman world– as a place where women could have equal standing and were viewed as something **OTHER than ‘property’.**

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to see my blessings.



## Tuesday– Apr 8

**‘...there are many... who live as enemies of the cross...’**

In Roman culture, there had always existed a ‘religion/philosophy’ called ‘Gnosticism’. This is a generalized category, as the different groups and factions have gone by many different names through history. Gnosticism believe in Spirit and Matter– and they strive to overcome Matter through use of Spirit. As Christianity developed, Gnostic groups began to adhere to basic Christian beliefs (while adding their own flairs and deviations). For example, Gnostic Christians often believed in Docetism... that Christ was not the Son of God, but simply a great human being, who was possessed by the divine Spirit of God at His baptism, which then left Jesus before His death. They would say that Christ accomplished what ALL believers should be able to accomplish(?), (with the correct secret wisdom and instruction) so that a Gnostic believer could ALSO contain and use the Spirit of God– becoming their OWN Christ!? Christianity teaches that the Spirit of God can work THROUGH the believer, but not the other way around. We strive to become LIKE Christ– while working UNDER Christ... not becoming our own Christ. Paul is writing to the Philippians about these folks, because some of their teachings were designed to lead people away from Scripture and church– promising ‘secret’ Wisdom and dangerous practices that aren’t actually compatible with the Christian faith.

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to see my blessings.

## Wednesday– Apr 9

**“rejecting an opposing his way of salvation.”**

When Paul says that these Gnostics are ‘enemies of the cross’- it’s important to point out that this is not a hostile or violent warfare being discussed. Paul is saying that these folks are working in opposition to Christ. They do HARM in their teachings, so they should be avoided. Obviously, there is no threat to Jesus, but a clear problem for believers. One of the main teachings of these groups, which they were trying to impose within the church at Phillippi, was the idea of the irrelevancy of sin. Basically they were saying that Jesus had already forgiven ALL sin on the cross (past, present and future) SO... as long as you accept Christ, sin is irrelevant and a believer can do whatever they want?! Kind-of like having an unlimited sin credit card(!)... which is absolutely ridiculous... but a very popular idea in the sin-rich culture of Roman excesses! These Gnostics were proposing that temple prostitution could be completely allowable in the faith– which is obviously not accurate!

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to see my blessings.



## Thursday– Apr 10

**“...whose fate is destruction, whose god is their belly...”**

Imagine the rich freedom experienced by women (in general) at the Phillippi church, specifically the many women who were slaves or had been forced into prostitution. To be in a place where you were not only SAFE, but also were treated with decency, respect and equality. Now imagine that these creeps come into that ‘sanctuary’ (a literal place of safety from harm) and start saying that EVERYTHING you have learned and know about that decency, respect and honor (that Jesus places on human life) is irrelevant! **Imagine hearing that the grievous harm done to you has been ‘irrelevant’!** **Imagine the perfect justice of God’s Grace, now portrayed as ‘irrelevant’!** At the same time, imagine seeing some of the more affluent church members paying deep attention to these creepers– seeing that the words are even (perhaps) making sense to them! That’s how gluttony works. It’s about EXCESS. As in this situation, those who have lived in excess through their lives (not doing without) often can miss the dangers or context of this kind of sin. In Philippi, the wealthy had never starved, or nearly died from over-work, or been sold into sex-slavery... so they couldn’t IMAGINE the harm of over-indulgence. For those who HAD suffered and lived deprived lives, this sin is unimaginably obvious! The church existed in mission to use their excess to save those without resources– and now these Gnostics were suggesting that selfish excess was ideal!

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to see my blessings.