



**DUAL CITIZENSHIP**  
**Psalm 27:1-6, Philippians 3:17-4:1**

Our Lord and the Apostle Paul as Jews grew up singing or reciting the truth of Psalm 27 at the local synagogue and temple. Both knew in the very fiber of their being how their faith in the living God enabled them to be strong and firm in the face of adversity. Faith does not exempt us from trouble – but equips us to face adversity without fear being the dominant force in our lives. This sense of confidence is not equivalent to arrogance – but reflects the believers trust that God’s purposes cannot be defeated. It allows us to not only confess our faith – but live it.

It was this faith that allowed Paul “to wait upon the Lord,” as he prepared for his trial before the Roman authorities. It gave him strength to face his critics – and not back down or cave in. His loyalty was to Christ – not Caesar. There is a hill higher than Capitol Hill. It is called Calvary. There was a higher patriotism. He was driven by this understanding of life – even when it seemed out of step with the prevailing culture.

It was this faith that gave Paul comfort and hope to press on – to run the good race – to fight the good fight.

It was also this faith and confidence that would enable the believers at Philippi to live in such a way that it would counteract the negative influence of those who lived “as enemies of the cross.” It would provide a peace and confidence that would drive out fear and restore hope.

It was this faith that Charles Wesley testified to in the great hymn we just sang, “**Thou Hidden Source of Calm Repose.**” You cannot write words with such depth and emotion unless one has faced his foes and been scarred in battle – but yet emerged on the other side.

In that spirit, I want to share three things for your consideration of how we are to live by faith and with faith in our time as well.

**FIRST OF ALL, WE ARE A PEOPLE WITH DUAL CITIZENSHIP.**

Paul shares with the believers at Philippi and with us that we have a dual citizenship. We are privileged to be citizens of 2 nations or commonwealths. We see that reality in our sanctuary today with these 2 flags – the American flag and the Christian flag. Our Pledge of Allegiance says “**One nation under God.**” So unlike our

Mennonite and Amish friends – we, with great respect display 2 flags. We know the kingdom of God is bigger and greater than all the nations of the world. We know our greatest loyalty is to God and not to man as **Acts 5:29** clearly instructs us. We are to shine as bright as stars in both of these places.

We know that Paul highly valued his Roman citizenship. It is his Roman citizenship that allowed him the privilege of a trial before a Roman magistrate. He had on previous occasions gone before the **Bema seat** to present his witness and defense for charges brought against him.

Philippi was a colony of the Roman Empire. Philippi was a city whose citizens were also citizens of Rome. Rome often sent its veterans or retired military officers to secure a conquered territory for Rome. They would spread Roman law, customs, culture, and traditions. As Dr. William Barclay and others share that “here Roman dress was worn, the Latin tongue was spoken, Roman justice was administered, and Roman morals were shared.”<sup>1</sup>

Just as the Roman colonists never forget they belong to Rome – so Paul points out to the believers at Philippi that they are never to forget who they belong to. They were baptized into Christ Jesus. This was their new and defining identity. Their citizenship and conduct is to reflect their loyalty to Christ – and not to their culture. They were to set their hands and minds on the things above. They were to be a colony of heaven charged with the responsibility of bringing the world to the acknowledgement of Christ as Lord and Savior. There was an old saying, ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do.’ Paul is going beyond that by teaching ‘When you are a citizen of the Lord’s commonwealth – act like this. Let your conduct match your citizenship.’ Paul shares in **verse 16**, “Only let us live up to what we have already obtained. As Roman citizens shared common goals and values so does the body of Christ.”

C. S. Lewis imagines the church of Jesus Christ to be something like a fleet of ships sailing in formation. To sail well they need a common goal and direction. If the fleet is headed to New York City – each ship must be headed for New York City. A ship that is headed to Brazil has no place in the formation. The church of Jesus Christ’s first goal and loyalty is to Jesus Christ. Any other goal or objectives will bring a collision or a lost ship.<sup>2</sup> Our Mission Statement reflects this biblical truth by sharing, “Our mission is joining together to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ. We invite people into the life-changing presence of Jesus Christ.”

**SECONDLY, TO CONTINUE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, PAUL ISSUES A PLEA: “IMITATE HIM.”**

I know Paul’s instruction seems arrogant or egotistical. We don’t like the thought of imitating anyone. As Eugene Peterson teaches us “we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century suffer from chronological snobbery. We don’t believe the generations who have gone on before us have anything to share with us.” We are self-made men and women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Paul has already offered three mentors or role models for us to follow: Christ (Philippians 2:5-11), Timothy (Philippians 19-24), and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-30).

I recently shared with my Sunday School class that studying under a gifted mentor was the role model for ethical instruction and educational training in that day. To be a student of a gifted musician, poet, philosopher, theologian was a great honor. To learn at their feet was not shallow or hollow – but a great honor.

Dr. John Weaver was a gifted organist/composer who served the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City for many years. To be one of his students was a gift and honor. To learn to imitate his mind – his spirit – his technique was a joy. His students fill some of the great churches all across that city. His name on your resume meant something.

From Dr. Phil of television fame to the over worked guidance counselor of a high school staff – we hear today of the crucial need for mentors and role models. We think we have discovered something new. Our youth are learning their morals and values by default. We are living in what is called a post-modern culture. It means nothing is true – nothing is false. Words refer only to other words – not to reality. This is exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden. It is an old error with a new face and twist.

Can I ask you a personal question today? What are you imitating? Who are your mentors? Who did you allow to nourish and nudge your spiritual life?

Having issued the call to imitation in **verse 18** – Paul sketches the negative side. Those who have brought him to tears are the ‘enemies of the cross.’<sup>3</sup>

Let me share one example with you. Some years ago a young man named Brian Warner decided to change his name to Marilyn Manson. Brian created his new name by combining the names of suicidal sex symbol Marilyn Monroe and savage serial slayer Charles Manson. Marilyn Manson became a shock rock millionaire, singing like a Satanist, dressing like a corpse, proclaiming himself Antichrist Superstar, praising suicide and homicide and death in every form, peddling slogans like “We hate love, we love hate” and “Kill God, Kill Your Mom and Dad, Kill Yourself.” Manson succeeded in grabbing money from the wallets of millions of teenagers fascinated with the occult, rebellion and death, but lately his popularity had been fading. Marilyn Manson has sent lots of bad message, but once in a while he has said something true. He once said, “I’m the biggest fake in the world, but I’m telling you I’m a fake, so if you buy it, it’s your fault, not mine.” Another time he challenged parents: “Raise your kids better or I’ll raise them for you.”<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps, now you understand better Paul’s plan for us all to imitate Christ – and the way – the truth – the life he ushered into human history.

About 25 years ago I went with a colleague to attend a one-day seminar with Dr. James Boice of Philadelphia. I had never heard of him before that. The gathering was mostly of United Methodist. He was officially teaching on the **Psalms** – but we covered a lot of ground that day on how the Psalms related to the every day life as a pastor and spiritual leader.

It was from that encounter that I invited Dr. Boice into my life as a mentor. That mentoring took place mostly through his books and occasional tapes I would pick up here and there.

That day he simply walked with us. He never gave the impression he was smarter or greater than us – which he was. He talked with us over coffee – lunch – side bar conversations. It was obvious his love for God’s word – and even better – God himself.

He helped a struggling Pastor who shared how discouraged he was with all the critical notes and comments he received. Dr. Boice shared how his church was in the midst of an outreach ministry to people and families with AIDS. This was 25 years ago. He received critical notes and mail and people said some very un-Christian things. He believed that God’s people – motivated by the grace and love of God – offered a perspective that others did not.

About that time some bishops and theologians were questioning the necessity of the belief and doctrine of the resurrection. Instead of a great academic and philosophical response – he gave a very simply illustration. He compared the resurrection to a clothesline in a back yard. The church hung all her wash on that line. If the line was firm – it would hold. If the clothesline fell – so did everything else. “Stand firm,” he said.

Dr. Boice also helped me to find words for my understanding of the Inerrancy of Holy Scripture. He wrote a book entitled **DOES INERRANCY MATTER?** He helped me to utilize biblical scholarship and yet have confidence in the unfailing word of God.

He shared how he valued Presbyterian polity – but he did not run the church by democracy. The Bible gave very clear guidelines about the role and authority of a pastor. He challenged us not to forsake it. “Stand firm,” he said. Like the psalmist said, “The Lord is my Light and Salvation. Whom shall I fear?”

### **LASTLY, WE CLAIM THE CONFIDENCE OF OUR RESURRECTION HOPE.**

The life to which Paul has committed himself is empowered by a view of the city of God of which he is a heavenly citizen.<sup>5</sup> In the Lord’s Prayer we pray “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Paul knew that while we were waiting upon the Lord – it was not wasted time twiddling our thumbs. While we wait upon the Lord, we live and work as if he has

already come. We work with one foot in heaven and one foot on earth – until that day both our feet are in heaven itself. That is why we are “marching to Zion, that beautiful city of God” as our opening hymn shares.

Several years ago, as the architects, builders and construction workers were finishing the two massive towers atop the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., an Italian stone mason was standing below in a courtyard, putting his final touch on a small angelic figure. A passerby noticed what he was doing and asked him where the figure would be placed when it was done.

The stone mason said with a sense of pride that the figure was going to be attached to one of the towers, stretching up toward the sky.

“But it doesn’t bother you that after all of your work, no one will see it, hundreds of feet above the ground?” The stone mason looked him in the eye and answered, “God will see it, and that is enough for me.”

That is exactly the spirit that Paul wanted the believers at Philippi and us here in New Holland to be possessed by. To stand firm upon the solid rock of Jesus Christ as we work and labor for him.

Amen and amen.

Reverend Eric S. Ritz  
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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, **“The Daily Bible Study series, PHILIPPIANS,”** Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1975, pages

<sup>2</sup> James M. Boice, **PHILIPPIANS: AN EXPOSITIONAL COMMENTARY**, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000, page 211.

<sup>3</sup> Fred B. Craddock [et.al], **“Preaching Through the Christian Year, YEAR C,”** Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, PA, 19482, first edition, page 146.

<sup>4</sup> Thanks to David Feddes of the **“Back to God Hour”** program for this illustration.

<sup>5</sup> Fred B. Craddock [et.al], **“Preaching Through the Christian Year, YEAR C,”** Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, PA, 19482, first edition, page 146.