



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Two Ways to Live

Relentless Joy, Philippians 3:17-21

Tim Badal | April 12, 2020



Easter. The time when our Lord and Savior, after enduring the cross, after enduring betrayal and abuse and a criminal's death, would be placed in the grave as a dead man. But His body was not to decompose or decay. On that third and glorious day, He rose from the grave. The truth of that great miracle on Easter is the truth that Christians all over the world are celebrating today. The reason we're celebrating is because Easter means hope for all who place their trust in Jesus Christ. Today, we celebrate the greatest of victories, the greatest of events and the greatest of opportunities. It is through Easter that you and I are able not to live for ourselves, but to live for our Savior.

Now, I know things are tough in these days. I know that for many this is not the Easter you were looking forward to. Amidst all this difficulty, Easter still brings hope, because Jesus transcends all diseases, He transforms all disappointment and difficulties, using them for our good and His glory. That is the great promise of Easter. Even in times when things look dark and difficult, our Lord and Savior reigns supreme. It is then that He does His best work.

This morning, I want to invite you to celebrate Easter with me. In order to do this right, we have to ask ourselves some really difficult questions. First, ask yourself: am I living in light of Easter, or in light of my circumstances and my place in life?

We're in a series we've called "Relentless Joy" out of the book of Philippians. This letter was written by the apostle Paul to a church in the city of Philippi, which was located in modern-day Greece. He wrote to the Christ-followers there to encourage them, give them hope and remind them that Jesus was the risen Savior. We too have hope because we know He lives. Why did the believers in his day need this hope? Just as in our day, life was difficult for them. They might have wondered if God was still on His throne. They were concerned about what was coming in the future. They were worried for their families and for many of the same things we worry about today. Yet Paul assured them there was relentless joy to be found as they lived in relationship with Jesus Christ.

Sadly, many in our world today many no longer go this route. As we will see in today's Scripture, Philippians 3:17-21, there are two ways to live life. These two ways are diametrically opposed to one another. Our future will depend on which way we choose to go.

A couple weeks ago I was struck by this reality when I came into my living room where my family was watching a new game show called "LEGO Masters." In the show, two teams of LEGO builders were given the same number and type of LEGOs, then they're given a theme to build on. The teams then designed structures that not only were sturdy, but also were pleasing to look at. Within a certain limit of time, each team worked together to build the assigned structure. In the episode I was watching, they were called to build a bridge. The results were awesome, but it wasn't until the judges added weight to the bridges to determine their strength that the two projects revealed their differences.

The first team watched in suspense as the weights were gradually added to their bridge. They seemed to have no confidence that their bridge would hold. As they watched, their project began to show signs of cracking. On the other hand, the second team appeared to be confident. There was science to what they had done, so they encouraged the judges to keep adding weights. As the weights were gradually added to both bridges, eventually the first bridge collapsed. All of their hard work in building that structure was lost. I was blown away as I watched the second bridge actually supported over 900 pounds. Their bridge of LEGOs held up.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ spoke about how we must build our lives. He told how one man built a house on a sandy beach, while another man built his house on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27). The houses themselves looked very similar. It wasn't until the great judge came—the storm—that the mettle of each house was tested. The wind and rain caused the house built on sand to collapse, whereas the house on the rock stood the test.

What do LEGOs and houses have to do with our lives at Easter? The answer is simple, my friends. You and I are building our lives. God has given us all we need to build lives that reflect Him as we live in light of Him. Maybe some of you today have chosen to build your life, using what God has blessed you with, for yourself. You've filled your life with possessions and pursuits. It's about you and not about God. The Bible warns you that the hope Easter brings—the provision Christ made through His death—is something you have pushed away. As a result, you will miss the benefits and blessings a life in Christ brings. Because Paul loved the people of Philippi, he wrote them words which offered them two ways to live:

¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Do you see the two ways you can live? You can live as an enemy of the cross or you can live as a citizen of heaven. Let's look at each of these.

1. Living for self, which leads to judgment

First, we can live for self, a choice that will lead to judgment. Look again at Philippians 3:18-19. After Paul had admonished the Christians to follow and imitate godly role models, he shifted to a somber mood. In a letter that is generally filled with joy, he used an expression that makes us uncomfortable. He wrote that he was fighting back tears. Why would Paul cry? What would cause that emotion? He realized that no matter how much he preached, no matter how much he told people about Jesus or how much he modeled what it meant to live a life dedicated to the risen Savior and Lord, there would be some who would reject that way of life, seeking instead to live for themselves. They would refuse the salvation Jesus purchased on Calvary and which was guaranteed by His resurrection, choosing instead to live for themselves.

You might say, as many do, "I'm not a selfish person. I don't live for myself." But the Bible makes it clear that we all live for our own desires. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 53:6, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.*" This includes you and me. Instead of choosing the life God wants us to have and that Christ has provided for us, we have gone our own way.

Paul went on to describe the priorities that characterize this kind of life. We might wonder why anyone would reject all Jesus offers us, considering what He's already done for us. He's given us life and breath and all we need for our good and our enjoyment. Why would we reject His offer of salvation to follow other desires?

This lifestyle is engrossed with temporal things.

People who choose their way are engrossed with temporal things. They're captivated and enthralled by the things of this world. First, Paul wrote in verse 19 that these people have "*minds set on earthly things.*" Remember, what you think about determines how you live.

Paul was even more specific when he said, "*their god is their belly.*" That seems to be a weird way to describe someone. Was he saying these men and women worshiped some part of their digestive tract? No. He was simply pointing out that their attention was always directed to satisfying their appetites in the here and now. They weren't thinking about others, nor were they thinking about the future.

You and I both know we live in a time of instant gratification, because we have appetites we want to fill as quickly as possible. Each day we make decisions based on such things as the appetite for pleasure, prestige, possessions or power. All of these flood our senses, saying, "Feed me. Feed me. Feed me."

When our minds are focused on ourselves and on the here and now, then the greatest voices in our lives will be our appetites. It's not that the appetites are bad in themselves. God has given them to us for our good. But He explains in Scripture that we are to maintain them according to His ways and purposes.

So let me ask what are you living for? What do you dream about and yearn for? What things make your life worth living? Are they earthly things? Are they things in the here and now? Are they things that merely satisfy your appetites? Even the most devoted follower of Jesus can find themselves engrossed in these things.

Let me be honest. I struggle every day with allowing myself to become involved with these things. The appetites within me are hungry. As I've told you before, we need to always be thinking about and testing what we live for. How do we decide if we're living for ourselves, for others or for the glory of Christ?

First we ask ourselves, “What does my calendar tell me? What does my daily schedule reveal about my priorities?” Then ask the conversation question: “In the multiple words I speak every day, are they more about me, what I’m doing, who I am and the wonderful things I’m doing? Or are they about Christ?”

Third, let’s ask the checkbook question. “When I look at the money I spend, is it for me to accumulate possessions? Is it for me to experience pleasures to fill my appetites? Or am I contributing to Christ and His Kingdom? Am I being generous with others?” When we do the calendar, conversation and checkbook tests, we begin to see more clearly whether we’re living for ourselves or living for Christ. We can be engrossed with earthly things.

This lifestyle makes us enemies of God.

This type of life makes us enemies of God. You say, “Wait a minute, Tim. I’m not an enemy of God. Yeah, I may live for myself, but I’ve got no issue with God. I like God. When I need Him, He’s there. When I pray that emergency prayer, He hears me. I have no beef with God.” But here’s the problem: God has a beef with you. Why?

Look at verse 21. It says God is able “*to subject all things to himself.*” God has given us everything we need to enjoy this life. The only thing He requires is that we worship and submit ourselves to Him. When someone lives for themselves, they become an enemy. The Greek word for enemy is *echthros*, which literally means “one who hates or is hostile toward another.” That’s pretty strong language, but that’s what Paul says happens when we live for ourselves. Why is that? Because there’s only one King. When you and I live for ourselves, we are living as if we are king.

Think about it this way. What if you were in a kingdom where there was already a king, but you started acting as though you were a new king? Do you know what they call that? It’s a *coup d’état*—a rebellion. That’s exactly what happened in the garden of Eden and that’s what happens each time we choose to live for ourselves rather than for God. We make ourselves His enemies, hostile toward Him. We’re fighting to see whose kingdom will win in our lives. Let me help you with that—God always wins. We need to recognize that we’re making ourselves enemies of the cross and of Christ and the Father when we choose to live for ourselves.

This lifestyle leads to a destructive end.

What will be the result? Some of you might be thinking, “Hey, I like living for myself. I’m accumulating everything I need. I’m pursuing pleasures and my life is pretty good. Why should I change anything? So God is a little angry with me? I can live with that.” But look at what Paul wrote in 3:19, “*Their end is destruction...*”

Whoa. Paul says there will be a destructive end to this type of life. He wrote, “*...they glory in their shame...*” All that someone accumulates—all the prestige they gain for themselves apart from Christ—will mean nothing. Whatever they glory in will bring them shame. In the end, it will lead to destruction.

This isn’t the only place the Bible speaks so bluntly. In Proverbs 14:12, Solomon wrote, “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*” Jesus Himself said in Matthew 7:13-14 that there is a broad way that leads to destruction and a narrow way that leads to heaven. The Bible is clear that there are many on the broad road and instead of choosing to find their hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and trusting in His provision through the cross, they are living lives for themselves. On that great and glorious day when they stand before the Lord, God will say to them, “You lived for yourself when you should have been living for Me.” If that describes us, the only expectation you and I should have is a fiery judgment in a place of eternal torment called hell.

I know what you’re thinking. “Tim, I came to your service because Easter means hope and joy and peace.” Yes! Yes, it does. The reason why we can have hope and peace and joy is because even though we are sinners and live selfish lives, God demonstrated His infinite love for us in that “*while we were still sinners Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

When Jesus died and was placed in a tomb, He did not stay there, but by the power of almighty God on that third glorious Easter day He rose from the dead, removing the shackles of sin that bound us and giving us the opportunity to become sons and daughters of the most high God.

2. Living for the Savior, which leads to joy

Yet in order for us to receive this gift, we must turn from a life that’s all about ourselves and turn to a life that is lived for our Savior. You can either live a self-centered life or a Savior-centered life. When you choose to live for Him, instead of judgment you will experience joy.

Paul spoke with such sadness about those who live for themselves. “*Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.*”

Almost like an Easter Sunday morning, the clouds roll back and the beautiful sun appears in verse 20 with a three-letter word: "But..." You don't have to live for yourself, Paul said. You don't have to let your belly be your god. You don't have to have your mind on earthly things. You can live differently. When we choose this better way, we move from a life focused on earthly things to citizenship in heaven.

Paul wrote in verses 20-21, *"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."* When we live for the Savior, it means several things.

Joy is found by learning to be His citizens.

First, living for Jesus means we need to learn to be citizens of His Kingdom. Paul said we're citizens of heaven. We can either be kings in our own kingdom, or we can be citizens of God's Kingdom. That's a decision we must make. My prayer today is that some will abandon their kingdom and start living as citizens in God's Kingdom, but this involves certain things. It requires a desire to leave our former land and head to a new land.

When my father was 16 years old, he immigrated from Baghdad, Iraq, to America. It was a massive decision, to leave all he knew and loved to go to a new land. For ten years—from 1966 to 1976—my dad lived as an alien in this land. But on the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence—July 4, 1976—my dad was part of a citizenship ceremony on Chicago's lakefront. That ceremony represented something we need to learn about spiritual citizenship. What was asked of my father will be asked of us as we join the Kingdom of heaven.

Part of the oath of citizenship was an affirmation of certain things. I'm going to read the words my dad would have affirmed back in 1976. He said, "I hereby declare on oath that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen, that I now will support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same."

You see, to be a citizen of heaven is to first of all let go of where you've been and join a new place. But in order to do this, you have to live in accordance with the new laws. So first of all you say, "No more connections with the old place and ways. When I'm in this new Kingdom, I'm going to live in accordance with its laws." When we become citizens of heaven, we say, "I'm no longer going to live with an earthly mindset; I'm going to uphold and live in accordance with the laws of the Kingdom of almighty God." Where do we find these laws? We find them in the Word of God. That's why at Village Bible Church, this Book is our guide that leads us to a life filled with joy. It protects us and keeps us from the sin that wants to ruin our lives, leading us to life everlasting.

We need to let go of the things of this earth and live with a heavenly mindset, living according to heaven's laws.

Joy is found by longing for His coming.

Why would we do this? Why would we give up a kingdom of our own to be a subject in someone else's Kingdom? Because of the promises of Christ. He says, "I'm coming back." We are waiting with a longing for His coming. Our Savior is coming back. You can't say that about a dead prophet. You can't say that about a dead teacher. But you can say that about a risen Savior. Jesus' final words in the book of Revelation are, "Yes, I am coming soon." He's on His way.

Joy is found by looking forward to the greatest change.

On that great and glorious day, you and I will witness the greatest change that will ever take place. Did you know that Easter is a preview—a sneak peek—at what will be the next greatest day in all of human history? In the day of resurrection, you and I will be changed in a twinkling of an eye. All those who have bowed the knee to Jesus and who have trusted and believed in Him—whether they are dead in the grave or alive at the time of His return—we will be changed. Paul described the change as a transformation of our lowly bodies into glorious bodies.

We saw that in what happened to Christ after His resurrection. He had a new body that allowed Him to walk through walls. He was different. And the change we too will experience will be a metamorphosis, a dramatic transformation. It will make us different from anything we've ever been before. We will be in bodies and in a place where there will be no more crying, no more shame, no more sorrow and no more pain. All of the old things will be gone. In heaven, there will be no COVID-19. There will be no "shelter in place." This is what's in store for the people of God. This is what's in store for those who make Easter their hope. This is what's in store for people who, instead of living for themselves, have decided once and for all to live first and foremost for Christ.

Let me ask you this morning: are you living for yourself or are you living for the Savior? You don't have to live for yourself anymore. You don't have to seek to fill the appetites of your nature anymore. You can find fulfillment, contentment, hope and joy when you bow the knee and give your life to Jesus.

It is then that He will give you to what you're looking for. It is then that we'll be able to look forward to His coming. It is then that we will experience a change unlike anything we've ever seen. So let me bring you back to that opening story, the "LEGO Masters" show. God has given you and me all we need for life. Will we choose to build our own structure and watch it be destroyed on that great and glorious day of judgment, or because we have built our lives on Christ, will we experience joy and new bodies and a new hope on that day?

My prayer is that you would experience that change and begin to live that kind of life, because that's what Easter is all about. We have the opportunity to stop living for ourselves and live for our risen Savior and Lord.

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.com).