

Two Radical, New Views

Jason Abbott

Okay, this is no joke. This is 100% true. I was trying to write an introduction for this sermon, and I got a charley-horse (or muscle spasm) in my right hamstring. I was literally sitting at my desk—having done no serious exercise in recent days—when, all of a sudden, my right hamstring was in a painful knot. And, I mean painful! If you’ve never had a charley-horse, they hurt bad. So, I was in my office attempting to stretch-out my leg, trying not to scream out like a little baby, working really hard in order to avoid the humiliation of calling-out to Stu or Del for help.

How pathetic; right?! Like, this is my physical reality at this point in my life! I mean, forget about physical prowess. Forget about boasting in my physical ability. I’m at the point where avoiding cramps—following a casual walk to work—qualifies as a true physical win. I mean...*seriously!*

Now, I’ll wager many of you understand me. I’ll bet you know just how I feel. If, however, you don’t, just wait. Time will change your view. Your eyes will dim. Your mind will slowdown. Your body will begin to fail you. There will come a day when a brisk walk to work gives you a charley-horse too. It’s what Scripture calls—in the old KJV—“the way of all flesh” (e.g. Joshua 23:14; 1 Kings 2:2).

Well, in today’s passage, Paul has good news concerning this. He looks ahead; he looks to the future. And, he tells us about what awaits all of us who are in Christ. Paul gives us a glimpse of our glorious, physical future. And, this little sneak-peek is meant to give you a radical, new view of yourself and of others.

Philippians 3:20-4:3

3²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

4¹ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

²I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have

contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

As we open up this passage to study it and grasp what the Lord's teaching us, we're going to find a worldview that pushes hard against our natural view of things. We will encounter (1st) A radical, new view when it comes to how we see ourselves, and (2nd) a radical, new view when it comes to how we see others. So, a radical view of you and a radical view of others.

Let's look at each in turn.

1. A radical view of you (3:20-21).

How do you view yourself? How do you think about your mind or your body?

Here's a better question for you? When you isolate how you think about them or value them, why do you think about and value them in that way? Whom did you inherit these views from?

The answer is that our culture has instructed you on how you should view you and how you should value you. It has taught you how to think about your intellect—what makes you smart or stupid, clever or dull. It's crafted in you a view of beauty—what a pretty woman or handsome man looks like. It's constantly indoctrinating you about your body—about the right size or shape, the right muscle-tone or skin-color. Isn't this true? When you truly think of where you learned to view or value yourself, weren't you mainly instructed by the culture?

Hollywood gives us an example of this kind of implicit, cultural instruction. Just consider what your lead actors and actresses look like in major-motion pictures. I just watched *Deepwater Horizon* with my wife. That film is based on true events which happened to average people, just like you and me. The cast, however, wasn't just like you and me. The cast was quite glamorous looking—chiseled and attractive. (Mark Wahlberg, Kate Hudson, and Kurt Russel play the leads.) Why couldn't they cast average looking leads—average looking heroes?¹

Or, consider this statistic. At 30-years-old, a lead actress will stop being cast as often; while for her male counterpart, it's 46-years-old.² What does that teach us

¹ You can see photos of the actors with those they portrayed [here](#).

² You can read more about the gender gap in Hollywood in [this](#) article from *Time*.

about how we should value women and men and getting older? How do portrayals, like these, change you? How do they change the way you think about yourself?

In today's text, Paul offers-up a radical idea about you...*if* you're a Christian. He says that you aren't citizens of this culture; you have a vastly superior citizenship. And, therefore, you have to begin learning to view and value yourself differently because of your new heavenly identity. We don't view or value ourselves as we are in this moment. Rather, we must begin to value ourselves, as we will ultimately be, at Christ's return. Listen again to what Paul says.

...our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (3:20-21).

Friends, the problem with our expectations and values—in this lifetime—isn't that they're too high, but that they *are not* high enough. The problem with your view of yourself is that all your standards and hopes and desires aren't glorious enough. You're settling for mediocrity. Your longing for a mere “lowly body” (3:21).

The word for “body” is the Greek word σῶμα. And, here, it means way more than simply your physical body. It refers to all of you, “not only the outward form.”³ God doesn't simply intend to give you a slim figure, six-pack abs, and a wavy mane of beautiful hair. No...that is thinking far too small. God has infinitely greater plans for you and me. The Lord wants and wills to craft in you a physique and intellect and character and worldview, which is *nothing less* than the image of God in you—Christ Jesus, God in the flesh, in you...*very God crafted in your very flesh!*

In the Bible, when people see angelic beings, they are paralyzed by their glory. They often have trouble speaking. They often attempt to worship the angelic beings. In short, they lose it. It's typically full on buffoonery.

Well, friends, your glory in Christ will surpass anything the angels can offer. In eternity, you will inhabit a station far superior and more glorious than the station of the angelic beings (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:3). In God's New Creation, you will reign alongside Christ (2 Timothy 2:12). You see, you were created to be the image bearers of God, and the Lord is going to see that goal met in you. You will once again walk

³ Ralph P. Martin, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Philippians*, 164.

with him freely. You will love him and enjoy him forever. You will be blameless and pure without any fault, shining like stars in the sky (Philippians 2:15).

Isn't that a glorious vision of you?! Isn't that a good news future for you?!

I wonder how often you think of yourself in that way. Probably not too much. Certainly not enough. If you're like me, you think a good deal about what you aren't. You think a bunch about the areas where you fall short. You let the culture teach you who you should be, what's really valuable, and how you should think. You, however, probably don't usually think about who you'll one day be in Christ.

Friends, open-up your imaginations. Dream about the glory that's before you. Dream about the majestic transformation that's coming in Jesus.

You know, we live in an art hungry neighborhood in an art hungry city.

Do you know why art is so tremendously important to the study of theology? It's important because of mind-blowing doctrines like this one—like glorification. It's essential because it's capable of communicating something of the unseen world, something of the world to come. Whether it's fiction or poetry, painting or sculpture, music or dance—art has the ability to help our mind encounter the mysteries of God. Just consider how paintings or poems can help us think differently and imaginatively about the world. Or, how a song can take you to another place!

Friends, when it comes to grasping the glory that will be ours in Jesus Christ, we need the artist's imagination. We need stories and films and paintings and songs to help us in our thinking about that glory. We need to contemplate things unseen. We need creators to help us anticipate God's New Creation, in us—his people.

You know, whenever I get to preach a mind-blowing theological doctrine—like the glorification of our bodies—I struggle to find words adequate for the task. My words fall short. I need help from poets and sculptors and painters and dancers and musicians. I need help from artists faithfully using their gifts.

Some of you are they. Consider this a calling and challenge from me.

Well, when we think of what we will be in Christ, it should transform the ways we think about ourselves. It should change our ideals. We should want much more than our culture tells us we should want. And, we should rest in the gospel certainty that one day, in Christ, we shall have it.

Well, let's turn now to the second radical, new view we should begin to have when we think about our glorious future.

2. A radical view of others (4:1-3).

Let's go back and remind ourselves of what Paul says at the end of this text. Listen to what he says to the church.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life (4:1-3).

What we have here is a command from Paul to “stand firm in the Lord” (4:1) followed by some very specific and practical relational-instructions for this church at Philippi. It's the kind of passage which we might be tempted to pass over quickly without giving it too much thought. However, that would be a mistake.

The “therefore” in verse one tells us that the commands and the instructions emerge from the doctrine of our glorification, which preceded them. In other words, Paul is saying because of this glorious future truth—because of your perfect future in Christ—live this way right now, together. If you and another believer are at odds with one another, reconcile! If you see two Christians who have a relational divide, help them to be of one mind.

Friends, Paul tells you to meditate upon the glorious future you have in Jesus; he tells you to drink it in and to exalt in it! Then, he reminds you that your brothers and sisters in Christ will share that future with you. In a sense, he's telling all of us, *You can take care of these relational divides now (in obedience to your Triune God), or you can take care of them on the day you must bow to him in obedience.*

The former will bring you commendation from Jesus, the latter merely shame. The former will glorify Jesus before a watching world; the latter will bring him glory as all creation recognizes that Christ the Lord will deal justly with every, single sin. Friends, if you're a believer, your name's indelibly written in "the book of life" (4:3), as are the names of your brothers and sisters in Christ. You and they will live together in eternity, but the sins between you will not. They will be dealt with.

Brothers and sisters, the doctrine of our future glory shouldn't simply change how we view ourselves but, also, how we view others. They are of infinite worth! They are of infinite value! And, along-with all who've trusted in Christ for salvation, despite all their sins and shortcomings and annoying tendencies, they are destined for unimaginable glory.

This future reality must change the way we relate to our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, but it must also transform the way we relate to all people—Christian and non-Christian alike.

I don't usually do this, but I want to end this sermon with an extended quote from C. S. Lewis on this very thing. Just listen to his words concerning future glory and how it must transform the way we see and live in this world. (The following is from his book *The Weight of Glory*.)

It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor.

The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken.

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare.

All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or [the] other of these destinations.

It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics.

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.⁴

⁴ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, 45-46.