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**You Are an Alien**  
Philippians 3:15-4:1

Have you ever tasted frog legs? They say it tastes a bit like chicken. Put a pot of water on the stove, crank up the heat, toss in that live little frog...and he jumps out as fast as he went in. Put a pot on the stove without the heat, throw the frog in and he is happy. He will contentedly do the back stroke around that little frog sized swimming pool. While he is happily swimming if you slowly nudge the heat up, gradually increasing the temperature....that frog will acclimatize itself and stay in. You don't even need to place a lid on the pot. It will not jump out even when it starts to boil because it slowly became used to the temperature of the water. That frog will boil to death in the pot because it did not recognize the danger. He didn't recognize the danger because it came ever so slowly, almost imperceptible in its change. Degree by hotter degree until finally it was too late.

I think we are in constant danger of becoming a frog in the pot. I think we are in danger of becoming conformed to the world views around us. Slowly degree by degree we get subtly sucked into the influences, beliefs, values, desires and priorities of the rest of the world. For some of us we may be so content in that hot kettle we don't recognize the danger. We need to get out of the kettle and stop swimming around in the hot water of worldly ideals thinking we will not be affected by it's influences. If your swimming with frogs, in a pot on a stove...chances are your going to get burned.

Just like that frog if we could see and recognize what it was doing to us, most of us would jump out and say. Woah! that's hot! I'm getting out of here. I don't want to get burned. How can we stay out of danger? How can we interpret the rising of the temperature around us? How can we stand firm for God in the midst of boiling pots of water and a lot of frogs that are calling us to join them in a warm Jacuzzi soak in their kettle. How can we keep from becoming conformed to the worldly influences around us?

Turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians 3. The author of this book has encouraged us to keep pressing on. Leave the failures and successes of the past behind and press on. The Christian life is a continual pressing. It is not a perfection this side of heaven. It's an expedition, a process that involves ups and downs. We are in danger of conformity with the world and lowering the standard to the values of the world. That is why in Philippians 3:15,16 Paul writes "Let us..who are perfect. Perfect not meaning immaculate perfection but perfect for where they are at. Let us have this attitude. Verse 16 Let us, keep living by that same standard. Pressing toward the one desire to experientially know God and the power that He has for us. Let US. It is not something we are to try and make on our own. The road is too tough we need each other, else be very susceptible to being boiled in the world's kettle of conformity. How can we stand firm in a boiling world? (READ)

We need each other. The Christian life was never meant to be lived in sanctimonious monkdom. Standing firm does not mean to stand still. It is so easy to be picked off. It is so easy to be toppled by the difficult things of life. It's easy to panic and feel great defeat and loss. We cannot afford to try and stand still. If so, we will be knocked back on our heels. To stand firm we must press on for the prize of knowing God in a deep and intimate way. We must stand firm together. How do we do that?

Point #1. Follow a Good example. Verse 17 Paul appears to sound very boastful when he exhorts the Philippians readers to "join in following my example. Yet, Paul is following Christ. Paul calls us here to observe those, study those who walk or live in the pattern, the blueprint the model, that you Philippians have seen in us. Us probably referring to Paul himself and Timothy, Ephaproditus and others who were serious about standing firm for God. Paul wasn't interested in boasting in anyone but Christ himself...but he recognized the value of examples, mentors. I learn so much better seeing someone else doing...than hearing about it or reading a book. If we want to teach someone we had better be practicing it, or at least trying to.

Mike Lupica writes about the impact mentors had on basketball star Grant Hill. In an NBA world full of flashy jewelry, big mouths, wild rages, orange hair, dances and trash talk. Grant Hill stands as an oddity. He conducts himself with elegance. Hill remembers that when

he was young, he watched Doctor Julius Erving carry himself with class. He never went out of his way to embarrass anybody. It was the Dr. J's that Hill wanted to be like. Hill feels like his generation has the wrong type of heroes. saying," I always felt that I needed to look up to the person that lived his life well. It's a matter of respect."

We need real life examples with real skin and bones. But we need to follow a good example. Who are your examples? Who are your mentors? Paul says we need examples, but be careful. In choosing your mentor v. 17 observe and study their character. Study the way that Christ is lived through them. Paul's one desire was to be like Christ so when he says be like me, he really is telling them to be like the Christ that is in Him. We can follow Christ's example from what we know in the gospels. We can follow Paul's example of following Christ by what we read in the 13 letters that he wrote including Philippians.

Choose your mentor slowly. Season them. How do they respond in the long term...throughout the spring and summer and the winter. Ask: As I look at that persons life, what is the most important thing to them? Paul said in chapter one, "For to me..to live is Christ." How do they speak to other? How do they treat those closest to them? How do their actions reflect Christ's love to those who could never repay them? What character traits do I find in them that I want God to begin working into the soil of my life?

Paul wrote to his protégé Timothy in the letter II Timothy 3:10 "But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and suffering." In Philippians we can follow the example and teaching of Paul. His ability to not be tossed back and forth as a plaything of circumstance. His desire to move toward others in a self-sacrificial way, thinking of the best interests of the other guy. We see His sovereign view of God's control and absence of grumbling. We see him continuing to press on to know God in a more intimate way even in the later years of his life.

In order to stand firm in the midst of a bad, sad world, we need to follow a good example. We need to be good examples worthy of following. Don't think you can get out of being example and excuse yourself because you feel unworthy. We are all examples to someone whether we like it or not. What that guy at work sees of Christ's light is shone

through you. What the gal in your neighborhood, club, sees of Christ is through you. What does your message of Christ look like? Don't look back...press forward. How can it become a clearer message?

In the midst of following our examples, be careful of the pitfall of the pedestal. Paul will be the first to remind that he has not arrived at perfection. That only comes on the other side of heaven. Imperfect people may disappoint. In verses 12 and 13 he repeats, "I'm not there yet, but I'm heading there...follow me lets go." I've seen so many people get wiped out by putting more faith in people than in God alone. Others can encourage and inspire us to growth, but ultimately our growth is tied to us and God, not others. Do not be discouraged thinking I can never be like...so I'll stop trying to grow. Don't fall into the pit of comparison either.

I thank God for the examples in my life who cared enough to pour their lives into me. I think of my Father, mother. Rick Reed and Mark Bailey. Pretty good sized list. Have you thanked those who have poured their lives into you? Write them a note this week. Do you need someone to follow? Begin to privately observe, study and follow. Find out what they are doing that brings them to an encounter with God and follow. We are all in danger of conformity. We need each other. Stand firm by following a good example. Join others in being that good example to follow. The message of Christ others see is the message you live.

How can we stand firm in a world pulling us down into conformity to join them for a swim in the kettle? Point #2 Weep for those destined to hopelessness. What makes you cry? What bring the tears? Look at verse 18. What makes Paul cry? Those who are enemies of the cross. Who have rebelled against the grace, forgiveness and power of the cross. Who are these people that Paul weeps for? They could be believers who once tasted the goodness of God and now have rejected its sweetness. It could be unbelievers unwilling to taste God. It could be a group labeled the Judaizers who heap on requirements to salvation. Those who trust in the flesh to get to heaven and add requirements to the cross. It could be the antinomians. Anti-against. Nomian=law. Those against the law who said no rules applied. They wished to experience more of God's forgiveness, so they sinned even more. Whatever the group, Paul grieved

over the one who's heart was set on worldly ways rejecting Christ. This makes Paul weep...what brings tears to your eyes?

Paul continues to describe these people he weeps over. Verse 19 "whose end is destruction." The word does not mean annihilation but destined to hopeless separation from God's presence in eternal judgment. No laughter, no love, no joy. Eternally separated from all that is good. And in this earth they get only a cheap substitutes that lasts as long as a captain crunch toy. This makes Paul weep..what brings tears to you?

He continues in verse 19 "whose god is their appetite" They are motivated by a sensual appetite. Eat drink and be merry. Go for it. You only go around once so do it now. Grab for all the gusto you can get. Feed your desires. Gorge your senses. After all, you deserve a break today.

These people had an incredible appetite, but it was for the wrong things. What do you hunger for? A Frenchman named Michel Lotito has a strange appetite. Lolito for some reason, likes to eat metal. In the past 25 years he has eaten 11 bicycles, seven shopping carts, a metal coffin, a cash register, a washing machine, a television and 660 feet of chain. Lolitto says it wasn't easy eating his first bicycle. He started with the metal and then finished off the rubber tires. He said it was tough to stay that extra day and finish off the rubber. Metal is tasteless but that rubber is horrible to eat. Now Lolitto says he can eat it all together. All of that seems quite amazing to us food only eaters, but he will tell you his biggest meal was a Cessna, yep..a 2500 pound aluminum, steel, Plexiglas and rubber airplane. He does all this by cutting it up into fingernail size pieces and consuming about 2 pounds a day.

He may have an iron gut but his appetite is not very healthy. He may appear not to be hurt by what he is taking in. He may tell us he is unaffected by it, but there is no nutritional value. No sustenance. No food for the body. If we are going to stand firm for Christ, we cannot afford to have unhealthy appetites that are dangerous or at best unproductive. We must cultivate a hunger and thirst for righteousness and His name. Paul's unquenched appetite was to intimately experience the knowledge and power of Christ. Those whose appetites were desiring unhealthy things made Paul weep. What causes you to weep?

Paul goes on in verse 19 to describe these people as dedicated to material things. Their minds grounded to the earth. Glorifying in the things that ought to bring them shame. They live for what is seen, not the unseen things. Buy that stuff you deserve it. Buy it you'll look great in it...yet when we continue to feed our desire for material things we can become imprisoned by them, and possibly imprisoned by debt. I read in the newspaper that Americans now have over 3 trillion dollars of debt on plastic. That is a phenomenal amount. Many have placed things as their god. They have become servants to them instead of the things serving them. They are being devoured by the monster named more. And Paul says here the things they glory in are actually reeking with shame. That makes Paul weep. What makes you cry? Do you weep for those around you that are destined to hopelessness. Paul did not write this so that we could pat ourselves on the back and say, "I'm sure glad I'm not like that" It was a warning to stay out of the kettle of conformity and encourage others to get out of the pot while they can.

Why? Paul gives the reason in the next verses. FOR verse 20. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are not carry carrying members of this world. We may be living here but this is not our home. How can we stand firm for Christ against the conforming value system of the world? Point number 3. Remember you are an alien. We are strangers we are aliens we are not of this world.

The recipients of this letter in Philippi had been granted Roman citizenship. Even though they were hundreds of miles from Rome, they were proud of their valuable Roman citizenship. It afforded them great privileges of tax exemption, protection by the armies. The people spoke Latin, they observed the Roman customs, their culture was distinctly Roman. Yet they were in a different land. Could these people understand what Paul was talking about? What a great word picture for them. Being citizens of a country in a different land.

Paul replays his thoughts from 1:27 where he urges them and us to conduct "in a manner worthy of the gospel." Conduct yourselves and citizenship are from the same word, politeuo. We get our English word politics. Our conduct ought to be in keeping with our citizenship. Our identity in Christ ought to influence our behavior. As citizens of a heavenly kingdom we are loyal to a different set of rules, a different

standard, the Bible. We have a different set of priorities as to what is important. We are to value different things. We should look like an oddity to those in the world around us. We should get people thinking we have a different accent, we sound different. We should get people asking themselves, Where are these people coming from...they aren't from around here.

Yet, this talk of being different bring fear inside of us. None of us want to be thought of as strange. I am not talking about being weird and freakish. I'm talking about wonderfully different, following a strangely other centered value system that thinks with an eternal perspective not bound by time or this world's system. We live not without hope as others. We are waiting for our Savior to return for us. That word in verse 20 has the idea of tip-toe anticipation eagerly awaiting Christ's return. That means we are looking to go, not padding ourselves to stay. We can stand firm against conformity by remembering we are aliens. This world is not my home...I'm just passing through.

Are you excited about heaven? Paul talks here about our lowly bodies, our earth suits being transformed to heavenly bodies. I heard a few Amens out there. We will become like Christ in essential character, a physical body just as Christ did when he ate fish and bread and talked and spoke with his disciples after He was resurrected. Yet, with no limitations of sin and disease. We can finally get out of our struggling earth suit that demands so much of our time and attention and constantly fails us. 1John 3:2 Beloved now are we the sons of God and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. But we know that when he appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. Paul says don't get comfortable here. We are going to be heading home, and it's going to be great. God identified with our humility so that we could then identify and join Him in His glorification. We are joined in his death on the cross and will one day join with Him in His resurrection. No more pain. No fear. Amen?

D.L. Moody warned people not to become so heavenly minded that they were of no earthly good. He was concerned about those who are so mystical, dreamy and impractical that no one could relate with them. I think we are so earthly minded that we create no hunger in others for heavenly things. We are so caught up, captivated by the material that

the light of Christ inside of us is barely a flicker for others to see. Verse 1 of chapter 4 calls us to stand firm? Are you following a good example? Are you being one? Do you weep for those around you who are destined to hopelessness? Are you remembering that you are an alien? that this is not your home? Is our behavior consistent with our identity in Christ? How about in some of those remote corners of your life? In the everyday routine of daily living? Can the waitress the restaurant tell by the way you treat her that you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven? How about your neighbor? Does he suspect by the way you treat him that you may be a citizen of God's kingdom. Can the people on the river road and 503 tell a difference by the way you drive? What countries values are you loyally following when you travel. Do you morals match heavens behind your doors at home? How do you treat people on the phone? those people you work with? Can they tell by the way you treat them that you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven?

Don't be subtly wooed into taking a swim in the kettle of conformity. There may be a time when you have a tough time jumping out. Follow a good example. Weep for those destined to hopelessness. Remember you are an alien and stand firm. The end of verse 21 says that one day God will subject all things to Himself. One day God will return creation to it's prior good and reverse the corrupting affects of sin. One day God will put things back in there place. Just like picking up the playroom after the kids have wreaked havoc for a day. One day humanities furniture will be replaced. Get out of the kettle. You know which one your in. Get out because it's starting to boil.