

Four Characteristics Of Christians In Time

Text : **Philippians 3: 2-16**

A. One of the very significant differences between God and man is time.

S#1.
S#2.

1. Man (*especially western man*) is very concerned about time.
 - a. We live by our schedules and don't much like them being interrupted.
 - b. Most of us carry a timekeeping device at all times. (*watch, phone, etc.*)
 - c. Americans quickly become upset when someone keeps us waiting or is late. S#3.
 * *Would you go to the doctor more if he didn't keep you waiting so long ?*
2. Many of man's concerns are relevant to time.
 - a. Concerned about things done or things not completed in the past.
 - b. Worried about what the future may bring.
3. God doesn't share our concerns about time. (*So it's never too late to draw near*)
 - a. **II Pet. 3: 8-9** Do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (Compare : **Exod. 3: 13-14** "I AM") S#4.
 - b. Time is totally irrelevant to God .. He sees ALL time as now. (*So He can't forget*)

B. Since God created man in time, He instructed us how to live in it.

S#5.

1. **Phil. 3: 13-14** ... forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. S#6.
 - a. One is to learn from the past, but not dwell on it.
 - b. The present is to be used as a passageway to the future.
2. Those outside of Christ are helpless to deal with time as God ordains.

C. There are four unique characteristics of a Christian with respect to time.

ONLY A Christian can :

S#7.

1. Can truly deal with the past.
2. Can fully live in the present.
3. Can wholeheartedly welcome the future.
4. Can ever enter Heaven.

Satan has a counterfeit message for each of these to approximate Christianity, but by this lesson we will see these four characteristics are accurate.

I. Only a Christian can truly deal with the past.**S#8.****A. This applies personally to each one of us.**

1. Every person has to deal with things he has done or not done in the past.
2. The God who cannot forget requires accountability for our past.
3. Satan attempts to use delusions to prevent our dealing with our past.

B. He seeks to delude us into believing the past never happened.**S#9.**

1. As one ages he puts the past behind him, he mellows and he changes.
 - a. The aged man no longer thinks of himself as he did when he was young.
 - b. It's hard to picture the gentle gray-haired people as rebellious sinners.
2. As we put past behind us, we want others to forget it as well, especially God.
 - a. David prayed, "**Do not remember the sins of my youth**" .. **Psa. 25:7**
 - b. Example : An elderly man who abused his family for years was made an elder.
3. **God sees every sin as now (all time is now)** and demands accountability for them.
 - a. Thank God the Christian has the blood of Christ to atone for his past sins.
 - b. All outside of Christ are outside grace and must account for every transgression.

C. Satan deludes people into thinking they can excuse their sins.**S#10.**

1. "*It wasn't my fault, I came from a broken home so I wasn't loved.*"
2. "Guilt manipulation" relieves guilt feelings, **BUT** it can never transfer guilt.

D. Satan deludes people by convincing them they can drown their past sins.**S#11.**

1. Some seek to make memories of the past go away using the pleasures of the world.
2. Others bury themselves in the quest for worldly success. (wealth & respect)

E. Satan deludes people into thinking they can atone for their past sins.**S#12.**

1. If my good deeds exceed my bad deeds, God will accept me.
 - a. "**The wages of sin is death**" **Rom. 6: 23** (*one sin = death*)
 - b. "**There is none righteous, not even one**" **Rom. 3: 10** (Cf. – **Isa. 64: 6**)
2. If there was a way for man to atone for his own sins, Christ wouldn't have died.

S#13.**F. All of these attempts are feudal because everyone sins and God remembers all.**

1. When we stand before God, He will look at the totality of our lives. (*as one picture*)
Matt. 12: 36 – **But I tell you that every careless word that people speak,**
they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment

S#14.

2. Only Christians can truly deal with their past because only Christ forgives sin. **S#15.**

a. **Col. 2: 13** – When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

b. Sins washed away by the blood of Christ are removed from God's memory. **S#16.**

Heb. 10: 17 – And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

II. Only the Christian can truly live IN the present.

S#17.

A. Notice I said “IN” the present and not “FOR” the present.

1. We live in the “now generation” where instant gratification is the order of the day.
2. The world's philosophy is “*Live for the moment.*”

B. In our modern culture all ages live by the same basic mindset :

S#18.

1. Whether old, middle aged or young the only thing that matters is the here and now.
2. I want it and I want it NOW. (*Favorite chant of folks on the picket line.*)

C. This attitude is not just a modern thing.

S#19.

1. **Luke 12: 15** – Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”

2. **Luke 12: 23** – For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

3. If you measure your life by things you're not even living .. just existing.

b. Our brief sojourn on earth is preparation for a life that never ends. (*good & evil*)

c. Prepare well because your preparation determines your eternal lifestyle.

4. God calls the lifestyle of this world death .. eternal separation from Him.

S#20.

a. **Eph. 2: 1-3** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived **S#21.**
in the desires of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. **S#22.**

b. The person in the world lives to make self happy, to accomplish personal goals.

c. This lifestyle is one that makes SELF God. (*Reason for broken marriages*)

D. Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly. **John 10: 10**

S#23.

1. Christians can experience an abundance of joy while in deep poverty.

II Cor. 8: 2 – that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.

S#24.

2. Life in the kingdom of God is joyous, but not about things.

Rom. 14: 16-17 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; **17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. **S#25.**

- a. It's about Righteousness, Peace, and Joy
- b. The world can't understand our joy so they ridicule it. (*our contentment*)

III. Only the Christian can wholeheartedly welcome the future.

S#26.

A. Only God knows what will happen tomorrow.

1. Some live in fear of the future. “*What if ... ?*”
2. Some fatalistically await the future. (*Que Sera, Sera*)
3. Some attempt to manipulate the future hoping to grasp opportunities from it.

B. Only the Christian can truly welcome the future.

S#27.

1. The best the unbeliever can do is to :
 - a. Welcome the challenges desiring that they be to his advantage.
 - b. Wish for the future to bring opportunities for gain and for pleasure.
2. However, realistically, the future is not all challenges and opportunities.
 - a. For some it will bring tragedy, loss, pain and suffering.
 - b. It will eventually bring death to all, and that sooner for some than for others.
3. The non-Christian can weigh his desires against what materializes, **but** in the end he can do nothing more than accept the inevitable.

C. Though the Christian does not know what will happen, he has no fear because he knows who holds the future in His hands.

1. He knows that whatever happens he will have opportunity to glorify God.
2. He knows that whatever happens will eventually work to his good.
 - a. **Rom. 8: 28** – And we know that God **causes** all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. **S#28.**
 - b. We **KNOW** ... not we believe, ... not we hope ... **we know.**
 - c. All things ... not some things, not most things ... **ALL** things.
 - d. All things are working together in **a plan** that is under our Father's control.
3. Ultimately, the future belongs to those who belong to God.
 - a. God promises us a future that's better than all our pasts.

- b. Upon this basis the Christian can wholeheartedly welcome the future, **no matter what it holds.**

IV. Only the Christian can ever enter Heaven.

S#29.

A. Satan advocates two extremes about Heaven and both are wrong.

1. Satan has convinced some that there is no such thing as Hell.
 - a. He convinces the “educated” that believing in an afterlife is foolishness .. myth.
 - b. **“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ Psa. 14:1 ... educated fools**
2. Satan has convinced others that everyone will get to Heaven.
 - a. *“There’s no way a loving God would condemn anyone to eternal punishment.”*
 - b. **II Thes. 1: 6–10** For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction **S#30.** those who afflict you, ⁷ and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out **S#31.** retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence **S#32.** of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.
 - c. From this text notice the following :
 - 1) God’s judgment is **“just.”**
 - 2) God’s judgment is **“retribution”**, i.e., punishment.
 - 3) His judgment is only on those who do not acknowledge (**“not know”**) Him as God.
 - 4) His judgment is only on those who do not obey His gospel (**“not obey the gospel”**).
 - 5) God’s judgment is **“eternal destruction.”** (*Not temporary or probationary*)
 - 6) God’s judgment is to be banished from His presence. **“away from His presence.”**

S#33.

B. The bible shows Satan’s doctrines to be lies ... Heaven is real, but few will go.

1. **Matt. 7: 13–14** Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the **S#34.** way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

From this text we learn :

- a. It is easy to be lost and many will be eternally separated from the presence of God.
- b. There are only few who will be diligent enough to stay on the road to Heaven.

2. **Matt. 7: 21–23** Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven will enter. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, ^{#36.} and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’ **S#35.**

From this text we learn :

- a. There are requirements for entering into Heaven ... **obedience** ... “does the will”
- b. Many who THINK they are saved are not. ... **did we not prophesy.**
- c. Some religious activities commonly done in Jesus’ name are not obedience.
- d. Some very religious people have NEVER had a relationship with God .. **are lost.**

CONCLUSION :

A. God created His people to live within the sphere of time and teaches us how.

1. **Phil. 3: 13–14** Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; **S#37.** but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

From this text we learn :

- a. **Forgetting** ... We must leave the past behind us. (*Can’t change it, but God can*)
 - b. **Reaching** ... We must actively use each day to serve God. (*secure our future*)
 - c. **Press on** ... We must not become distracted or discouraged. (*keep on serving*)
 - d. **The goal** ... We must never forget that we’re progressing toward a goal ... **Heaven.**
2. Satan will do his best to distract us from our goal,
but the victory is ours so long as we stay in Christ.
- a. **II Tim. 2: 10** – For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. **S#38.**
 - b. **John 14: 6** – Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. **S#39.**

B. If you are in Christ :

S#40.

1. You can truly deal with the **past** because all of your past mistakes are forgotten.
2. You can fully live in the **present** because you know your purpose in life.
3. You can wholeheartedly welcome the **future** because your Father controls it.
4. You can enter **Heaven** because your older brother has prepared a place for you. **#41.**

Lesson Text :**Philippians 3: 2-16**

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; **3** for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, **4** although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: **5** circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; **6** as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. **7** But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8** More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, **9** and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, **10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; **11** in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **15** Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; **16** however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.