

“Heavenly Citizenship – Part 2”
Philippians 3:20
(Preached at Trinity, May 14, 2017)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verses 8-14** Paul described the grand focus of his life – Jesus Christ our Lord.
Philippians 3:8 NAU - "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"
2. The context of **Verse 8** find’s Paul’s willingness to abandon the religious works that he had previously trusted, it also applied universally in Paul’s life. Once he met Christ every other earthly treasure lost its value. Christ shined brighter than everything else in life.
3. Although very much involved in this life, Paul maintained an eternal focus, pressing towards heaven and joyously awaiting the return of Christ.
Philippians 3:12-14 NAU - "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."
4. Then in **Verses 15-20** Paul charged his readers to maintain this same attitude. In this passage, Paul sets before us the two types of people in the world.
 - A. One has their sights set on eternity and are steadfastly traveling towards their home. We call them heavenly minded. Paul places himself in this group. It’s the path of Christianity.
 - B. The other type are those Paul describes in **Verse 19** “set their minds on earthly things.” We call them worldly minded. Their sights are set on the things of this earth and they spend all of their energy seeking earthly things. They can’t see beyond the grave. All of their attention is focused on the pleasures and wealth of this life.
5. But these things must not characterize us. We are dwelling in this present age but we have been raised above it. Our citizenship is in a different realm.
Philippians 3:20 NAU - "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"
6. Paul is also presenting the familiar “already/not yet” pattern so consistently taught in the New Testament. We have been saved but we have not yet entered into the fullness that we will enjoy at the end.
“Our citizenship IS in heaven from which also we eagerly wait . . .”
We have been delivered but we are still awaiting our Deliverer.
We live in the reality of the *already* but maintain a great focus on the *not yet*.
7. Last week I asked the question, what are some of the characteristics of those who have entered such a life—the life of pilgrims on their journey home?

8. The first characteristic of heavenly pilgrims that we saw last week was their “other-mindedness.” In other words, they live above this world.
 - a. The Christian is in a unique dual existence
We dwell in this present realm. We are a part of it. God has given us dominion over the earth and we take this mandate very seriously.
 - b. But our life in this world is always governed by our faith. Everything has an eye upon Christ. And everything has an eye on eternity. Our heavenly citizenship affects everything in this life
9. This morning I want to set before you two other distinctives of those whose citizenship is in heaven.
 - I. Heavenly pilgrims are driven by a desire for righteousness
 - A. Pilgrims are always uncomfortable in this life
 1. Remember how it is described:
Philippians 2:14-15 NAU - "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation"
Paul called it an evil age
Galatians 1:3-4 NAU - "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,"
 2. Peter wrote of the condition of Lot in Sodom –
2 Peter 2:7 NAU - "He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men"
The word for “oppressed” means “to wear down.”
The ESV & NIV translate it “distressed,” KJV: “vexed”
 3. The wicked ways of this world are ever before us. They vex us. Every generation casts emphasis upon different aspects of evil. Our generation has its own points of priority and they demand conformity.
 - a. Our generation has made a god of sexual pleasure.
Adultery and fornication is now the norm. Marriage has fallen out of favor. Abortion is the law of the land. Pornography is a multi-billion dollar business.
 - b. Homosexuality has also become the law of our land—to speak against it is considered hate speech.
 - c. Materialism has swallowed us up. Any degree of evil is tolerated with our politicians as long as they maintain our economy. We have a lifestyle unprecedented in the history of the world.
 - d. We are continually being taught that there is no God. Our existence is due to a random set of cosmic events. Since the earth has no Creator it is advanced to a godlike state. Environmentalism is to be worshipped.

- e. There are no moral absolutes. Anything and everything is considered acceptable as long as it can be justified. There is no absolute truth, no ultimate reckoning, no heaven or hell. It is a world characterized by John Lennon:

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today...

- B. We are not a part of this wicked and perverse world. Instead we give ourselves to the purity of the pilgrim life

1. Paul stressed this over and over

Colossians 3:1-3 NAU - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Colossians 3:12-17 NAU - "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

2. We read of it in Paul's letter to Titus

Titus 2:11-14 NAU - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

3. This is consistent with Paul's words in Chapter 1

Philippians 1:27 NAU - "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"

The word for "conduct" is πολιτεύομαι – It literally means to "live as a citizen." In other words, there are certain patterns of behavior that depend on the place of your citizenship. Citizenship has responsibilities and duties.

4. Those who have the hope of the eternal inheritance seek holiness now
William Hendriksen: “The hope of Christ’s Return has sanctifying power. If a person makes a god of his belly and sets his mind on earthly things, how can he ever expect to be welcomed by the spotlessly holy and infinitely glorious Christ at his brilliant advent?”¹

1 John 3:2-3 NAU - "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.³ And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

2 Peter 3:11-13 NAU - "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

II. Heavenly pilgrims persevere in the joy and expectation of their eternal home

- A. The lost man is concerned about earthly things
1. He stores up for himself earthly things.
 2. He sets his heart upon earthly things – they are the chief source of his joy
 3. He worries about earthly things
In other words, we should remind ourselves that
WORRYING IS BEHAVING JUST LIKE A LOST MAN!
 4. He has little thought beyond this life.
- B. The believer recognizes that his reward is not yet, but he joyously awaits it
1. The early church lived in constant expectation of the return of Christ. The return of Christ provided great comfort as they suffered martyrdom or imprisonment.
Philippians 3:20 NAU - "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"
 2. Paul reminded the Church of Thessalonica:
1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:1 NAU - "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."

¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Philippians*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 5:183.

3. As Christian pilgrims, we understand that everything in this world is ending. We are seeking a reward that is imperishable
Matthew 6:19-21 NAU - "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 NAU - "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."

C. Since this is not our home we are not establishing deep roots.

1. We haven't yet seen our Lord, yet we long for Him and wait for Him
1 Peter 1:8-9 NAU - " though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."
2. We haven't yet seen our heavenly city but we are confident of our citizenship and we press towards it. We focus our life on seeking heavenly things.

Hebrews 11:13-16 NAU - "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. ¹⁵ And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them."

3. The godly man is a homeless man in this world – our home is in glory
- a. If this is not our home why do we spend all of energies on things which pertain to it?
 - b. Worldly things sap our energy and render us useless in the kingdom
1 Peter 2:11 NAU - "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."

Conclusion:

1. May God grant us the grace to remember the truth of **Verse 20**.
Philippians 3:20 NAU - "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"
2. We are awaiting the glorious return of Christ and the restoration of all things. We are awaiting the dawning of the new heavens and new earth when all things will be renewed.
3. The Christian is living this renewed life now and living in expectation of what's to come.
 - A. His life is a continual testimony to the reversal of the curse of the fall
The Christian seeks to honor God in life as he awaits his final glorification.
 - B. He sees Christ as reigning victoriously now
 1. He is presently upon His throne
 2. The Christian is not threatened by worldly politics or the present political system. The Kingdom of our Lord transcends this world.
4. May God help us to live with such a glorious expectation.