

“Heavenly Citizenship – Part 1”
Philippians 3:20
(Preached at Trinity, May 7, 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. As we've seen, in this passage Paul is setting 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. He describes himself in **Verses 12-14** –
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."
 - 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 present world.
2. As we've seen, both groups have their role models; both have their guides. We will follow one or the other.
 - A. Paul commands us to look to him and others who keep this heavenly mindset.
Philippians 3:17 NAU - "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."
 - B. The people of this world, however, exert a powerful influence. They are the majority and in many ways, they make the rules. They establish the ways of this world, the styles and customs, the carnal path to happiness. The influence of earthly-minded people is especially dangerous when received into the church and regarded as Christians. Paul labels them as "enemies of the cross."
3. Paul has declared the great focus of his life.
Philippians 3:14 NAU - "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."
Everything in Paul's life was focused upon Jesus Christ.
Philippians 3:8-9 NAU - "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"
Philippians 3:10 NAU - "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death"
Philippians 1:21 NAU - "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

- 1 Corinthians 2:2 NAU** - "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."
- Galatians 2:20 NAU** - "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."
4. In **Verse 17** he charges us to follow his example of pressing towards the upward call of Christ. In **Verses 18-19** he contrasts this with those who set their minds on earthly things. Then in **Verse 20** he reminds us that the Christian's citizenship is in heaven. In other words, the Christian should be heavenly minded rather than earthly minded. Paul is contrasting heavenly things and earthly things.
5. This is a serious matter. We often dismiss the warnings against worldliness. After all, we live in a world of worldliness. Paul declares the condemnation of those who set their minds on earthly things.
- Philippians 3:19 NAU** - "whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things."
- 1 John 2:15 NAU** - "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."
- James 4:4 NAU** - "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."
6. Paul implies in these verses that there were "many" who professed to be Christians whose greatest energy was on satisfying the desires of the flesh. They kept their minds on earthly things. They were deluded. Their end will be destruction, which is a metaphor for hell.
7. Paul warned Timothy of those who would falsely profess Christianity but remained unconverted and earthbound.
- A. He wrote of Demas who forsook him out of a love for this world.
2 Timothy 4:10 NAU - "Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me"
- B. He warned Timothy to avoid such who loved worldly pleasure more than they loved God, who possessed only a "form" of religion.
2 Timothy 3:1-5 NAU - "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these."
8. All of us used to have our hearts and minds on earthly things but these things must no longer characterize us.
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NAU** - "do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."
- Ephesians 2:3-6 NAU** - "we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of

wrath, even as the rest. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,"

9. 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"

- a. This word for "citizenship" is πολίτευμα, a noun which literally speaks of a form of government. It is similar to the word we saw in **Chapter 1:27** where Paul used a verb charging the Philippians to live in a manner worthy of a citizen of the Gospel of Christ.
- b. This would have struck a particular note with the Philippian Christians. Citizens of Philippi thought of Rome as their native land. They had been taught to call Caesar lord.
- c. Paul is reminding them that as Christians our citizenship transcends this world. They serve the Lord of lords and are eagerly awaiting His return in great power.

Philippians 2:11 NAU - "that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

10. Paul is describing our present condition.

Philippians 3:20 NAU - "For our citizenship is in heaven"

But 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*.

11. What are some of the characteristics of those who have entered such a life—the life of pilgrims on their journey home? Remember, Paul is describing the life of the Christian. He is describing *OUR* life. He is contrasting those who mind heavenly things with those who mind earthly things.

I. They are other minded

A. They live above this world.

1. The Christian is in a unique dual existence
 - a. We dwell in this present realm. We are a part of it. We have families, occupations, responsibilities. Houses and cars to maintain. Even the church has buildings that must be cared for.
 - b. And we are taught to submit to the governing authorities of this world.
2. In the midst of this and all of the daily activities and duties of this life we are constantly aware of the temporal nature of it and the ever-present permanent existence of our eternal home, the heavenly City of God where our true citizenship abides. And we are aware of our sovereign Lord whom we serve and of whose return we patiently await.

3. Although we are in this world and have need of earthly things they are not our chief goal
Matthew 6:31-33 NAU - "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' ³² "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
- B. Although our citizenship is in heaven, however, we do not maintain a passive escapist mentality but an active living out of our faith in this present world.
1. Following the Daniel model as he faithfully served the realm of Nebuchadnezzar, the Christian remains apart from and yet engaged in the secular world. As luminaries we shine upon our world of darkness.
 - a. We seek to improve upon our culture in such a way that we reflect hearts of service while reflecting the glory of God. We recognize the Creation mandate to exercise dominion over the earth. John Calvin: "The custody of the garden was given in charge to Adam, to show that we possess the things which God has committed into our hands, on the condition, that being content with a frugal and moderate use of them, we should take care of what shall remain. Let him who possesses a field so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence; but let him endeavor to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated. Let him so feed on its fruits, that he neither dissipates it by luxury, or permits to be marred or ruined by neglect."¹
 - b. We live above this world and yet we understand that God is IN this world. He sent Christ into this world as Redeemer. The Gospel is the only hope for this world and God has entrusted the Gospel to us. We must engage this world with the Gospel.
 - c. As we live in this world we desire everything in our lives to reflect God's glory.
Being other-worldly does not mean we turn our back on our duty in this world.
 - d. Like Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court, our faith dominates every aspect of our lives. We reject the notion of a division between the secular and the sacred. Our modern culture insists on a strict separation between one's personal faith and how he interacts in society
 - e. For the Christian, *everything* is defined in terms of our relationship with Christ. Our relationship with Him governs everything. His Word is our rule—we examine everything through the lens of Scripture.

¹ Calvin, John, *A Commentary on Genesis, Geneva Series*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), Page 125.

2. Too often professing Christians live in such a way that their Christianity has little impact upon how they live.
Phil Johnson writes: “It is not uncommon to find well-meaning evildoers, as it were, who are quite sincerely convinced that they are Christians, and attend church faithfully, and may even hold a position of leadership, but who have absorbed a worldview that makes it easy for them to ignore their Christian principles when it comes time to do the practical business of daily living.”²
3. Our heavenly citizenship affects everything in this life—the here and now.
Dennis Johnson – “Although we have not yet seen that city, our status as its citizens is already making a difference, transforming our values and drawing us to examples worth imitating. Paul’s call to follow his footsteps implies the promise that God’s grace is strong enough to snap us out of the patterns that the past has imprinted on our minds and hearts. For those who trust in Jesus Christ, *who we are* is no longer determined by *where we have come from*, but instead by *where we are going*.”³
4. Our happiness is not bound up in our earthly possessions. We enjoy the good things of life as tokens of God’s goodness and we receive them with thanksgiving, but we do not idolize them. We remain content when God chooses to take them away.
5. We have much greater treasures than earthly things, much greater things of value.
Something for all of us to ponder: If we were arrested for our faith and cast into prison would we have greater sorrow for the loss of our Bibles or our cellphone?

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.
3. And in this life we are busy advancing the Gospel. Through the Gospel the curse of sin is reversed. That’s our great desire.
As Isaac Watts wrote:
*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.*
4. The Christian is living this renewed life now but anxiously awaits the fullness that is yet to come. Such people do not live as if this world is all there is. And they don’t live as if their faith has no impact upon how they live their daily lives.

² Pearcey, Nancy. Total Truth (Study Guide Edition - Trade Paperback): Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity (p. 12). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

³ Dennis E. Johnson, *Philippians*, eds. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary, 1st ed., (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 227.