

## **Living like a Citizen of Heaven**

### **Philippians 3:17-21**

#### **Introduction:**

1. Where is your citizenship? You say, "I'm a citizen of America." Yes, but that is only temporary. One day all of us will die, leave this world, and slip into eternity.
2. The most crucial question is, "Where is your eternal citizenship?" Are you a citizen of heaven?
3. In verse 20, Paul states, "*For our conversation is in heaven...*"
  - "Conversation" literally means "citizenship, life."
4. So, a person who is a Christian has a dual citizenship - a temporary one on earth, and an eternal one in heaven.
5. How does a person become a citizen of heaven? Sin cannot enter heaven, so that leaves all of us on the outside looking in. But, Jesus Christ came to this earth and made a full and complete payment for sin on the cross.
6. When we trust Christ and Him alone to save and cleanse us of our sin, Christ's Spirit immediately enters our hearts, cleanses us, and makes us fit to dwell in God's presence. vs. 9
7. The moment sinners trust Christ, Christ makes us citizens of heaven with our names written down in the Book of Life in heaven.
8. If you are a citizen of heaven, it should make a difference in the way you live on earth. The church of Jesus Christ is a colony of heaven on earth. People should be able to notice a difference in the way we live our daily lives.
9. How can we make a difference on this earth by living like citizens of heaven?

#### **First, by following the right example. vs. 17**

1. In verse 17, Paul encourages these believers to follow him and the example that he had set for them.
  - Some might view this as cockiness or arrogance, but it is not at all.
2. Paul was a spiritual father to these people, and was an example and role model for them to follow. **1 Corinthians 4:15-16**
3. Paul knew that he was following the Lord and walking after Him, so he did not hesitate to say, "Follow me." **1 Corinthians 11:1**
4. Paul knew the power of a godly example, and this is why he told Timothy to be an example of the believers. **1 Timothy 4:12; cf. Titus 2:7**
5. All of us need spiritual mentors in our lives, who can not only tell us, but show us how to live like a citizen of heaven.
6. On this earth, there will be plenty of ungodly examples. We know that the world we live in is full of hatred, greed, pride, lust, covetousness, etc.
7. What a difference it makes when we have a godly mentor in our lives that can model the actions and attitudes that a citizen of heaven is supposed to possess (love, purity, gentleness, goodness, faith, etc).

#### **Second, by embracing the cross. vs. 18-19**

1. The cross is the focal point of all history. On the cross, God forever dealt with the sin issue created by Adam and Eve. Jesus gave Himself to die and pay sin's price.
2. **Romans 5:8** makes it clear, Christ died for us. This is why Satan hates the cross so much. Satan thought that the cross meant victory for him, but instead it spelled his defeat.

- It meant that God could justly offer His grace and forgiveness to every person in the world.
  - This is also why Satan has legions of people that are as Paul said, "*enemies of the cross.*"
3. As citizens of heaven, our attitude should be just the opposite. We should embrace the cross and its message. **Galatians 6:14**
  4. Embracing the cross means that we fully realize that this world is not our home. This earth is not what it is all about for us. Our hearts are set on heavenly things of true value. **Colossians 3:2**
  5. If I embrace the cross in my daily life, it means that I realize that I am dead to all the things that the world values and esteems. The fame and fortune of this world is not what I live for. I live unto Christ who died for me and rose again. I live to do His will.
  6. If I embrace the cross, this means that **Galatians 2:20** is real to me. I am dead to self-will, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, self-desires, self-promotion, selfish living.
  7. Notice the difference in attitude with the enemies of the cross. vs. 19
    - Their God is their own belly (what makes them feel good), their glory is in their shame (**Illustration:** Jerry Springer), they mind earthly things (they live for this world with no thought of eternity).
  8. What a difference and impact it makes when a citizen of heaven actually **lives** like a citizen of heaven, embracing the cross and its message, daily.

**Third, by living in anticipation of Christ's return. vs. 20-21**

1. The Bible is very straightforward. Jesus will return.
  - Jesus will return in the air for the church, the body of Christ.
  - Seven years later, Jesus will return to earth to usher in His kingdom on earth.
2. We call Christ's return for the church the rapture, based on **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**.
3. Jesus is currently at the right hand of the Father, but one day He will leave His seat and come for all those who are in Christ. "*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...*" we will be caught up and leave everything on this earth behind.
4. Look at verse 20 in our text. It says, "...we look." **cf. Titus 2:13** - "*Looking for that...*" **cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:8**
5. As citizens of heaven, we should be looking for, waiting for, and anticipating the return of Jesus Christ our Savior from heaven.
6. At that moment when He returns, He will change these vile, sinful, corruptible bodies and transform them into new bodies that will be sinless like Christ's body.
7. Christ will make us fit to reside in our eternal home in the heavenlies. We will have bodies that can function in the heavenly realm and serve Christ in the ages to come. vs. 21
8. Are you living in anticipation of His coming? Are you aligning your priorities and living your life in a way that if He were to come right now, you wouldn't be ashamed?

**Are you living like a citizen of heaven? Or, have you been living your life like this earth will be your home forever? Let's begin living like citizens of heaven!**