

Citizens of Heaven

In Philippians 3:20-21, we read:

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

“Our citizenship is in heaven,” says the Word of God. We may be of different nationality, age, color, or language but if we are disciples of Jesus Christ, our citizenship is the same, and it is in heaven! That is where we belong. And that is where our eyes should be fixed, eagerly awaiting the coming of our Lord! As Romans 8:22-23 tells us:

Romans 8:22-23

“For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”

We are now in a lowly body. We “groan within ourselves” waiting for the day when this lowly body will be redeemed. This day must be the focus of our attention, and the Lord Jesus must be the One on whom we should fix our eyes! We must not allow anything to take Him away from our eyes or hide Him from us.

In the above passage from Philippians, we started at verse 20. This passage is part of a larger one that begins in verse 17. Let's read it in its entirety, because verses 17-19 are also very important:

Philippians 3:17-21

"Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

See the part I have underlined. Not all have their eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus. Not all walk as citizens of heaven. There are those whose hearts are set on earthly things. I don't think Paul is talking here about people who were outside the church. Such people, by definition, cannot have their eyes fixed on heavenly things. Therefore, Paul could not be talking about such people. Instead, he is talking about members of the church. Such members of the church are also mentioned by Peter in 2 Peter 2 and by Judas in his epistle. Members of the church whose god is not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly. Who may seem to honor Him with their lips, but dishonor Him with their actions. Members of the church whose glory is in their shame or in their shameful deeds. As Judas says: "they pervert the grace of our God into sensuality" (Jude 1:4). In everything that a saint should normally be ashamed of, they boast! Members of the church who have their minds set on earthly things. They may call them blessings. Forget the blessings of this earth, my brother and sister. They are all temporary, weak, and may even disappoint you. We have the greatest blessing, and it is not earthly, but heavenly: we are citizens of heaven. So let us turn our eyes to Jesus and Him alone!

Returning to what Paul says, see that it was not one or two who did this, but many. See also that he says that many were walking in this way. Walking means action.

Paul is talking about people who, by their actions, prove themselves to be enemies of the cross of Christ, having their belly as their god and their minds set on earthly things. Do not follow any of them, no matter how nice their words may be. Their end, as Paul says, is destruction. For, as he also says:

Romans 8:12-13

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. **For if you live according to the flesh you will die;** but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

If we live according to the flesh, we will die! We must not have any illusions about this! The end of these things is death. But our end, if we follow our Lord Jesus Christ by doing His commands, will be the new Jerusalem.

Galatians 4:26

“but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.”

This is our city, my dear brothers and sisters. Although God is actively present in this life, every minute and every second of it, the truth is that this world is not the one on which we should focus our attention. In fact, in this world we will have tribulation. As the Lord said:

John 16:33

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you will have tribulation;** but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

And Acts 14:21-22

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, **“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”**”

And 2 Timothy 3:12

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

The Christian life is not a path filled with earthly “blessings” and satisfaction of the flesh! Anyone who has led you to believe this has lied to you. And many do this today. Tons of books, videos, and seminars have been produced on “how to claim your blessings now,” “how to get the best from God.” How to claim your “rights” as children of God. As if God were a machine and they would give you the secret key to unlock it, so that earthly “blessings” would flow into your life. Although Paul says not to focus on earthly things, they want us to focus on exactly that! The result of these false teachers is a large number of worldly “Christians,” selfish beings who run after “blessings” to consume them in their pleasures. People who are sometimes more worldly than the worldly. But brothers and sisters, let us not be deceived. As James 4:3-4 says:

James 4:3-4

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**”

Do you want to be a friend of the world? Do you want to do what the world does, to live as the world lives? Then you will not be a friend of God but of the world! Don't misunderstand me. God gives gifts to His children and He gives them abundantly! But

that is not the point. We are not here for that. We are here to walk the path of faith, doing God's will, regardless of the cost! And that path means having our eyes fixed not on earthly things, but on heavenly things. Again, Paul tells us:

Colossians 3:1-6

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.** For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience."

We turn our heart to things above, not to things on earth, putting to death "fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." And if we do this then:

2 Peter 1:10-11

"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; **for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**"

A rich entrance into the Kingdom of our Lord is what we should desire! That is where our eyes should be fixed! As the Lord said:

Matthew 6:19-21

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where

neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

We must store up treasures in heaven. These treasures must be the focus of our attention, not earthly treasures. And how do we do that? By thinking about heavenly things and giving up the earthly things. By keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and not giving in to temptation. By enduring trials and putting to death the deeds of the flesh. In a nutshell: by trying to do God's will in our lives, whatever the cost.

In summary, being citizens of heaven is not something passive. As Christians, we are not citizens of this world. However, if we behave according to this world, we effectively prove that we are actually citizens of this world. In this case, we cease to be citizens of heaven! We cannot be both! As citizens of heaven, we have our eyes fixed on our Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform this humble body and give us a body like His glorious body. We have our eyes fixed on our heavenly city, the new Jerusalem. Here we will have sorrows and tears, but there God will wipe away every tear.

Revelation 21:1-4

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. **“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”**

So stay strong, my dear brothers and sisters. Things may not have turned out the way you expected, but God knows everything. He knows exactly what He's doing. And

everything He does is for our **eternal** good. Let us turn our eyes to Jesus. He is preparing a home, a city for us, and in His city there will be no more tears, injustice, pain, sorrow, or death.

John 14:1-3

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ”And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

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