

Heaven's Citizens – Phil 3.20

Lesson 1: A Heavenly Citizenship Begets a Heavenly Conversation

Introduction

Knowing that the church is surrounded by many who *walk as enemies of Christ* because they *mind earthly things*, in v.17 Paul urges the brethren to *imitate him* and to *keep their eyes on those who walk according to the apostolic example* of living on earth with an eye on heaven, looking for the coming of Jesus Christ. And *the reason* they live this way, says Paul in v.20, is because *their citizenship is in heaven*.

*But *what exactly* does this mean? After all, we still very much live our lives *here*, on *earth*, working, playing, eating, sleeping. *How is it*, then, that Christians are *citizens of heaven*?

- I. How is it that Christians *have* their citizenship in heaven?
 - A. Our names are enrolled in heaven, Lk 10.20; Phil 4.3
 - B. Our Saviour has gone ahead of us, in our names, to prepare a home for us there, Jn 14.2-3
 - C. Our names were enrolled there in election. Christ went there in our names to take possession as our Representative. But when we come to faith, we begin to enjoy the freedom and rights—and thus the proof—of that citizenship, Rom 8.14-17; Gal 4.4-7; Mt 6.8-9
 - D. Our natural slavery to Satan is broken and we enjoy the freedom of heaven, Rom 4; Gal 4
 - E. We have a right to all the stock and treasures of heaven, Phil 4.19; Gal 4.7; 2Pet 1.3-4
 - F. We have an assurance that, in Christ, our feet are planted in heaven and that we cannot lose that ground, Jn 10.27-29; Eph 2.5-6; Col 3.3-4
 - G. We have the privilege of doing business with heaven, Mk 11.24; Jn 14.13; 15.7
 - H. We have communion with the angels of heaven, Heb 1.14; 12.22
 - I. We have the protection of heaven, cf. Acts 22.25-26; Heb 1.14
*What a great mercy is ours! No man can say, as Paul said of Rome, that he was born there; but by grace we can all say that we have been made citizens of heaven, and at the great price of the blood of the Son of God. How grateful we should be! How heavenly we should live!

- II. How is it that Christians *live* as citizens of heaven?
 - A. The aim of our hearts is toward heaven. We count ourselves as pilgrims and strangers in this world and it's our aim to lay up our treasures above, 1Pet 1.1; Mt 6.19-20. Whatever we do in this life is with an eye to our preparations for heaven and our life there.
 - B. We're acted by heavenly principles in our daily lives.
 1. God is to be glorified in all that we do, 1Cor 10.31
 2. God is to be loved, worshipped, served, and obeyed above all others, Mk 12.30
 3. Christ is Lord of our lives, Lk 14.26
 4. The kingdom of God is to be sought before all else in life, Mt 6.33
 5. We aim at a clear conscience before God in all things, Acts 24.16; Rom 14.23
 - C. We have communion with the Host of heaven, 2Cor 13.14; Mt 6.6; Ps 100; Heb 4.16; 10.19; 1Cor 10.16; Jn 6.51
 - D. We live by the laws of heaven, Acts 5.29; Jn 3.36. Even when we obey the laws of men, it is with an eye to the law of God over it, Eph 5.21; Rom 13.1
 - E. Our thoughts and hearts are set upon heaven, Mt 6.21; Ps 73.25-26; cp. Acts 7.39. *If God should open a door to your heart, what would men find there? The earth and all base things; or heaven and all excellent things? Ps 139.23-24. Surely, every day, there's something of the world that finds its way into our hearts. And if this is so, then what great use should we make

of our Lord's Days and its precious ordinances, to cleanse our hearts and fill them anew with heaven's delights!?

- F. We fill our ordinary lives with heavenly things, such as: singing God's praises, Ps 106.1-3; keeping the Sabbath day holy, Isa 58.13-14; using earthly things after in a heavenly manner, 1Cor 10.31; and serving the Lord Christ in our daily callings, Col 3.23-24
- G. We're heavenly when we come together, Eph 4.1-5

Questions:

1. How thankful are you to have your citizenship in heaven?
2. How often do you think of the fact that you were by nature a citizen of hell? and if the grace of God had not intervened, you still would be?
3. When was the last time you sincerely thanked God for plucking you as a brand from the fire?
*Our prayers can be so filled with *petitions* that we forget to lay the foundation for our petitions in God's *praises*.
4. How much do you *value* your spiritual, heavenly privileges and blessings? cf. WSC 36
5. How heavenly do you live in your home? in your workplace? in your playground? and in God's house?

If God were to open a door to your heart for all men to see the stamp of its manufacturer, what would they find? Sin, yes; a measure of earthly-mindedness still, yes; a measure of hypocrisy, yes; and even a measure of darkness that still needs the dawn of the Spirit's redeeming and sanctifying light...; **but if** the seed of God's grace is there, if the mark of heaven's citizenship is there, **then take heart!**, because that seed will grow, that light will spread, and the Lord of that Place will more and more transform the heart and conform the life until all that's earthly is swallowed up by His sanctifying work. And in that, you should *rejoice!*