

Our Citizenship Is In Heaven

Philippians 3:12-21

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Teaching Aim: To encourage every believer to press on toward the goal of being Christ-like. To understand that our primary citizenship is in heaven and to live like it while here on earth. To eagerly anticipate the return of our Lord Jesus Christ and the glorified bodies we will receive, specially prepared to spend eternity with Him.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD'S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: Pressing on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me (Phil. 3:12-16)

1. In **verse 12** Paul acknowledges that even he hasn't arrived at spiritual perfection, but he presses on anyways. What can we learn from Paul about our own spiritual walk here? What do you see as some of your spiritual shortcomings? What are some practical steps you can take to correct them? What was it that Christ laid hold of for both Paul and ourselves? (**See John 3:16; 10:27-28**) How do we receive that gift?
2. Why was it important for Paul to forget the things behind (**vs. 13**) and move forward to the things ahead? (**See Acts 7:58; 22:1-5; 26:9-11**) Was Paul encouraging us to literally forget our past, or encouraging us not to let our past paralyze us in our Christian walk today? Is something from your past hurting your spiritual walk? If so, what? *NOTE: If you feel spiritually paralyzed by an event from your past, we encourage you to talk to a trusted spiritual leader in your church.*
3. In **verse 14** we see Paul pressing on toward the ultimate goal of being like Christ. Why should the goal of every Christian be to "finish strong" the race of life? What kind of an impact will "finishing strong" have on others (including your family)?
4. What kind of mindset is Paul looking for from spiritually mature Christians (**vs. 15**)? (Hint: **See vv. 12-14**) How can your attitude in life's trials and experiences promote or hinder your spiritual growth? How can your attitude directly affect others? What should the goal of every Christian be in life's journey? (**See 1 Cor. 6:20**)

5. Each person is at a different place spiritually, hopefully we are all moving steadily toward becoming more like Christ. According to **verse 16**, what is each Christian responsible for in his or her spiritual walk? (**See Luke 12:46**) With so many false teachers attacking the gospel message, Paul's exhortation to the Philippians was that they to stay on line spiritually and not stray. Why is Paul's warning equally applicable to us today?

Part II: Paul's exhortation to follow him as he imitates Christ, not the false teachers (Phil. 3:17-19)

1. You've probably heard it said, "*Do as I say, not as I do.*" Is that the attitude Paul shares (**vs. 17**)? What do **1 Cor. 4:16** and **1 Cor. 11:1** tell you about Paul's character? Would you encourage others to "imitate you as you imitate Christ"? Why or why not?
2. Which two biblical characters does Paul mention as examples for others to follow in the book of Philippians? (**See Phil. 2:19-24; 25-30**) Can you think of any Christians in your own life who have set a good example for you? What was it in their Christian walk that you would like to emulate?
3. What does it mean to disciple a person (**vs. 17**)? According to Jesus, should Christians be disciplining others? (**See Matt. 28:20**) Why do you think so few Christians actually disciple other believers today? Have you ever disciplined somebody? If not, why not? If so, what were the benefits?
4. **Verse 18** seems to indicate that the "enemies of the cross" were already in the church and causing tremendous damage to the body of Christ. What was Paul's unusual response? Why was Paul weeping here?

5. Paul had often warned the Philippians (**vs. 18**) as well as other churches of the dangers of false teachers. (**See Acts 20:28-31**) Why is this warning particularly pertinent for us today? How can we know when we are listening to “an enemy of the cross”? (**See John 17:17; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 4:1-6**) What should our response be when we hear such teaching?

6. **Verse 18** indicates the “enemies of the cross” were those attacking the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. This has led many to believe that the “enemies of the cross” were actually the Judaizers who were adding “the works of the Law” to “grace” for salvation. What four marks does Paul list in verse 19 to describe the “enemies of the cross”? How do each of the four marks relate specifically to the Judaizers and their damning beliefs?

7. Rather than having our minds set on the things of this earth, what should our minds be set on (**vs. 19**)? (**See vs. 20; Col. 3:2-10**) D.L. Moody used to say, “*Some Christians are so heavenly minded they are no earthly good.*” How do we balance the two?

Part III: Citizens of heaven should be eagerly awaiting the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 20-21)

1. Every Christian has dual citizenship, one citizenship here on earth and the other more important citizenship in heaven (**vs. 20**). How should your heavenly citizenship affect your earthly living? Why should you live each day anticipating the return of our Lord Jesus Christ? (**See Rev. 22:20**)

2. According to Paul, what will happen to our earthly bodies at the return of Jesus Christ (**vs. 21**)? (**See 1 Thess. 4:16-18; 1 Cor. 15:35-38, 50-53**) Explain how we can know that our resurrected bodies will be glorified “physical” bodies like Jesus? (**See Luke 24:6, 36-43; 1 John 3:2**)

3. According to **Phil. 4:1**, who is Paul’s “joy” and “crown”? What is Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians? Why is this exhortation so important for us today?

MINER'S CORNER – *Manna for today!*

- * As a Christian you should realize that you are a work in progress and press on toward the goal of being Christ-like in your attitudes and actions.
- * You should not allow incidents from your past to prevent you from fulfilling the call of God in your life today.
- * With God's help you can take your past weaknesses and turn them into strengths.
- * Your spiritual walk should be of such character that you can encourage other people to "imitate you as you imitate Christ".
- * As a Christian you have dual citizenship, one here on earth, the other in heaven.
- * You should eagerly anticipate the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, for when He returns He will transform your lowly body into a glorified, "physical" body like His own, a body especially prepared for spending eternity with Him.