

## *What is your citizenship? Do you live as a citizen of Haven? Philippians 3:17-4:1*

### **Philippians 3:17-21 – 4:1**

<sup>ESVUK 17</sup> Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

<sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even **with tears**, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

<sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

<sup>20</sup> But **our citizenship is in heaven**, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. <sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

<sup>NIVUK 17</sup> Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. <sup>18</sup> For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even **with tears**, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But **our citizenship is in heaven**. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. <sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Does the country we live in influence our way of life? Is it important what our citizenship is?

Paul reminds the Philippians that even though they live in this earth – as children of God – they are already the citizens of heaven and therefore they should be living as such.

V (17-18) reveal two different ways of life, one **right**, the other **wrong**.

Let's look first at the way we are not supposed to live, and then at how we are to live.

### **1. Christians must not live as citizens of this earth (18-19)**

We live in a day when it is not “correct” to criticize someone’s theology or underst.of the **B**. According to many the most important thing is: we **love one another** and we are “one”.

- We should not focus on what divides us but rather on what unites us,
- so if theology divides us – let’s put it aside!

But ap.Paul repeatedly warned the Philipp.about those promoters of a false version of Ch.

One of the main tasks of elders is to guard the flock from wolves who come in sheep’s clothing

**Acts 20:28-31** - <sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears

**Matt. 7:15** - <sup>15</sup> Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves

Who were those dangerous false teachers (18-19)?

We know that Paul was talking about people who

- “traveled” among the churches professing to be Christians, not about pagans.
- they were not people from outside the church
  - about those he would not have spoken “with tears”.
- It is obvious that such people live just for themselves.

Paul was upset because these people claimed to be Christian, but didn’t live as Christians, => and therefore caused great confusion both in the church and outside.

We don't know exactly who they were but Paul uses their example  
=> to show us how we should not live as citizens of God's kingdom:

### **A. Citizens of this earth are enemies of the cross of Christ (18).**

The cross of Christ is the central principle of the gospel and of the Christian life.

"For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

The cross shows us that:

- our good works are not able to make us right with a holy God,
- we cannot save ourselves from God's righteous judgment.

To come to the cross for salvation means we must completely give up our own merits

- and we must trust completely in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Enemies of the cross diminish its value by emphasizing human worth or merit

- in addition to what Christ did on the cross. *The cross means death to our pride.*

A. Citizens of this earth are enemies of the cross of Christ (18).

### **B. Citizens of this earth are heading for eternal punishment (19).**

"Their destiny is destruction" (19). Paul is referring to *eternal punishment*,

- not to some temporal judgment.

Destruction does not mean annihilation, that these sinners are wiped out by God so that they cease to exist.

The teaching of Scripture is that those who reject God's mercy at the cross

- will be cast into the lake of fire where they will endure eternal punishment

John 3:16;

Rev. 20:10,15 - <sup>10</sup>and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. <sup>15</sup>And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

This "destruction" means eternal ruin or loss.

We do not like this kind of theology, do we? It is neither easy nor pleasant teaching,

- but it is the clear teaching of the Lord Jesus

Mark 9:42-48 - <sup>42</sup>"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,<sup>[a]</sup> it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup>And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell,<sup>[b]</sup> to the unquenchable fire. <sup>45</sup>And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. <sup>47</sup>And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,<sup>48</sup> where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

A. Citizens of this earth are enemies of the cross of Christ (18). B. ... are heading for eternal punishment (19).

### **C. Citizens of this earth live for the things of this earth (19).**

Their god is their stomach (19), which means that they live for selfish and sensual pleasures, rather than denying self in order to live for Christ.

The Bible does not promote asceticism as a means of getting right with God.

Rather, it teaches that God has richly supplied us with all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17)

But if we remove God from the center and replace it with some earthly pleasure,

- we are guilty of idolatry.

These false teachers gloried “in their shame” (19). They boasted in their supposed “freedom,”  
- when in reality they were slaves to their lusts.

More, they “set their minds on earthly things” (19).

One form of such thinking is our emphasis on how Christ can make you happy “here and now”.

- He can give you peace, - joy, and - a happy marriage. - He can solve all your problems.

=> So people come to Jesus and find out that they have trials and persecutions - as the Bible clearly promises - and they give up on such Christianity.

Of course, we all have earthly things that consume our time and energy: - jobs, - bills to pay, - houses to maintain, - family problems, - health problems, etc. => but the point is,

=> the ***true Christian does not put earthly comfort and happiness at the center of his life.***

We should put Christ and our hope of being with Him in heaven at the center, and that enables us to deal properly with the earthly problems we all encounter.

Setting our minds on Christ and the things above

- is the key to dealing with sin and relational problems (Col. 3:1-17 - read).

So, Paul’s point is that as citizens of heaven, Christians are not to live as citizens of this earth,

- who are enemies of the cross of Christ, - who are headed for eternal destruction, - who live for the things of this earth. => Remember, these people were in the church,

- they claimed to know Christ, but they were not truly converted to Christ.

Enough about the wrong way to live. Let’s focus on the right way to live:

## **2. Christians must live as citizens of heaven (3:17, 20-21; 4:1).**

Three things describe/distinguish the citizens of heaven:

### **A. Citizens of heaven follow godly examples.**

“Join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us” (17)

- Paul is not being egotistical. - He knew that he lived with integrity before God.

- He also just admitted that he was still in the process of coming to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (12-14), so he is not implying that he is perfect.

=> but his life was an example of how believers should live.

=> he also adds that there were others, probably referring to Timothy, Epaphroditus, and men like them

- ***who walked with God.*** Such men show us in practical ways:

- how we should walk with God, - how we should deal with relationships, etc.

A. Citizens of heaven follow godly examples.

### **B. Citizens of heaven eagerly wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

The bodily return of JC in power & glory is one of the most frequently emphasized truths in the NT.

- just as He promised that He came the first time to die for our sins and kept His word,

- so He promised to return. => when He comes, it will be in power to reign.

Two things will happen: **First**, => He will transform our “lowly bodies” (21)

- which are subject to disease and death and prone toward sin,

- into conformity to His resurrection body.

This will involve not only an **outward**, physical transformation – free from disease and death; - but also an **inward**, spiritual transformation – free from sin.

And Paul simply states that ***Jesus Christ has enough power to do it (21)***.

**Second**, “He will subject all things to Himself” (21).

- If you are not willing to subject to Him today, you will be forced to do it one day.
- All His enemies will bow before Him one day.
- He will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Because of this, you should make sure that you are in submission to the Lord **JC** now, => so that He comes as your Savior, not as your Judge.

I guess, one can say that the spiritual condition of our heart can be seen in  
- ***how much we are waiting for His return.***

Citizens of heaven long for His return.

- A. Citizens of heaven follow godly examples.
- B. Citizens of heaven eagerly wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ

**C. Citizens of heaven stand firm in the Lord in light of His coming.**

**4:1** is really the conclusion of chapter 3:

“Therefore” means => in light of this truth of His coming, ***stand firm in the Lord.***

Notice, Paul calls these people: “my beloved brethren,” “my joy and my crown” and again “my beloved”  
- he longs to see them, and especially to see them standing firm in the Lord,  
- not influenced by these false teachers.

Remember, ***Christianity is knowing Christ Himself, and being found in Him.***

He is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption

**1 Cor. 1:30** - And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption

He is our ***all in all (Col. 3:11)***. => He is our sufficiency for every need, our refuge,  
- our rock in times of trouble. ***Stand firm in the Lord!***

***What is your citizenship? Are you a citizen of heaven?***

- You can become such only through birth, the new birth.
- Just as you could do **nothing** about your physical birth,  
so you can do **nothing** to cause your spiritual birth. => ***It must come from God.***

- Just as He is powerful to raise the dead and subject all things to Himself when He comes again,  
- so He is powerful now to raise the dead spiritually and give new life to all who call upon Him.

He can even now take your rebellious heart and bring it into submission to Him  
- through His mighty power.

Scripture promises, “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (**Rom. 10:13**).

Cry out to Him for the new birth!

Our text is especially a warning to those who claim to be Christians,

- but who in fact are living as citizens of this earth, living for self and pleasure,
- with no view to the coming of our Lord.

I can think of nothing more tragic than

- to profess to be a Christian,
- to be involved in serving Christ, and
- to stand before Him one day and say:

“Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?”

only to hear the horrifying words:

“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.” (**Matt. 7:22-23**).

Make sure your citizenship is truly in heaven.

Then live as a citizen of heaven, not as a citizen of this earth.