



'Back to Basics for Believers Series'

Sermons in the Epistle to the Philippians

Message 19 – 'Citizens of Immanuel's Land' Philippians 3: 20 - 21

Paul has been urging the Philippians to pursue and strive after the spiritual mind. To walk in a manner that would have a huge impact on those around them to the glory of God. It was a hard message, but he comforts them and urges them in this manner by pointing them to the wonder of heaven. Paul knows the cost that is involved in walking wholly committed to the Lord, but as he points out in these verses, when you focus on heaven, it is all worth while! As we can see he points them to:

1. Heaven's Salvation - The first point to see in these verses is quite simply that the Philippians had been made citizens by the wonderful grace of God. In their earthly life, they had been privileged to have been given the status of Roman citizens even though they lived away from Rome itself. This only gives a glimpse of the beauty and privileges of what happens when a lost sinner trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, and by grace is made a citizen of heaven. You see, for a person who comes to Christ, repenting of their sin, receiving Christ through God-given faith, and trusting in Him, that person's name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. When your name is written in heaven, it stands for ever. Luke 10:20, *'Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.'* You know why this verse is so wonderful? When you look at the Greek verb 'written', it is deliberately written in the perfect tense. Do you know what that means? It means that it is once-for-all written and it stands written, and nothing can alter that fact! Brothers and sisters in Christ that is a marvellous thing and should grant us great peace, assurance and elation! That truly if you have repented of your sin, trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, and rest in Him, that He has written your name in heaven and it cannot be removed. His grace will preserve you so that you receive salvation in its fullness and an eternity of heaven to look forward to. What a Saviour!

2. Heaven's Standard - There is another implication that Paul speaks of here as he uses the term citizen. That being that citizens behave in a manner that upholds the laws and lifestyle of their homeland. As Roman citizens that lived in a Roman colony, they were to live as Romans. The point quite simply is this, that the Philippian believers knew exactly what it meant to live in one place and to be a citizen of another place. They knew exactly what it meant to live upon earth and, to dress as a citizen of heaven and not of earth; to speak as a citizen of heaven and not of earth; to engage in the pleasures of a citizen of heaven and not of earth; to live by the laws of heaven as well as the laws of earth; to worship the God of heaven and not the religions or gods of this fallen earth.

3. Heaven's Saviour - The believers life is also to be focused upon the return of Christ. It is this focus, this anticipation that allows the believer to take hold of the spiritual mind. There is fantastic energy in the present power of a future hope. Looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is the highlight of Christian expectation. When you put these elements together, the Greek word 'look' (apekdechometha) means to yearn, to eagerly look and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to take His people to heaven. The citizen of heaven has a lasting hope because he knows that his Lord will return. Then of course there is the aspect here that Paul makes very clear, that there is a blessed hope of a glorious body that the believer will receive when Christ returns. Christ is coming, for the Christian this is marvellous, yet for the unbeliever, it is terrible. It will also be the beginning of Christ's judgements, and these will be appalling for those that do not know Him. The question is, will you meet Him as Saviour or as judge?



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