

## Living as Citizens of Heaven – Part 4

### Christian Conduct – Phil. 1:27-30

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

#### Intro:

- The title for this summer series in the book of Philippians is found in our passage today, where Paul tells us that we must live as citizens of heaven. This is the major theme of this letter and if you are a Christian, this letter provides both theological grounds and practical application as to why we are to live as citizens of heaven and how we are to do so.
- We must remember that Paul is writing these things while bound in chains in prison, whose “crime” is believing in and teaching the truth about Jesus. This was not a man writing from a private jet being whisked away to his expansive and luxurious estate. This comes from a man who has given his wholehearted service to Jesus and suffered greatly for doing so. While still maintaining and actually increasing his joy, determination, and love.
- The things that he is writing are incredible, supernatural even, as the Holy Spirit is writing through him for our encouragement, instruction, and joy. God will speak to you today, and may we have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to our church.
- Please open your Bible to Philippians chapter one, starting with verse twenty seven, as we finish out this chapter this morning. I have been using the NIV version of the Bible to speak from because it is the version that is in the pews, and they typically do a good job with their translation. However, today, I am using a mash-up between the NIV and the NLT versions guided by the original Greek because I think this better clarifies the meaning of the text, so I guess you can call this the DAV version 😊.
- In the preceding passage, Paul declares, “for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (v. 22) as he was discerning what the will of the Lord was in his present circumstance and what God would have him do next. And then he says:

#### Phil. 1:27a

**Whatever happens, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.**

#### Live as Citizens of Heaven

- How he starts this statement is important: “Whatever happens . . . you must live as citizens of heaven.” This is a very strong statement. You and I, “we” MUST live as citizens of heaven. This means that this is how we are to live, regardless of our circumstances. In poverty or prosperity, fetters or freedom, sorrow or success, we are to live as citizens of heaven.
- When you are born in a country, you become a citizen of that country because it is your birthright. And when you are “born again” by the Spirit of God, you become a citizen of a better country, a heavenly one (see Heb. 11:16).
- We know that if you are born into a country, you learn the language, you embrace the people, you adopt the values, customs, and laws. Even though you live in this country, you are a citizen of an even better one. And while you are here, you are an ambassador of another country (Eph. 6:20) as we represent the values, customs, and laws of the place and people we love.
- As Paul states, we are to conduct ourselves “in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” For Paul, the word “worthy” means ascribing worth. When he tells us to live in a “worthy” way, he means we should live in such a way that shows what we believe is of supreme worth.

- When confession and our conduct - what we believe and how we behave – line up - it is glorious and powerful. Our believing in the good news and living by the power of the Spirit is glorious to God that we are living the values of the kingdom, which gives glory to the goodness of the King, and we get the joy of His Spirit working through us as we represent Him. In this way, we can be content in all circumstances, having the inward characteristics of the Spirit of Jesus as we become more like Him.
- We are not citizens of this world; we are people who belong to another place. Let us represent the King as citizens of heaven. Let us love our King more than we love this world. This is our calling, no matter what happens. Let us think this way and then act accordingly.

### **Phil. 1:27b - 28**

**Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel 28 without being intimidated in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.**

- There are two instructions in this passage, and the first is to stand firm in one Spirit.

### **Stand firm in one Spirit**

- “Stand firm” means be ready for action and be prepared for anything. It is a position of action being committed to the cause. You stand together as one unit, working for the same goal, being of one heart and mind, and being united by the Spirit of Christ. We are one team, we are one body, and we function together as one.
- This is where we build each other up according to their need (Eph 4:23), seeking the good for each other (2 Cor. 10:23), bearing each other’s burdens (Col. 3:23), speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:13), encouraging one another (1 Thes. 5:11), and loving each other (1 Peter 4:9) and this is by no means a complete list.
- You need the church, and the church needs you. We are one body (1 Cor. 12) – if we do not stand firm, we will not stand at all (Isa. 7:9).

### **Strive together for the faith**

- We are to strive together – that is, working together so the message of the gospel saturates the hearts and minds of all people - that everywhere someone turns, they will find a believer, a representative of the kingdom. We must work together so that all hear this message.
- And there will always be those who will work to intimidate you. It is a clash of the kingdoms, one fighting against the other. There are two kingdoms with different values, cultures, and goals. The kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. Don’t be surprised when people oppose you and the kingdom of light, the kingdom of heaven. Keep living as a kingdom citizen and keep striving as one for faith in the gospel to grow in depth and in number.
- And our staying in and with the faith, our staying in Jesus and connected to His people, not backing down but growing stronger in our faith, this will be a “sign” that if you resist and oppose the King and His “government” (Isa. 9:6-7) they will be destroyed. Because even the “gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18). God will destroy those who persecute His people. “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple” (I Cor. 3:17). And the one who “endures to the end will be saved” (Mt. 10:22, Mt. 24:13).

- And then Paul gives the final instruction in this passage:

### **Phil. 1:29-30**

**For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. 30 We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.**

### **Embrace the privilege of salvation and suffering**

- There is a great privilege to be given the privilege of salvation. The privilege of being a child of God. The privilege to be a citizen of heaven. The privilege to bear the name of the King.
- And not only have we been given the privilege of salvation, but we have also been granted the privilege of suffering. The suffering that comes to a Christian (as a Christian) is not a sign of God's neglect but rather a proof that grace is at work in his or her life. "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12) also, Acts 5:41 "They left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name."
- The title is both given and "earned" by suffering alongside Christ, like a soldier or a member of a championship team. We win as one, and we suffer as one. If one suffers, all suffer, and if one is honored, all are honored. Embrace both salvation and suffering – both are a high calling and high privilege. Get your "uniform" dirty. There is no crown without a cross.

### **Conclusion**

- The best conclusion is the questions for the growth groups . . . and I hope you are connected to one. I am asking that you hold on to at least one thing from our passage for today. Let us love our Lord and value our heavenly citizenship more than any ruler or kingdom of this world. Let us live as citizens of heaven. Let us stand firm together in one spirit and in one faith for the sake of the message of the gospel and the kingdom of Christ. Let us wholeheartedly embrace the privilege of salvation and suffering until we reach the final minute of our life on earth and enter into our rest and reward.
- Prayer people and pray

### **Benediction**

*May you be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (I Cor. 15:58)*

### **Questions for Growth Groups**

- Self-Reflection: Are we living lives that reflect the gospel? How do our actions demonstrate our faith?
- Community and Unity: How can we foster greater unity within our church? What practical steps can we take to support one another in our spiritual journey?
- Facing Challenges: What fears or oppositions are we currently facing? How can we draw strength from Paul's exhortation to remain courageous and firm in our faith?
- Embracing Suffering: In what ways can we reframe our understanding of suffering as a privilege and an opportunity to grow closer to Christ?