

Citizenship

10-17-21

Philippians 3:20–21 (ESV)

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ 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.

The Christian’s citizenship is in heaven, and earthly things are at best secondary. Believers belong to the “city ... whose architect and builder is God”! Our eyes should be heavenward, anticipating the coming of our Savior. **An eager expectation of HIS return does much to protect the believer from earthly, sensual enticements.**

Our citizenship is in another country. Christ the leader of this country will return and “transform” our mortal bodies into the character of HIS resurrected body. This means believers will be transformed and will receive glorified bodies that will more adequately display their essential character as children of God and sharers of divine life. *This will be accomplished by the same effective operation that will bring all things in the universe under the authority of Christ.* Paul fully understood this and confidently declared:

Philippians 1:21–23 (ESV)

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Understanding citizenship helps us live life and face death!

Often, we are so attached to this physical world that heaven seems almost like a dream and we have a hard time grasping the reality. However, the Scripture declares heaven as the superior reality and the physical world more like the passing dream. **Paul saw death as bringing gain because he would be with Christ. Death for him would be a departure from his present state, like the release of a prisoner from his bonds.** Death was not a catastrophe to Paul. It was “better by far” because it would bring him to the goal of his Christian life. It would bring rest from his labors and the joy of eternal fellowship with Christ.

Paul had a peek into heaven his home country where his citizenship was! Paul was caught up to the third heaven, the dwelling place of Christ and the saints, which Jesus called paradise.

2 Corinthians 12:2–4 (ESV)

² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. ³ And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— ⁴ and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

It is against this background that Paul declares his conviction that when “the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.” Confidently Paul says, “He would prefer to be away from this body and at home with the Lord.”

2 Corinthians 5:1 (ESV)

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Our citizenship in heaven becomes our confidence.

2 Corinthians 5:6-9 (ESV)

⁶So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

Paul was always confident, even in the face of death, because he realized that when he left this body, he would take up residence in the presence of the Lord. Being absence from the body = residence with the Lord. This means that the same moment of death that marks the destruction of our transitory earthly body, it also marks the taking up our permanent residence with the Lord. So being “at home with the Lord” is a higher form of reality with the intimate fellowship with Christ. This is Greater than anything we can experience on earth.

Let me repeat, “Understanding citizenship helps us live life and face death!” Number one, we are not tormented by physical death, because we understand that it is only the reality of going home to be with Jesus.

Number two, we will see that our life here on earth has an eternal impact and also associated heavenly rewards. This will help determine the earthly decisions we make.

2 Corinthians 5:9–10 (ESV)

⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

As Citizens, we will give an account of ourselves at the Judgement Seat of Christ. When we stand before Christ we will be scrutinized and will receive an equitable and full recompense of what is due us. There we will receive praise and rewards. Also, we may “suffer loss” by forfeiting Christ’s praise or losing a reward that might have been ours. **This is related with rewards not our status as holy pure children of God.** We will all stand before God as “right” as God!

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Through Jesus we are as “right” as God!

Prophetic Prayer