

**Announce:** 1 Year Bibles & Pamphlets

NLT...

**We are citizens of heaven** (3:20)

- Twitter: "Can you please explain that? **How** can we be citizens **if** we aren't there yet"

**The Christian life is one of tension:**

- Peace, joy, contentment... sure. But also, constant tension...
- Living in this world and looking for the world to come
- The tension is good
- Philippians 1:21-23

**21** For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. (Tension)

**22** But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. (Tension)

**23** I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me.

**24** But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live. (Tension)

- Julius Caesar had been assassinated 100 years before Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians, Philippi had been the scene of a bloody battle in a Roman civil war that ensued in the aftermath
- After the battle when things were settled in the Empire, the generals (Antony and Octavian) left many of their soldiers in the region, giving them land and making Philippi a **Roman colony**
- So, many of the people that lived there (and are now part of the church in Philippi) were **Roman citizens**, but they lived in Greece **(Tension)**

- Paul says we are **citizens of heaven** (3:20)

- Many of us immediately think, "Oh, yes, of course... I want to go live in heaven and get out of here"
  - And that may be a true (and good) feeling—but I am **not sure** that is what Paul is getting at in this particular text
- The **task of a Roman citizen** in a place like Philippi was to bring **Roman culture and rule** to the area—to expand **Roman influence** there (Northern Greece)
  - Not to go to Rome
- A **Roman citizen** anywhere else in the world (especially, perhaps Northern Greece) would always feel some what conflicted
  - Being in a different culture but **needing** to bring Roman culture to bear on said culture **(Mission)**
  - **Bringing about** and **rejoicing in** things that were like Rome, but always **longing** for the fullness of it **(Tension)**
  - But, never fully **abandoning** where they were as **useless**... it was in some way **home**... a somewhat uneasy home and not the "homeland" per say
  - **They would always have this sense of belonging—but not quite belonging**

If I have a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the explanation is—I was made for another world. – C.S. Lewis

When we are re-made in the image of God (Born again), we are **made for another world**

- o Colossians 1:13

He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son

Being **citizens of heaven** we are never quite **satisfied** and **comfortable** here

- If we are, if there isn't this **holy discontentment**, then maybe we have become too **acclimated** and **acculturated**
- On the other hand: If we are only longing for heaven, then perhaps we are failing to (1) realize the gift God has given us in life here, and (2) to be faithful with our lives here
  - o **So heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good** (not on mission)
  - o Accept what is **common grace**—reject what is **antithetical** to the gospel
  - o Cf. The Roman citizen in Greek
    - Its not the Grecian culture was completely done away with, but **the qualities of Rome** were brought to bear on it

**This smacks of imperialism...**

- But we truly do have something better to offer
- In bringing the qualities of Christ and heaven to bear on earth (**Grace, etc**)
  - o We often misrepresent the quality of heaven and of Christ's work
  - o We usually push morals on people—rather than the cross (**Imperialism**) (Cf. v 18)
- **The Gospel is not GOOD ADVICE to men but GOOD NEWS about Christ; not an invitation TO DO, but a declaration of what God HAS DONE.** ~John Stott

**Nevertheless, mission always attracts opposition...**

- Suppose those **Roman citizens in Greece** got in a situation where they were becoming **overwhelmed** by the citizens and culture of Greece—even experiencing **conflict**
  - o Their best hope would be that the **Emperor himself** would come from Rome to help their situation and **establish his kingdom and authority** there in a new way
  - o **That is what Paul is picturing in verses 20-21**
  - o That King Jesus is going to do just that!
  - o **Read 20-21**
- We are a sort of **colony of heaven**
  - o With the responsibility and joy of bringing the life and rule of heaven to bear on earth
  - o Cf. **The Lord's prayer**... and our being instruments of that prayer being answered
- We, of course, are not that good at doing this and find ourselves weak and threatened and even helpless (Philippians/Paul and persecution)
  - o In that case, we are reminded that (v. 21)
    - **He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.**
  - o At a future time, when He comes again—**the blessed hope**

Knowing this would allow them (and us) to receive what Paul says next in **4:1**

- Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord.
- **An issue of allegiance**

**This is the great challenge of the letter:**

- To think out what it means to give our **primary allegiance** to Jesus
- What does it mean to remain allegiant to heaven, in the face of all the **other claims** to allegiance that press upon us?
- And to trust and rejoice in the fact, no matter how much tension and conflict we encounter, that the King is going to **come in power** to bring **His life and rule** to bear on the whole world
- Cf. v. 21<sup>b</sup>: **He will bring everything under His control**

This is the sense in which they were to copy Paul (v. 17)

- Paul lived a life that was consistent with **both** the truths of the cross (v. 18) and the fact of Christ's coming (v. 20)
- When both of these truths are grasped it yields a certain way, quality of living

And to avoid the influence of the sort of people in **verses 18-19**

- People whose **behavior is conditioned by** their affection of this world and pleasuring themselves
- **Lesser allegiances**

v. 19

- **...their god is their appetite...**
- Your god is that which shapes your wants and desires
- If we are going to be changed and receive **glorious bodies like that of Christ**, we should not regard our bodies at this time as being ultimate
  - Our appetites and passions should not rule us
- Their appetites dictated their lives (as if this was the only life—we know better)
- **...whose glory is in their shame...**
  - Contrast Paul in verse 3 (NASB) who says "**we... glory in Christ Jesus**"
  - The difference between making **self or Christ** joy and authority in our lives
- **...they think only about this life here on earth...**
  - This is a matter of where we locate our affections
  - We are enjoying earth, but longing and living for more
  - If your affections are too strongly anchored on earth you miss the joy of Gospel Citizenship

How easily this could describe me on certain days and at certain moments:

- **Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth**
- Am I being **faithful** to **my true citizenship**?
- Or have I become too acclimated and acculturated

We feel like verse 19... **but we** (in verse 20) **are citizens of heaven**

- ...we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our savior...
- Genuine Christianity, the kind Paul tells us to imitate, lives in the light of Jesus' return.
- **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.** (Rev. 22:20)
  - Where are you? "**Come Lord Jesus**", or "**Wait Lord Jesus**" (thinking more about life here on earth—**acclimated and acculturated**)
  - And what does that say about your perception of Jesus and His kingdom?
  - Matthew 5:19-21
    - 19 Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal.**
    - 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal.**
    - 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.**

Is Christ your treasure? Or are you seeking a **lesser** treasure?

- Being enamored with lesser treasure keeps us from the true and actual treasure
- And it robs us of the reality of our gospel citizenship:
  - **Prosperity knits a man to the World. He feels he's finding his place in it, while really it is finding its place in him.** ~ C.S. Lewis

**We are citizens of heaven**

- Heaven is **increasingly finding its place in us when** we treasure the King

This **more full experience of gospel citizenship** will actually produce even a **greater tension**

- But this tension **produces joy**
  - We have a better King and kingdom
  - We have a better hope
  - We are going to a better place
- This allows us to interact with this world in a better way

We are increasingly experiencing and bringing the **benefits of citizenship**:

- Privilege—Children of God and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16-17)
- Protection—Under the Kings Covering (Colossians 1:13-14)
- Higher law—The Law of Love (Ephesians 5:1-2)
- Higher calling—Dispensers of grace (1 Peter 4:10)
- Better quality of life—Rivers of living water (John 7:37-39)
- Greater joy in life—Beyond all pain (Romans 8:18)
  - **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

We get to experience (and dispense) some of the benefits and **glory** of that King, kingdom, hope and place now

- Vestiges of the Kingdom (and of heaven)
- They keep us living otherworldly and supernaturally (although not perfectly)

What would it look like for us to really live as a **citizens of heaven**?

- **How can we be citizens if we aren't there yet**