

Pastor Aker's Page

May 4-5, 2019

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:14

Have you ever noticed how hard it can be to experience change? Maybe the new letter carrier comes at a different time of day, setting off your entire schedule. Somebody sat in “your pew” at church and you had to sit somewhere else. The weather cruelly went from sunny 85 one day to snowy 32 a couple days later. Your children grow up and leave the nest. We live in a world of constant change. Why does it sometimes challenge us so much?

I have a theory. Perhaps we've forgotten where our true citizenship is. According to Philippians 3:20, we are citizens of heaven. Our lives are hidden with Christ (Colossians 3:3). We may live here in this place, in this age, but we don't really belong here. To put it another way, Missionary Gary from Mission Central tells the story of a missionary and his family who were serving deep in the jungle of Papua New Guinea. They lived in earthen huts. They ate worms. The people wore tree leaves for coverings. The climate was constant. The people spoke a different language. They had severely different traditions. For the missionaries, nothing was what they would consider normal; nothing was familiar to them. Everything was thoroughly *foreign*.

Those missionaries experience what we Christians know each day in this age. Our citizenship is in heaven; we don't really belong here. That is to say, everything around us is *foreign*. Sure, over time we've come to recognize things and as best we can even make a home here, still everything remains strange to us. Christians live in a foreign place, ready to gladly pack up and leave in a heartbeat at our Lord's calling!

At least that's the way it should be. Unfortunately, we sometimes so acclimate to our surroundings in this age that things no longer seem foreign. We find ourselves getting anxious at the threat of change. The twisted ways of the world come to seem practically normal. Some Christians find themselves adopting foreign views and stances. You

might hear a Christian say “Sunday is our family day away from everything (even church)” or “gender is fluid” or “abortion is a woman's choice” or “all we need to do is elect _____ and things will work out”. When we hear these words uttered by a Christian, we are hearing someone who has taken into himself the foreign views of a land not his own. Temporary viewpoints of a temporary place.

Our citizenship is in heaven! A permanent place promised by our unchanging Lord. We have forgotten Christ's Words when we find ourselves espousing the same sentiments of the world. We have forgotten ourselves when we fear change! *Fearing* change means that we have gotten overly attached. There is nothing in this world that will last forever. This truth brought Paul to the point of saying, “I count everything as rubbish”. Absolutely nothing will last. Everything that one day tickles my fancy will the next dump me. Everything.

That is, with One significant exception. The Lord Jesus Christ will never abandon us. He will never fail us. He will never put us to shame. So Paul couldn't care less about the fading and momentary esteemed things of this world. His eyes were set on Jesus! That he may gain Jesus. That he may be found in Jesus. That he may know Jesus. That he may share in Jesus' sufferings. That he may become like Jesus in His death. That he may attain the resurrection of the dead.

Next to Jesus, everything else seems paltry. Quite frankly, next to Him everything else is common and inconsequential! When Jesus is our measure against which we compare all other things, all of a sudden everything has a way of falling into place. With Jesus at the top, everything and everyone else is put in their place. With Jesus at the top, we long to be with Him. We pine to come into our homeland. We bemoan this foreign place with its strange ways. With Jesus at the top, we fear no change! Whatever comes our way is momentary. Nothing will last *except* Jesus Christ and the promise He has made to us.

In Christ,

Pastor Corey Aker