

+ PHILIPPIANS: LEARNING HOW TO THINK LIKE A CHRISTIAN +

1.27-30; 3.17-21 — Learning to think like citizens of the Kingdom

Twice Paul moves from his example of thinking about “the things that really matter” to encouraging the Philippians to think in a way defined by Christ’s Lordship and heavenly hope.

TRUE CITIZENSHIP

1.27-30: Living as Worthy Citizens: Unity, Proclamation, and Suffering

- Paul’s exhortation: “Only *let your manner of life* be worthy of the gospel of Christ...”
- Translations obscure what is going on here. The word πολιτεύομαι = “to live as a citizen.”
- Philippi = proud Roman colony. Citizenship = highly desirable. But Paul says the church is the colony of Christ; your true citizenship is heavenly. Jesus, not Caesar, is Lord.
- How does the citizenship express itself? An alternative society with a unique purpose.
- “Standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel, and not being frightened in anything by those who oppose you.” Unity; purpose; courage.
- Paul faced opposition; he knows the Philippians are, likely from fellow Roman Philippians who saw this new Christ cult as a threat to the Roman fiber of Philippi, Imperial Cult.
- Paul wants to set an example for and to encourage the Philippians to adopt both a way of life and way of thinking, especially with regard to suffering for the Gospel (cf. 1.30).
- The source of steadfastness in suffering: “It was given to you in behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him but also to suffer for him.” Faith *and* suffering are divinely given.
- Confidence: their citizenship will lead to salvation from God (cf. 1.19).

+ How might our Kingdom citizenship form us in different ways of thinking and living than our American citizenship? How do the values and priorities of the two kingdoms differ?

+ How do we normally think about suffering? How can we think about suffering as a gift?

3.17-21: Heavenly Citizenship: The Hope of Christ as Lord

- Explicit use of “imitation” language in 3.17 — connecting to Paul’s example in chap. 3.
- Paul has renounced former commitments/identities; he calls the Philippians to do the same.
- Negative example: “enemies of the cross.” They “set their mind on earthly things” (cf. 3.15).
- Return to citizenship language: 3.20. Paul distinguishes Christians by saying “our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- Paul is using Roman Imperial language and applying it to Jesus.
- What was claimed about early Christians in the Roman Empire? These Christians serve not Caesar but a crucified Lord; first priority is not Rome but proclaiming the Gospel.
- Understanding our citizenship (Heavenly, not Roman) and who our Lord is (Christ, not Caesar) shapes us in new ways of thinking and gives a distinct hope: transformation like Christ.

+ How does our heavenly hope turn our mindset away from “earthly things”?

+ How can having Christ as Lord reframe the way we think about earthly affairs (e.g., politics)?