

# PHILIPPIANS

## LESSON ELEVEN

### JOY IN BEING A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN

(3:20 – 4:1)

**3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ**

- A. These three verses sum up Paul's previous teachings and paint an important contrast.
- B. In contrast with the enemies of the cross of Christ, the Philippian brethren were citizens of Heaven.
  - 1. While the enemies of Christ were attached to this world, the Philippians were devoted to the goal of Heaven.
  - 2. While the enemies of Christ kept their focus on the fleshly, shameful, earthly things, the Christian looked for the Savior from Heaven.
- C. The word "conversation" actually means "community, citizenship; commonwealth, state – the government of such."
  - 1. The Greek word is *politeuma* and is found only here in the NT.
  - 2. The Bible teaches the truth declared in the song – "this world is not my home."
  - 3. Even though he lives in this world, the Christian's life is governed by the laws of Heaven (Col. 3:3; Gal. 2:20; Acts 5:29).
  - 4. The child of God is not attached to this world (Matt. 6:19-21; 19:21; Luke 12:32-34; 2 Cor. 4:18; 5:1; Col. 3:1-3; Heb. 10:34).
  - 5. Our allegiance is to Heaven, not merely to the kingdoms of men.
  - 6. This is important to remember in the context of the city of Philippi.
  - 7. They were Roman citizens – with all the benefits and privileges that came with such standing.
  - 8. Yet, they possessed an even greater citizenship as children of the God of Heaven (John 18:36).
- D. The Greek word for "is" in this verse means that our citizenship in Heaven actually exists now and has been established (cf. 2:6; Jn. 14:2; Heb. 11:16).
- E. Though we are citizens of Heaven, we still have not reached that eternal home.
- F. Thus, we continue to look for the Savior Who will come from Heaven and take us home to be with Him there.
  - 1. To "look for" literally means "to wait for."
  - 2. It is the idea of a patient waiting with an earnest expectation.
- G. In other words, we must continue running the race until we reach the end of our lives or until the Lord returns.
- H. J. W. Shepherd wrote: "The consummation of this citizenship, however, is yet to come. As members of the heavenly commonwealth they are still pressing on in obedience to the upward call (3:14), hence they are in an attitude of earnest expectation."

3:21 **Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself**

- A. When He does return from Heaven, Jesus will change the faithful to be like Him.
  - 1. The word “change” means “to transform; to change the figure of; to fashion anew” (cf. 2:6, 8; 1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Cor. 11:13-15).
  - 2. That which will be changed is our “vile body” – literally, “the body of our humiliation; our low body; our body of low estate” (cf. Luke 1:48; Acts 8:33; James 1:10).
  - 3. Our humble bodies will be fashioned like unto His glorious body (1 Corinthians 15:43-52; 2 Corinthians 5:1-4; 1 John 3:1-3).
  - 4. This is not a statement about morality or sinfulness; rather it is about changing our physical bodies into one which may inhabit our true home – Heaven.
- B. He will do this by His own power, “the energy of His being able” to change our bodies.
- C. Should anyone doubt the power of Jesus to accomplish this feat, Paul reminds them that He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.
  - 1. In fact, the resurrection will be a subduing of all things to Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:25-27).
  - 2. This paints a picture of our home in Heaven as an “organized commonwealth,” a city foursquare (Revelation 21:16).
- D. Thus, the citizen of Heaven longs for the return of the Lord.

4:1 **Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved**

- A. Thus, Paul’s encouragement is for the Philippians to stand fast in the Lord.
  - 1. They needed to hold their ground and not give up the fight, for the Lord will return and Heaven will be their home.
  - 2. Shepherd wrote: “Paul makes the vision of future glory to be an inspiring force, giving life to the sober, practical duties of everyday Christian life and its responsibilities.”
- B. Again, Paul expresses his deep affection for this congregation, calling them his dearly beloved brethren.
- C. Paul longed for their companionship on earth, but desired even more for them all to be together in Heaven.
- D. These attitudes should characterize all Christian relationships.
- E. Finally, he refers to them as his joy and his crown.
  - 1. Paul’s joy was built upon his relationships with faithful brethren.
  - 2. It was immovable because it would continue into eternity.
  - 3. The crown is the victory wreath given to the winner of the race.
  - 4. Thus, their victory was also a part of Paul’s victory (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20).
- F. The hope of an eternity in Heaven with the faithful of all the ages is a firm foundation for the joy of the Christian life.