

22S17 Philippians 3:17-21 Our Citizenship in Heaven

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I hope everyone is doing well. Today I want to continue our study of Philippians with Philippians 3:17-21 Our Citizenship in Heaven.

Before we start, let us remember this short letter was most likely written by the Apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome. Paul had first visited Philippi during his second missionary journey, and he has great affection for the church in Philippi. This letter is sometimes called “the Joy Epistle” because of thankful and joyful tone. But remember Paul is in prison in Rome, not very happy circumstances.

I’m reading from the New King James version (NKJV) today. But of course, you can use whatever translation you choose.

Let’s read Philippians 3:17-21 (NKJV) *¹⁷Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. ²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

Let’s pray. Dear heavenly father, guide our discussion today such that your message is clear to each of us. As we read your word from Philippians, help us see why Paul is so thankful and joyful despite his situation. I pray that you help me stay out of the way so your hope and peace can be shared with us. I pray this in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

So, before we start studying today. This section in many of our bibles has a heading. Of course, these headings are not part of the original letter Paul sent. But I do find these interesting. I like to see what the many translations say to round my understanding and prepare me for the text, Like this title “Our Citizenship in Heaven” (NKJV& KJV), or “Following Paul’s Example (NIV). Regardless of your translation title, Paul is about to instruct us about who we are as followers Jesus.

So, let’s break these verses down a little more. Starting with Philippians 3:17 (NKJV) *¹⁷Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.*

Paul is not being arrogant here. He is simply stating that he has followed Jesus with his words and actions. We can look at Paul and others who have been following Jesus to see examples of how we should live our lives as followers of Jesus.

Let's look at what else Paul says. Philippians 3:18-19 (NKJV) *¹⁸For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.*

Paul is telling to contrast him against the many false teachers. Those that are only really concerned about their bellies and self-glory. These are anti-Christ. They teach what may appear to be the bible or the gospel, but they only really serve themselves. I want to take a moment here. If you are serving God, you can make money, you can acquire noteworthiness. But if your motives are fame and fortune, you are not serving Jesus. You are simply serving your own belly and desires, by using the name of God. I think we should look at our "so called" leaders in Christian churches and ministries. If they are getting rich off of donations, then they are simply not serving Jesus but themselves. Let me say it plainly, if you are getting rich from the donations of God fearing people, \$20 donations from little old ladies, then I know exactly what a Just God is going to do with you someday. Repent is my only advice.

Back to Philippians. Paul is telling people to beware of those that use God to achieve worldly profit and gains.

Let's continue reading. Philippians 3:20-21 (NKJV) . *²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

Paul again is reminding us that if we are true followers of Jesus, we are not worried about money, fame and all those things. We are citizens of Heaven and we should act like one. I want to tell you a story I heard about Alexander the Great. One night Alexander the Great could not sleep, so he decided to go check the guard posts. He came across a young soldier on guard duty sleeping. The penalty for this was death. Alexander the Great woke the young man up with a thump. "what's your name soldier?", Alexander the Great asked. The soldier said, "Alexander sir". Alexander the Great asked him again with more force, "what's your name soldier?" The young soldier again answered, "Alexander sir. Alexander asked a third time and the young man answered, "Alexander sir." Then Alexander the Great look straight at him and said, "Change your name or change your conduct" and walked off.

Do you get the point? If we profess to be Christian, a follower of Jesus, our conduct better match. And said another way, if someone's conduct is not in line with Jesus and his teaching, then no matter what they claim, they are not true followers of King Jesus. You can always see clearly what you love most by looking at how you use money and how you spend your time. Christian. Change your name or change your conduct.

Let's review.

- 1) Paul's Example? Why is Paul telling us to follow his example? Simply, not everyone who says they are with Jesus, are with Jesus. Our words and actions must match the character of the one we say we follow. That is Jesus our King.
- 2) False Teachers? How can we identify false teachers? Their bank account and calendar are one way. If they take money from followers of Jesus, to make themselves rich or take trips, vacation or buy nice things with donations intended for God's work, then these are not true followers of Jesus. They are more focused on themselves than what God wants them to do.
- 3) Citizenship? Paul reminds us, we are citizens of Heaven. If we are followers of Jesus, we are adopted into the family of God. We are citizens of heaven, right now. We better act like one.

Let me leave you with this, even in the first century in the time of Paul there were people trying to take advantage of Christians. They may say they are. They may look like they are. But look carefully. If they are preaching Jesus for personal gain, then they are false teachers or antichrist. Now I believe God can use these people, to preach the gospel, reach the unreached and accomplish His bigger, better plan. But as for these men and women who profit from this by taking advantage of God fearing people. Shame on them and at the same time I pity them for judgement is coming. We are to be about the work of God. And yes, we can gain money and fame in the process. But if money and fame are the objective and you don't use those things for God's bigger, better plan, then shame on them.

Let's Pray. Heavenly Father thank you for this letter from Paul. Help us to read and meditate on this letter so we can hear the message you have for us. Help us to remember who you are Lord. You are our king, king of kings. You are our Lord, Lord over everyone. We can trust you, Lord. Help us to do what you ask and not worry about what others are doing. I pray this in your Name Lord Jesus. Amen

I hope you will join us for the rest of our study of Philippians. Please email me comments or feedback. Thank you for joining me today. Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.