CAPITOL® COMMISSION
Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders

Citizenship

January 30, 2024

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule
Tuesday, January 30, 7:00-7:45 AM
House Hearing Room 3
All Welcome!
Capitol Commission is NON-PARTISAN and NON-DENOMINATIONAL

Introduction
The Philippian church was the first Jesus community Paul started in eastern Europe. He generously loved the people within the churches he started. And yet, the special bond between the Philippians and Paul was a deep love.

They were partners, friends, sharing in suffering, and in the power of the resurrection, and exemplary people like Epaphroditus from the Philippian church and Timothy from Paul's missionary team. What we read are friends made for eternity. Ones that while on earth live as citizens of heaven who will one day live eternally in heaven together.

Make friends for eternity. Start today, continue tomorrow, and enjoy a lifetime. What you do now counts. Who you journey with matters.

1:27 – Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News.

Citizenship
At all costs live in light of whose you are. Christ is the model citizen. Paul exhorts the Philippians throughout chapter's 1 to 4 to strive for the fullness of Jesus. One day we will reach the goal. Spiritual regeneration is the passport into a transcendent heaven. The Holy Spirit dwells within followers of Jesus as a guarantee to our eternal citizenship in heaven.

> *I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us.* Phil. 3:14

Ambition is neutral. What we do with ambition and why we exercise ambition determines its appreciation. For the Christ follower, ultimately our ambition is: *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain".* Phil. 1:21

If our ambition is to magnify Christ in our body we will live as citizens of heaven fully devoted to Jesus, circumspective of our responsibilities, knowing earthly citizenship is temporal, and heavenly citizenship is eternal. When Paul says: "For to me, to live is Christ" he means while on earth he has dedicated himself to the advancement of the good news about Jesus regardless of what suffering he encounters for the sake of the faith. "*To die is gain"* is Paul's way to say that if he dies he realizes heaven gaining the full presence of Jesus. Paul wins either way. He is jealous for Jesus showing up bold wherever he proclaims the message of the cross and resurrection of the Lord.

Philippi was a Roman colony assimilated into the socio-economic and political terrain of Rome. Italian citizenship afforded the Philippians privileges: they did not pay taxes, entitled to legal counsel, afforded military security, and more. Philippi was a pluralistic city populated with religious and economic diversity.

Augustus Caesar, also known as Octavian, populated Philippi with his army veterans. It was considered the Rome away from Rome. Philippi was a breeding ground of Roman patriotism. Paul was not as concerned with their living as Roman citizens. Dual citizenship was not the issue. The exhortation was to live out their heavenly citizenship performing the responsibilities of a citizen.

> *"The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!" they shouted to the city officials. "They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice."* Acts 16:20-21

The minority community's way of life was shaped by another King, Jesus. Those committed to serving Christ as Lord prioritized loyalty and devotion to God. Tensions threatened the Roman religious-political rule. God's Kingdom threatened Rome's kingdom; Heavenly citizenship threatened Italian citizenship; King Jesus threatened Caesar. As one would expect, persecution ensued against the Jesus community.

Defend the Faith
Roman citizenship required the defense of the Roman empire. Paul is charging the Philippian citizens of heaven

to defend the faith. The gospel is the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus.

The biblical book of Jude chapter 1 verse 3, says:

> *But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people.*

Jude admonished the early church to expose false teachers, and to defend the good news of Jesus they had received from the Apostles. The Roman force was not false teachers but they did seek to mute the Apostles' proclamation of King Jesus and His Lordship. External pressure from the Romans was to mute, restrict or annihilate the church; internal pressure from false teachers brought disunity to members and confusion to the Apostles' teaching.

Whether defending the faith from opposition or defending the faith from deceptive teachers take up the same mindset as Christ. Stand together in one faith, in one spirit, in one purpose. The Church contends together. The individual and community tethered by unity in the spirit to accomplish God's plan for the Church and those in the Church.

Have you considered what God's plan is for you? What spirit do you have toward your colleagues? How does the Holy Spirit manifest in you? How are you affecting your community?

1:28 – Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself.

Sovereignty
Intimidation is not his concern. Paul's focus is to start Jesus communities wherever God leads him, and to teach believers the way to conduct themselves as citizens of heaven.

Paul's mindset was that at the end of time followers of Jesus would be vindicated by God through salvation while persecutors and opposers would receive judgment. In other words, Paul is saying don't let the opposition intimidate you or distract you from your call to be citizens of heaven defending the faith as fully devoted followers of Jesus. We are eagerly awaiting our King to come from heaven to earth. His Kingdom is one of healing, justice, love, and hope that at the end of time God will create a new heaven and earth.

The Sovereignty of God, in essence, is His rule over the His heaven and earth. To understand that God is in control is to not be intimidated by opposition, fear suffering, rather to be bold to declare His message, and do it in the Spirit of Jesus full love and grace. Leave the vindication to God. He will reverse the wrongs and brokenness of humanity with righteousness and healing. Stand firm, take courage, be resilient, and preserver.

1:29 – For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.

Suffering
Suffering is a prominent theme in the book of Philippians. Paul was imprisoned not knowing if he would be martyred. Dying for Jesus is not the true sacrifice for Paul. True sacrifice is staying alive to serve others.

Paul was daily confronted with persecution and sufferings. His was not a one-time martyrdom. It was a daily suffering leading to a final martyrdom which leads to the power of the resurrection. His view of Sovereignty will carry him from death to life.

Suffering expresses faith. God uses it to shape His followers into the image of Jesus.

> *These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.* 1 Peter 1:7

Suffering even perfected the Lord Jesus

> *God…[made] Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring [people] into their salvation.* Hebrews 2:10

1:30 – We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.
The word struggle in its original language [Greek] is [agōna] agony. Perhaps Paul is in agony over his physical beatings, the spiritual dark forces against him, his imprisonment, his prayer for the Philippians, we can't be sure, but we do know the Philippians shared in his suffering. When you suffer for Christ know it serves to unite us in redemption. One day we will share in the power of the resurrection of Christ. We are citizens of heaven.

What is your citizenship?