

“Earthly Priorities for Heavenly Citizens” Philippians 1:1-2

Our identity as heavenly citizens in Christ determines future destiny and our present duty. Because we are in Christ through faith in His gospel, we have a perfect eternity awaiting us. Because we are in Christ and yet still in this world, our priorities are determined for us - to pursue Jesus Christ and to proclaim His name, in unity with the people of God.

When we understand who we really are, it changes our perspective.

Philippians is a book that can change your perspective. Focused on what is absolutely most important in life...and that is Christ.

BACKGROUND: Author

- 3:5-6 – “a Hebrew of Hebrews... a Pharisee... as to the Law, blameless”
 - Born in Tarsus. Exposure to Greek language, culture and literature
 - Raised and trained in Jerusalem under Gamaliel
 - Committed to Judaism; a Pharisee (strictest sect; father a Pharisee)
 - Gal. 1:13-14; persecutor of the early church
 - Damascus road – Acts 9
 - Apostle to the Gentiles; church plants in Roman world

Audience – Church in Philippi – Acts 16:13-15

- First church founded by on the continent of Europe
- about 10 yrs before this letter was written (52 AD); 2nd missionary journey
- Became a giving, evangelistic church; faithful partners
 - Contribute to Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica - Phil. 4:15-16
 - Contribute to the needs of fellow believers - 2 Cor. 8:1-5; 11:9
- Ministered to Paul in prison: 1:12-13
 - o “whole Praetorian guard” suggests Rome (AD 62)
 - o probably 1st Roman imprisonment since expected to be released
 - o Other “prison epistles” = Ephesians, Philemon, Colossians

Church sent Epaphroditus; Epaph. becomes ill

writes a letter and sends it by the hand of Epaph. - Phil. 2:25-28

The city of Philippi – Acts 16:6-12 (See Map)

- They live in a very significant city – map of Philippi
 - The city of Philippi was captured, fortified and given its name by King Philip of Macedonia (father of Alexander the Great) in 356 BC. Located in northeast Greece, Philippi was about eight miles from the sea in the midst of a very fertile region fed by springs and enriched by gold.
 - Located on the *Via Egnatia*; main road connecting East and West
 - 42 B.C. After battle between Antony and Octavian v. Brutus and Cassius. Antony resettled many Romans.
 - Declared city a Roman colony; relocated many Italians to the city. Filled with Romans, some Greeks and some Jews, wide variety of peoples.
 - Unlike other cities, citizens of Philippi possessed the Italic Right = full citizenship in the Roman empire
 - * Governed by Roman Law; highest privilege
 - * No taxes
 - * No torture or death without a fair trial
 - * Right to own, sell, and transfer land; civil lawsuits
 - Assumed rights in our day. Very few inhabitants of Roman Empire had citizenship, and thus very few had these rights.
 - Proud of citizenship.

Central theme around which we will build our study is Citizenship – 3:20

- Identity changed; in Christ
- Perspective changed; oriented toward Christ's return
- Destiny changed
- Priorities changed – 1:27

Privilege far greater than Roman citizenship

Begin to explore this theme by looking at greeting; first 2 verses. Paul's greetings were not standardized. Clues to what he wants to talk about in the rest of the book. What does it mean to be a heavenly citizen.

I. Slaves of Jesus Christ

DEFINITION – not “servants”; no freedom; not your own master

Not “apostle” = No major problems

Warnings about potential problems

Presents himself in humility

Slaves of Christ on behalf of the Philippians

Acts 16:22-34; Paul in prison. Did not claim his citizenship rights to avoid prison.

Again in prison; don’t worry about me – gospel progressing

Citizens of heaven sacrifice their rights for Christ

II. Saints in Jesus Christ

DEFINITION

Elite – “St. Paul”

Different, set apart – Ex. 33:15-16; 34:8-9

How? In Christ

Christ’s holiness; Phil. 3:9

Should be like God. How? Phil. 1:2

Grace; not “greetings”

Peace – Hebrew greeting; reconciled; blessed

In Philippi

Set apart for two purposes – pursue Christ; proclaim Christ

1. Progress report
2. Thanks for participation
3. Press on together

Citizens of heaven are set apart for Christ

III. Servant leaders for Jesus Christ

Why are these two groups singled out?

Offices of leaders established by Paul in church plants

Appoint elders in every place

A. Elders' Responsibility = "overseers"

Guard, protect from heresy

Prevent dissension; maintain unity

Maintain focus and purpose

Three threats:

1. Persecution – 1:29-30
2. Internal disunity – 2:3-4; 4:2-3
3. False teaching – 3:1-2; greatest threat to grace is legalism

Any effective church will be attacked

B. Deacons responsibility – "serve"

Used of government officials

Used of Paul's co-workers

Used of Paul

"Deacon" used of Christ – Rom. 15:8

Overseer also used of Christ – 1 Peter 2:25 (guardian of your souls)

Holy One used of Christ – Jn. 6:69; Acts 2:27

Slave used of Christ

Citizens of heaven imitate the humility of Christ

Conclusion

Imitate Christ; pursue Christ; proclaim Christ; life is Christ

Focusing book. I want it to flood our minds this semester.

Memorize the book.

This week memorize Philippians 1:27