

“Thrive Series” 4th Oct 2020: #5 “Living as Citizens of Heaven”

S Erwin McManus: “Our citizenship is in eternity; history is our temporary residence.”

1. Paul Gives a Direct Instruction?

S Phil 1:27 NLT ²⁷ Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves (*politeuomai*) 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.

- Paul commanded the Philippians (the first command in the letter) to shift their perspective from the earthly realm to the heavenly one.
- They should live in this world as citizens of another world, the heavenly kingdom.
 - Expression ‘Live as citizens of heaven’ Not expressed in most other translations... NLT creates a powerful picture!
 - *Gk. politeuomai* – literally ...“to behave as/make a citizen” conducting yourselves publicly (and in conversation!)

2. S Q. What is Citizenship? (Philippi was a Roman Colony)

Paul and the Philippians understood citizenship...

- A Citizen had privileged status **“Embodied a Clearly Recognisable Identity”**
- A colony is not just individuals but a community
- Roman citizens understood their responsibilities.
- Roman citizenship gave rights that others didn’t have.
- **Citizenship affects all areas of life, including:**
 - Language, appearance, creativity, pride / esteem.
 - Thinking, behaviour, belief, shared values, allegiance.
 - Laws, conduct, currency, sovereignty, record, power...
- Q. What impact does this have on those who are / are not citizens?

Citizenship of Heaven has a similar ‘pattern’ of expectations

- **Q. How does Heavenly Citizenship look like in each of these areas?** ie Laws, conduct, currency (faith) sovereignty, records, power, etc...
- Note: Like Philippi, Roman Citizens in Britain (and other countries) looked and behaved like Romans in Rome
- Examples of UK Roman historical presence *Pictures...*
 - Bath
 - Lullingstone Villa, Eynsford 100AD
- Every colony mirrors and points back to the Capital – ie Rome
- Earthly expressions of God’s kingdom must point back to Heaven

3. S Q. How Can we live as Citizens of Heaven ...?

3.1 Worthy of the Good News

3.2 Standing together – one spirit / one purpose, intentional decision

3.3 Fighting together – for the faith (Good News)

- Not Fighting each other
- “Athletes competing (*engaging / wrestling*) together in an athletic contest.” (Gk. sunathleō) The image in Greek is drawn from athletic contests. Usually, athletes competed one against another; in 1:27 Paul asks the church at Philippi to compete together as a team of athletes to help advance the faith that comes through the preaching of the gospel.
- To ...Preserve and Propagate the Gospel

Q. What do I need to change if I'm going to live as an effective, visible citizen of Heaven?

- How can we motivate each other – to spread the Gospel?
- What in my life 'rubs off' on the lives of others?

S Quote: “Confidence in OUR identity, will impact someone else discovering THEIR destiny.”

4. How to Defeat an Enemy?

S Phil 1:28 NLT 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.

“intimidated” Gk. (*terrified – like a bolting, panicked horse*)

“sign to them” Gk. (*a legal term denoting proof obtained by an analysis of the facts*). Visible facts... By standing and fighting together for the faith, in love and confidence, the Philippians would be living proof to their opponents that the message of Jesus Christ is true.

“Unity” is not just a ‘fellowship’ idea but has the ability to produce significant spiritual power.... it acts as evidence of Christian citizenship.

Q **What is intimidation?** When your life is changed by an outside pressure!

- Important to see the true enemy
- Understand how the enemy operates
- Live increasingly cleaner lives – beyond accusation

**S “When we know who we are,
...we carry ourselves ‘differently’
...impact the spread of the Gospel.”**

5. How to Thrive under pressure?

S Job 17:9 (NLT) The righteous keep moving forward, and those with clean hands become stronger and stronger.

- ‘Righteous’ keep moving – not static, intentionally taking steps...
Q. What does this mean?
- ‘Clean hands’ – Q. What does it mean to have clean hands?
- ‘Stronger and stronger’ - “We can become stronger even with Covid!”

7. **S** Why is Suffering for Christ also a Gift?

Seven areas to consider. Suffering...

1. Brings Gods comfort **2Cor. 1:5 NLT** For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.

2. Brings fiery trials and rejoicing **1Pet. 4:12-13 ESV** ...do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.).

3. Brings blessing and reward **Matt. 5:11–12 ESV** ¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven... (Also.. 2Cor. 4:17; 2Tim. 2:12; Rev. 22:12).

4. Brings out spiritual leadership God sees suffering as a tool to accomplish His purposes, This happened to Jesus: **Heb. 2:10 NLT** ... it was only right that he (*God*) should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation.

5. Brings refined and tested faith - in His children **1Pet. 1:7 NLT** 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....

6. Brings mature endurance **James 1:2–4 NLT** ...when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³ For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴ So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.)

7. We will share in God’s Glory - glorified with Christ in the future **Rom. 8:17 NLT** And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

Q. When is general suffering in life, not suffering for Christ?

Q. How does my experience of suffering compare to the 7 areas listed above?

Conclusion:

Incredible call...to live as Citizens of Heaven!