

Where Is Your Citizenship?



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For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; –Philippians 3:20

There is a widespread misunderstanding in the body of Christ today related to our responsibility to live in this world while maintaining an attitude of not being of this world. This misunderstanding is based on seeing these seemingly opposing truths from an either/or perspective. In other words, some people seem confused as to what role Christians should actively play in the affairs of this world since heaven is our true home.

In the Scripture cited above, Paul rightly reminded the believers living in Philippi that their citizenship was in heaven. Some have taken that to mean that they should not be concerned about anything in this world beyond their own comforts and well-being.

What Paul meant by his exhortation to the Philippians was that their ultimate loyalty was to God and His kingdom, not to the earthly realm of dictators and despots. Paul was speaking about priorities. What Paul did not mean was that Christians bear no responsibility to influence and direct the affairs of citizens of this world.

The same is true for us today. As a matter of testimony and doctrine, eternity is our ultimate destination. However, having the assurance of heaven as our true and final eternal

home does not release us from the obligation to speak the truth of who God is and what He requires from His creation, to every man and woman in every context, day, and age.

Thus, Paul's statement is not an either-or proposition. Heaven is our ultimate destiny, but this earth is our temporal home. Understanding that our real citizenship is eternity does not release us from our responsibilities here on earth. People who claim that Christians should not be involved in for example, politics, are simply wrong.

How can we to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16) without interaction with the communities in which we live? The short answer is you cannot be salt and light to the lost and perishing without serving on committees, school boards, or elected and unelected public offices in your communities. Evangelism requires outreach to people. Even protesting the latest moral outrage requires you to interact with people.

Just like our real, physical temporal homes need repair and ongoing maintenance, so too do the affairs of man. This world needs constant recalibration and input from Christians. Without a moral guiding light, i.e., the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, the world of humanity is left to their own vain imaginings (Psalm 2) and subsequent demonic control (1 John 5:19).

For some, "heaven is our home" has become an excuse for not becoming involved in the affairs of this world. Christians have withdrawn from many spheres of life, thinking that they are being obedient to the teachings of the Bible. Is it true that the Bible teaches withdrawal and separation from the world?

It is not true that the Bible teaches withdrawal and in fact, Jesus prayed to the Father that His disciples of all ages would be protected while in the world: "I do not ask Thee (the Father) to take them (Jesus' disciples) out of the world, but

to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (John 17:15-18).

THE REAL ISSUES

The enemy of God and of His people has managed an effective strategy that has resulted in much of the body of Christ viewing the world's travails as "just deserts," and pointedly admonishing no one in particular to "let them devour themselves." Is this the way we should live our lives, watching the world destroy itself?

Where is the hope for those God desires to save from eternal destruction? When Christians withdraw from the war being fought for the souls of people, they are deliberately disobeying the Father's desire for His children.

Jesus told His disciples just before He returned to His glory to await His second coming, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Jesus' commandment as Matthew records it above makes it very clear that we are to be engaged with the communities in which we live. Why then do so many Christians refuse to do this? I think the reasons that Christians do not engage their community can be distilled down to three primarily. Those three are: (1) disobedience (2) fear (3) ignorance of the command.

Disobedience cloaks itself in several different costumes. Some appeal to their doctrine surprisingly. Their mantra is "God knows His elect and He will bring them to saving faith regardless of anything I do or say." Others say that evangelism is the job of ministers and others with that "gift"

which they assert quickly, they do not have. These individuals never seem to consider why they think the “professional clergy” should do what they are not willing to do. Some use the oldest and lamest excuse ever: they do not have time. The basis for all these types of reasons for not being salt and light is simply disobedience.

Fear is without question the biggest reason people do not actively tell other people about their faith. In the United States we have watched as churches that once had visitation night, where church members met at the church for prayer and then went into the community to knock on doors and tell people about Jesus Christ, have morphed into churches that present programs on Sunday morning aimed at attracting lost people to their services where they hope a combination of skits, dramas, singing, and motivational speeches will take the place of Gospel proclamation. If all those activities fail, then they can always hold a Super Bowl Football party at the church complete with free beer.

What are Christians fearful of? For the most part they are fearful of having to answer any questions related to Christian faith. They are fearful of that line of questioning because they do not know what and in some instances why, they believe what they believe. Biblical illiteracy among professing Christians is at an all-time high and rising. Ignorance is indeed bliss for those who need an excuse not to be engaged with their community.

HOW WILL THEY HEAR?

Knowing that heaven is our home is a source of hope and encouragement. That knowledge also creates a sense of urgency. No one is guaranteed their next breath of air or heartbeat. That makes the use of our time an important issue. Do we want to have assurance that those we love will also be citizens of heaven by faith in Christ?

The Apostle Paul while on Mars Hill in Athens, told the assembled crowd that God “has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). To believers in Rome Paul said:

“Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call upon Him whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? (Romans 10:13-15a)

The days are long since gone when unbelievers wake up on any given Sunday morning and decide it would be a good day to visit the church down the street. Thus, Christians must go to them. Guess where the best places are to find those people who most need to hear about Jesus Christ? Here is a hint: the best places are the places you spend the most time at. For many of us that place is work. For some it might be school. The point is that God’s sons and daughters are on mission to disciple others wherever they are.

Christians must understand the importance of speaking the truth about who God is and what He has determined to do. Jesus Christ is returning as Judge (James 4:12; Revelation 16:7). He came the first-time offering salvation through faith in His finished work on Calvary’s Cross (John 3:17; 1 John 4:14). He is coming again to judge all those who have rejected the Father’s gracious offer. The reason the Father left us here after our profession of faith and filling with His Holy Spirit was so that we would be witnesses to this truth.

I often remind believers that they are no more ready for heaven today than they were the day they were saved. This is true from a positional perspective. We become adopted sons and daughters and joint heirs with Jesus when we are born-again. I say that to emphasize the point that the reason that God left

us here after we were born again was to do the things that He prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

We are God's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) to a lost world. The foundation we have in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11) provides a steady and firm position from which we can offer exhortations and admonishments to all people to come to Christ in faith for the forgiveness of their sins. This reality of the believer's responsibility to proclaim Christ to the lost is done in view of the surpassing riches of knowing Christ and the great hope we have that all people will come to know the same joy that God's people have known.

We are citizens of heaven right now, but we are also heralding the greatest news creation has ever received: there is a coming King, make ready for His return! Do you know Him by faith?

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