

Show Me Your Passport, Please!

Philippians 3:17-21

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connect groups

November 19, 2017

PATH

Anytime you travel overseas, a passport is required. Your passport is a document of citizenship, denoting your country of origin and permanent residence. Your name is written on that document along with your place and date of birth. Jesus said that our names are written in heaven (see Luke 10:20) because we have been born again. That makes us tourists and foreigners here on earth. In this section of Philippians, Pastor Skip showed how Paul gave us four distinguishing characteristics of heavenly citizens:

I. Citizens Walk with Partners (v. 17)

III. Citizens Wait for a Place (v. 20)

II. Citizens Watch for Pretenders (vv. 18-19)

IV. Citizens Will Get a Promotion (v. 21)

POINTS

Citizens Walk with Partners:

- Paul was a model citizen of heaven, but he did not put himself on a pedestal.
- Like Paul, we are foreigners on a pilgrimage toward paradise, and we have a passport of citizenship.
- As Christians, we should have a certain walk (lifestyle) that characterizes our citizenship.
- As citizens, we need partners in our walk, those who motivate and encourage us and keep us accountable. We can't grow well without a mentor or guide.
- **Probe:** The Greek word Paul uses for *pattern* is *tupos*. It refers to a stamp or dye that imprints something, leaving a pattern or print on the object. How has Christ left a pattern and print on your life? How should mentors leave a pattern or print on the lives of people they lead?

Citizens Watch for Pretenders:

- Notice the word *weeping*. Not everyone within the borders of a country is a loyal citizen. There are fake citizens within the church: people who know the heavenly language but don't conform to the heavenly laws.
- Peter spoke of "false teachers among you" (2 Peter 2:1). Paul characterized these people as "enemies of the cross" (v. 18). He was referring to:
 - Legalists: those who believed in strict adherence to the law, a works-based faith

- Antinomianists: those who believed in no law; all action is permitted
- Judaizers: those who believed one must be a Jew, living by Jewish standards
- Gnostics: those who believed the material/physical was evil, and only the spirit mattered, therefore allowing wayward actions in the flesh
- Remember that your example and lifestyle may help pretenders become citizens.
- **Probe:** The Greek word Paul uses for *enemies* is *echthros*. It means *hateful, adversary, and a foe*. Like in Paul's day, the church today has enemies. Who/what are some of the enemies of the church now? Take a moment to pray for them, yearning for them to become citizens of Jesus' kingdom.

Citizens Wait for a Place:

- Every Christian has three addresses: physical (on earth), spiritual (in Christ), and future (heaven). Christians have a heavenly focus because we have a heavenly citizenship.
- The word Paul used for *citizenship* is the same word from which we derive *politics*. Paul was saying that our political affiliation is in heaven.
- One of the ways to identify a citizen of the kingdom is whether the person wants to see the King. We should be excited for Jesus' return.

- We become citizens of God's kingdom when we trust in Jesus Christ. Jesus then writes our name in His registry, the Book of Life.
- Heaven is more than a destination; it is a motivation.
- **Probe:** Notice Skip's use of the word *motivation*. Motivation provides the reason for actions, desires, and behavior. How should your future home (heaven) influence your actions in your current home (earth)?

Citizens Will Get a Promotion:

- With heaven, Christians get an upgrade; our bodies will be transformed. Every citizen of heaven will get a resurrected, glorified body.
- The word Paul uses for *transformed* is *metaschématizó*. It means *to transfigure*, making an internal *and* external change.
- At the resurrection, we'll get a resurrected body like Jesus': "we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2). We'll have new capabilities, and the glorified, upgraded, renewed body is for every believer.
- **Probe:** A promotion is the action of raising someone to a higher position or rank. Share a time when you got a promotion here on earth. What were some of the benefits? Compare this with your future heavenly promotion. How do the two types of benefits (earthly and heavenly) compare?

PRACTICE

Connect Up: Pastor Skip challenged Christians to look up, look around, and look out. What are some of the things we should be looking for when we connect up to God (His will, His love, guidance, etc.)? Why should we be on the lookout for Christ's return?

Connect In: Pastor Skip called us to look around for fellow imitators of Christ. What

are some characteristics you look for in someone following Jesus? Share about a mentor who had a great impact on you. What were some qualities that stood out in that person's life?

Connect Out: When we look out, we are not only looking for false imitators, but also for ways to make the pretenders citizens of heaven. What are some key characteristics

that make you aware that someone is not a true participant in the kingdom of God? For example, predators feed on the weak and hurting. Most predators in a church feed on one of three things: finances, intimacy, and theology/doctrine. Beyond telling the local church leadership, what actions should you take if you think you know of a predator or false imitator within your midst (prayer, evangelism, etc.)?