

Philippians 3:17-4:1 – Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long *to see*, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

### Second Half Theme Verse

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is loving, whatever is reputable, if there is any virtue and if there any commendation, dwell on these things. Whatever you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9 – Literal Translation

### Recap of Philippians 3:17-19

1. Follow my example and others who walk like us - Paul establishes not an ideal but the new normal. Paul tells them to “become imitators” not just of himself but also of others who walk in the same pattern. The pattern is established in the mental attitude of mature believers.
2. Warning against the earthly mind of others
  - a. Whose end (is) destruction
  - b. Whose God (is) the belly
  - c. (Whose) glory (is) their shame
  - d. The ones who think the earthly things

This is contrasted to the mind of Christ, specifically in verse 12 where the pursuit is a goal that is in accordance with the upward call.

As we learned last time, believers can, indeed, place themselves at enmity with God (James 4:4). And the ones that Paul is weeping over seem to be believers who have forsaken the example of Paul and have instead set their minds on earthly things.

This goes back to the beginning of Chapter 3. The “mentality of the world” does not refer to overt sin (as with the Corinthian church), rather the issue here is rooted in legalism.

Legalism takes on two forms:

1. In Justification – Paul regularly battles the false understating that one is justified by God by keeping the Law (Romans 3:20, 28, 4:4-5; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5)
2. In Completion – To the churches, Paul continually fights with those who believe that in order to be complete in Christ, one had to follow the Law or other laws (Galatians 2:16, 21, 3:3, 11, 4:9, 5:2-4).

**Philippians 3:20-4:1**

3. The reason to have a mental attitude that is of above and not of earthly things is because we have a heavenly reality, a home that is not of this world, citizenship in heaven.
4. Finally, we will see what the main desired outcome of Chapter 3 is to “stand firm in the Lord.” But we have to understand what this means and not just use the Christian cliché, which leaves each person to his own interpretation.

**For our citizenship is in heaven**

An evaluation of this phrase or the verse very easily provides an explanation of its meaning. Why should our focus be on heavenly things and not on earthly things? Because heaven is our home.

The literal translation is “for the citizenship of ours exists in heavens.”

πολίτευμα politeuma – this is a cognate of the word for city and indicates where a person belongs. This is the only use of this particular word, but Paul uses other words in the same word family in some significant areas.

Philippians 1:27 – *Conduct* is a verb in this family and indicates the activity of a citizen. The function of the believer is to act in accordance with the gospel of Christ.

Ephesians 2:11-22 – There was a division within the early church that had to be overcome. Jewish believers in Jesus placed themselves on a higher level than Gentile believers in Jesus. Verse 11 explains that the designation of circumcision is a division that does not exist in the church.

In verse 12, Paul reminds them that the division of Jew and Gentile was prior to believing in Jesus. But now in Christ, He has made the two entities into one body known as the church.

Verse 19 contains the result. You are no longer strangers and aliens (to Israel and to God), but you are fellow citizens with the saints (Jews) in God’s household. This does not mean that Gentiles are part of Israel but are one with the saints in Israel as a citizen of God’s city, God’s dwelling — heavenly citizenship.

*Heaven* is the plural, but do not let that trip you up. Paul uses heaven/heavens 21 times, with half of them being in the plural. There is no indication that one means sky/universe and the other means spiritual heaven. The word indicates a direction; from heaven means from above. This is just the anthropomorphic understanding of the location where Jesus is and that is where Jesus is coming from to claim us for Himself. I could get into all the examples of singular and plural, but for now, I will simply give you my conclusion on this one.

The Old Testament does not clearly speak of a heavenly abode. The majority of heavenly references are from Jesus Himself. This does not mean that the Jews were not aware of heaven being a real location, for none of the Jews questioned Jesus as to the reality of heaven. Jesus states that the future abode of the redeemed is in heaven. Christ speaks of a “reward in heaven” (Matt 5:12). He urges them to “lay up ... treasures in heaven” (Matt 6:20), where presumably they will be able to access those treasures—but thieves, moth, and rust will not. John 14:2-3 – Jesus comforts the disciples by telling them of their future abode (Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Colossians 3:1; 1 Peter 1:3-4).

## PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 3

The verb in verse 20 is “ὑπάρχω huparchō” translated “is.” This is a compound word “hupó” and “archomai” – to commence under, to come into existence, to exist. This is the same verb in Philippians 2:6 – Jesus “he existed” in the form of God.

In 2:6 the verb is used as a participle to describe the nature of Jesus Christ. In 3:20, the verb is Present Active Indicative and speaks to our current status, our current existence.

“For the citizenship of ours currently exists in (the) heavens.”

Although our location will change physically to the heavenly realm (to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord), our current status as believers is as citizens of heaven. Citizenship has been degraded in this present age, with both good and evil intentions. But both the Jew and the Greek citizenship meant a lot more. Where you are a citizen determines much about you.

We know of Paul using his Roman citizenship to his advantage to stay alive and safe throughout his imprisonments and trials from both the Jews and Romans.

However, it is more important to understand that citizenship, no matter where you live, is your reality and your ultimate home.

Philippi is a Roman colony filled with Roman citizens in a Macedonian, Greek region. Paul is a Jew from Tarsus in south Turkey but is identified as a Roman citizen. Paul tells these believers who either are or covet Roman citizenship that our reality is a heavenly citizenship.

What is the responsibility of a citizen of one city/country who lives in another? It is an automatic ambassadorship. The sojourner represents the city/country of his citizenship, a commission is not required (2 Corinthians 5:1-21)

It is from heaven that we get our worth; it is from heaven that we look for the prize; it is from heaven that we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is because of this present reality that we put no confidence in the flesh.

It is because of this present reality that we seek to know Jesus Christ better.

It is because of this present reality that we pursue the goal of the prize of the calling from above.

It is because of this present reality that we now walk in like manner as Paul walked.

It is because of this present reality that we avoid walking according to the values and influence of earthly things (sin/legalism).

Jesus will transform our bodies into conformity with the body of His glory.

**We eagerly await a Savior**

Part of our citizenship includes the fact that our home is only acquired when we go to Him (in physical death) or He comes for us (the coming of the Lord).

*Eagerly wait* is the verb “ἀπεκδέχομαι *apekdechomai*,” a tri-compound word: “apo,” “ek,” and “dechomai.”

Picture of the word group

*dechomai* – Take, receive, accept, approve

*ekdechomai* – wait for, expect, look forward to (Acts 17:16; 1 Corinthians 11:33, 16:11)

*apekdechomai* – This tri-compound word is used exclusively for the glory of His appearing and the revelation of our glorification (Romans 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 5:5; Hebrews 9:28).

The word means to wait with high intensity or anxiously.

What are we (1<sup>st</sup> Person Plural) anxiously expecting? In Greek, the accusative nouns are the direct objects. Each word is part of the direct object as a whole — *a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*. He is the Savior (used primarily in the Pastoral Epistles<sup>10</sup> and in 2 Peter<sup>5</sup>). He is the Lord, the Master, supreme One, Ruler, sovereign One. Jesus is His human name to identify with His humanity and that He is our kin. Christ refers to His messiahship, the anointed One of God to fulfill the promise to mankind and to Israel.

Paul is speaking as “we” to the Philippian church in 50-60 AD. As we have seen, this same word is written in the early letter of Paul (Galatians), the middle letters of Paul (Corinthians and Romans), and the late letter of Paul (Philippians). It is also used in Hebrews, probably written in the late 60s as well. This word is used with respect to the anxious expecting of the return of Jesus Christ from the 40s-60s in the first century.

Not only that, but these words have been cherished for nearly 2,000 years in which we all are (or should be) anxiously awaiting the return of Jesus. If a generation is 40 years, then there have been nearly 50 generations of believers that have been anxiously awaiting Him, and we may actually see it.

Every minute of every day, we should have in the mentality that Jesus could come and take us home.

**Why a Savior?**

Normally, we use the word Savior to point to an initiation — someone who saves from hell to heaven, from death into life. Is Paul just saying we anxiously expect the One who saved us? The use of this word in some passages definitely points to that fact, but awaiting His arrival as Savior points to the fact that we will also be saved from this earth and the judgment that is due (1 Thes. 5:9-11).

**Who will transform our body**

The literal translation is “Who (referring back to Savior Lord Jesus Christ) He will transform our body of humiliation fashioned like unto the body of His glory according to the working of His ability even to subject all things to himself.”

There is a great wordplay here in connection to Philippians 2:5-8:

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in *morphē* of God, He did not consider equality with God something to be held, but emptied Himself, having taken the *morphē* of a slave, having become in *homoiōmati* of men, having been found in *schēma* as a man, He humbled Himself.”

Now 3:21

“Who will *metaschēmatizo* our body of humiliation to become *summorphos* to the body of His glory”

The Bible is rich in verses that talk about our changing (Romans 8:23, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53; Colossians 3:4; 1 John 3:2).

### **Stand Firm**

The last verb is an imperative, “στήκω *stēkō*,” which is a form of “histēmi” (to stand). This means to stand still, to persist, to persevere (1 Corinthians 16:13; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 1:27).

Each use of the word has a particular understanding depending on the context in which it is used.

1 Corinthians 16:13 – Paul desires the church in Corinth to act in a manner that is consistent with their maturity. They know what they need to know, now it is time to put away the childish things and stand firm in the doctrines of God that they had believed and to be strong.

Galatians 5:1 – *Stand firm* here is in rejection of legalism and the Judaizers. We are to not return to the weak and worthless way of the world in the pull of having our works be what makes us worthy to God.

Philippians 1:27 – the first use of *stand firm* in Philippians is in reference to being together in unity in the gospel of Christ.

Now in 4:1, we have the adverb “οὕτως *houtōs*,” which means in this manner. In what manner? In this text, *standing firm* in the Lord is about your thoughts, your motivation. We need to follow those who are focused on Christ and understand that our true reality of His nature and our citizenship.

The means of withstanding the temptation of this world (to find its success and pleasures as our aim or goal) is to understand our true reality and what we are eagerly awaiting.