

REVISITING THE BELIEVER'S POSITIONAL RICHES IN CHRIST

Part XX: Applying The Truth That Believers Are Heavenly Citizens

(Philippians 3:20 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. One of the great concerns Christians may bear is the grief of losing what it **used** to mean for them to be citizens of a particular earthly nation that has since gone into decline or otherwise failing to be able to become a naturalized citizen of another country of one's preference.
- B. The believers at Philippi in the Apostle Paul's day knew from their city's history what it meant to experience great loss as citizens regardless if a Roman emperor had tried to alleviate their loss.
- C. However, one of the 33 positional truths we believers come to possess the instant we trust in Christ as Savior is a heavenly citizenship that abundantly compensates us for citizenship losses or inadequacies that we experience in this life. (Lewis S. Chafer, Systematic Theology, vol. III, "Soteriology," p. 252)
- D. Paul's solution for the Philippian believers is based on this positional truth, and it applies to all believers today:

II. Applying The Truth That Believers Are Heavenly Citizens, Philippians 3:20 et al.

- A. When Paul wrote in Philippians 3:20 NIV ESV to Philippian Christians that their "citizenship" ("conversation" KJV) was in heaven, he wrote to people who knew what it meant to experience loss as Roman citizens, a loss that had not been fully recompensed by their homeland's emperor whom they had served (as follows):
 1. Due to a Roman civil war, some landowners in Italy who supported the triumphant forces of Antony were nevertheless "stripped of their holdings in Italy," Zon. Pict. Ency. of the Bible, vol. Four, p. 760.
 2. Rome's Emperor Augustus Caesar then tried to compensate these landowners for their loss, establishing the city of Philippi in Macedonia so though they had to relocate there from their precious land holdings in Italy, they could still enjoy Roman citizenship in Philippi in the realm of Macedonia, Ibid.
 3. The Philippian believers were aware of this arrangement from their history and/or they were descendants of the originally relocated citizens to this Roman colony of Philippi "as colonists while their citizenship was in Rome," Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 662.
 4. Accordingly, nothing could fully compensate these people for the loss of their lands in Italy.
- B. In a statement full of meaning for these believers, Paul mentioned the heavenly citizenship they possessed in Christ that would **far** more than compensate them way beyond what even the Roman Emperor could ever hope to do for them (as follows):
 1. Paul wrote to his Philippian readers that, in contrast to the false teachers who minded "earthly things," they were citizens of heaven, Philippians 3:19-20.
 2. However, in **vast SUPERIORITY to their CURRENT lot as displaced Roman citizens from Italy who lived in a Roman colony city in Macedonia, their HEAVENLY citizenship would supply citizenship PRIVILEGES that even their ROMAN citizenship could NEVER achieve (as follows):**
 - a. Instead of having to settle for life in a foreign colony away from their former land holdings due to the injustices of a civil war they had experienced, heavenly citizenship supplied the hope of the coming of Christ to change the believers' bodies for **transporting them TO heaven's HOME** as **OPPOSED** to the unhappy and inadequate **DISPLACEMENT** they had experienced in this earthly life, Philippians 3:21.
 - b. That heavenly home far exceeded in value and blessing anything the ancestors of Paul's readers had lost in their original land holdings in Italy: heaven's streets were paved with gold, its 12 foundations were each composed of precious stones, the tree of life and clear flowing river were there, God's presence was there, there was no civil war there that could result in their being displaced again since there were no sinners there and Paul's readers had a home there built for them by Jesus Christ, Revelation 21-22; John 14:2-3.
 - c. Hence, these believers were not to focus on "earthly things" that could be gained or lost in this life, but on heavenly things where **full** citizenship blessings **forever awaited** them, Philippians 3:19b-20!
 - d. Other New Testament passages telling of the temporary nature of our earthly sojourn in contrast to our vastly superior heavenly home as heavenly citizens include Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:22; 2 Corinthians 5:8; 1 Peter 2:11 and Hebrews 11:13; Ibid., Chafer.

Lesson: Paul urged his readers to look beyond the lamentable losses they or their ancestors experienced in being displaced from Italy to Macedonia by focusing on their vastly superior heavenly citizenship and its blessings!

Application: *May we focus on our heavenly citizenship for comfort over what citizenship losses we face in this life, knowing that what God offers us in heaven far exceeds whatever losses we might possibly experience in this life.*