

Made For More Philippians 3:20-4:1

“But our citizenship is in Heaven”

Introduction: It happened again last week. Talking with a dear friend they expressed their heartbreak over the fact that their son, raised with the truth, had struggled with faith to the point that he wanted nothing to do with Christ, His church, and for a time, even the family. Though he had moved closer to the family over the years, he still held firm in his disregard for the Bible and any talk of gospel, Jesus, etc. It was apparent that this former pastor and his wife dealt with this blow in expected sorrow, and though they still had faith in God’s goodness, love and sovereignty it was clear the sheen of ministry had been stripped away, replaced with an unrelenting heaviness.

If you have not experienced some sort of heaviness and sorrow because of unmet expectations, unfair treatment, pain, or constant sorrow, you will at some point. Life in this world does not turn out the way we thought or intended, and even if there are aspects going well, we each carry a deep wound that colors and shapes our view of reality, God, and future.

C.S Lewis dug into the question of why humanity faces this kind of unmet expectation:

*“Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exist...If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is **that I was made for another world**...Probably **earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.**”¹*

What was Lewis’ point? Not only do we face **brokenness** in a world riddled with sin (our own lives, bodies, the creation itself), but life in a fallen world CANNOT bring us the satisfaction that our heart desires. Think about that reality. No amount of money, power, sex, pleasure, or comfort is enough to bring anyone to a point where we say, “I am completely satisfied and need no more.” We get glimpses and times of satisfaction, but NOTHING on this earth does it for us. We were made for something more. We were **made for another world.**

This morning we are going to take a small but significant glimpse into our future, our true home in heaven. It is somewhat surprising how little we think about, understand, or study the topic, since it will be our future for eternity. We spend far more time maximizing our retirement that we will enjoy for 30 years (maybe), creating and checking portfolios, diversifying, and making sure Social Security will still be around. But often the thought of heaven eludes us. And in that lack of clarity, we no longer yearn for the future but try to cling to our life in this world. So we want to view life today through the lens of our **heavenly identity, where we draw hope in the midst of brokenness, and where we will one day be united with our Savior, the one who ultimately satisfies.**

Our Heavenly Identity: Current Citizens (3:20)

“But our Citizenship is in Heaven.”

Contrast in Thinking

Before looking at the text we need to be reminded of the flow of Paul’s thought in the whole of chapter 3. You’ll remember that he started with calling out the false teachers who **added works** to salvation, saying that someone had to perform the ceremony of circumcision in order to be included into Christ.

¹ C.S Lewis “Mere Christianity” p. 121

Paul reminded the church that we are saved by Christ alone, a righteousness that is not earned but is given by faith through Jesus Christ. That also sets the course of our life as our purpose is to now know Christ **and the power of his resurrection**. Paul reminded us that he had not achieved this yet, but he **pressed on to make it his own (12)**, toward the purpose of Christ-likeness and the prize of Christ Himself. In order to move forward, he had to forget what was behind, both in sin and shame, and move forward and upward in maturity. He then talked about our **influences**, and exhorted the church to follow his example and those who emulated him.

Our influences are so important. They shape our thinking, our values, and ultimately our actions. Enemies of the cross exist who may represent God and His values, but are exposed by their desires, their boasts, and their thinking. Those whose minds are set only and continually on earthly things are not only primed for destruction, but lead others astray. We are called to set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:1), to fix our gaze on the reality of our future where Christ is rather than the mirage of the present, where desires rule. **The battle of our identity** (are we citizens of heaven or simply at home in this world) **is the battle of our mind, which is the gateway of our heart**. How we think through these things matters.

Nature of Citizenship (and heaven)

Notice that the contrast between toxic influences and proper thinking rests on a simple phrase: *But or citizenship is in heaven*. What does that mean?

Nature of a citizen – Philippi was a tiny outpost, a colony far from Rome, but the citizens there took great pride in the fact that the place they lived WAS ROME. They represented the values of Rome and upheld its distinctiveness. Paul intentionally used this language of heaven to emphasize that the church had a secure citizenship in heaven but were living on the outpost, the colony of Philippi on earth. That means we carry the values, ethos, and distinctiveness of heaven here with us.

Timing of citizenship – Citizenship in heaven is not something we'll receive *someday*, it is something we have **in the present**. It **IS** in heaven. This reality shapes our thinking, reminding ourselves that we are merely aliens and strangers on this earth (Heb. 11:13), knowing that this world is not the end but merely a brief walk through. It is like taking a trip to a foreign country where we feel out of place, uncomfortable with the language and customs without time to adopt them all, while yearning to come home to where our true identity.

Nature of heaven - Let's talk briefly about heaven itself. What will heaven be like? What will we do? Will we see our loved ones? These questions and more should be asked and time should be taken to answer them since the Bible addresses them. I remember that growing up in a church context heaven was not emphasized much so I got the impression that heaven was a lot like church, which to honest was not all that appealing. Others get the idea that heaven is some weird version of ghostlike spirits floating about all day (and maybe there's harps and clouds and stuff). Still others rely on stories of little kids who had a dream of going to heaven and describing his experience to try to understand. None of these is accurate, and **NONE OF THESE HELP US BEAR THE WEIGHT OF BROKENNESS and UNMET EXPECTATIONS**.

Without unpacking the whole reality of heaven (which would make a great series), there are two aspects that are helpful to our thinking:

Heaven now is not what heaven will be – When a believer dies, we have hope that we will be immediately ushered into the presence of Jesus in heaven. "*Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*" (2 Cor. 5:8). Jesus declared to the thief on

the cross, "*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise*" (Luke 23:43). We will die in our present, earthly body but be ushered into paradise, a place where our pain and suffering are gone and enjoy the glory of Jesus. Some believe this will be a truly spiritual experience as we wait for our new, glorious bodies (we'll cover that in a minute), while others point to Moses and Elijah at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3), where Peter, James and John recognized them as having physical form and identified them as 'men' (Luke 9:30). In heaven, prior to the resurrection, the elders are seen falling down and casting their crowns before the throne (Rev. 4:10), all of which necessitates a physical body, along with holding harps and golden bowls (Rev. 5:8)

Whether or not we will have bodies and what those bodies will be, we know that Jesus said He was going back to heaven to "***prepare a place for you***" (John 14:2), and if He goes to prepare a place, He will come again and take us to Himself, that where He is we will be also (John 14:3). The significance of this dwelling is not so much what it is today, but what it will be in the end. After a time of Tribulation on this earth (Rev. 4-19) Christ will reign for a 1000 years on this earth (Rev. 20:1-6), followed by a final rebellion of Satan, where he will be thrown into the lake of fire, along with the beast and false prophet (Rev. 20:7-10). Following this will be the Great White Throne judgment where Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14) and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15) But after this devastation, it gets really good.

Revelation 21:1-2 - "*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw a holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, **prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.***"

This will be a transformation of the entire universe. The word for "**new**" here indicates that the earth God creates will not merely be new as opposed to old, but **new in quality and superior in character.**² The new has replaced what is old, where the new is superior in kind to the old. This is the same idea in **2 Cor. 5:17** where we have become **new creations in Christ** with the old passing away.

This will also include the city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven (see also Isa. 66:18, 22-23), prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. We know in Rev. 19:9 that those believers invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb are blessed. We are part of a great love story where God saved His children and Jesus saved us as His bride. When the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven, it is not only a city with all that makes up a city, but also a people for His own possession. This will become the central focus of eternity, with no temple, for the temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb (Rev. 21:22), and the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb (Rev. 21:23)

Heaven will be more like earth than anything else - But what will this new heaven and new earth be like? It will be more like earth than anything else. This will be a place that God will dwell with us again (Rev. 21:3), where tears, death, mourning, pain and mourning will be no more (Rev. 21:4). There will be a river of the water of life, the tree of life for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2), and where we will see His face, and we will serve and worship God and the Lamb since the curse is gone (Rev. 22:3-4). Night will be no more and we won't need any light source except for the Lord God, and we will reign forever and ever (Rev. 22:5).

In other words, the New heaven and earth will be Paradise regained, and will be like the original creation in Genesis 1-2, except for the fact that there will be no fear of repeating the failure of Adam since Death and sin are done away with in Christ. Heaven will not be unfamiliar, it will be **home**, both a

² Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, p. 149.

home we've always longed for and yet only got glimpses of during our life. There will be no disconnect from our enjoyment of the world and worship of the Lord since our sinful nature will be no more. When Christ came to make all things new, He not only saved us from hell to be His, He also will redeem the earth, bringing it to perfection, renewing it to a new glory.

This is why we say we were made for more. We say that **this earth** is not our home, but one day a **new earth will be**. When we engage in the good things on this earth like art, culture, science, sports, education, and really good music, these are NOT UNSPIRITUAL but rather they give us a *foretaste of the future heaven*. When we enjoy a sunset or a steak or holding the hand of our spouse, this is NOT a wrong type of loving this earth, it is rather a **preview** of something even greater. We get tired of ourselves, of others, of sin and suffering and crime and death, but that does not mean we hate the things God has made for us to enjoy. We can enjoy these because we know that one day we will enjoy them fully with Christ, in perfect worship and service.

Our Hopeful Expectancy: Jesus' Return (3:20b-21)

"and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enable him even to subject all things to himself"

Saving Work of the Lord Jesus Christ

But what needs to happen for us to be prepared for this future glory and home? That is Paul's next statement to the Philippian church. He uses a seldom used combination of titles for Jesus, where he calls Him the LORD Jesus Christ, like He did in 2:6-11, but added the term **Savior**. Here Jesus is awaited not only to save from sin, but to save us from our lowly body for the future. Salvation is not only something that happened in our past (justification), but something that continues in our present (sanctification), and culminates in the future (glorification). It is our future salvation that we are currently waiting for, which is an active act of faith, not a passive form of indifference.

Transforming Work of the Lord Jesus Christ

What will Jesus do for us in His return? He will **transform** our lowly, fleshly, humble bodies to be like His glorious body. The word transform means change the form of, meaning our whole person will be changed, not just our external vessels. Our bodies today face physical decay, indignity, weakness, and death. Our bodies bear the marks of the brokenness of this world and the effects of sin. What Jesus will do is transform these frail bodies into ones that are ready to live on into eternity with Him. We get a bit of a clue of what those bodies will be like.

1 Corinthians 15:40-57 tells us that they will be *imperishable* (42), no longer dishonored but glorious, not longer weak but raised in power. We will no longer face death since our first bodies came from Adam and the earth and our new bodies will come from Christ and heaven (45-48). We will be changed in an instant and put on immortality since death will be swallowed up in victory, and the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law, but God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus showed us what His resurrected body was like as He interacted with His disciples. They recognized Him, they talked to Him, ate with Him, and touched His hands. But He also could walk through doors (John 20:19) and disappear and reappear (John 19:26). In other words He still looked like Jesus, but He was different. He was not as bound by this earth but ready for the next. This is the **power of the resurrection** that Paul had said he longed for in knowing Christ. All of this is secured by the power that enables Him to put all things in subjection under His feet. We got glimpses of this while Jesus was

on earth as He healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and had power over nature. What we got glimpses of in the gospels will be put on full display when He returns and puts all things under His rule. It is the power that we bank on to give us new bodies.

Our Helpful Encouragement: Stand Firm (4:1)

*“Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, **stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.**”*

Effusive Care from a Concerned Pastor

Now Paul had laid things on pretty thick, and the church was in the midst of suffering, so this next verse reverberates the heart of a loving pastor. Notice the **6 ways** he heaps on affectionate care and concern. *My brothers, whom I love, long for, my joy, my crown, my beloved.* This was no secondary concern for Paul. This was central to all of life and **joy**. Much like this pastor this morning, how we think about life and our future will go a long way in determining our joy, contentment, and joy in this world. This answers the key questions we have: **how long, O Lord? How could you let this happen to me? When will justice be seen?** The answer is that we wait for the return of our Savior who will give us NEW BODIES and will be with us forever.

Immovable Position for Longing Saints

The one exhortation Paul gave as a result: **stand firm**. Do not waiver in your faith. Do not give up hope. Do not retreat or give ground. Do not grow weary and stop. But actively wait, and continue to trust Him. In two other passages dealing with waiting for Christ's return, we see the same kind of encouragement.

1 Corinthians 15:58 - *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, **immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.***

2 Peter 3:14- *Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, **be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace.***

Conclusion:

Probably our greatest problem is that we are so rooted in this world. It is possible to be so enamored with this life and this world that there is little thought about heaven. Materialism has been destructive to the Christian life and the very thing God provided for us to enjoy life has become an end in itself, and in effect, a god.³

*“For he (Abraham) was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they **were strangers and exiles on the earth.** For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland...But as it is, they **desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.**” Hebrews 11:10, 13, 14, 16*

So the question this morning is this: where is your citizenship. Those who were not found in the book of life were left outside of the city, unable to enter in. Jesus said to all those who are weary and heavy burdened to **Come, come all who are thirsty and desire to take the water of life without price**, come to Him. Repent of your sin, not just sin in general, but the sin that you have committed against a holy God,

³ Paul Enns, “Heaven Revealed” p. 184

and place your trust in Jesus Christ, who lived perfectly and died to satisfy the wrath of God. Ask for forgiveness and follow Jesus. The brokenness of this world is a result of sin, and only Christ can satisfy us. We were made for much more, and it only comes through the person and work of Jesus Christ.