

“Our Citizenship is in Heaven” Philippians 3:17-4:1 / Luke 13:31-35 (3/16/25)

One thing that I think I had a very blessed life is that I have traveled to many countries since I was young. I lived in 4 countries, traveled to 14 countries, and visited more than 30 big cities in the world. My experience traveling to many countries and cities is a unique experience. So, I am always grateful to God for my unique experience.

However, on the other side, I had many challenges to live and to travel to many countries. Cultural differences, languages, and many other challenges I had. The most difficult challenge was that I had to do a lot of paperwork for my visa status. Every time when I was struggling with paperwork, I hoped to have citizenship in each country. Not only about additional paperwork, but also I could not have many benefits like scholarships in each country because I did not have citizenship.

Having strong and well-developed country citizenship gives someone many benefits. I experienced the power of citizenship when I lived in China. When I lived in China, there was a disease spread out to the world. The disease's name was SARS. At that time, South Korea had just overcome the government bankruptcy, so compared to other well-developed countries, the South Korean embassy did not do its job well. When SARS became serious in Beijing, the capital city of China, well-

developed countries' embassies protected their citizens very well. They provided the information about SARS well, gave great guidance, and arranged airplanes to transport their people to their countries. Now, South Korea also does this really well, but at that time, the embassy was not experienced, and they did nothing for us. I just looked at my friends who went back to their country. Later, many Koreans personally found flights and escaped China.

Strong countries' citizenship brings a lot of benefits. In today's Philippians Scripture, Paul mentioned the citizenship of Heaven. At the time of Paul, people could have many benefits when they had the citizenship of the Roman Empire. This benefit of citizenship helped Paul a lot when he delivered the Gospel and planted churches in the Roman Empire. Paul avoided scourging in Jerusalem, and he could request a trial before Caesar. People who had Roman Empire citizenship could have many privileges. So, people who were from the Roman Empire colony area were proud of having Roman Empire citizenship.

Philippi was a colony of the Roman Empire. There was a gold mine in Philippi, so a town was founded by Macedonia to exploit the gold mine. Then later, Philippi was colonized by the Roman Empire. Many cities in the Bible were centers of transportation, culture, and religion. But Philippi had one thing that set it apart

from other cities. There were several famous wars near Philippi. After the wars, the Roman Empire settled the soldiers and militaries in Philippi. Roman soldiers had citizenship of the Roman Empire, and most people had citizenship by birth, so over time, most of the people from Philippi became citizens.

People in Philippi were familiar with the idea of citizenship, and they knew the responsibilities and rights of Roman Empire citizenship. So, Paul told them, “Our citizenship is in Heaven,” to let them know Christians should know and follow the responsibilities and rights of the citizens of Heaven.

I hope to talk more about citizenship. Each citizen has their own responsibilities and rights. And there are processes and conditions to have each country's citizenship. Then, what are the responsibilities and rights of the citizenship of Heaven, and how can we get the citizenship of Heaven?

As citizens of Heaven, our first responsibility is to know who the King of Heaven is. In today's Luke Scripture, Jesus said that Jerusalem killed prophets and stoned those who were sent to it. And they did not want God's hand. Jerusalem did not know who their King was or who the King of Heaven was, even though they physically saw Jesus. We are people, and we are Christians who should know about Jesus. And we are people who know who Jesus is. It is our first responsibility, we

should know Jesus is the King of Heaven, and Jesus is the King of our lives.

The second responsibility is that we should follow the culture of Heaven, which is the teaching of Jesus. Many parts of the cultures and religions of the Roman Empire were against the teachings of Jesus. So, many Christians at the time of the Roman Empire had struggles between the Roman Empire's culture and Jesus's teaching. Paul said many people walked as enemies of the cross of Christ, and he encouraged Christians in Philippi to stand firm in Christ.

The third responsibility is that we are the people who wait for Jesus Christ. Paul said, "But our citizenship is in Heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Early church Christians expected Jesus to come again soon. Even though Jesus has not come yet for more than 2000 years, Christians are the people who wait for Jesus. Have you waited for somebody to come? I saw a very good example of waiting through my parents. My parents always wait for my children to come. Once they heard that we would visit them soon, they prepared and set up everything for my children. They cleaned up the house. They removed things that could be a danger to my children. They prepared high chairs, toys, and food for babies. Everything was set up so that my children would be happy when they came. We are the people who are waiting for Jesus to come again, which means we are the

people who are preparing for the coming of Jesus.

Then, what are the rights of Heaven's citizenship? What are the privileges of Heaven's citizenship? According to the historical record, "the rights of Roman citizenship were extensive, including the right to vote, to hold office, to serve in the military, to purchase, possess, sell, and bequeath property, to enter into a legal contract, to have a fair trial, and to appeal to Caesar." As Roman citizens had rights, we also had rights and privileges as the citizens of Heaven.

The first rights and privileges that I think are we experience Heaven in our lives. Heaven, the Kingdom of God, is the place where Jesus reigns and where God is present. We can experience the presence of God right here, right now. We could have a spiritual sense to feel the presence of God in our lives. I would not say we do not have any suffering because of our citizenship of Heaven. But I would say that we could be grateful, we could cope with suffering, and we could find love and peace in our lives.

The second right and privilege that I believe we can be satisfied with Jesus. I believe there is an emptiness in humans when they do not know about Jesus. And they do many things to fill up this emptiness. People chase money, power, or other things to fill up this emptiness. However, nothing can fill this emptiness. I am quite

confident to say that only Jesus can fill this emptiness. I believe it is the best privilege that we can have and say satisfaction.

Then, how can we have this citizenship of Heaven? There are processes and conditions to have each country's citizenship. I am very grateful because I had South Korean citizenship as I was born. South Korean citizenship is one of the hardest citizenship to get. If someone wants to get citizenship, that person needs to pass a language test, history test, and interview and should have lots of conditions. Then, what are the processes and conditions to have the citizenship of Heaven? It is the simplest but hardest process. Confess Jesus as the Lord Christ, and believe in Christ. It is the only process and condition to be a citizen of Heaven. Our Lord Jesus Christ became the way to be a citizen of Heaven. He did all the paperwork and process for us. And he guides us and tells us now how we can be the citizen of Heaven. The only thing that we should do is “Confess Jesus as the Lord Christ and believe in Christ.”

We live in this land, in this country. Our citizenship is in Heaven. We are people who live on the earth and live in Heaven at the same time. Through Jesus Christ, we became people of Heaven, and we could have all the privileges and rights as citizens of Heaven. I hope we can be Christians who do all the responsibilities as citizens of Heaven. And I hope we can be the people who are happy and joyful

through the privileges and rights of Heaven. Believe in Christ, then we will be the citizens of Heaven. Amen.