

A Celestial citizenship:

❖ Imitate the faithful (Philippians 3:17-19)

- We all have people who, in one way or another, have shaped our lives or our thoughts. Perhaps an artist, an athlete, a musician, a singer. Perhaps a pastor, a preacher, a faithful brother or sister.
- Have these "role model" people helped us grow as individuals, or led us down paths we should never have tried?
- Paul invites us to imitate those whose examples uplift us and encourage us to be better (Phil. 3:17). He also warns us that, even among believers, there are people who are not worthy of imitation (Phil. 3:18-19).
- What makes the difference? Some think only of earthly things, while others have their thoughts fixed on Jesus. Good role models are, in turn, imitators of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

❖ Full citizenship (Philippians 3:20-21)

- Let's face it. We Christians have a problem: dual citizenship. We are both citizens of this world and citizens of heaven. This creates serious conflicts for us (Rom. 7:22-23).
- When will we achieve full citizenship? When will we cease to be citizens of this sinful world? At the Second Coming (Phil. 3:20).
- When we are resurrected (or transformed), and death has no power over us, what will happen?
 - (1) We will have a physical body, and our own eyes will see God (Job 19:25-27)
 - (2) Our body will be spiritual, immortal, and incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:42-44, 50-54)
 - (3) We will be glorified (Col. 3:4; Phil. 3:21)

B Until we get there:

❖ Harmony and rejoicing (Philippians 4:1-6)

- Concluding his letter, Paul interweaves personal greetings with practical advice. He asks Syzygus [faithful companion] and Clement to help Euodia and Syntyche live in harmony. Of all of them, Paul's co-workers, he says: "Their names are already written in the book of life" (Phil. 4:2-3).
- The following advice may puzzle us: "Rejoice always [...] Do not be anxious about anything" (Phil. 4:4, 6). How can this be possible in a world full of problems and afflictions?
- This is possible because our joy is "in the Lord" (Phil. 4:4a). We cast our anxieties on Him, confident that He can bear them for us (Matt. 6:31-34; 1 Pet. 5:7).
- And how do we cast our anxieties on Jesus? Through prayer (Phil. 4:6).

❖ Pure thoughts (Philippians 4:7-9)

- The result of casting our anxiety on Jesus and rejoicing is peace (Phil. 4:7). A peace that the world cannot give or take away (John 14:27; 16:33).
- This peace, according to Paul, will be a protection—a guard—for our feelings and thoughts (Phil. 4:7b). For this guard to be effective, what things should we think about (Phil. 4:8)?
 - (1) In what is true; in what is honest; in what is just; in what is pure; in what is lovely; in what is of good repute
 - (2) In summary: "If there is any virtue, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil. 4:8b).

❖ Contentment (Philippians 4:10-13, 19)

- We are joyful; nothing troubles us; we have peace; our thoughts are pure. We have a perfect and fulfilling life... or do we?
- We may have prosperity; we may have needs or problems. If, like Paul, we have full assurance that God directs our lives, we will remain confident in Him whatever our situation may be (Phil. 4:11-12, 19).
- Like Agur, we trust that God will give us neither more nor less than what is beneficial to us (Pr. 30:8-9).
- When we live with this confidence, we are certain that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).
- What happens when we don't have what we think we need?
- Let us ask the Lord for it, and if it is according to His will, He will grant it to us (James 4:2b; 1 John 5:14-15).
- We don't always know if what we ask for is according to His will, but there are certain requests that, we are sure, are always according to His will.