

Christian Citizenship

One of the purposes of Christ-centered community is mission. We come together in corporate worship and community to be sent out into the world. We are called into mission in our life, work, and play.

How does God want to express His gospel and Kingdom presence through you in your world at this time? How does God want to express Himself through New Hope Church in our community at this time? These are the prayerful and probing questions for every Christ-centered, outward-focused Christian and church. I will try to give some insight from God's Word on the outward focus of the church.

Christian citizenship is a theme in the New Testament book of Philippians. This book was written to Christian converts, many proud Roman citizens. The language Paul employs is the language of politics and citizenship to teach the gospel of Christ. He says, "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). How do Christians live as citizens of heaven in 21st century America?

Christians seek to live the way of the cross. "In contrast, many in the world whether they know it or not live as enemies of the cross" (3:18).

Christians acquire different appetites. We enjoy God's gifts of work, play, food, pleasure, music, and art, but Christ is our ultimate satisfaction. For many who live for temporary satisfactions, "...their god is their stomach" (3:19). They dine at the table of this world's satisfactions, becoming more insatiable, perishing of spiritual starvation.

Christians pursue different aspirations. "But our citizenship is in heaven..." (3:20). C.S. Lewis said, "Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither." For those who live for the world, "Their mind is on earthly things" (3:19). Significance and success are defined and measured by worldly achievement, wealth, and status. "Their glory is their shame" (3:10).

Gospel citizens have a different destiny. "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (3:20-21). For those who love the world, "Their destiny is destruction" (3:19). Yet, we do not delight in this. "For, as I have often told you before, and now say again with tears, many live as enemies of the cross" (3:18).

We access a different power. The power is not a political power to change the moral and spiritual trajectory of this country. Historically when the church has political power, the church becomes a sterling example of Lord Acton's maxim, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

The Philippian church and other small pockets of Christians throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome had no political power, no religious standing, and limited economic resources, and yet God changed their world through them. We have the power. "We eagerly await a Savior... who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies..." (3:21).

We have the power of God Himself at work in us. "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know... his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead". (Eph. 1:18-19)

We have the power of the gospel. "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Rom. 1:16).

"Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Therefore, my brothers and sisters... stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!" (Philippians 3:20-4:1)

Great peace in the Lord,
Eddie