

Focus for week 3: Chapter 3

Three questions:

- 1) Chapter 3, verse 8: "More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Not only quotable, but it has a deeply important meaning. What does this verse say to you? Why is it important for Philippians?
- 2) Chapter 3, verses 12-14: "pressing on," is a major sub-theme here. What is the goal that the Apostle Paul is pressing on towards?
- 3) Chapter 3, verse 20 uses the term "citizenship in heaven." What does this refer to? What do you think it means and how should it impact our daily living and believing?

Three Insights:

- 1) Charles B. Cousar writes, "Two interrelated, epistemological questions: What is it to know Christ? And how does one know Christ? The first question is answered by explaining that to know Christ is to know the power of his resurrection and to know participation in his sufferings. The second is answered by explaining that the knowing has to do with conformity to his death and the anticipation of the resurrection of the dead. The two answers obviously reinforce each other."
- 2) N. T. Wright offers for us, "The Philippian colonists were proud of being Romans, and would do their best to order their civic life so that it matched the way things were done in Rome. The most recent innovation down that line was, of course, the establishment of the imperial cult: Caesar, the Emperor was to be worshipped as saviour and Lord. All of this is important if we are to understand the present passage, which in many ways is the climax of the letter. 'We are citizens of heaven,' Paul declares in verse 20. At once we modern Christians misunderstand what he means."
- 3) M. Eugene Boring: "Heavenly citizenship" (3:20) is not a Gnosticlike appeal to separate oneself from "earthly things" and be aloof to this worldly-life. The noun *politeuma* usually translated "citizenship" has a double connotation. Since Philippi was a Roman colony with numerous Roman citizens, Christians are reminded that their ultimate loyalty is to the kingdom of God, not to any earthly empire. The term also has a more specific meaning relevant to the situation in Philippi and the present context. *Politeuma* is used for the separately incorporated Diaspora Jewish associations that had privileged legal status in Roman cities. Jewish and Jewish Christian associates of the new Jewish converts, especially those who had previously been God-fearers attending the synagogue, would encourage them to become full Jews, where they would enjoy the legal protection of the belonging to the Jewish *politeuma*.

Two links for further experience:

- 1) Great link for further insight in how to read the works of the Apostle Paul:
<https://bibleproject.com/articles/philippians-bible-study/>
- 2) <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.1198.html> This link is to a classic European depiction of Paul. Always near are a sword representing his martyrdom and pen and paper reminding us of his prolific career as a writer of the New Testament.
- 3)

For next week, February 12, 2024:

Read chapter 12 and complete chapter 4 study guide as able.