

A Colony of Heaven In Enemy Territory

Phil. 1:27-30

Introduction:

1. Reading of Phil. 1:27-30.
2. Luke describes the city of Philippi as a Roman colony in Acts 16:12.
3. Philippi along with the rest of Macedonia had passed under Roman control in 168 B.C.
4. Near Philippi, in 42 B.C. Antony and Octavian had battled Brutus and Cassius. Antony and Octavian were victorious and settled a number of their veterans at Philippi and made it a Roman colony. Octavian had settled other colonists there after his victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 B.C.
5. Such cities used Roman law and modeled their constitution after the constitution of Rome. Thus Luke describes how Paul and Silas were dragged before the chief magistrates of the city. Rome also had her chief magistrates. Paul defended against the beating that he and Silas had taken at the hands of the magistrates policemen. Paul and Silas were Romans too and it was illegal to exercise such penalties against Romans without a public trial. Romans had to manifest conduct consistent with Roman allegiance (Acts 16:20-21).
6. But there was another colony in Philippi. It was a colony from heaven (Phil. 3:20). They were planted in enemy territory with the task of persuading others to become citizens of a heavenly kingdom (1:27-30).
7. We too are a colony from heaven planted in enemy territory. There is resistance from the enemy. There are challenges that we face. But we must stand firm as we try to impact this foreign society with the gospel of hope.

Discussion:

- I. How do I know that we are a colony of heaven in enemy territory?
 - A. I know it from what Paul says in Philippians.
 1. He speaks of those who are enemies of the cross of Christ, but says that our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:17-21).
 2. He says that we are to conduct ourselves as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil. 1:27).
 - a. The English word “conduct” is translated from the Greek “politeuo.”
 - b. The ASV margin says, “behave as citizens worthily.”
 3. We serve King Christ.
 - B. I know it experientially.
 1. I know it when a Christian attorney calls and informs me of a marriage that is damaged by sin and is near disintegration, and says can you help?
 2. I know it when a Christian wife calls and says my husband has filed for a divorce can I come see you?
 3. I know it when I receive an e-mail about a preacher who several years ago sexually abused two young children. Their mother now devastated that she was

not able to protect them.

4. I know it when I receive another e-mail about a congregation of God's people now divided.
 5. And another e-mail of a non-Christian husband abusing his daughter until the age of 15. She is destroyed. She is seeing a psychologist. Her, a Christian mother wants to separate from this husband. The preacher wrote to me asking, "How can we orient this family and this good sister."
- C. We are living in enemy territory.
1. Maybe you are protected from some of these things. Maybe not.
 2. Maybe you are not on the front line. Maybe such things only break into your awareness occasionally, but they are constantly before me.
 3. We need to be oriented and to realize that we are citizens of heaven living in foreign territory can help.

II. It is God at work in us that gives us our orientation. What He reveals to us in Scripture defines our direction.

- A. He began a good work in the Philippians and Paul expected Him to perfect it (Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13).
1. It was begun by the preaching of the gospel (Acts 16).
 2. The word of God performs its work in those who believe so that they take on a new orientation (1 Thess. 2:13).
 3. When we are filled with real knowledge we approve the things that are excellent and we are filled with the fruit of righteousness (Phil. 1:9-11).
 4. This new orientation is contrasted with the confusion from which we have come in Titus 3:3-8.
- B. As a colony of heaven in enemy territory we are to make our impact felt by persuading the enemy and giving them hope through the gospel.
1. Paul did this (Phil. 1:12ff). His focus was on the proclamation of Christ (Phil. 1:12-20).
 2. The Philippians did this by financially supporting him (Phil. 4:15-16).
- C. There are opponents to the work (Phil. 1:28).
1. From outside (Phil. 3:2).
 2. From inside. Some are not well oriented. Their focus is on their own personal interests. They create division because they are not well oriented (Phil. 2:1ff; 4:2).

III. We must stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27).

- A. Some might interpret this to mean that we are to be in perfect doctrinal agreement.
1. There is much to be said for doctrinal agreement.
 2. But that is not the point of this text.
 3. This text is teaching us that we united together in purpose (2:1-2).
- B. Our one purpose must take precedence over other things.

1. Our purpose must take precedence over convenience and ease. Paul suffered for Christ's sake (Phil. 1:29-30).
2. Our purpose must take precedence over self-interests (Phil. 2:3-8).
3. Our purpose must take precedence over grumbling and disputing (2:14; 4:2-3).
4. We live in a crooked and perverse generation and we are to appear as lights in the world (2:14-18). Lights orient. Darkness confuses.
5. We have to keep clear on what is important. Our citizenship is in heaven. We cannot afford focus on things that distract from this. We must strive together for the faith of the gospel.
6. Paul's priorities were clear (Phil. 3:7-16).

IV. We must act in a way that is consistent with our citizenship (Phil. 1:27).

- A. Stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.
- B. Think on those things that are excellent (Phil. 4:8).
- C. Follow the example of Paul (Phil. 4:9; 3:17ff).
- D. Rejoice in the proclamation of Christ (1:18). Rejoice in the Lord (4:4). Rejoice that our citizenship is in heaven and that our Savior is coming (3:20-21).

Conclusion:

1. You are a colony of heaven in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.
2. You are lights in the world.
3. Hold fast the word of life.
4. Rejoice, even as you struggle, for it is you who are victorious and it is you who have the promise of glory (Phil. 2:14-18).