

'They Are Not Of The World'

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Our Lord Jesus Christ says concerning all of His elect, 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world' (John 17:14, 16). In making that statement, our Lord is telling us that His people are strangers and pilgrims in the earth. True believers are not like those men and women who are of the world. God's elect live by different principles. The children of God live for different objects. Their motives, goals, interests and ambitions are altogether different from those of other people. They are in the world, by reason of necessity, and they make the best use of their time here; but 'they are not of the world'.

To use the language of Holy Scripture, 'Here we have no continuing city', but we desire a better country, that is an heavenly. We do not look upon anything in this world as permanent. We recognize all earthly things and all earthly relationships are temporary. 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens' (2 Corinthians 4:18-5:1). Because the people of God are not of the world, even as Christ our Lord was not of the world, 'the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not' (1 John 3:1).

These are the things Paul is dealing with in our text. 'For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.' The people of God are strangers and pilgrims on this earth making their way to heaven, living in hope of a glorious change.

The believer's holy conversation

'For our conversation is in heaven.' Paul uses the word 'conversation' when he is talking about our manner of speech, our manner of life, the way we live. He is saying, God's people live in this world as men and women whose homeland is heaven.

Holiness of life for the children of God is not some kind of super pious show of outward religion. Holiness is not a certain manner of speech, a certain way of dress, or certain practices and customs of life. Holiness is sanctification to the Lord. It is commitment and dedication and faithfulness

of the heart to Christ. All of God's people lead holy lives. They are men and women whose hearts are attached not to this world, but to heaven. This is what Paul says, 'Our conversation is in heaven'.

Philip Doddridge gave this paraphrase of the text, 'But we converse as citizens of heaven, considering ourselves as citizens of the New Jerusalem, and only strangers and pilgrims on earth.'

Certainly Paul means for us to understand that we are strangers, aliens and foreigners in this world (Hebrews 11:8-10, 16). Since we are aliens in this world, we must behave as such. We must be careful that we do not bring reproach upon our homeland. We want to do as much good as possible among those people with whom we dwell. We must not greatly concern ourselves with the affairs of this land. We are simply passing through this land. We must not yoke ourselves to its affairs. We are not eligible for the honours of this land. It would be very foolish for us to hoard up this world's treasures (Matthew 6:19-21).

Paul would have us constantly realise we are citizens of heaven. We are under heaven's government. Christ, the King of heaven, reigns in our hearts. The laws of glory are the laws of our consciences. Our daily prayer is, 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven'. The Spirit of God holds sway over our hearts. Grace reigns through righteousness in our souls. We gladly wear the easy yoke of our Master.

As citizens, we have a common right to all the property of heaven. It has been purchased for us by blood, earned for us by perfect righteousness, and claimed for us by a Substitute (Hebrews 6:20).

As citizens of the New Jerusalem, we share all of heaven's great honours (1 John 3:1). We are princes with God. We wear the robe of righteousness. Saints are our companions. Christ is our Brother. God is our Father.

Even now we enjoy the delights of our homeland. Do the saints in heaven rejoice over sinners that are born of God, over prodigals who come home? So do we. Do they chant the glories of triumphant grace? We do the same. Do they cast their crowns down at Immanuel's feet? All the honours we have, we cast at His feet, too. Do they rejoice in Him? We do, too. Do they sing, 'Worthy is the Lamb'? Our hearts join their song. Yes, even though we are here upon the earth, our great joy is to know that our names are written in heaven.

Let us live in this world as people who are citizens of heaven (Colossians 3:1-3). It is a privilege for me to live in this land of peace, liberty and prosperity. I would rather be a citizen of the United States of America than to be a citizen of any other country in the world. But the privilege of being a citizen of this country places upon me certain necessary obligations and responsibilities. Similarly, being a citizen of heaven, I have certain responsibilities to which I must be faithful.

It is my responsibility to seek the glory of God in all things and above all things and to seek the will of God. It is my responsibility to labour for the furtherance of the gospel. It is my responsibility to serve the interests of Christ's church and kingdom. Let me live not for this world, but for Christ. 'Love not the world' (Matthew 6:31-33).

The believer's confidence

'From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' This is our blessed hope. Our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, is coming again! We are looking for, expecting and hastening unto the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ (Job 19:25-27; John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14).

Our Lord is coming to gather His own elect. He is coming to judge the earth. He is coming to establish His kingdom and glory in the earth.

The believer's heavenly change

Paul tells us that when our Lord returns, He will accomplish the believer's heavenly change. Our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, is coming to this earth again; and when He does, He is that One, 'who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself'.

When our Saviour comes, He will deliver us from the final results of sin. He will completely vindicate His people and bestow upon us the glorious inheritance of the saints in light.

He will 'change our vile body'. This earthly shell is the body of our humiliation. It is a temporary house for our souls. By reason of sin, it is called 'our vile body'. It is a body defiled by sin. It is a body attended with frailty. It is a body of mortality. It is a body that must soon die and be sown in the earth and return to dust.

But on the resurrection morning, this vile body shall be stripped of all its vileness. It shall be changed like unto the glorious body of Christ. 'As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly' (1 Corinthians 15:49). See Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2.

The nature of the great change to take place in this vile body in the

resurrection is clearly described for us in 1 Corinthians 15:42-58. It will be changed from corruption to incorruption, dishonour to glory, weakness to power, natural to spiritual. This resurrection will be universal. It will be instantaneous. It will be by the power of Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour is able to accomplish this great change. What He has promised He is able to perform. If He can subject all things, the totality of all the power of the universe, to himself, He certainly has the power to change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.

He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has broken the power of Satan. He has governed the universe in perfect conformity to the will and glory of God. He has subdued the hearts of His people. He has broken the power of death. He has the power to raise the dead.

Let us live in this world as citizens of heaven. Let us live in anticipation of our Redeemer's return. Let us live in hope of the resurrection.

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