

## 4-He Is Able... TO SUBDUE

### Philippians 3:17-21

**Philippians 3:21** Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby **he is able even to subdue** all things unto himself.

**Introduction:** Christians have a **dual citizenship**—on earth and in heaven—and our citizenship in heaven ought to make us better people here on earth.

The spiritually minded believer is not attracted by the things of this world. He makes his decisions on the basis of eternal values and not the passing fads of society. **Lot** chose the well-watered plain of Jordan because his values were worldly, and ultimately he lost everything. **Moses** refused the pleasures and treasures of Egypt because he had something infinitely more wonderful to live for (Heb. 11:24–26). *“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”* (Mark 8:36).

*“For our conversation is in heaven”* (Phil. 3:20). The Greek word translated “conversation” or “citizenship” is the word from which we get our word **politics**.

*It has to do with one’s behavior as a citizen of a nation.* Paul was encouraging us to have the spiritual mind, and he did this by pointing out the characteristics of the Christian whose citizenship is in heaven. Just as Philippi was a colony of Rome on foreign soil, so the church is a “colony of heaven” on earth.

Let’s notice several things in this passage:

### 1. Heaven’s Log (Record) *“Brethren” cp. ch. 4:3*

The citizens of Philippi were privileged to be Roman citizens away from Rome. When a baby was born in Philippi, it was important that its name be registered on the legal records. When the lost sinner trusts Christ and becomes a citizen of heaven, his name is written in “*the book of life*” (Phil. 4:3).

Citizenship is important. When you travel to another country, it is essential that you have a passport that proves your citizenship. None of us wants to suffer the fate of **Philip Nolan** in the classic tale *The Man Without a Country*. Because he cursed the name of his country, Nolan was sentenced to live aboard ship and never again see his native land or even hear its name or news about its

progress. For fifty-six years he was on an endless journey from ship to ship and sea to sea, and finally was buried at sea. He was a “*man without a country.*”

The Christian’s name is written in “*the book of life,*” and this is what determines his final entrance into the heavenly country (Rev. 20:15). When you confess Christ on earth, He confesses your name in heaven (Matt. 10:32–33). Your name is written down in heaven (Luke 10:20), and it stands written forever.

*Warren Wiersbe tells this story: A friend in Washington, D.C., arranged for my oldest son and me to tour the White House. She told us to be at a certain gate at eight o’clock in the morning and to be prepared to show evidence of who we were. David and I walked up to the gate, and the guard politely asked our names. We told him, showing our credentials. He said, “Yes, sir! Mr. Warren Wiersbe and David! You may enter!” We got into the White House because our names were written down on the proper list, and our names got on that list through the intercession of another. So it is with our entrance into heaven: because we have trusted Christ, our names are written down, and we will enter glory on His merits and intercession alone.*

### 2. Heaven’s Language *“mind”-vs. 19 “conversation”-vs. 20*

Those who “*mind earthly things*” **talk** about earthly things. After all, what comes out of the mouth reveals what is in the heart (Matt. 12:34–37). The unsaved person does not understand the things of God’s Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14–16), so how can he talk about them intelligently? The citizens of heaven understand spiritual things and enjoy discussing and sharing.

*“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error”* (1 John 4:5–6).

But speaking heaven’s language not only involves what we say, but also the way we say it. The spiritually minded Christian doesn’t go around quoting Bible verses all day! But he is careful to speak in a manner that glorifies God. *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers”* (Eph. 4:29).

### 3. Heaven’s Laws *“Be followers together of me.” -vs. 17*

The citizens of Philippi were governed by Roman law, not Greek law, even though they were located hundreds of miles away from Rome. In fact, it was this policy that put Paul into jail when he first visited Philippi (Acts 16:16–24). Paul himself used his Roman citizenship to guarantee his protection under Roman law (Acts 16:35–40; 21:33–40; 22:24–30). In Philippians 3:17, Paul warned the Philippian believers against imitating the wrong kind of citizens. *“Be followers together of me.”* Of course, Paul was a follower of Christ, so his admonition is not egotistical! (1 Cor. 11:1).

Paul knew himself to be an *“alien”* in this world, a *“pilgrim and a stranger”* (see 1 Peter 2:11). His life was governed by heaven’s laws, and this is what made him different. He was concerned about others, not himself. He was interested in giving, not getting. His motive was love (2 Cor. 5:14), not hatred. By faith, Paul obeyed the Word of God, knowing that one day he would be rewarded. Men might oppose him and persecute him now, but in that final day of reckoning, he would be the winner.

There are some today, like those in Paul’s day, who profess to be citizens of heaven, but whose lives do not show it. They may be zealous in their religious activities and even austere in their disciplines, but there is no evidence of the control of the Spirit of God in their lives. All that they do is energized by the flesh, and they get all the glory. It is bad enough that they are going astray, but they also lead other people astray. No wonder Paul wept over them.

#### **4. Heaven’s Loyalty** *“the cross of Christ”-vs. 18*

The cross of Christ is the **theme** of the Bible, the **heart** of the gospel, and the chief source of **praise** in heaven (Rev. 5:8–10). The cross is the **proof** of God’s love for sinners (Rom. 5:8) and God’s hatred for sin. The cross **condemns** what the world values. It **judges** mankind and pronounces the true verdict: *GUILTY!*

In what sense were the Judaizers the *“enemies of the cross of Christ”*? For one thing, the cross ended the Old Testament religion. When the veil of the temple was torn in two, God was announcing that the way to God was open through Christ (Heb. 10:19–25). When Jesus shouted, *“It is finished!”* He made one sacrifice for sins, and thus ended the whole sacrificial system (Heb. 10:1–14). By His death and resurrection, Jesus accomplished a *“spiritual circumcision”* that made ritual circumcision unnecessary (Col. 2:10–13). Everything that the Judaizers advocated had been eliminated by the death of Christ on the cross!

Paul wept because he knew the future of these men: *“whose end is destruction”* (Phil. 3:19). This word carries with it the idea of waste and *“lostness.”* (It is translated *“waste”* in Mark 14:4.) Judas is called *“the son of perdition,”* and this is the word used (John 17:12). A wasted life and an eternity of waste! In contrast, the true believer, whose citizenship is in heaven, has a bright future.

#### **5. Heaven’s Lord** *“for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ”-vs. 20*

The Judaizers were living in the past tense, trying to get the Philippian believers to go back to Moses and the law, but true Christians live in the future tense, anticipating the return of their Savior (Phil. 3:20–21).

*As the Accountant in Philippians 3:1–11, Paul discovered new values.*

*As the Athlete in Philippians 3:12–16, he displayed new vigor.*

Now as the *Alien*, he experiences a new vision: *“We look for the Saviour.”*

The fact that Jesus Christ is returning is a powerful motive for dedicated living and devoted service *today*. *“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”* (read 1 John 2:28—3:3). The citizen of heaven, living on earth, is never discouraged because he knows that his Lord is one day going to return. He faithfully keeps on doing his job lest his Lord return and find him disobedient (Luke 12:40–48). The spiritually minded believer does not live for the things of this world; he anticipates the blessings of the world to come.

This does not mean that he ignores or neglects his daily obligations; but it does mean that what he does today is governed by what Christ will do in the future. Paul mentioned particularly that the believer will receive a glorified body, like the body of Christ. Today we live in a *“body of humiliation”* (which is the meaning of the word translated *“vile”* in Phil. 3:21), but when we see Christ, we will receive a body of glory. It will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye! (1 Cor. 15:42–53).

At that moment, all the things of this world will be worthless to us—just as they ought to be, relatively, today! If we are living in the future tense, then we will be exercising the spiritual mind and living for the things that really matter. When Jesus returns, He will *“subdue all things unto himself”* (Phil. 3:21b).

When Jesus returns, He will “*subdue all things unto himself*” (Phil. 3:21b). That word *subdue* means “*to arrange in ranks.*”

Isn't that our problem today? **We do not arrange things in their proper order.** ***Our values are twisted.*** Consequently, ***our vigor is wasted*** on useless activities, and ***our vision is clouded*** so that the return of Christ is not a real motivating power in our lives.

**The truth in these verses means letting the Lord arrange the things in life according to their proper rank.**

It means living “*with eternity's values in view,*” and daring to believe God's promise that “*he that doeth the will of God abideth forever*” (1 John 2:17).

This means to be “*spiritually minded*” -- to look at earth from heaven's point of view.(Col. 3:2).

D. L. Moody used to scold Christians for being “*so heavenly minded they were no earthly good,*” and that exhortation still needs to be heeded.

### **“He Is Able...” Series**

→ 3 Weeks ago..... 1-He Is Able... TO SAVE (Our Country/Family/Soul)

**Hebrews 7:25** Wherefore **he is able also to save** them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

**“From the Guttermost To the Uttermost!”**

Billy Sunday's great sermon, where he talked about how God saved him **from the gutter-most** because he was a gutter-drunk when God saved him.

→ 2 Weeks ago..... 2-He Is Able... TO SECURE (KEEP)

**2 Timothy 1:12** *For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that **he is able to keep** that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

→ Last Week..... 3-He Is Able... TO SUCCOUR

**Hebrews 2:18** For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, **he is able to succour** them that are tempted. *To run to, or run to support; hence, to help or relieve when in difficulty, want, or distress; to assist and deliver from suffering; to relieve; as, to succor a besieged city.*