

# **“More Than Citizens”**

(Phil. 3:18-21)

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. The Man without a Country**

1. The book by Edward Everett Hale in 1863
  - a. The story of Philip Nolan
    1. A young US Army lieutenant
    2. An accomplice of Aaron Burr in treason
  - b. During his trial, after cursing the United States he said, *“I wish I may never hear of the United States again!”*
2. Sentenced to live the rest of his life aboard a navy ship
  - a. 56 years from one ship to another
  - b. No one was allowed to speak of the United States with him
  - c. Finally buried at sea
3. Truly a man without a country

### **B. Your role as a “Citizen of the United States”**

1. Your right to vote
2. Where the world seems headed
  - a. Sermon last week
  - b. It can't be stopped
3. Yet our responsibility to seek what is right

- a. (Will Metzger) *“The sovereignty of God never excuses us from responsibility”*

## C. Issues that matter to me

Does the candidate support...

### 1. *The sanctity of life*

- a. Baby dedication
- b. Isabella’s birth
- c. ....both born and unborn
  - 1. Abortion....the silent holocaust
  - 2. Carolyn’s talk in Brazil
    - a. The ladies couldn’t believe what we do to the unborn
- d. When does life begin?
  - 1. 3 months...4 months...7 months?
  - 2. Conception
- e. Err on the side of life

### 2. *Biblical Morality*

- a. American’s special relationship with God
  - 1. We pledge to be “One nation, under God”
  - 2. To be consistent with His moral standards
    - a. Marriage and Morality
- c. The Washington Monument
  - 1. Will always be the tallest at 555 feet
  - 2. What you can’t see

The first part of that monument to reflect the rising sun is the eastern side of its aluminum capstone, where these words are inscribed: *“Laus Deo,”* Latin for *“Praise be to God.”*

- d. Ronald Reagan believed God had a plan for America

*“I have always believed that this anointed land was set apart in an uncommon way, that a divine plan placed this great continent here between the oceans to be found by people from every corner of the earth who had a special love of faith and freedom.”*

- e. If our nation continues to turn away from God?

- 1. Belief in Judeo-Christian standards

- f. Love the sinner

- 1. The sin of hating the “sinner”

- 2. Love them like Jesus loved them

- g. But hate the sin

### ***3. The Survival of Israel***

- a. God promised to bless those nations that bless Israel, and curse those nations that curse Israel

- 1. Israel is an anvil that has worn out many a hammer

- b. America has stood with Israel more than any other nation

- 1. Miraculous survival

- c. I fear the day we turn away from Israel

- d. America has a special relationship with Israel

- 1. Part of God’s plan

## **E. America’s special role in God’s plan**

### **1. Where people enjoy the freedom to worship God**

- a. Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock

- 1. Freedom to worship God

- b. Written on all our money “In God we Trust”

- c. Scripture etched in most of our nations buildings

- d. Washington kneeling to pray in the snows of Valley Forge
- e. Lincoln praying to God in the hour of national crisis
- f. President George Washington

*“No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of man more than those of the United States.”*

- g. President Woodrow Wilson in 1911

*“The Bible...is the one supreme source of revelation of the meaning of life, the nature of God and spiritual nature and needs of men. It is the only guide of life which really leads the spirit in the way of peace and salvation. America was born a Christian nation. America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture.”*

- h. Freedom lacking in other nations
  - 1. The school in Burma
    - a. Kids standing all day
  - 2. Attacks on Christians around the world

## **2. Source of world missions**

- a. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century 75% of the missionaries and money came from the United States
- b. After WW II America sent out 350,000 new missionaries
- c. Why 95 % of the world’s population has been told about Jesus

## **3. Protector of the Jews**

- a. The day President Truman signed Israel into existence
  - 1. Was moved by God
- b. God has used us to protect this small country
- c. Details in “The Final Kingdom”

## **F. What is your role to be?**

1. We are in the middle of a great struggle
2. So was the Apostle Paul and the church in Philippi
3. The verses I missed while in Virginia

## **II. Text....Phil. 3:18-21**

### **A. The enemies of the cross.....v.18**

*(18) For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.*

1. Brought sorrow to Paul
2. Most likely were inside the church
3. They were “posers”
  - a. Posing as believers
  - b. The most dangerous kind
4. Has always been a problem for churches
  - a. Get inside
  - b. Rise to leadership

### **B. They are destined for destruction....v.19**

*(19) Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.*

1. Their “destiny is destruction”
  - a. The Greek for “destiny” refers to the ultimate end
  - b. “Destruction” refers to eternal damnation
  - c. Apart from Christ....eternal punishment
2. Their minds were preoccupied with “earthly things”....v.19
  - a. “their god is their stomach”

1. Now this is getting personal
  - b. Like little babies
    1. Cry if they don't get what they want
3. They are living for today only
  - a. Get all that you can right now
  - b. People who fail to address life after death
4. Deaths this past week
5. The certainty of death
6. Questions to ponder

### **C. But true believers are headed for glory**

*(19) ...Their mind is on earthly things. (20) But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) 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.*

1. ***“But our citizenship is in heaven” (v.20a)***
2. Citizenship brings all kinds of ramifications
3. Important advantage to people of Philippi

Philippi was a Roman colony. At strategic military centers, the Romans set down their colonies. In such places the citizens were mostly soldiers who had served their time—21 years—and who had been rewarded with full Roman citizenship. The great characteristic of these colonies was that, wherever they were, they remained fragments of Rome. Roman dress was worn; Roman magistrates governed; the Latin tongue was spoken; Roman justice was administered; Roman morals were observed. Even in the ends of the earth they remained unshakably Roman.

Paul says to the Philippians, “Just as the Roman colonists never forget that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship.” (Barclay, p.69)

4. And more than just citizens...
  - a. “Ambassadors”

b. II Cor. 5:20

***“Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”***

5. Definition of an “Ambassador”

a. “The highest ranking representative appointed by one country or government to represent it in another”

6. The role of an Ambassador

a. Every Christian is an “ambassador”

1. Your importance in God’s eyes

b. God’s highest ranking representative

c. The official spokesman for their kingdom

d. People draw their understanding of Christ by observing *your* behavior

1. May be the only Christian they know

e. And you’re not a citizen of the country wherein they live and work

## **D. As an Ambassador...**

***1. You’ll have difficulty “blending in”***

a. Tri-City kids touring Europe during 1<sup>st</sup> Gulf War

1. Kids of Marines

2. Told them how to dress

3. “Don’t talk!”

4. Almost impossible to “blend in”

b. You too are a foreigner

1. Talk differently

2. Act differently

3. Not meant to blend in

**2. *You must allow God to speak through you***

a. The ambassador delivers the president's message

1. He is a mouth piece

b. You are to deliver God's message to this world

c. II Cor. 5:20

***“Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.”***

d. A key part of your job as a Christian

e. God pleads through us

1. To the people around us

2. For their souls

e. A difference between pronouncing and pleading

1. Pleading is from the heart

2. We get sidetracked by trying to change a mind when we should be trying to change a heart

**3. *Don't allow your conduct to cause embarrassment***

a. The book “*The Ugly American*”

1. People hated Americans because of the Ambassador

2. Didn't care what he had to say

b. *You* are an ambassador...of heaven

1. Don't misrepresent Christ

2. Be Christ-like

c. Don't become an embarrassment to other believers

d. Like it or not, people have higher expectations for you

- e. How I could embarrass this church—
  - 1. Not repaying debts
  - 2. An off-color story
  - 3. Racist comments
  - 4. Adultery
  - 5. Drunk and loud
  - 6. Lazy at work
  - 7. Gossip
- f. The same applies to each member of this church
  - 1. Including students
- g. More than your reputation at stake
  - 1. Hurt the reputation of Christ
  - 2. ...and every other citizen of His kingdom

***4. You carry the power of the one you represent***

- a. The power of each U.S. Ambassador
  - 1. Wields the power of his President
  - 2. When an embassy is attacked
- b. The power you wield
  - 1. Because of who *He* is (not you)
  - 2. You aren't normal
  - 3. Have the resident power of the Holy Spirit
- c. You will suffer attacks
  - 1. Attacked because of Christ
  - 2. Ambassadors are guarded by the U.S. Marines

3. God's angels watch over us

**5. *You enjoy diplomatic immunity***

a. Embassy Row in Washington D.C.

1. Beautiful area

a. Strolling down the street

2. Parking tickets in Washington D.C.

a. Don't have to pay

3. Have "diplomatic immunity"

4. Considered "honored guests"

b. Our embassies around the world

1. A piece of America on foreign soil

2. Not governed by their laws

3. Guarded by U.S.M.C.!

c. The Christian ambassador?

1. Citizens of heaven

2. Diplomatic immunity

3. God's protection

a. His angels watch over you

b. Only things better than Marines

d. Men can't really hurt you

1. (Heb. 13:6)—" So we may boldly say: The LORD is my helper;  
I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

**6. *You have direct and immediate access to the one who sent you***

a. Ambassadors in constant touch

1. Satellite communication
  2. “What’ll I do next?”
- b. Your God is only a prayer away
1. When in doubt—pray!
  2. “What’ll I do next?”

**7. *You don’t need to fully understand each directive***

- a. Not your job to second guess—just obey!
- b. The President sees the “Big Picture”
  1. You only see a particular battlefield
  2. He sees the whole war
- c. Walking down life’s road
  1. One path may look right
  2. He sees the dangers (dead end)
  3. You only see “why” later
- d. When the road has much turmoil
  1. It hurts to walk it
  2. Yet—He knows you need it
  3. Grow from the rough roads
    - a. Learn compassion for others
    - b. Learn dependence on God
    - c. Learn patience
- e. If you have taken the *wrong* road?
  1. Grow where you are
  2. Never too late or too old

**8. *You are an ambassador regardless of your circumstances***

- a. If a country dared to imprison our ambassador?
  - 1. Still an ambassador
  - 2. Only in bonds
- b. Paul's work as an ambassador
  - 1. Some of his greatest representing was done while in a Roman prison
  - 2. (Eph. 6:20)— ***“For which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak”***
- c. You are an ambassador 24/7
  - 1. At work or school
  - 2. On vacation
    - a. “What happens in Vegas doesn't stay in Vegas”
  - 3. Buying groceries
  - 4. Dealing with crazy relatives
- d. You cannot resign the appointment!
- e. Is there any way out?

**9. *Like every other ambassador you'll one day be called home***

- a. Returning to the USA from Brazil
  - 1. When I went...line for foreigners
  - 2. When I returned....special line for citizens
- b. Getting into Heaven
  - 1. Name registered at the front gate
  - 2. Written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 20:15)
- c. You're not home yet.....v.21

*(20) But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) 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.*