

How Paul Lived on Earth as a Citizen of Heaven

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The apostle Paul had everything. He was safe socially, as a Roman citizen born in Tarsus. But as a Jew, he was also well connected, on “the inside” of the religious world. He had friends in high places and drew a lot of self-confidence from his position (Philippians 3:4–7).

However, Paul rejected it all and looked beyond earth—to his Creator—for fulfillment. Rather than looking for happiness in this life as Solomon had,

Paul lived by faith in the living God, through Christ, and by faith he cleared a path through the thorns of life to eternal glory.

Paul's life embodied the life of Jesus. Jesus was no longer on earth, he had risen and gone on to glory. But the life of Jesus and his ministry continued on earth through the power of the Spirit of God. This is what Jesus said would happen (Acts 1:8), and for Paul it was evident that Christ was living in him and through him (Galatians 2:20). The gospel is not an idea to be nurtured, or a theology to be studied, but a life to be lived—it's the life of Jesus.

According to Philippians 2:12, Paul "worked out" in his life, the life that had been implanted there by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lived in him and through

the Holy Spirit he embodied the life of Christ.

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Paul's life exhibited the citizenship of heaven. In Philippians 1:27 Paul encouraged the church at Philippi to show that their "manner of life" was "worthy of the gospel." This phrase "manner of life" means to behave as a citizen. The city of Philippi was a Roman colony. Although hundreds of miles away from Rome, it was under Roman law, received all of the privileges of Roman citizenship and protected by Rome.

Paul's point here is clear. Even though you live so far from Rome, you are still to live as Roman citizens. The application is

equally clear. Even though we live on earth and not yet in heaven, we are to live as citizens of heaven. Let the gospel shine forth in a heavenly lifestyle.