

The Christian's Fleet

Introduction. The word "ship" has a dual meaning. It can either be used to refer to a large boat, or as a suffix which denotes a state of being or a level of obligation one has toward something or someone. Today, if you will indulge me, we are going to play on both meanings to explore the various "ships" that compose the Christian's fleet.

I. **Discipleship**

- A. The Greek word *mathetes* ("disciple") is from the verb *manthano* ("to learn"). Thus, a disciple is a pupil or learner.
 - 1. Although "disciple" was prominent in Greek culture, it was very popular among the Jews. Rabbis had disciples who studied with them in a well-defined relationship.
 - 2. The need for training was intensely felt among the Jews, who believed that no one could understand scripture without a teacher's guidance (John 7:15).
- B. Jesus taught with authority without having gone through the only process that the Jews felt could qualify anyone to teach (Matthew 7:24-27).
- C. Jesus gave several characteristics which demonstrate that one is a disciple.
 - 1. Continuing in His word (John 8:31-32).
 - 2. Showing love to one another (John 13:35).
 - 3. Bearing fruit (John 15:8).
- D. Luke records the point at which the disciples began to break with the language of Jewish and Greek culture (Acts 11:26). The term "disciple" is never used in the epistles.

II. **Citizenship**

- A. Citizenship had a special meaning in first century times, particularly when Paul uses it to affirm our position as citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 2:19-20).
 - 1. Paul was a Roman citizen and was aware of the privileges of that citizenship. The importance of being a citizen of Rome is illustrated in Acts (16:16-40; 22:22-29).
 - 2. We are "translated" or we "enter" into the kingdom by obedience (John 3:5; Colossians 1:13; cf. Hebrews 5:8-9).
- B. Against the background of New Testament times, Paul's statement that Christians hold citizenship in heaven has exciting significance.
 - 1. Wherever we may live or travel in this world, our heavenly citizenship guarantees us the protection of God himself.
 - 2. While we live as "strangers and pilgrims" in human society (1 Peter

2:11), we are bound to obey the laws of our country (Romans 13:1-7). Yet we can bring every need and every issue to a higher, divine court, appealing to God in prayer (Hebrews 4:16).

- C. Understanding our heavenly citizenship brings us a sense of confidence and security. We can live boldly, committed to carry out our duty of obedience to heaven's laws.

III. **Fellowship**

- A. The Greek word translated "fellowship" is *koinonia*. It is variously translated "fellowship," "communion," "distribution" and "contribution" in the KJV. Our fellowship is with God, Christ and with each other (1 John 1:3, 6-7; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Acts 2:42).
- B. The Greek philosophers chose the word *koinonia* to depict the ideal of a harmonious secular society. However, such a "utopia" has never been realized. Sin always distorts the "dream." Instead of compromise, we reject fellowship with sin (Ephesians 5:11-12).

IV. **Stewardship**

- A. The definition of "steward" is "a house-distributor (i.e. manager), or overseer, i.e. an employee in that capacity; by extension, a fiscal agent (treasurer); figuratively, a preacher."
1. We are "stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10). A steward, which figuratively represents one entrusted with God's work in some capacity, must be faithful (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; Titus 1:7).
 2. Jesus used several parables to illustrate this point.
 - a) The faithful steward (Luke 12:35-38, 42).
 - b) The unfaithful steward (Luke 16:1-8).
 - c) The parable of the pounds (Luke 19:12-27).
 - d) The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30).
- B. If we sow liberally with what God has given us, then we will reap liberally (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Our desire in this life should not be to materially enrich ourselves, but to serve the Lord and be content with what we have (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

V. **Workmanship**

- A. "Workmanship," which comes from Ephesians 2:10, means, "a product, i.e., fabric (literally or figuratively): a thing that is made (cf. Romans 1:20)." The word can also have the connotation of a "work of art," especially a poetic product, including fiction.
- B. We are created in "righteousness and true holiness" for "good works" (Ephesians 4:24; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 2:12). As we work out our own salvation, God works in us for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

VI. **Hardship**

- A. "Hardness," found in 2 Timothy 2:3-4, is variously interpreted as "trouble" (2 Timothy 2:9), "afflictions" (2 Timothy 4:5) and "afflicted" (James 5:13). In classical Greek, the word was actually used frequently to describe the hardships of military service.
- B. Christians will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).
 - 1. "Judgment," figuratively representing persecution, will "begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:16-19).
 - 2. Therefore, we must fight and not turn back (1 Timothy 6:12; Luke 9:62), no matter what happens at the hands of those who hate us (Luke 6:22; John 15:18).

Conclusion. Is your fleet shipshape? If not, perhaps you need to "awake" from the stupor of neglect, carelessness and being preoccupied with other matters. While you yet have time, and before you reach a state in which you renounce all ties of faith with the Savior, you need to come home. A hardened heart will someday bring you to a point of no return. When that day comes, there will remain no more a sacrifice for sins, but certain judgment "which shall devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27).