

Where Do You Belong?

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning everyone. It's great to see you. I love that description of men with beards and women with soft skin. I don't know if you love that. I'd love to grow a beard. It ain't happening anytime soon. But it's so great, isn't it, to celebrate our church family together. It's just been such a great week, that holiday club. So I do ask you to continue to pray for all the children that were there this week, that they would really come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord, Saviour and King.

We turn this morning to Philippians chapter 3. So maybe you want to turn there just now. If you've got your Bibles, you can grab it. If you use your phone, you can scroll down. Philippians chapter 3, verses 17, and we'll take it right through to 4, the end of 4, verse 3 as well. So this is the Apostle Paul, and we join him here at chapter 3 and verse 17.

Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For as I have often told you before and now say again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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. Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. I plead with Yodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yoke fellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life. Amen. We pray that God would bless the reading of his word this morning. Why don't we just pause for a moment's prayer.

So speak to us now, our loving and gracious Heavenly Father, as we turn to your living words. Would you challenge us and would you change us, we pray, because we ask in the name of our King and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen. Well, I wonder by show of hands this morning, if there's anyone here that has more than one passport. Anybody got more than one passport? There's a couple, let's see them in the air. Does anyone want to tell me where their more than one passport is? Sorry, you know what I mean.

[3 : 01] U.S. and British. U.S. and British. U.S. right, American and British. Excellent. Anyone else? There's one over here. British and Irish. Excellent. So to burst your bubble, I was reading about a man this week who has not one, nor two, nor three, nor four passports. He has eight passports. Via different routes, he is officially a citizen of eight different countries.

And I wrote them down. Cape Verde, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitson, Nevis, Ireland, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Do you know what his nickname is? He's the Octai Citizen. Which, if you ask me, sounds like the worst superhero ever invented, the Octai Citizen. Well, here's what I want you to do this morning is you think about your passport.

I want to ask you one simple question. Where do you belong? Where do you belong? Where is home? You know, over the summer months as a church, we've been working our way through this little letter that Paul wrote to this little church in Philippi. This small band of Christians who are seeking to live out their faith in Jesus Christ and in the midst of their city of Philippi.

And you might remember way back at the outset of this series, we considered what kind of city Philippi was. You might remember those three Ps that we looked at. We thought about the fact that it was a prestigious city. That was our first P. There's a lot of famous names in history come from this city.

[4 : 39] We thought about the fact that it was a pagan city. It was rife with pagan gods. It was full of worship to the emperor. And we thought about the fact that it was a proud city. Because this is a

Roman colony.

This is a place where many Roman soldiers would go upon retiring from active duty. They'd go to Philippi. And so you can imagine that Philippi is a place full of people who are loyal to Caesar and who love the things of Rome. I was trying to picture it this week. Imagine that there was a World Cup on and the citizens of Philippi are trying to support Rome. And they're singing the Roman national anthem. They're singing it with gusto. They've got the full Roman strip on. They've got the strip. They've got the shorts. They've got the socks. They've got the hat. They've got the scarf. They've got the foam hand. They've got the face paints to go with it. What is their chant? Caesar! Caesar! This is a place full of people who are loyal to Caesar. You ask them where their citizenship is. Where do they come from? They would say, we come from Philippi.

But Paul wants these Christians to understand that when it comes to singing your national anthem, when it comes to singing your tune, the place where you belong, the place where you come from, the place that you call home, you understand that you would sing a different song.

Now why? Philippians, don't you see that you belong to Christ? You don't belong to Caesar. And because you belong to Christ, your home, the place where you belong, isn't Philippi.

[6 : 15] It's heaven. So Paul has been telling them this far in this letter, isn't it? That because you're Christ, you don't need to think like Philippi.

You want to think like Christ. You don't want to act like everyone else in Philippi. You want to act and live your life like Christ. You may live in Philippi, but understand they don't belong in Philippi. A key verse for us this morning, if you've got your Bibles there, is the first part of verse, sorry, verse 20 of chapter 3. Paul writes, But our citizenship is in heaven.

Do you see it there? So dear Philippians, live as a little outpost of heaven in your little city of Philippi. You may be living in Philippi, but you belong to Christ and your home, you are citizens of heaven.

Now what a, just think about it, what a timeless message that is for God's people down the generations, is it not? And what a timely message for us this morning.

[7 : 27] I don't know if you've ever stopped to think about it. But our life corporately is a church, Bruntsfield Evangelical. We are a little outpost of heaven in our little city of Edinburgh.

So what we're going to consider this morning as we look at what Paul is saying to these Christians who are seeking to live out their faith, their new citizenship, is how we should live in light of that.

In the here and now, how does being a citizen of heaven, how does knowing that impact our living? Now if you remember last week, I kind of opened by saying it was a Sesame Street sermon.

Well this week, it's an internet sermon. Because I want to ask us three questions, and those questions begin with W. So W, W, W.

It's how you're going to remember this this morning. This is the challenge to us all as we think about what it means to live as citizens of heaven in our city. So here's the first question, verses 17 to 19 of chapter 3.

[8 : 29] Are you watching? Are you watching? Or rather, who are you watching? What does he say, verse 17, if you've got it there? Join in imitating me.

Do you see it? So follow my example, dear Philippians. Follow me, not for the sake of following me. Follow me as I follow Christ. As I go hard after Jesus Christ.

And not just me, but follow others. Do you see it there? Who are like me. And that they too follow hard after Jesus Christ. And follow our pattern.

The Greek word there means something akin to a stamp. Follow those who've got the mark of being the real deal.

Now I remember my cousin many years ago, he came back from holiday. And he had a new pair of sunglasses. You know what the sunglasses were called? Ray bombs. Ray bombs. Now if you're on the ball, you'll notice, you'll probably realise that a ray bomb is a fake ray ban.

[9 : 35] So he comes back with these things. But do you know how you can tell the difference between a ray bomb and a ray ban? Do you know how you can tell what a genuine ray ban glasses are? I can see some of you freaking out thinking, what have I bought?

Ray ban. The mark of a ray ban is that they have a little white ray ban on the top left. And they've got an RB engraved on the top right. That is the mark of a genuine ray ban.

And that's what Paul is saying here, is it not? Keep your eyes on the ray bans and not on the ray bombs. Look for the mark. Follow those people who, in your midst, have the stamp of Christ on their

lives.

If you remember Paul, he singled out a few people back in chapter 2. If you want to maybe skim back there. Timothy. He's a man of proven worth.

He's a man who loves you, who genuinely cares for you. And he's a man with a real servant heart. Paul held him up as an example to follow. There's the mark. And then we get Epaphroditus.

[10:40] A man who loves you. A man who loves the Lord. A man who was willing to sacrifice himself. He was willing to risk his own body for the sake of his Lord and for the sake of the proclamation of the gospel.

He holds up another man. There's the real deal. And here we are today. What does Paul say? Follow me. We saw it last week, didn't we?

That Paul is a man with some serious credentials. But he's a man who counts all things as loss. Who counts those credentials as nothing for the all-surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord and his King.

And he's a man who strains on. Who strives on for Christ. Holding unswervingly to the truth. Knowing that he's not yet perfect. But knowing that in every single detail of his life, God is molding him and shaping him more into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

And he lives as a man who's not uncertain about what is ahead of him. He lives as a man who is fully confident of what is ahead of him. That's what the stamp of Christ looks like, says Paul.

[11:49] Keep your eye on the Ray-Bans. Keep looking for the mark of the Ray-Bans. And forget about the Ray-Bombs. And notice the word keep there. It sneaks it in under the radar.

Keep your eyes. As if to say this is not a one-off event. This is a life pursuit of keeping your eyes on the prize. And I've been loving the athletics on BBC this week.

Our boys nailed it in the relay last night. It was brilliant. But any sprinter will tell you that you run your best when you keep your eyes fixed for the whole race on one place. And that's why when you see people cross the line, where's the first place they look?

They look to the screen. Because none of them have seen it. They don't know where they finished. So the only way they can work it out is by looking to the screen to tell them where they finished.

Because their eyes have been on the prize the whole time.

Paul says keep your eyes on us. Keep their eyes on us. And why is that so important? Well, because there are other people. See it there. The Ray Bonds.

[12:50] Who are competing for your eyes. And just so is he. He's outlined the stamp of the genuine. Likewise he outlines the stamp of the counterfeit. Verse 18.

Those who are enemies of the cross of Christ. People who will deny the cross. Both to its theological significance and to it being a pattern of life to follow.

Instead they have their minds on earthly things. Seeking man's recognition. Man's praise. Living for themselves rather than for Christ. But know dear Philippians.

That in the end the path that they're on is a path that leads to destruction. So keep your eyes on us. Keep your eyes on us. Now by way of application to our Christian lives.

Let me just ask you two questions this morning. Through your eyes. Firstly, who are your eyes on? Who are your eyes on? Who are your examples? Who are you looking to? First and foremost.

[13:53] Can you say like Paul. That my eyes. Are on Christ. That I'm striving for him. That I'm living for him. That I'm obeying him. But secondly and probably more.

Directly from this passage. Who are the brothers and sisters round about you. In your life. Who are examples to you? Who are you watching? Who's ahead of you in the race?

Who's setting a good pace as they follow Christ? Who is an example for you to look at and follow? Now I must say this is probably the. I love. I love this church.

But this is probably the thing that I love most about this church. Is that this church. This family. Is full of examples for me to follow. I see examples of this all the time.

And I've watched some of you. And you've gone through some really hard times in your life. Some of you. You've faced illness. Some of you have.

[14:51] I've lost some of your. Closest friends and family. Some of you have faced difficulties of work. At work. Some of you faced unemployment.

Some of you have faced retirement. I had to think about what I do with my life. And many of you I know are right there at the minute. But many of you. I see.

Have come out the other side of that. And despite the pain. Despite the questions. Your testimony is. Blessed. Be the name. Of the Lord. And I've watched as many others of you.

Have sacrificed. And you've served. And you've prayed. And you've visited. And you've done it all behind the scenes. When nobody's seen. In any way possible that you can. And can I just say. When it comes to my life. And I hit some rocks. To have examples of people. Who have been through it before. Is absolutely incredible. I've got my binoculars out.

[15:51] Like that video. And I've watched. And it is absolutely inspiring. Surely that is what Paul is talking about here. Surely that is the joy of what it means to be part of a church who is full of examples.

First question. Who are your eyes on? Second question. Whose eyes are on you? So you may have noticed. I don't know all the building work that's been going on in the corridor behind us. Do you know why we had to do that? Do you know why we had to knock down a wall? Do you know why we had to put in a lift? Because this place is growing. And we're full of kids. We have to make room for kids.

These are growth problems. These are great problems to have. But what responsibility. But what responsibility? As we think about these young minds. The question that we need to be asking ourselves is not where can we fit them.

The question we need to be asking ourselves is what are we showing them? What are we showing these young minds? Not just on a Sunday. But like the video was saying.

[16:57] Behind the scenes. In our homes. In our everyday lives. The way that we talk about one another. The way that we interact with one another. The way that we deal with stressful situations when they come up in our lives.

Whose eyes are on you? Is it not true that the most important thing that we can pass on to this generation, the next generation, is not a building. As lovely as this building is.

It's not a building. It's a living and an active faith and a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. You know the video that we watched earlier.

It's an excerpt taken from a book by Don Carson. You want to read the whole thing. We've got 25 copies on sale this morning. Just a pound. You just grab it when you go this morning. Just put your pound coin in the box.

Just 60 pages. You'll get through it in an afternoon. I was thinking a lot about what it means to pass on an example to the next generation. You want to read it? Can I highly recommend it? You'll get it before you go this morning.

[17:57] But not just the young generation. Who is here this morning? Who is in your life that you could begin to meet up with? And share life with? So I'm going to leave with you this morning to think about and to pray through.

You may be living in Philippi, Philippians. But you belong to Christ. And you're citizens of heaven. You've got to ask yourself. Who are you looking to? Second question.

And this is verses 20. Sorry, verse 20 of chapter 3. Right through to verse 1 of chapter 4. Are you waiting? Verse 20.

Our citizenship is in heaven. You see, unlike these false teachers whose end is destruction, do you see how Paul wants these Philippians to know that because they belong to Christ, their end is heaven.

And from there, they await a saviour. So he's telling them, isn't he, that they are in a waiting game. Their lives are to be spent waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[19:03] Now here's the question. What does it mean to wait well? Is it like when you're at the dentist? You know, you go to the waiting room, you pick up a glossy magazine, and you kill a bit of time.

You look at your watch before it's your turn to go in. No, it's not like that. Is it like going to the bus stop? And you get to the bus stop, and you look at the screen, and it's blank. And you think, I've got no idea when this bus is coming.

I really hope it's coming. It's not like that either. So what does waiting well look like? I remember when we told our little two-year-old that she was having a birthday party.

So excited. So every morning, I would get her up. She'd say, Daddy, it's my birthday today. I said, today? It's not today, sweetheart. It's not today. And Alex, my wife, would ask her over dinner, Chloe, guess what's coming up?

Guess what's coming up? And she would have that puzzled look in her face, and she couldn't work out. And then she realized, my birthday's coming up. My birthday. We'd put the girls down at night, and we could hear Chloe in the monitor singing happy birthday to herself.

[20 : 06] Happy birthday to Chloe. And then I kid you not, ooh, a cake. Blow out the candles, Chloe. Our citizenship is in heaven.

And from there, we await a saviour. Do you see what he's saying? For Paul, waiting does not mean resting.

For Paul, waiting does not mean hesitating. For Paul, waiting means anticipating. It's not about twiddling your thumbs, wondering if it's going to happen.

Sorry, it's not about twiddling your thumbs, wondering when it's going to happen. It's not about crossing your fingers, wondering, hoping that it might one day happen. It's about lifting your hands in worship, and using your hands in the service, the joyful service of the Lord, knowing the truth, and living in the truth, that one day is going to happen.

Do you see how for Paul, the end makes a real difference to how he lives now? And what will happen when Christ returns?

[21 : 15] Look at verse 21. He'll transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body. Now we noticed the pattern, didn't we, in chapter 2, if you want to flick it back, verses 5 to 11.

Paul took us through it. Thought about Christ, he humbled himself. And because he humbled himself, because he went so low, God exalted him.

God glorified him. And it's the same pattern for us, as followers of Christ, that as we humble ourselves, when Christ returns, God will glorify us.

It's interesting at this point that Paul talks about the body. Could it be that there were people in these circles who were saying that perfection in this body, in this life, is possible?

Were there maybe people in these circles who were saying that the body, this is where all your investment needs to be? Perhaps. But whatever, Paul wants them to know that they have lowly bodies.

[22 : 22] As if to say this, this is not where all your investment should be. Looks will fade, the grass withers, the flowers fall, illness was set in, strength will dwindle.

Who would have thought that one day, Usain Bolt wouldn't be the fastest man in the world?

Strength will fade. Presumably that is why Paul can say in verse 20 of chapter 1 that his desire is that Christ will be honoured in his body.

And how he can say of Epaphroditus that he was willing to risk his body for the sake of the gospel.

Because the hope of the Christian is that there awaits a transformed body. And do you see the freedom that that gives us to live our lives, risk our lives for the sake of the glory of Jesus Christ because we know it's not all about this.

And on that day, transformed bodies, and on that day, glorified bodies like our Saviour and our King, Jesus Christ.

And how can he do that? Quite simply, says Paul, because he's got the power. Jonathan Edwards, famous American Puritan, to go to heaven fully to enjoy God is infinitely better than the most pleasant of accommodations here.

[23 : 41] So let me ask you again, are you waiting? How are you waiting? Are you waiting well? Are you living for something in your life?

Whoever you are this morning, are you investing in stuff that's going to fade? Are you investing in that in which moths and rust cannot destroy? Well, dear Philippians, because of what's yours in Christ, because of what's ahead in you, verse 1 of chapter 4, stand firm then.

Stand firm. Don't let it go. Stand firm in the Lord because you may be living in Philippi, but know that you belong to Christ and know that the future ahead of you is heaven because you are citizens of that kingdom.

Are you waiting? Third question this morning, verses 2 to 3 of chapter 4, are you working? More specifically, are you working it out? Do you see how Paul moves from the future to the present? Do you see how he moves from the general to the very specific? So he's heard about this tension in this church between two of its members. Do you see it mentioned there at verse 2, Yodea and Syntyche, who for whatever reason they aren't quite seeing eye to eye?

[24 : 58] Now two things to see. Firstly, we don't know who these women were, but you can probably infer that they are two big personalities, both prominent enough in this church that if they

continue to disagree, this is going to cause big problems for their fellowship.

And we don't know what they were disagreeing about. Again, you can probably infer that it wasn't something that was fundamental to the faith. Because remember way back, well just chapter 3 rather, that he's gone to town on the false teachers.

And you'd have thought if this was a false teaching issue, he would have gone to town here as well, but he doesn't. But what we do know is what he wants these two women to do. Do you see it? End of verse 2, agree.

Literally, be of the same mind. There's that mind word again cropping up in this letter. Be of the same mind and let that mind be the mind of Christ. Bring humility to the party.

This is what he's saying. Humility of Jesus Christ. He did not grasp at greatness, but rather he modeled humility. Going so low, obeying the will of his heavenly father to such lengths that he gave up his life on the cross.

[26 : 11] That is to be your mind, dear sisters. And so, Judea, and so synticky. Do you see how Christ calls you to bring that mindset and to reconcile with each other with that mindset?

Dear sisters who have worked so hard with me, whose names are in the book of life, do you see how outplace it is to insist in your own way when you follow a king and a savior who did not insist on his own way?

You've got to agree, says Paul. You've got to work this one out. You can imagine that as this letter is read publicly to this church, I mean, they are loving chapter 4, verse 1.

Stand firm in the Lord. Hallelujah! But then they get to 4, verse 2. Things would have gotten a little chillier.

But standing firm as a church means standing together as a church. And while there's a rift in the camp, do you see that that is in danger? And so for the continued growth of this church and for the continued mission of this church and for the continued goal of pursuing Christ, you've got to work this one out.

[27 : 22] And see, it's not just any kind of agreement. It's not just getting the wedding photo, play happy families. Do you see that they've got to work this one out in the Lord? 3, verse 1.

Rejoice in the Lord. 4, verse 2. You've got to agree in the Lord. They need to be at one. They need to see that Christ Jesus has made them one. They need to humble themselves.

They need to settle their differences. And all of that is becoming more like Christ. Mark Dever in his wonderful little book called *The Compelling Community* writes this.

When two people share Christ, even if everything else in their life is different, then they are closer than even blood ties could bring them. So let me ask you this morning, are you working?

Are you working it out? Is there somebody here this morning who you need to get right with? See, our unity as a church is such a precious thing. If you look at what's going on in the world just now, is that not incredible?

[28 : 27] The unity that we have in our diversity, the thing that Christ has done, not that we are good, but he's great, it's worth fighting for. It's worth humbling ourselves for. Stand firm, says Paul.

You may be living in Philippi, but you belong to Christ. Your citizenship is in heaven. You are not octi-citizens. You are uni-citizens. Many of you, I'm sure, love the Narnia series by C.S. Lewis.

I love the way that the last battle comes to a conclusion. If you remember that story, Ray Jewel, the horse, he describes what it's like for him to come home, and he says this, I've come home at last.

This is my real country. I belong here. This is the land I've been looking forward to all my life, and though I never knew it until now. Come further up and come further in.

You may be living in Philippi, but you belong to Christ, and you're citizens of heaven. So as we close, let me ask you, are you watching? Are you watching?

[29 : 36] Are you waiting? How are you waiting? Are you waiting well? Are we waiting well? And are you working? Are we working hard to work it out? Let me pray as we close.

Father God, we thank you so much for the wonderful truths that we've seen in your word this morning.

May what is true about what is ahead of us spur us on even more to live freely and to live wholly for Christ and his kingdom here and now.

So would you be helping us this week to watch and to wait and to work and to know so closely the love of Christ that surpasses all understanding because it's in his name that we pray, dear Heavenly Father.

Amen. Amen.