

Our Heavenly Citizenship

Philippians 3:20-21

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, April 17, 2022

We just have a few holidays, so we want to make them very special. And that's what we're doing today. In light of this Easter holiday, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Philippians. And while you are turning there, if you are joining us for the first time today, I want to let you know that we've been going through another book of the Bible on Sunday mornings as a church. And that is the book of Hebrews. Because that's what we like to do here at Grace, we like to go through the Bible verse by verse; we like to take a portion of Scripture and go through it slowly, so we don't miss anything and get all the details. So if you come on a normal Sunday, we'll be in the book of Hebrews, then if you come the following week, we will be in it again so forth and so on all throughout the year. Because we like to show our people how the Word of God unfolds. We like to help them see what it says for themselves, so they can read it on the page. I don't ever want our people to walk away and believe something because the pastor told it to them, I want them to walk away and believe it because God said it. But for this week, since it's a special day, we're going to take a break from that and look at another passage. It's actually one we've never studied before as a church. And it's found in Philippians chapter three. We will start in verse seven, it says,

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

And then if you look over in verse 17, it says,

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

And we will end the reading there. And as you read that, you can just tell that a key theme in this letter is Christ, or the joy that we have in Him, because the word joy is repeated 16 times in the book of Philippians, more than almost four times per chapter. So when you read it, you can almost feel the happiness jumping off the page at you. As you go through it, it sounds as if Paul is writing this with a smile on his face. When you come to chapter three, you really get a sense of that, because he says one reason why we have so much joy as a Christian is because in verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven. Not that it will be in heaven one day, but it's in heaven now. And not that

we'll get it sometime down the road, if we're lucky or good or fortunate or we stay on our best behavior. No, you can have it this very moment, all through the work of Jesus Christ.

Just to say a few words about this so we can get our minds around what he's talking about here. I think it goes without saying that when people become a Christian, they change, don't they? They don't stay the same. Because their soul transforms from one state of existence into another; their heart goes from one mode of being into a different mode, which is what this is referring to here. Because it says that they go from being a citizen of Earth to a citizen of heaven. When you're saved, you move from being part of this kingdom to being part of that one instantaneously and overnight. Because if you notice, it's not a progressive thing in this passage, it's immediate. It's not something that happens gradually. It says that your citizenship is in heaven. Boom, bang, end of story. It's a done deal. Finished, complete. And it's also permanent as well. As we've talked about in previous weeks, this is something you can't go back on now whenever you feel like it, because once the change happened, it's sticks. And once it occurs, it never goes away. One of the Puritans said the one thing you cannot fake in the Christian life is perseverance. You can fake everything else. But you can't manufacture that once saved, always saved; the real thing lasts. And it's irrefutable, because when the change happens, you notice it. You can tell because it turns your whole world upside down. And you're never the same again, which is what people in the Bible experienced, by the way.

This is what the apostles in the early church saw, to the point that some of these people, when you read the New Testament, you see they even changed their names when they got saved. Imagine doing that. But Saul's name was changed to Paul. Simon's name changed to Peter, and John became the son of thunder, which is quite a nickname, by the way, makes you wonder if he had an inside voice with a name like, that must have been very loud. You also see that they changed their profession, because Peter became a preacher. And Paul became a missionary. And Matthew gave up his former way of life as a tax collector in order to be a disciple, which was a tremendous change for him. You couldn't get more dramatic than that. You also saw they change their relationships, because they were all pretty popular at first; they got along with their neighbors. But by the time they come to the end of their life, Peter dies on across upside down, Paul is beheaded, and Matthew, according to church history was nailed to the ground with short spears and decapitated in Ethiopia. But the point is that they weren't alone in that; the whole church acted that way. It was very common thing to see people make that sort of commitment to Christ and turn completely around when they believed in Him. Acts chapter 24, verse 14 tells us that one of the first things the early Christians were called was followers of the way. And that's interesting because the term didn't come from their friends, it came from their enemies. And it wasn't intended as a compliment. It was intended as an insult because even their opponents recognize that they used to walk this way. And now they walk that way. They used to look like this. But now that they're Christians, they look like that. Acts 11 Verse 26 also gives us another name of this when it says that they were called Christians, and that term Christians is so common today. We don't even know what it means anymore. But it literally means Christ followers, because that's what they did. They literally followed after Christ. They chased after Him with all their mind. Jesus acted this way, and they copied him. Because that's what Christians do. They change, not just some of them, but all of them. Not just a few of those who are overly zealous, but every single one of them.

And we need to look at a few more passages about this before we get into our text, because this is such a confusing subject today. I mean, so many people are neglecting to do this in the church that we've got to straighten it out a little bit in our thinking. But when you look at Scripture, you see there's several terms that it uses to describe the change that someone undergoes the moment they become a Christian. For example, it says

that they go from death to life. That change is so great, and it's so extreme and it's so powerful that the Bible says that when someone is saved, they go from a place of spiritual deadness and uselessness and powerlessness to a place of spiritual awakening. Some of you can identify with this when you were saved, a switch went off in your head. And now all of a sudden, you saw the world through a whole new light. And Ephesians chapter two talks about this, if you just want to write that down, I'm just going to quote it to you, but Ephesians two, verse one says, and you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, but God being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. And that's a wonderful verse because as Paul is describing salvation there, he says that you once were this, but now you are this. You once were dead, but now you are alive. And not only were you dead, you were the walking dead because it says that we acted according to the course of this world. I heard someone say that, you know, dead men can't do a lot of things, but they can stink. They can decompose. And that's what we did. We decompose all over the place because we were under the influence of the prince of the air, which is another way of saying the devil, because we weren't Satan's worshippers, but we were Satan's followers in that. We weren't the devil's fans, but we were his allies. You know, some people think they're better than that, because they're not killing anybody. But they forget, the devil does more than just kill people. He commits other sins, too. He lies and cheats and steals. And we did all of that. Until something happened to change that, and it's something was God, because verse four says, "But God, being rich and mercy, made us alive together with Christ." That means that God didn't do that, because you were rich, He did it because He was rich. That means that God didn't save you because you deserved it, it means that He saved you because He deserved it because He acted in love. It was unconditional love that saved you because that's the first way the Bible describes the great change that occurs in us: it's a change from death to life.

Salvation is also a change from darkness to light. When someone is converted, this is what happens to them as well. They go from a place of spiritual blindness and misery where you can't see anything to a place of spiritual sight because the scales fall from your eyes. And you can see this one in Colossians one, verse 13, where it says "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." And that's also a great passage, because there's another contrast there to say you were this, but now you are this; you were in this domain, but now you've been placed in another, and who did it? God did it. Who made the transfer from darkness to light? The Lord made it happen. And we don't say too much about transferring domains today because that's a little bit outdated. But we do say a lot about another thing, and that is immigration, which is a very popular thing in British Columbia right now; our church is full of people that have immigrated here from other places, which means that we can identify with what Paul is saying here. Because he said we have immigrated into the light.

This past week, I had to go down to the US Consulate in Vancouver to do some passport stuff. And I was reminded that I am an immigrant. I had memories of going to the to the government website and filling out the paperwork and taking the test and sending in the money and jumping through the hoops and waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting for the stuff to come in the mail so that I could get into Canada. When you read this passage in Colossians, I want you to see that it is different from all of that. Because in order to immigrate into heaven, you don't jump through hoops, God does. And in order to come into the light, you don't put in the effort, He takes care of all of it. To Him be the all the glory.

A friend of mine once said that, I don't know when the sun came up, but I know it's shining because God did it. God made the sun rise in my heart. And there's other ways we could describe this change. I mean, it's a change from slavery to freedom. It's a change from goats to sheep. It's a change from bad soil to good soil, a change from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

I counted up about 15 of these or so we don't have to go into all of it because Paul gives you a very powerful one when he tells you about this change in Philippians three, verse 20, when he says, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." And I'll say a few words about this in a moment, but a key word here is the word *citizenship*, because it's a Greek word *politeuma*, from which we get our word politics. In the context of the verse, it refers to someone who possesses all the honors, rights and privileges of a Roman, even though they live somewhere else, because that's what the Philippians did. Even though they lived in a town of Philippi, they had their loyalties elsewhere, because they were citizens of Rome. And Paul says it's the same way with us. Because even though we make our residents sit down here on this planet, and make our home down here on this earth, and live and move and breathe in this place, we don't belong here. That's a change God has made in you. This world is not your home, at the end of the day, because you are citizens of heaven. Now that's a powerful transformation. And it's an absolute work of God because it's enough to change the way you look at the world around you, because you live here but you belong there. And you work in this place, but your heart is in another. And the point Paul is making in this passage is that you need to act like it now and leave your ways behind. Because when you go out into the world, people need to see something of Heaven in you. And they need to be able to tell that your thoughts are elsewhere. And this is important to talk about because, to be honest, I don't think this is the way a lot of Christians look at the world today. When you look at them, you don't see a lot of heaven coming out of them. They look like they always did, because they still cuss and drink and swear, and they still lie and cheat and steal and sin, and Paul says, it shouldn't be that way for you. Because Jesus came to bring you out of your former way of life.

This is also important because a lot of people will say, "Well, I get that. I understand Jesus has come to bring me out of these things. But to be honest, I still struggle with them. I still wrestle with the flesh and my sin. To the point that I don't feel very heavenly." I'm sure if I took a survey the church today, most of you would say that. I don't feel very spiritual right now; I feel like I'm something of the earth. But the wonderful thing about this passage, and I want you to see this, is that if you're a Christian, this says you're part of heaven, whether you feel like it or not. This can be yours, no matter how great the struggle. I don't know about you, but I was studying this passage this week and it was pretty convicting for me, because when I read over it, I was struck by how seldom I think about having you guys identify with that. It seems to never come up on my mind. I'm always rush, rush rushing around. Going here, there and yonder. I don't know if you guys know where yonder is, but it's somewhere else. And until I hear a sermon like this, or study a passage like this, and I go, Oh, yeah, I'm not part of this world. Which is what this sermon is about, I want to help you with that today.

So if you're taking notes, in Philippians chapter three, we're going to look at four marks of our heavenly citizenship. And the first one is that our citizenship is a present reality. We've already talked about this a little bit, but I want to go into it some more. But the first mark of our heavenly citizenship is that it is a present reality, which means that this is something you possess. Now, if you're a Christian, you don't have to wait for it or work for it or earn it through the law. If you've trusted in Christ, you are part of heaven. We're going to talk about the resurrection in a moment because this is Easter Sunday. But let's start with this. If you read again, in verse, eighteen, Paul writes, and he says, "For many walk with whom I have often told you, and now tell you even

weeping, that there are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven.” I Wanted to read that context to you, because you can tell that these verses were given as a warning to the Philippians. Because there's something wrong in the church in Philippi, there was an issue there, that there were false teachers among them. If you want to look in verse two earlier in the chapter, Paul actually gets very blunt about these men, and he says, “Beware of the dogs.” It's quite a way to address these guys. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers. And beware of the false circumcision. The word *beware* was mentioned three times because apparently these guys were a real problem. They were coming into the church and saying that in order to be saved, you have to be circumcised. And in order to go to heaven, you have to keep the law. Verse 19 refers to them again, when it says that they have set their mind on earthly things, not spiritual things, not things of heaven. These guys are looking at the things of the earth. And so Paul, to help the Philippians, says in verse 24, “Our citizenship is in heaven.” In other words, you don't need to think about all that so much, and worry about issues like circumcision and the Sabbath and keeping the law and obeying all the food rituals. You need to put it on something higher. And like I said earlier, this term *citizen* is a very helpful one here, because it literally means politics. Because what Paul is telling the Philippians is that your politics are in heaven. Your priorities are there. Now that word can refer to a lot of things depending on how it's used. But in the setting here, it refers to the way a person conducts himself within the political arena. It wasn't really talking about the way a king did, or a leader, it's talking about the way an ordinary person would do it. Because we all understand that in order to be part of a nation, there are certain expectations you have to meet. You have to pay your taxes and you have to respect people's rights and obey the civil authorities and play hockey, if you're a Canadian, and go ice fishing. It's all wrapped up in this word.

And in fact, the scholars tell us that there's more involved in that. Because the city of Philippi was a Roman colony. The Roman Emperor Augustus gave it that distinction when he defeated Mark Anthony in a famous battle there in 42 BC, establishing himself as the Emperor. And as a result of that battle, he made all the people citizens; he gave them the right to join the empire with all the privileges there, which enabled the Philippians to do several things like hold public office and vote in government affairs and serve in the army. Even though they lived a long way off, they lived about 1000 kilometers from Rome, which at that time was like from here to the moon. The Romans still treated them like they were equals, because of this distinction, which the Philippians really appreciated, because eye witnesses tell us that when he visited the city of Philippi, everybody talked like Romans and walked like Romans and acted like Romans. They wore Roman dress and ate Roman food and worshipped the Roman gods, which was pretty unusual, because a lot of people hated the Romans. They were so violent toward the people they conquered, but not these guys, they loved them. It was even said, if you met a Philippian on the road, he wouldn't say I'm a Philippian, he would say ergo sum Romanos, I'm a Roman. And I expect you to treat me that way. Which was confusing because they didn't look like Romans. And they didn't appear that way to the naked eye, because they had different skin color and hair color and eye color to everyone else. But they were Romans in their heart. They felt that way in their soul. And Paul uses this expression here to say it's the same way with you, because you don't look like you're from Heaven either. You don't appear that way to the naked eye, because you have different skin colors and hair colors and eye colors from everybody. But that doesn't matter because heaven is your home deep down in your heart. It's where you belong in your soul. And that's what matters to God.

The Bible tells us that when someone is saved, not only does your life change, but your loyalties change. And not only is your heart different, but your allegiances are different now because you were part of this kingdom and now you're part of that one. And you were a part of this empire, but now you're part of another, the empire of God

so that none of this other stuff matters so much anymore. Nobody cares about your eye color in heaven. And nobody cares about your skin color there. The only thing they care about is what do you think about Christ.

I think this is important for us to remember because in light of some recent events in our world today, there's been some fighting in churches due to the war in the Ukraine, maybe not so much here in Canada. But I've heard some accounts of churches in the states that have broken out in fistfights because they have members in their congregation from Russia and the Ukraine, both sides of the conflict. And tensions have gotten so high that they've had altercations during the service. But when you read something like this, you wonder if all that would stop if they would remember this as Christians, you are citizens of heaven first. This means that we're on the same side, we're playing on the same team. You're not citizens of Russia first; you're not citizens of Ukraine first; you're not citizens of Canada or the US or Mexico. You belong to a place that transcends all that. And you need to remember it.

We had a saying in Tennessee that says nobody fights like cousins. And it's true. But the truth is, you're more than cousins in here, your brothers and sisters, you're closer than life itself. So we need to keep that in mind. Because this is not the last time you're going to face something like this as a church, there's going to be wars and rumors of wars; nation is going to rise up against nation. But the Church of Jesus Christ must stay united.

This leads to another mark of our heavenly citizenship and that is that our citizenship awaits the king. First thing is that it's a present reality. But second, is that our citizenship awaits a king. Which means that not only do we belong to a greater country than all of this, we belong to a greater Lord who rules over everything. And that's what he talks about next in the passage. If you look in verse 20, he says, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." And as you read that, you can tell that Paul is moving on and developing this argument because he starts by mentioning our citizenship and now he mentions our king. And he begins by mentioning our country, but now he mentions the one who rules over it. Because that's how the ancient world was set up at the time you had countries and you had kings, you had nations and you had people who ruled them. And Rome had a bunch of them because they were too big to govern their empire alone. So what they would do is they would install lesser magistrates all around the world that would they would refer to as their pro councils or their puppet kings. And they would take care of local affairs, while Rome took care of the rest. You would actually see this in the New Testament, because there you read about a man named Herod, who was called the King in Jerusalem, even though Augustus was the emperor in Rome. And that sounds a little confusing, but the idea is that Herod ruled over a piece of the pie, while Augustus ruled over the rest. He had a little small piece of the empire, Augustus had the whole thing. The book of Acts also mentions another king named Agrippa, who ruled over Israel after Herod, even though Nero was on the throne at that time, because that's the way things were done. They had big kings and little kings, they had big bosses and small bosses. And with that in mind, Paul says here that we have a king too. He just hasn't arrived yet. We have a ruler as well, He just has not gotten here. But when He does, He will show that He's greater than anything the Caesars ever held. Because he'll be lowered overall. And the way he says this is important, because he doesn't just call Jesus *Jesus*. But he calls him by the name *Savior*, because that's what he did. Jesus is the one who came to save us from our sins. We celebrated that on Friday. He came to die on the cross to forgive us. But that's not enough, because he also calls Him, if you look in the passage, Lord. It says, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord..." and that word is *kyrios* in Greek, which was a title that was used for the Emperor. If you ever wondered why the early people persecuted the Christians so much, it was because they use this word for Christ. Because the Romans would not just call Augustus Augustus, they would call him *kyrios* Augustus, or Lord Augustus, and the

Christians came along, and they call Jesus *kyrios*, our Lord Jesus. And they said, that's treason. And so they put the Christians on crosses, they threw him in the arena, they beheaded them. Because they would not just use this title for the Emperor, they use it for Christ. Paul uses it for Jesus here because this is what He will be, He will be the Lord of heaven and earth.

And he doesn't even stop there. He goes one step further because he calls him our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the term Christ meant the anointed one, or the King of the Jews, to say that he is King of the Gentiles and king over the Jews. He is Lord over the Romans, and Lord over the Hebrews, because Jesus is Lord over everybody. There's not a single part of the world that does not fall under His domain, which is something that we understand as Christians. We understand that there is a king that we submit to. There's a Lord who was on the throne. Because when you were saved you don't you know, you don't just do whatever you want and act however you want and live however you please know you change and you repent from all that now, because Jesus is Lord. The world doesn't do that. They don't act that way. Because they don't have a lord.

If you don't believe me, just go home and turn on the TV. They sin and they lust and they fight. But you're different. Let me tell you how this applies to our lives today. And that is that if you ever feel like you don't belong in the world, there's a reason for that and that is because you don't. And if you ever feel like you don't fit in, because this world is weird, and strange and foreign to you, that's because it is weird and strange and foreign because you're weird and strange and foreign. Because you're a citizen of heaven now. And you don't have the priorities everyone else has, and you don't have the same obligations. And that makes you an alien down here. And as we all know, aliens don't fit in anywhere. We had a men's Bible study the other day and one of one of the men they're from another country. He was telling us something we he was doing, we're all like, that's weird. And he said, I'm not from here. Same goes for this. So you shouldn't be surprised when all this stuff seems so strange. Because this world doesn't embrace you as one of your own their own because you're not one of their own. They don't treat you like a friend because you're not a friend anymore. There is a clean break between you and the rest of society. So if it feels a little odd, that's okay, because it should.

To put this in perspective, Paul says that we are awaiting or eagerly wait for a Savior that is to come, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word *wait* is in the continuous tense in Greek, which means that we're waiting and waiting and waiting for Him. We're looking and looking and looking for a Savior, because we don't like it down here very much. It's not very comfortable for us here. And it says that we eagerly await His arrival, which means as far as we're concerned, He can't get here fast enough. We're in a hurry, because there's nothing we really want down here anyway. I mean, if anything has taught us that it's been the Coronavirus. I used to like watching sports on TV, you can't even do that anymore. Nothing's comfortable anymore. In fact, when you read the Bible, you find this is something that it says over and over again. And that is that you have to keep your mind fixed on heaven for this reason, because that's where your hope is found. So you don't want to get too attached to all this stuff, which is why a passage like Colossians three, verse one says this, it says, "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." And when he says that you have died there, that means you have died to all of this. When he says, keep seeking the things that are above, he tells you that because that's where your citizenship is, that's where you belong. Not down here, up there; not in this place, but in that one.

Matthew six verse 19 says, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal.” The arguments very simple there, but Jesus tells you to not to store up your treasures down here because they won't last. And He tells you to store your treasures up there because they will. It's simple logic here. Titus two verse 11 says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodly and worldly desires...looking for the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” You get the idea. So long as you're down here, friends, you need to keep your backpack, your hands on the wheel, and the tire spinning underneath you because you are just traveler down here, and nothing more.

This is one of the worst things I've seen happen to Christians as a pastor is when they just get settled down here. And when life gets so easy, it's one of the greatest challenges we have in the church in Canada, because our life has been pretty comfortable. So we don't think about heaven that much. Because we don't need to; we have Heaven down here in our own minds and that needs to be different for us.

And that brings us to another mark of our heavenly citizenship, which is that one day our citizenship will transform us. The first mark here is that it's a present reality, we already have it. Secondly, it awaits a king, which introduces a futuristic aspect to the passage. Because Paul makes a shift in the second part of verse 20, from talking about the present to talking about the future because he tells you that a king is coming. As one pastor said, it's Friday, but Sunday's coming. And it's a day of sorrow and sadness now because the world thinks it's won because it believes it triumphed and it shut Jesus up in the tomb. But He won't stay that way. He's coming back. And that's what he talks about with his third mark of our heavenly citizenship. And that is that one day our citizenship will transform us, which means that it will change us from the inside out. That's what we celebrate on Easter because He will give us a resurrection. And if you look in verse 20, he says, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with a body of His glory.” And it's interesting the way Paul writes this here, because he's been talking about a very practical situation in the life of the church in Philippi. And that is that they have false teachers among them. But now he tells you why you need to avoid these false teachers. And that is because Jesus is coming back soon. And when He does, He will transform you. And when that happens, you're not going to care about circumcision very much. I promise you, when you get to heaven and you stand before the throne of God, God's not going to ask you if you were circumcised or something like that, it won't matter. And that's the idea here. And when he uses the word *transform* here, it's a Greek word *metaschematizo*, where we get the word metamorphosis, one of several colorful words that Paul uses in this passage. And it literally means to change or transform someone. But the way it's used here, it means to change the entire person. Verse 21 mentions our bodies, which means that this is not just the change of soul that we talked about earlier, it's the change of your flesh or skin.

The idea is that when salvation happens, while salvation does happen immediately, and the Lord changes our soul in an instant, you don't see all the results of that right away. It takes time to flesh some of it out. Because while you've already been saved, and reborn and redeemed, you haven't been raptured yet, and you haven't been resurrected yet, and you haven't been glorified or entered into the eternal state. And that's what this is describing. This refers to a future event. All those other things happened in the present for you. This will happen down the road, because one of the things that the king will do when he comes back at the second coming is to transform your humble bodies. And the word *humble* here refers to the body you have now, because that's what you're living

in today. It's humbling, or it's vile, in the King James Version, not because it's bad or evil or sinful, although that's part of it. But just because it's weak and frail. I don't have to tell you that our bodies are subject to all kinds of manner of death and disease, or any doctor in the room could tell you about that. But Paul says here, for those who trust in Christ, the day is coming when He's going to fix that, and we won't need doctors anymore, or nurses or hospitals. Because He'll give us a body that won't be exposed to that. Because it'll be just as glorious.

You see the word *glory* in there, as Jesus body is right now, in heaven, because if you notice, Paul is making a comparison here between two bodies, our body and His body. And he's making a contrast between two human forms: our humble one, and His glorious one, to say that one day this is what will get, the Lord will put us in the same glorified state that Jesus is now enjoying in eternity. Which is wild to think about. And it's so unusual that the only way we can understand this body is to study His resurrected body. Because the Scriptures tell us that after Jesus died, three days later He was resurrected. He passed away and left this earth only to come back transformed into something that the world had never seen before. It was so strange that there was no category for it because Jesus is the only person who was ever raised like this. A lot of people who died before Christ in the Old Testament, and they went to heaven in spirits and souls. But none of them came back in a body, glorified body, Adam died, Moses died, David died, Noah died, Abraham died, Isaiah died, Jeremiah died, and they left and they're in heaven now in their spirits. Jesus came back in a glorified state. Which is why when the disciples saw Him after the resurrection, they couldn't recognize Him because they didn't know what was going on. I mean, when Mary saw Him, she thought He was the gardener. Remember that? When the disciples on the road to Emmaus saw Him, they thought He was a traveler. When the apostles in the upper room saw Him, they thought He was a ghost. When Thomas saw Him, he thought He was a delusion until he put his hands in His nail marks and stuck his fingers in the hole against His side. It's also why when they saw Him, they freaked out, because they thought He was dead. When they realized it was Jesus, they still didn't know what to do with it because His body was indestructible. It could disappear and reappear at will. It could vanish and walk through locked doors just like that and show up in the middle of a room. At the same time, Jesus could talk with them and walk with them and eat with them, and they could touch Him. Paul's point here is that one day you're going to get all of that. If you trust in Jesus Christ, when the Lord returns, He will raise you up the same way God raised Him.

There is also a historical reason why Paul ties us into Jesus' returned because historians tell us that when the Roman Caesars were gone for a while, they would often come back home at the head of a parade called a triumph, where they would give expensive gifts and presents of gold and silver to the people as a way of showing that the king was back in town. He was gone, but He's back. He had left, but now He's returned to exert His authority. And Paul uses that image here to say that when Christ returns, He will do the same thing as well. But he's going to shower you with more than just silver and gold, he will give you a brand new body that will never spoil or fade, or wear out with the passing of time. I'd say that's good news because I know that some of you have been struggling with your body lately, because you've been sick. So let me remind you what this says. It says that Jesus knows about that He understands what you're going through. And He's going to eventually put a stop to all the sickness. Because when you receive this new body, it will have no more death and disease and decay in it. There'll be no more viruses, or bacteria or flu bugs, or pandemics, there'd be no more aches or pains or bruises, there'll be no pulled muscles or dislocated limbs, or wheelchairs or paralysis, there won't even be any more headaches. Which means you won't have to drink so much coffee anymore. Once you get your resurrected body, you can cut it down to two or three cups a day, some of you who have so much money, you won't even know what to do with it.

And let me tell you what this has to do with your life. And that is that if you feel like you don't belong in this world right now, there's another way to deal with that, and that is to remember that it's not going to last anyway. And if you feel like you don't fit in because this world is weird and strange, and all that kind of stuff, there's another way to handle it. And that is to realize it's not going to go on forever. It has a limited shelf life, this world has an expiration date, the only thing that matters is that Jesus is going to return. When He does, He will resurrect you and that's all you need to be focused on.

As one commentator said, when you understand what Paul is saying here, and you take it all in, it puts things in perspective, because it makes us hold our log huts with a loose hand. And I love that quotation because that's what this world is, it's just a log hut. That's what your body is, it is a pile of dirt and rocks. So you don't need to take it so seriously. It's also temporary. Your soul is what you need to care about. This is such an issue here in British Columbia, because many of us are so consumed with our bodies and the way we look. Because we're constantly at the gym, working on diet and exercise and nutrition, which is fine, there's nothing wrong with taking care of yourself, as long as you realize that it won't change the fact that you're still going to die. And as long as you understand that it won't stop the reality that your body will one day give out. And when it does, you're just going to make a healthy corpse. So you need to stop spending so much time in the gym and start spending more time in your Bibles. For some of us, it will do us a world of good.

I'll never forget the time one of my neighbors was dying of cancer. And she said to me, "I want to talk to you about God. And I feel so bad saying that because I've never done it before." And I said, "You shouldn't feel bad about that. Because you're about to meet Him." And she was very open. And we had a very blunt conversation and I said, "The two of you, you and God, are about to stand face to face. So if you don't talk about it now, when are you going to do it? We need to start thinking about eternal things. That's where you're going." I find it so tragic that we don't do this very much anymore. But the early church said a lot about the resurrection. Because they didn't have much more to look forward to; they didn't have a retirement plan or an IRA or a savings account in the bank. All they had was the fact that one day Jesus was going to come back and raise them, and it was enough for them.

When you look at the catacombs, from the first and second and third century, a lot of them had artwork on them. And much of the artwork had to do with the coming resurrection. They had pictures of Jonah and the fish to remind them that he was three days in the fish and then he came out. They had pictures of flowers and plants to show that just as a seed goes down into the ground and dies, it comes back to life. We're going to do the same. Even when you read the New Testament, you see things like this. It says, "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober and build up one another. And they said that because they understand that the day of the Lord could come at any moment, Jesus could return at any second. And when He does, we want to be ready by being sober. Some people want to prepare for Christ's return by propping their feet up and saying I don't care. I'm going to be raptured anyway, it doesn't matter. That's not what the Bible says. It says you need to care. It also says, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in which the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat." Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be? You need to be holy, and godly. And I like the connection there because it says, yes, the world will be destroyed. And yes, it's going to burn. But what do you need to do? You need to be godly about it. It needs to change the way you live your life. Scripture also tells us that for the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of shame, with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will

rise first. So comfort one another with these words, because this is a comforting doctrine. For Christians, there's no comfort in it. If you're lost, there's no reassurance in it if you're going to hell. But if you're a believer, it should be a very encouraging thing to talk about.

And that brings us to one more mark of our heavenly citizenship. Just to review these other ones, the first one is that it's a present reality. And secondly, it awaits a king. And thirdly, our heavenly citizenship will one day transform us, which is probably the most important one in the list because it shows you that God is not through with us yet. Even when we die, there's more to the story. I've been to a lot of funerals in my day. And I would have to say they're never a happy occasion. Unless you realize that there's more to come, then they're happy, then it's a joyful thing. There's nothing worse than seeing someone in a casket thinking their life is over. But if you're in Christ, this passage says that your life is not over. One day, you're going to come out of that casket.

This brings us to one more mark of our citizenship, and that is that our citizenship should cause us to stand. A fourth and final mark of this heavenly citizenship is that it should cause us to stand firm, which means it should give us the courage to resist all these false teachers that Paul has been talking about. And that takes us back to where we started all this. But if you look in chapter three, verse 20, just to get the setting again, he says, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state, into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. Therefore, my beloved brethren, whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way, stand firm in the Lord." And I wanted you to see all that because the chapter divisions that we have in our English Bibles were not in the original Greek, they were added in the 12th century by a man named Steven Langdon, who did a very good job, and you need to be thankful that he did it because if he didn't do it, then I would start a sermon by saying turn to the book of Philippians. And you just turn to the book and just start reading it. Not too bad in the book like Philippians. But can you imagine going to a book like Matthew. Stephen Langdon helped us with that. He added the verses and chapters, and he did a great job. But I do think this one might be a little bit misplaced, because Philippians four verse one really gives you the application to all Paul has said so far in chapter three, because the reason you need to remember that your citizenship is in heaven, and you're awaiting a king, and you're looking forward to the resurrection is so you can do one thing and one thing only, and that is to stand firm. Paul is writing to help you have courage to resist all that bad stuff he's mentioned earlier in the chapter. That's the connection here. Because again, earlier in chapter two, Paul says that there were men in the church that were dogs and evil workers and of the false circumcision. Because they said that in order to be saved, you had to keep the law. Now you had to do a bunch of good works. So Paul refutes that by saying all that's unnecessary, when you remember that Christ is going to resurrect you and he's going to bring you back. So you need to forget about all that and focus on Him.

In fact, Paul finishes Chapter Three by highlighting another aspect of the resurrection. When he says that he will transform the body of our humble state, by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself. And that's a little bit hard to understand, but a key word is the word power, because it shows you where Jesus gets the ability to do all this stuff, like return to the earth and reign as king and resurrect us. He gets it by His power because He doesn't have to ask someone else to help. And He doesn't have to call on an outside party to raise you from the dead and call you back to life. He takes care of it on his own. And Paul's point is that if he can do that for you, then why do you want to go back to the law now? If Jesus can take care of your soul on His own, why do you want to add to the salvation with works? You shouldn't do that, you need to stand firm. And the phrase *stand firm* can refer to a lot of things, but for one thing, it means that you need to stand firm doctrinally

against the heretics. Instead of letting them pull you away from the Bible and teach you things that are not in this book. This is so common today. We don't have to say much about it. But when it comes to the issue of salvation, people say just about anything is nowadays, don't they? They tell you all sorts of bad information. Depending on which church you go to, you might hear him say things like, in order to be saved, you have to dress a certain way and look a certain way and act a certain way. Don't wear makeup, don't wear earrings, don't have long hair if you're a guy, otherwise, you're lost and going to hell. And they say that you have to sing like we do and pray like we do and read from the same version of the Bible, the King James version of 1611, it cannot be the King James version of 1620, or the King James version of 1625. It has to come from 1611. Otherwise, you're doomed. Now I was trying to find a very vague way to say this but I need to be blunt. That's nonsense. It's absolute rubbish. So you have to stand firm against it, you can't let it sweep you away. That's the kind of thing he's talking about here.

This also means you have to stand firm practically. You can't let yourself go in the other direction and say I can do whatever I want to now that I'm saved and live however I want to now that I'm a Christian, because it doesn't matter. Another thing churches are saying today, pulpits are telling people that God doesn't care. If you're addicted to drugs or alcohol, He doesn't care. If you watch pornography, He doesn't care. If you're sleeping with someone that's not your spouse, all He cares about is that you're nice. All He wants to know is that you're a good person. Paul says you can't believe that either. You have to stand firm against that. And you know, this also means you have to stand firm without complaining. Because you need to learn to face all these things without letting your heart get sour and bitter. Because this is what the book of Philippians is about. Remember, I told you, it's about the subject of joy. It tells you that you can have peace, no matter what happens to you in this life, all through the work of Christ. And I've already said a little bit about this. But I didn't show you the circumstances of this letter. So I want to do that now. But if you turn back to chapter one verse 12, you can see some of the circumstances or the setting of this epistle. When Paul says, "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel." In what circumstances? Paul says in verse 13, so that my imprisonment and the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole Praetorian Guard and everyone else." Now, that's the setting of the letter. He was in prison as he wrote this, that the word *Praetorian Guard*, refers to the soldiers who guard in the city of Rome. Since there were so many of them, about 10,000 or so, they were given the task of doing other things like watching prisoners. And that's what this is referring to. Because Paul says, I'm so happy I was in prison, I'm joyful. Verse 18, that I was put in jail, because it allows me to witness to the guards. Can you imagine saying that? Let me tell you some if I got arrested for being a prisoner, or for being a pastor or something like that, I would hope my emails would come off of this nice and polite. I think I'd be begging you guys to let them get me out of there. Paul says, Leave me in here. I'm witnessing to the guards and never had that opportunity before. Then he says later on down in verse 21. He says, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean more fruitful labor for me, and I do not know which to choose. But I'm hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ for that is very much better, yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." And there's a lot in here but basically Paul is saying that if I live it's good, and if I die it is good. If I make it, I'm fine. And if I don't, I'm fine. Because I know where I'm going; I know what's going to happen to me. I'm not going to be in this jail house forever. Jesus is going to resurrect me.

Paul sums it up this way as well in chapter four, verse 11. If you turn over there he says, "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. [He's talking about circumstances again]. I know how to get along with humble means, and I know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need for I can

do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.” And when Paul says I can do all things, he doesn't mean I can do all things and succeed. That's the way a lot of people interpret this verse. It doesn't mean I can do all things and catch a football and score a touchdown and make a million dollars. He means I can do all things, even when I don't do that and fail. Because I can be joyful. Either way, whether I'm filled or hungry, whether I have abundance or need, no matter what the cost, I can have hope all the way through it, because Jesus is enough for me.

And my friends, I think that's a good place to stop this Easter message and drive it home for a moment. And that's by reminding you that this is what the Christian life is about. It's about understanding the fact that Jesus is enough for you. It's about saying with the apostle Paul that he is sufficient to cover every need, no matter what it is, well filled or hungry, having abundance or in need, in jail or out of jail, dead or alive. Because it's about facing all that with a smile on your face, and joy, knowing that He will take care of you. You can't really read a book like Philippians and frown. You can't look at all this and walk away sad, you need to have a different response. I say that because the way some Christians behave, they never smile at anything, all they do is frown. Because they come out of church every Sunday morning and look like someone just put lemon juice in the communion dish. Or like they got flogged on the way out the door. You shouldn't act that way. Friends, nobody flogged you this morning. And nobody put lemons in here, you need to have a smile on your face. In fact, if you feel like you don't have anything to smile about today, because you don't know Jesus, and all this stuff seems so odd to you. I want to remind you that it doesn't have to be that way. Because you can know Jesus for the very first time today. And He can put a smile on your face. If you would just believe in Him, because the Bible tells us that Christ came to live as one of us. He entered this world 2000 years ago, to go to the cross and die and be resurrected, in order to save all those who believed in Him. And that includes you. He came to deliver anyone from hell, who puts their trust in His name. And anyone means anyone because it's an open invitation. You don't have to fix your life first, like I just told you, you don't have to do a bunch of good deeds first. You don't have to dress a certain way and act a certain way. All you have to do is call out to Him and He will make you a citizen of Heaven today right now this instant, not tomorrow, not the next day. He'll do it right away. And it will bring you joy, I guarantee because it will change everything for you.

One day, I would encourage you brothers and sisters, you're going past retirement, you're going past an IRA, you're going past your savings plan. One day you're going to die. And when you do, you will be ushered into eternity. And the question this morning is what will happen, then. If you trust in Jesus, He will resurrect you.

In my studies this week, I came across a story from the 1800s of a man named Philip Nolan. And it really illustrates this well because he renounced his citizenship in the United States while he was on board a ship. But the problem is that after he did that, no other country would take him in because they looked at him as a traitor. So he spent the next 50 years of his life wandering the ocean, going from place to place with no rest. And friends, I tell you that story because I'm afraid that a lot of people are living their lives like that today. They're like a ship just wandering the ocean going from place to place with no rest. But I'm here to tell you that you don't have to do that if you trust in Christ. Because you can find rest if you believe in Him and stop wandering around. So will you do that today? Let me pray that you will. Let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father Our hearts are over joyed with the thought of what Christ has done for us. We of all people should be the most to be glad not because this world is a nice place but because heaven is a nice place. Not because the things that we experience here are good but because You are good and we cannot wait to go into Your

presence. Lord, thank You for passages like this that remind us of that. We're all too guilty of being far too earthly minded.

It's often said that some people are too heavenly minded to be earthly good. It's the other way around. Most of us are too caught up in the things of this life, and we need to repent this morning. Lord, would you take what we've learned today and put our eyes on something higher? Would you take the words of the Apostle Paul, and remind us that there is a life to come? And that is such a wonderful thing. Lord, I do pray for those who have heard this message this morning. I don't know where everyone's at today. But for those who are saved, Lord with this, encourage their hearts and build them up in the faith. We do come from many places in our church, we come from all over the world. And it's encouraging to know that wherever we come from, we're going in the same place if we trust in Jesus, he we look forward to that for those who are lost. Would you open their eyes to Christ? Show them their Savior and draw them to the resurrection? Thank you for this word, Lord. May we go home and live it out. We pray this in Jesus' blessed name. Amen.