

A Citizen's Hope

By Don Green

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Bible Verse: Philippians 3:20-21
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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

When a pastor preaches 100 times a year or so, as I do and as many others do, there's an inevitable ebb and flow in what happens. Some messages are simply part of the continuity of verse-by-verse preaching and God always uses his word, but the pastor, the preacher is not always conscious of a particularly strategic reason for that message on that particular day. You just faithfully go through the word and trust the Lord for how he uses it. There are times where there are exceptions, like tonight, where you are aware that a text has come in the normal sequence of preaching that is especially timely for the people of God, sometimes especially timely in a nation, and certainly timely in the broader evangelical church. Tonight is one of those kinds of messages.

If you're visiting us here tonight, I've been preaching through Philippians off and on for a very long time and many times over the months, I have brutally castigated myself in my study because of how long it was taking and how tedious it seemed to be. But not tonight. Not anymore because all of that timing was providential to bring us to the obvious point that we needed to be at here this evening. Tonight, we have a perfect text, at the perfect time, with the help of the perfect Holy Spirit, by an imperfect man, to imperfect people who need to hear what this perfect text had to say. If we had reached this text even a few weeks ago, its import would have been lost, it would have been missed, but we have it tonight when we especially need it. It is a text that will not only help you, this is a text that will constrain you as a Christian if you have ears that are willing to hear. It will help you leave behind the anger and the anxiety that many of you are feeling in the days in which we live, and that's what needs to happen, no doubt about it. I've heard what you've said, I've seen what people have said on social media, and this is a matter of urgent necessity for all of us.

This is a primary text in Christian understanding and in Christian thought, and it is a primary text for Christians to grasp and understand so that they view life properly, and if you are a Christian, you need this text tonight. This is a primary text that puts every earthly, social, political and personal matter into the secondary place in which it belongs. Take any social matter that's going on, any political matter that's going on and even, beloved, anything that is happening in your life, and it all comes into a secondary significance compared to the wonderful truth of God's word that we are going to see from Philippians here tonight. And along with that I would say this, this is a text of urgent compulsion also for the non-Christian. This is a text that will show you the way out. It is

a way out of this miserably perverse generation and world in which we live, and it is a call upon non-Christians to leave behind the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of self and surrender all to Christ and to the kingdom of his wonderful wonderful light. This is a text that gets us back to the heavenly source of being a Christian. It is a text that gets us back to the heavenly purpose of Christianity over against the worldly preoccupation of the so-called evangelical church today that is more concerned to talk about medical issues or political issues or the kind of beer they've been drinking lately, or whatever else it is that seems to come out of the mouth of people that call themselves Christians. It is time to come to this text tonight and get our thinking straightened out, to have the Holy Spirit minister to our hearts and give us a sense of the glory of what it means to be a Christian, the glory of what it means to be in Christ, and to have it set a course for the way that we think that is unalterably directed toward the things that really matter, the things for which God saved us, and the thing for which we are ultimately destined to know.

Philippians 3:20-21 will be our text here this evening. My advice to you, my encouragement to you tonight would be to get comfortable. I have no idea how long this is going to go but everything is going to be for your up-building, beloved. Paul says in Philippians 3:20, he says,

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 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.

What we have in this text is the climax of one of the truly great chapters in all of the New Testament, not that you can compare Scripture with Scripture in a comparative sense like that, but the themes of this are so lofty and so fundamental that it's worthwhile for us to take a brief review of where we've been over the past several weeks so that we have an appreciation for the full context and the full import of the text that is in front of us here tonight.

In Philippians 3, Paul has shown a noble view of what it means to be a Christian and it's bracketed, chapter 3 is bracketed by a call to rejoice. Chapter 3, verse 1, Paul says, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord," and so what we see in chapter 3 is flowing out of that command to rejoice in the Lord. It's not simply, as people like to say, that joy is a choice and you just choose to be joyful and everything is going to be great. That's not the reasoning, that's not the method of Scripture at all. The call of joy is built upon the theological spiritual realities of what it means to be a Christian and you must understand those things, but what I want you to see and with the chapter divisions that were introduced many centuries after Scripture was first written, there is a bookend about rejoicing as well that is found in chapter 4, verse 4. Look at it there with me where it says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"

So right now, we're immediately confronted by the Scriptures in a way that stops us in our tracks, in our grumbling, complaining spirit, and our worrisome anxiety and anger, and I'm just using these terms deliberately, I'm trying to be a shepherd here in what I say

as well as a Bible teacher, and you and I, and I include myself in what I'm about to say, you and I just have to stop making excuses for ourselves and for the miserably mediocre way that we live our spiritual lives in our grumbling and complaining against whatever it is that displeases us about life. We need to change and we see that Scripture tells us that we are to be believers who somehow rejoice in the Lord, that we find gladness in him.

So there's a bookend. Chapter 3, verse 1, chapter 4, verse 4, everything there is designed to reinforce and to establish this call to rejoice in the Lord and to be glad in him. Well, what do we find as we read chapter 3 and how does it lead up to this climax of the final two verses in chapter 3? Well, Paul has shown us a noble view of what it means to be a Christian. He starts by warning his readers against false teachers who do not teach consistently with the things that he has taught them. Chapter 3, verse 2, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision." False teachers are a real problem. They come dressed as sheep, they come looking as though they are sheep bringing you the word of God but they're actually wolves in disguise. You can read Matthew 7 and see that I'm not exaggerating, I'm simply repeating the words of our Lord himself that this is a very real problem, and the problem is being exposed even in our day as we see it being lived out before our very eyes. So Paul has extended a warning to look out for false teachers and he calls people to joy and part of joy is coming out and away from false teachers who are not giving you the biblical truth.

Now as he goes along, Paul gives a history of his spiritual life and speaks about his days before Christ called him on the road to Damascus, he was a legalistic Jew who was proud and boastful in his self-righteousness, and what he says about that is that he has rejected all of that. He's rejected any claim to self-righteousness. He has repented of his pride. He has repented of self-righteousness and he has forsaken and rejected it all. He is humble before the throne of God. He is humble before the righteousness of Jesus Christ so profoundly that he calls his former way of life, he calls everything about his self-righteousness to be nothing but rubbish, to be dung, to be the equivalent of human excrement by comparison. Look at verse 8 where he says, "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 here it is, "and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ." He says, "Everything about myself, everything about righteousness, self-righteousness, everything about pride, I fling it from me. I cast it away. I want nothing to do with it. I forsake it utterly in view of the surpassing greatness, the surpassing beauty, the surpassing holiness of Christ, the surpassing value of His redemptive work on the cross, the surpassing value of His love and the glory of who He is." Paul says, "There is no comparison here between who Christ is and my prior claim to self-righteousness."

To put the two with opened eyes side-by-side, you see why he calls it dung on the one hand and says Christ is supreme and great and the only thing that matters by comparison and look at it there, I read through it rather quickly, how he rejects self-righteousness in verse 9. This is all review if you're new with us here tonight. This is review of things that we've said before but this is so fundamental. He says, "not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ," or you could

understand it as saying that which is received through faith in Christ. It's not an accomplishment. Righteousness is not a self-accomplishment, it is a gift that you receive by faith from a gracious God by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, you see it there in verse 9. And because Paul has forsaken all about self, going along with that becomes a forsaking of the things and the priorities of this life. What becomes the surpassing ultimate goal of the true believer is looking forward to that day of the bodily resurrection. He says there in verse 10 and 11, he says, "I want to know Christ. I want to know 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." That's the ultimate goal. The resurrection from the dead, something that utterly transcends this life, is something that this world cannot give and this world cannot take away. That's what Paul's ultimate goal is. That's what his heart priority is and everything else is secondary to that as we'll see when we get to our two verses here tonight.

So now in light of that, having established his life goal, his life aspiration is to know the resurrection, the bodily resurrection from the dead which Christ will give to everyone who belongs to him, Paul says in chapter 3, verse 14, look at it there with me, he says, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Now as you go through that text and as we studied in recent days, the picture in this chapter is that of a runner straining with all of his might and all of his muscle and all of his focus, straining toward the finish line, focused on what lies ahead, and everything is geared toward hitting that finish line, running, winning the race and that's the only thing that matters and there's no distractions that are tolerated in that quest. We talked about the fact that, you know, one of the worst things that a runner can do, not that I'm a runner but this is what I'm, you know, this is what I'm told and this is what makes sense, a sprinter in a race or someone coming around the corner looking for the finish line and in competition, he does not have the time and he should not be looking around over his left shoulder, over his right shoulder, looking up, because those distractions will cause him to lose his step, it will cause him to stumble, it will cause him to lose speed, and the race can be lost in that moment of carelessness. And as a result, the runner focuses, the skilled runner focuses on the tape and is looking straight ahead and says, "That's what I'm after." As a result, Paul has said in verse 13, he says, "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." In context what he's saying is, "I don't want to boast about my Jewish righteousness, I don't even want to boast about what's happened in my life of ministry as an apostle, by comparison I'm just setting that stuff aside so that I can continue looking forward and running the race that the Lord has set in front of me. I'm pressing forward, not looking back. I'm not boasting about what's happened in the past in my ministry, and I am not preoccupied and filled with regret over the sins of my past."

That is one of the consequences of understanding the work of Christ, the imputed righteousness of Christ and what it means to be born again and to be a new creation in Christ. You're not preoccupied with the sins of the past, you're not filled with regret over the sins of the past, and I know for some of you there's a great big, "Amen! Hallelujah! Thank God that I'm delivered from what I used to be and I bear that guilt no more. My

sins have been nailed to the cross and I bear them no more, praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! And I don't have to look back at that miserable past. I've been delivered from it. I've been forgiven of it and the Lord does not hold that against me anymore and therefore I am free to run the race in front of me. I'm not running the race encumbered by all kinds of restrictive clothing of, you know, of a guilty conscience over things in the past. My mind is free and therefore I'm free to run the race that's ahead of me." So we see something of Paul's life ambition.

Now, beloved, what we find as Paul speaks is that this is the mindset that every Christian is to have. This isn't some super-spiritual attainment that the Apostle Paul had made and the rest of us just admire from a distance. The basis of Paul's joy is the common possession of everyone that is in Christ. Everyone that is in Christ is a new creation. Everyone that is in Christ has their sins fully forgiven. Everyone that is in Christ has the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to their account. Everyone that's in Christ has the Spirit of God dwelling within them. Everyone that is in Christ is destined for that great resurrection. Everyone that is in Christ will end up in heaven in the end. And so it's all on the basis of shared realities with the apostle. He doesn't have anything that we don't all already possess if we are in Christ and that's why he can say in verse 17, look at it there with me, he says, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." Well, the example that he has been setting forth for us in Philippians 3 is an entire view, an entire worldview about how to view life and to think about life in Christ. So we are to have that same mindset that Paul describes about himself. He says, "I want you all to think like I do and to be of a mind that I have just described to you, so that you are satisfied in Christ, you are trusting in His righteousness and your hope is set firmly on heaven." And that changes the perspective on things.

Now notice this. He sticks in a contrast in verses 18 and 19. We looked at it last time. He sticks in this contrast and with a broken heart, he says as he was writing the letter 2,000 years ago, and with a broken heart I tell you tonight that things haven't changed in the subsequent 2,000 years, that this is the reality of things. He says in verse 18, "many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ." He says, "Not everybody that's ever populated a church actually shares this mindset. Not everybody who has populated a church has actually been a new creation." The passage of time, time and truth go hand-in-hand and the passage of time has shown where they were really at all along.

What does he say about them? Well, he's weeping. His heart is broken here. This is not the contentious spirit that you find on social media as different people discuss spiritual matters and people are fighting and calling each other names and all of that nonsense. That's not the spirit of what Paul is saying here at all. It breaks his heart to say the truth of the matter is that there were some that walked, that seemed to be walking with us, but they've turned away for a love of the world and their lives have exposed who their god really was. Verse 19, these people were never Christians, they are not Christians now because they're end is destruction. Though they were walking claiming the name of

Christ, they will actually be destroyed in hell forever because they do not share in these realities of which Paul was speaking in Philippians 3.

How can you recognize them? What does it look like? Well, their glory is in their shame. They take pride in the things that actually should cause shame to them. And he gets more specific and he says, "They set their minds on earthly things. They are preoccupied with the things of this world. They are preoccupied with the things that attend this life and that will all be gone when a person either dies or Christ returns. It's all going to pass away." Their lives are not drive by the reality that heaven and earth will pass away, as Christ said, "But My word will not pass away." They live as if this world is the thing that really matters and it's the thing that occupies their time, occupies their affections, and occupies what it is the content of even their teaching. And so you have these people claiming to be Christians but their teaching and their lifestyle is entirely earth-centered, about earthly priorities and earthly matters that are all going to be burned up in the end anyway.

So Paul is animated, Paul is drawing a sharp contrast to help the church at Philippi, and by extension us, draw a distinction between what he has described as the real Christian life and the fact that so many others are teaching something else that is centered on earthly things. And so to be under the sound of a ministry that is neglecting these priorities of which Paul spoke, a rejection of self-righteousness, a life ambition to know Christ and to pursue and to know him as the most noble aspiration in life, is to be under people that are seriously leading you astray. And so this really matters. Paul is weeping here because he feels the weight of the eternal consequences of the matters that he's discussing. There are eternal consequences for the false teachers and those that are following them, and he's overwhelmed with a sense of grief that in the name of Christ that would be the focus that is presented and these other realities if not explicitly denied are just conveniently ignored and never emphasized from the lips of the man who claims to be a shepherd of the sheep, a voice for the living God by the teaching of his word. And so you get all of these silly topical series with clever names attached to them, and year after year goes by and people are just swirling down the drain because these anchoring fundamental truths have never been taught, never been emphasized.

So Paul views this as a matter of great consequence, these things of which he speaks. Look at it there again in verse 19. I don't want you to miss how critical this is. Paul says, "Their end is destruction." This isn't simply a matter of having a little bit different of a philosophy of ministry and a different approach to life, and thinking about things a little bit differently than one another. These things are oil and water. These things cannot mix together. And so Paul now with all of that said, Paul now gathers up everything in chapter 3 for this great and glorious climax to everything that he has been saying. This is the capstone that helps us see why the truth of these matters leads to a different kind of mind and a different kind of life as a result.

Let's look at the two verses again and we'll feebly try to expound these words within the measure of the ability and time that we have. Chapter 3, verse 20, Paul says, "For." In other words, this is what is to be taken out of what preceded,

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 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.

Paul in these two verses is defining the Christian position and he is defining what it means to be a Christian so that we can live the Christian life in a manner that is worthy of the gospel of Christ, worthy of the gospel that saved us, worthy of the Christ who loved us and gave himself up for us. Look, beloved, I ask you: do those things matter or not? Does it matter that Christ loved your soul and gave himself up for you or not? Is that the most important thing in life to you or not? If it is the most important thing in life to you, then it is going to give you a perspective that puts everything else that happens on earth into comparison, and it's all seen to be lesser things in comparison to the greater realities of what it is to be a Christian.

So we could frame it with this question: how is it, then, that we can rejoice? Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord," at the beginning, at the end. Rejoice. Rejoice Rejoice. Well, how do we do that in difficult times like the days in which we live? How do we do that? We can frame the question in a different way and every one of us needs to hear this tonight in light of the things that are happening all around us, things that are in the news, things that are in our lives, things that occupy so much of the conversations that we have with one another. We need to ask this question fundamentally, we need to ask this question: what is the relative importance of earthly matters? What is the relative importance of earthly matters to the Christian?

Now look, there are people trying to tell me what I should be preaching on, and that I need to be preaching on all of these different earthly topics. Well, you know, I don't want to be unkind but I'm not about to listen to that counsel. I'm not about to respond to that because I am driven and I am captive to the things in this text and I know that this is what you need to hear as well, and this needs to captivate you and reshape the way that you think, and for some of you simply to have the way that you are already inclined to live, reinforced and established, yes, you're on the right track. And not rebuking everybody in here, I am just compelled to do everything I can to emphasize the utter supreme importance of what's in front of us here tonight, especially in the context in which we live. We all need this.

So there's going to be two points here tonight. All of that so far was just introduction, apparently. Two points tonight and it's really simple. Point 1: remember who you are. And point 2: remember who you will be. Remember who you are and remember who you will be. Who are you as a Christian? Well, maybe I should step back. Are you a Christian? If not, I invite you to Christ. I invite you to the one who was crucified, buried and resurrected for the sins of people just like you, the one who lovingly calls you out of the world and says, "I will save you from sin. I will save you from this awful world. I'll bring you into My heavenly kingdom." And calls you to repent of your sin and to humbly come to Christ, receive him by faith for the Lord and God and Savior that he is, and find new life in him. Nothing would thrill me more than if God would use this message

tonight to save your soul and to share in the new life in Christ that he's graciously given to so many of us and has so graciously given to me in my utter unworthy state.

Remember who you are. I'm going to speak now to Christians. You need to understand something, beloved, you need to understand something really fundamental, you need to absolutely forget for the remainder of this hour, you need to absolutely forget everything that you have been focused on in the prior week, everything that has preoccupied your mind, everything that's made you angry, everything that's made you anxious, everything that's made you a threatening person as well, you need to forsake all of that and just simply hear what the text has to say to you here tonight. What is it that changes a Christian's perspective and gives them a different perspective on the relative importance of earthly matters? You remember who you are.

You must understand this. If you are a Christian, my friend, my brother, my sister in Christ, something fundamental has changed. You now belong to a different realm. You no longer belong to the realm of the world. You no longer belong to the realm of your prior life and your prior lusts and your prior aspirations and all of that. Everything has changed. Scripture could not be more clear about this. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 it says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, new things have come." And so there should be this sense in which you are conscious of saying, "I must have a completely new and different perspective on everything in life because Christ has made me new, and therefore everything about what I think and what I prioritize is new, and is different, and is redefined and recast compared to my former life." To understand that you belong to a different realm utterly redefines life in a way that it's exhilarating, it's thrilling to contemplate this, it is utterly liberating to know this, and I just want to say that without fear of contradiction, in one way or another every true Christian that is under the sound of my words tonight, a true Christian will find his heart warmed by the things that we are considering here tonight. There should be a silent amen going on in your heart as you hear these things, a silent sense of saying, "O God, thank God that's true of me," as the Spirit works in your heart and affirms these things to you. You can't be a Christian and just be utterly dead to these things, and to say, "This doesn't matter. Don't you see what's happening in the world? How could you be preoccupied with these spiritual things in light of what's happening in the world around us?"

Well, that's just an ungodly heart, a dead heart speaking out of the world and completely missing the point. I don't want you to miss the point here tonight. This is just too urgent and we must focus on this one thing. This changes the way that we view all of life and do not excuse yourself from the import of this text by saying, "But you don't know what it's like. Or you're not taking it seriously enough. You're not taking COVID seriously enough, preacher. You're not taking politics seriously enough, preacher. You're not taking this or that seriously enough, preacher." No, I reject that accusation altogether. I dismiss it out of hand. The problem is that Christians are not taking God's word seriously enough and that's why they're so preoccupied and worried and consumed by doubt and angst over the world around them. It's because they've not taken to heart the things that the Scriptures say clearly are true of every believer. It's not that these things aren't difficult

but it's that they're secondary. They're tertiary in comparison to these great realities of which Paul speaks.

So remember who you are. Look at verse 20 here. Paul says,

20 For our citizenship is in heaven.

Now the word "our" there is emphatic in the original language by its placement at the beginning of the sentence. What Paul is saying, he's making a contrast here. Looking back at verse 19, he has those whose mind are on earthly things, notice the contrast, their minds are on earthly things, now by contrast our citizenship is in heaven. It's a great contrast. Their mind, earthly things. Our mind, heavenly things. Their realm, the world. Our realm, heaven and the things that are pertaining to our salvation. I don't want you to miss this point. Paul is making a contrast between unsaved wolves and the true sheep of God. Verse 19, their end is destruction and their minds are on earthly things. By contrast, our citizenship, our realm is in heaven, and the things that we care about center on heavenly things, biblical things, the things of Christ rather than the things of the world.

You can write this down or at least remember it, if you can. This is incredible to contemplate. The affections of your heart can tell you whether you are a Christian or not. Heart affections, heart priorities, separate the sheep from the goats. No question about it. Paul says, verse 19, about those whose end is destruction, their mind is on earthly things. That's where their priority is. That's what they live for. That's what they care about. That's what they want to fight for. By contrast, us, our citizenship is in heaven. And what Paul is doing here is he is renouncing a preoccupation with the things of this earth. Paul says, "I belong to heaven. I am looking for the return of Christ. That's what my heart is set upon."

This word "citizenship," it's the only time in the New Testament that this particular word is used. The idea of citizenship, think about, think back in our country's history before 1776 and we were 13 colonies that were subject to British rule. Citizenship suggests a colony that is under the control of a remote country. It is where you owe your allegiance and expect protection from. Now forgetting the intervening American Revolution for us a moment, we were colonies and we were looking to Britain and, you know, and Britain had the authority and the control there. Just to give you a sense of the word and a sense of the idea here, a gathering, a citizenship that's under the control of another location. That's all I'm trying to say. And it's that other location to which you owe your allegiance and from which you expect your protection.

Now think about this with me. Paul is saying that we're like a colony from heaven. We live as colonial citizens who belong to a different realm. It is to heaven as a citizen of heaven, it is to heaven that we owe our allegiance. It is from heaven that we expect our protection, not anything on earth. You see, fundamental to your identity as a Christian, beloved, is this, and let me just say this again for the sake of emphasis, fundamental to your identity as a Christian is this: you live on earth but you belong to a different realm. You are in the world but not of the world to use the language of Christ.

Now let's just think through this biblically, theologically, and just kind of tease this out, you know, and bring some other things into mind that will help us understand the nature of what's being said. This is just so clear in Scripture and so remarkably wonderful that we could, you know, we could spend a lifetime talking about just these things. To understand that you are a citizen of heaven is to understand something about the very nature of conversion, or to state it differently, if you understand the nature of conversion, you can understand why you must be a citizen of heaven. A Christian is one fundamentally who is born from above. Jesus said, "You must be born again," and the language has the idea you must be born from above.

Look at John 1 for an important text about this matter. The gospel of John 1. And as I said in a different place, in a different context, part of the reason that I'm so animated about this in this particular time, in this particular message, is that I feel that I and like-minded pastors with me, we're fighting for the very nature of what Christianity will be like in the future. With so many people so preoccupied with the world, so preoccupied with what is happening and fighting over silly issues like racial matters and things like that, we are completely losing sight of what the nature of Christianity is, that we are citizens of heaven, that we've been born from above. People are fighting over things and making it sound like that Christianity is about worldly matters to be fought on worldly issues, with worldly attitudes, for worldly goals. This is a total misrepresentation of what the truth is. That's why this is so very important. We are talking about things that will shape the direction of what Christianity looks like from a human perspective in the years to come. This is worth fighting for. This is worth dying for. This is worth losing friends over.

John 1:12. Notice the source of new life in Christ. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Our new birth finds its source in God himself, finds itself in the nature, the purpose, and the action of God. This is not something that we did on our own. John 3:3, "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you have been born again you cannot see the kingdom of God.'" Verse 8, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." You see, a Christian is someone whose spiritual life has its origin in heaven. Its origin is in the God of heaven. It was the Holy Spirit who gave us new life. It was the Holy Spirit who prompted us and drew us to faith in Christ and under his power and under the choice of God and the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit, we are born again and enter into the heavenly kingdom.

And beloved, that changes everything. If you are a Christian, that means that there is something about you, something fundamentally defining about the very essence of who you are that is defined not by your human birth to your biological parents, but rather is found in the new birth given to you by God and that is essential to who you are. That defines the very essence of who you are. And that changes absolutely everything because the source of your spiritual life is vertical, it is from heaven itself, then you are a citizen of the realm from which you have been born. Think about it that way. And if we have

been born of God, then our citizenship is where God is. And where is the dwelling place of God? It's in heaven, not on earth.

There are other Scriptures to help us see this and think about it, and they bookend the book of Philippians. Look at Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 4. Philippians 2:4, "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 (by grace you have been saved)." Your source of life is in this God who saved you in Christ. And what has this God done? Where is the real you? Well, verse 6, "[He] raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." When God saved you, when the Spirit drew you to Christ, he joined you to Christ. You were put into union with Christ so that everything that is true about Christ becomes true of you. Is he perfectly righteous? Then that perfect righteousness is credited to your account. Is he raised from the dead? Then you are raised in newness of life as well. Is he seated in the heavenly places? Then the essence of who you really are is with him also in the heavenly places. You belong to a new realm, a new kingdom.

Look over at Colossians 1 on the other side of Philippians. Chapter 1, verses 13 and 14 of Colossians says that God "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." Notice, a transfer has taken place. Out of one kingdom, out of one domain, the domain of darkness, the domain of Satan, you have been lifted up out of that domain in Christ and transferred over into a completely new realm that now defines who you are and what you shall be. Verse 14, "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

So beloved, you're united with Christ in heaven, positionally speaking. You have been transferred to a new kingdom and that has a consequence, beloved, it means that you're a citizen of heaven by birth. You belong to a new realm. You have a completely new status in Christ. You are in Christ in the heavenly places – watch what this means – because you are in Christ in the heavenly places, beloved, that is your real state. That is your true condition. That is your real position. That is your state of existence. That, my friends, is what the love of God has done for you. He's delivered you from a dark realm of sin and Satan, saved you from that and made you part of his kingdom. The Bible uses a different metaphor, he's made you a child in his family. And the gracious act of God in doing that, the wonderful deliverance that he has given to us in Christ has put us in a genuinely different realm as new creatures in Christ and therefore we think utterly differently about the world and everything around us. Beloved, think about this with me: is God your heavenly Father in Christ? The answer to that is, yes, if you are a Christian. Is Christ your brother in heaven? The answer to that is, yes, if you are a Christian. Scripture says he's not ashamed to call us brethren. Well now beloved, think with me here. Where is home, then? Where is home? Home is not here on earth. That's ridiculous. That's insanity talking. Home, citizenship, family, is where our Father is, is where our brother is. Where our blessed brother is, that's where home is. That's where our heart is. That's where our citizenship is.

So what I want you to see is what Scripture teaches about the reality of Christianity, that you are born from God, you're transferred to a new kingdom, it means that you belong to a different realm that is distinct from and so much better than the realm of this earth. Home is not here. This isn't home. Do you know why it's so hard to be a Christian in this world? It's because it's not home. Do you feel that way or is it just me? I can't get comfortable here. I can't settle in here with all the things that are constantly changing, my body is decaying, people I love die, people I love I do their funerals for them, stand at the graveside and look at their casket and talk to their grieving family members. This ain't home. This is not home defined by death and sin and rebellion. This isn't home for me. Did someone say, "Me either"? I'm glad to hear that and that changes the way that you view everything that happens in life.

Look back at Philippians 3:20. What we want, what we are eagerly seeking is not anything political here in earth or political in America. That is not what it's about to be a Christian. If everybody got up and walked out because I said that, I would not stop saying what I'm saying. It is completely independent of what people think about it because this is just Scripture. This is just the truth of Christianity. Paul says our citizenship is in heaven and we have an anticipation, an expectation that we're looking for. Verse 20,

from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

Our hope is not that circumstances on earth will work out to our liking because they're probably not going to, and even if they did, it's transitory, it's going to change, and even if it didn't change, you're going to die and leave it behind. So that can't be what we're living for. That can't be the object of our Christian affections and Christian priorities and it's not. The point of being a Christian is that you have new life that originated in heaven, and to understand that you, yourself, are destined to join Christ there.

So he says in verse 20 we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a reference to the Second Coming of Christ. It's not in the political structures of today that we hope in or that we love. We're looking for that time when Christ returns to earth and establishes his kingdom. When Christ returns and comes for his own, when Christ comes and we are transformed by the vision of his face and seeing him face-to-face and we are made like him for we will see him as he is, that's what we're living for. And beloved, nothing political on earth, no medical vaccine, nothing that happens here on earth can begin to compare to the greatness of that. And so why put your hope and why wrap your life up into those transitory lesser things when Christ is Lord, Christ is your King, and Christ is coming again? That's what we live for and everything else is secondary by comparison.

Look over at 1 Peter 1 just to reinforce this. 1 Peter 1. Beloved, I plead with you, I plead with you to settle this in your mind and embrace it in your heart. This changes everything. 1 Peter 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope," something we don't possess yet but something that we are eagerly awaiting, "to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an

inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." Your inheritance is not on earth. It's in heaven and it's waiting for you, protected by the power of God. That's why you've been saved, it's to gain that heavenly reward, not some kind of temporary earthly circumstance here. I say this reverently, for the love of God, we have got to understand and embrace this. And so, my friend, if you are a Christian, your new life in Christ utterly changes the way that you think. It distinguishes your realm of thought and love and affection from the realm of the world's love and thought and affections.

Go back to Philippians 4. This gives us a new perspective on what Paul is saying in these verses 8 and 9 that we'll look at later this month, Lord willing. "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." Well, beloved, what are the things that Paul has in mind that are honorable and true and right and pure in everything? Well, what has he been talking about since the beginning of chapter 3? It's those things about being in Christ that we are to dwell upon. Those are the only things that are ultimately honorable and pure and lovely and excellent and worthy of praise. This becomes the fascination of our hearts. This becomes the object of our love and the preoccupation with that love makes everything else diminish by comparison.

Those of you that fell in love and got married, whatever the subsequent course of your married life together be, remember to the time when you loved each other and you were moving toward the altar together. Isn't it true that, at least it should have been true that your love for your future mate rose like the sun and made everyone else, washed out everyone else by comparison. The rising of the sun dimmed all the other stars in the sky and that one became the object of your affection and the exclusive object of your love. Well, multiply that by infinity and eternity and recognize that this is what Christ is to us as a Christian. His love for us and the love by which he drew us, and the love by which he keeps us, is so exquisite, so exhilarating, so exclusive that it makes everything else that we might otherwise love and set our affections on dim and fade away by comparison so that we want only him, we want only that kingdom, we want only the inheritance for which we live. Dwell on these things, the things pertaining to your salvation.

Now go back to the book of Colossians again, chapter 3, verse 1. This is not optional. This is not optional in the Christian life. This is the command of God through the apostle's inspired writings for his church on what we set our minds on. Colossians 3:1 brings all of this together very nicely. Colossians was written about the same time as Philippians during Paul's Roman imprisonment so you can see these themes were on Paul's mind over a period of time and in Colossians 3:1 he 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 earth." Does that sound like Philippians 3:19-21 or what? "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

So we're citizens of heaven. That's where we were born from. That's where our life is. That's our destination. That's our home. And so as a citizen of heaven, we live under the authority of God's word. As a citizen of heaven, we have access to our Father's throne. And as a citizen of heaven, we have a loftier ambition than the things of this world. Hebrews 13:14 says, "here we have no lasting city, but," do you know what it says? "We are seeking the city to come." That's where our goal is. That's the eye that we have. That's our finish line, the city to come. And beloved, that fundamentally changes our interest in this world. It changes the anxiety we feel over the things of this world. It certainly ought to cause us to repent of our anger of the things that are happening in this world because we've been so captivated by our citizenship in heaven.

Listen to what Martyn Lloyd-Jones says. "I am increasingly coming to the conclusion that there is no sounder test of whether people are truly Christians than their view of life in this world. The criterion is not only whether we say we believe certain articles of the faith. Christians who are new men and women and who have a new nature, must of necessity take a different view of life in this world from those who are not Christians."

Now beloved, just to be really personal in the application here. I've had my own matters of sifting through applying this to my own heart in what I'm about to say to you, thinking about the events of this month and all that's happening in the world around us, the talking to you about your response to it all. Anger in your life, anxiety in your life, indicates that your life, in that moment anyway, is riding on what happens in the world. If you're angry about politics or you're anxious about other stuff, your heart is telling you that you're preoccupied about what happens in the world. Go back to the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:25-34. "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you." Seeking the things of Christ, the things of his kingdom, that's what a Christian does. That's who a Christian is. It's what God gives us in that new nature. And it's okay if this is overwhelmingly convicting to you as long as you respond to the conviction and say, "Lord, I have totally lost sight of reality here. Forgive me and help me. God, I belong to heaven and I'm grateful for that and that's enough for me. Christ is enough for me. Christ is sufficient for me, my Father. Let all this world pass away, if I still have Christ, Lord, I have everything." That's the way a Christian thinks. That's the way a Christian looks at life. This is what a Christian loves.

To be in Christ, to have our life hid with him in heaven, honestly I ask you, what else do you want? You have all of heaven, you have all of Christ that belongs to you, all of the promises of the good God in Scripture to his people are yours and will be certainly fulfilled and you're not satisfied with that? You can't find any satisfaction in who Christ is? What's wrong with you people, to quote R. C. Sproul. What is wrong with you? We just cannot let ourselves off lightly here and just excuse it as, "Well, that's just who I am." No. No, it doesn't work that way. This is the truth and our heart is meant to be shaped by it, to embrace it and to be softened by it, and to utterly have our affections changed into something different otherwise I don't know what those Scriptures we've been looking at for the past hour mean. I don't know how they have any meaning if they tell us to set our minds on the things above but actually we're supposed to be consumed by the things on

earth, and we live that way and that's okay, as if that's what being a Christian is. It's not. We just have to embrace what real Christianity is and let that define the way we look at everything else in the world and what we care about in the world.

There's another reason to rejoice. It's not just because of who you are, remembering who you are, point 2, remember who you will be. Remember who you will be. Oh my, after everything that we've said, it gets exponentially better. It's even better than what we've been saying. Verse 21. Why are we eagerly waiting for Christ? Why are we eager about it, standing on tiptoes looking on the horizon, looking at the sky waiting for that initial division of the heavenly curtain and it expands back so that we see Christ descending bodily toward us? Why are we eagerly anticipating that? Well, something really good is going to happen. We rejoice because we have a certain hope waiting for us. Verse 21, Christ isn't done yet. We haven't even entered into the fullness or the final state of our salvation in what we've been talking about so far because Christ is going to do something more for believers. Verse 21,

21 [He] 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.

My friends, my Christian brothers and sisters in Christ, understand that we are living for something that completely transcends this world. It's something the world cannot give us, the world cannot take it away, and when this moment comes that verse 21 speaks about, we will enter into the fullness of how much our salvation has made the world utterly irrelevant to us. We are living for something better than this world, something beyond this world, and something that will certainly come to pass. Jesus Christ will return to earth. He will conquer every enemy of his. He will overturn all unrighteousness. He will rout Satan and the kingdom of darkness and he will reign supreme. And when he comes, somehow in a way that I can't fully describe to you but Scripture points us to and the fulfillment will be greater than anything we could imagine anyway, when he comes we will see him and when we see his face, we will be changed in a moment. Scripture says we will become like him because we will see him just as he is. You, if you are a Christian, you are going to look into the face of the resurrected Christ and see him for who he really is, and when that happens, you will be utterly transformed and this jar of clay in which we now live is going to be changed into something utterly different, something like the body of Christ, the resurrected body of Christ.

Now look, I get that life is difficult and frustrating and sad and difficult. I get that but that's not what we're talking about tonight. We're talking about something different tonight that changes the way that we look at everything else. Our Lord said to us, said to his disciples, a promise that holds true for us as well, on the eve of his crucifixion, he told the disciples gathered with him in the Upper Room, he said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I'll come again and receive you to Myself." He'll come again for us. This glorious eternal Son of God, preexistent, coequal with the Father, coequal with the Spirit, sharing in the one undivided essence of God, came in human flesh in his first advent, coming again in his second advent telling us that he will come for us by name. We were

chosen by name before the foundation of the world before we had done anything good or bad. Christ saved us by name in his redemptive work at the cross. The Spirit drew us, saved us, indwells us by name. And when Christ comes again, he's going to come to us by name. There is this personal dimension to it that is just inexpressibly intimate and wonderful. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "We wait for His Son from heaven."

Okay, let's assume that nobody's life is exactly like they wanted and there's a lot of hardship represented in the room. We assume that and what we're saying is we can accept that, we can even rejoice in the midst of it because that's not what we're living for. We're living for something else. We are citizens of heaven. One day we will be in heaven with our Lord because he's coming for us to take us there and nothing on this world can stop us, no political administration can hinder the purpose of Christ in accomplishing that. And I, you know, I just find my body reaching up on tiptoes, reaching up waiting for that, just reaching as if I could just pull Christ down to have it happen right now. That's the sense of the verb eagerly awaiting this to come.

That will be the fulfillment of our faith. That will be our ultimate transformation. And do you know what? Scripture doesn't speak to this but I promise you, I absolutely guarantee and promise you that none of us are going to be talking about the 2020 election when Christ comes and receives us to himself. We're not going to care about that one bit because we're going to be utterly overwhelmed by the glory of his presence, the glory of the manifestation of his physical presence in front of us, and being changed into his likeness, and we're going to be so enraptured by the wonder of that, that everything on earth is going to be forgotten.

If that's what's coming for you, beloved, then why are we so worked up about today? Which defines the other for you? This is the question you have to answer. Is the hope that Scripture describes of Christ coming for you, will that define your perspective on today or will you let your perspective on today define your perspective on your hope? Boy, that's a bad trade. Don't go there. That is a real waste. It's also grossly unbiblical, sinful thinking to let passing matters of this life eclipse your hope of the return of Christ.

Look at it there in verse 21 again, "our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will," this is what will happen but it's still future, he "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." What is the body of his glory like? Well, we got a glimpse of it at the transfiguration. His face shone like the sun, it says in Matthew 17. His garments became white as light. Wow, that's exciting. That's cool. I can't wait to see that and then to recognize that somehow he's going to share that glory with all of us who know him, and that that's what it's going to be like? This body of clay transformed so that it conforms to the body of his glory like it was made known at the transfiguration? That manifestation of glory in which the people in Revelation fell down before him and worshiped and glorified the Lamb? Oh, ho, ho, ho, is that going to be great!

You see, beloved, that's what we're living for. That's what our hope is. That's what matters, and that gives us the discernment to realize that the things that are happening on earth are trivial and passing and temporary by comparison, and that gives us the power, the ability and the motivation to persevere through it and not lose heart. That's the point. The one who saved you from sin will deliver you from this world. The one who saved you from sin is going to share his glory with you and that's why you can rejoice even today, even if it's through tears. Your God has saved you through a righteousness that is not your own. He has given you a new citizenship in a heavenly realm. He who began that work will complete it. Who you are, your present position in Christ is very very great but an even greater glory awaits you.

Beloved, that all is why you can rejoice and you must rejoice even if we are rejoicing in the midst of a dying world. Beloved, remember who you are. Remember what you will be. Take heart because your faith is not in vain.

Let us pray.

Our Father, we just thank You and pray that somehow You would seal the many things that we've said today to our hearts. Be gracious to Your erring, wandering, often discouraged, often unbelieving children. Be gracious to us and refresh our hearts with the wonder of our citizenship in heaven and the glory that awaits us, and let it transform the perspective by which we view everything else. Father, be gracious and give new life to those under the sound of my voice who are not in Christ. How much they need to come to Him, Father, and yet they can't do it on their own. They need the help and power of the Holy Spirit. I pray that You would grant it to them abundantly, fully, graciously. Let them look in the mirror as I once did many years ago, and see the face of a guilty hell-bound sinner, and then with that thought in mind, let them flee to Christ who came to seek and to save the lost. Let them run into the arms of our gracious Lord, O Father, and find in Him a complete and utter salvation for the forgiveness of their sins and the granting of this glorious hope of which we have seen from Your word here tonight. We commit ourselves to this, Father. This biblical view of true Christianity, we ask You to cause that to prevail in the end over against all of the false imitations that are all around us, biting at our heels. Grant us discernment. Grant us perseverance. Grant the fulfillment of the wonder of the things that we have seen from your word here tonight. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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