

A Citizen and an Ambassador

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[0:00] The Bible tells us how God makes us citizens of heaven and he shows us how to behave as such! and also as ambassadors for Christ. So we're going to look at these two truths about a believer.

! Firstly, that we can become a citizen of heaven. That's kind of astonishing to think of it, isn't it? That we can play such a part, that we can have such a blessing. And we see this thing here in Hebrews 11 verse 16 where it talks about this. It tells us there, but now they desire a better country that is unheavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city. It says that God has prepared a city for such as have that better country, that heavenly country. What country do you belong to? Is a good question, isn't it? I know there's folk from different countries and people might think I'm an Aussie, but actually it's not true.

I'm not an Aussie, not a dinky die, fair dinky and true blue Aussie. I'm a kind of ring in. I'm an imposter. No, I actually, I've been naturalised and I've got this, this proves it, it proves that I'm an Australian. All right, I was born in mother England, but now I'm an Aussie because the the queen effectively of England through the delegate, the mayor has signed the form there. So it's all authorised. I'm a citizen of Australia. I've got Australian citizenship. And what's more, I've got an Aussie passport as well. I've got an Australian passport. So, and again, it's all authorised, it's got my face in it. But actually, I've got joint citizenship. I've got dual citizenship.

Because not only do I have an Australian passport, I've got a British passport as well. So from the fair motherland of the UK, from mother England, I've got the British citizenship too. So I've got dual citizenship, right? Dual citizenship. So in a way, actually, so do you that believe. Isn't it true?

Even if you've got only got Australian citizenship, if you're a believer, it says that we are citizens of another country. We actually have dual citizenship. So that's a blessing to know, isn't it? As it reads further in Philippians 3 verse 20, it tells us here, for our conversation, in other words, citizenship is in heaven. From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. It tells us that our conversation, our way of living, effectively our citizenship is in heaven. We've actually got a citizenship there. The big question for all of us is where is your citizenship? Where are your loyalties?

[2:55] Now, if, God forbid, if Australia declares war on Great Britain, I've got to make a decision. That's a decision we have to make, isn't it? Effectively, what's the more important citizenship for us as believers? It's heaven, isn't it? That's a better country. And the word conversation here, it means residence or community. It means our form of government, includes our rights, privileges and responsibilities are all in heaven. Now, nowadays, to get one of these, you've got to pass a test. I'm not sure if I passed that test to become an Aussie. Maybe some Aussies might fail it too. But now you've got to qualify for citizenship. You've got to be a permanent resident, for one thing. You've got to be aged over 16. You've got to have lived in Australia for four years, one year as a permanent resident. You've got to be of good character. You've got to know the privileges and responsibilities involved. And you've got to pass the citizenship test.

Now, I've got some good news for you today that the citizenship of heaven doesn't have any of that. Now, there's no age limit. You don't have to qualify by filling in a certain knowledge of a test. It's very simple to become a citizen of heaven, simply by trusting Christ, by believing in Christ as your Lord and Saviour. It tells us of those who have this citizenship that it contrasts them in the context of verse 19, talks about those who mind earthly things. But we have our citizenship in heaven, our minding, our mindset, our affections are not led by earthly things, but by heaven, heavenly things. We're heavenly minded. We mind the heavenly things. And so it's a big question

for everyone really, will you choose heaven? Will you choose this citizenship? What choices will we make?

Life's about daily choices, isn't it? And we can know daily victories, daily blessings, as we heard earlier. And really, it's about priorities. We think, for example, one Bible example that I like to reflect on is that of Mary and Martha. And we see Mary sitting at Jesus' feet, hearing his word. And he says, one thing is needful, Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word. Well, as Martha was in the background, scurrying around, working, fretting, fussing, busy, but maybe too busy, maybe preoccupied, that she missed that moment she could have had as sitting at Jesus' feet. And it's the question for each of us, where do we place our priority? Is it on heavenly things, on our heavenly citizenship, or are we too preoccupied and busy by earthly worries and toil? Where do we place our priority? To what? To who? Are you one who identifies with Christ, with heaven? Being a citizen of heaven means something changes. You know, when you get the citizenship, something changes. You still look the same, pretty much. It's nothing probably changes dramatically when that moment you trust Christ. But that's just the beginning of that relationship, isn't it? As we trust him. As we made a citizen of heaven, because of his granting it, freely by his grace to those that will believe. And that being a citizen of heaven does mean that something changes.

Our destination changes, doesn't it? That we know we're not going down, we're going up. I know when we were witnessing to a fellow yesterday, I was saying, well, are you going up or down? It's one or the other. It's heaven or hell, really. It's one or the other. And you can know you're going to heaven by virtue of Christ's promise that he's gone to prepare a place for you. And he says, I am the way to that place, the way, the truth and the life. Another thing that changes when you become a citizen of heaven is God's values change our lives. What he says matters. We've got his word to turn to, to find his promises. And it tells you there that yes, based on the requirements, you're a citizen of heaven. If you trusted Christ, that's the requirement. If you trusted the savior, then you're a citizen of heaven.

[7:21] Something happens on the inside. And as a Christian, you're going to stick out as well. As we know, we can be different. Well, we are, we are different. We've come from somewhere else now, because our allegiance, our loyalty is different. And as citizens of heaven, I'll put to you, there's some three things you could reflect on that are different for you as a believer, as a Christian, as a citizen of heaven. There's something different, number one, about your company. There's a different company for the believer, the different companionship, the company that you choose, the friends that you want to hang around with, who you want to be with, who you want to please. There's a different company that occupies your mind. What's driving you? Is it peer pressure? I know as younger people, as all, as all people, there's peer pressure. Us older people have peer pressure, don't we? In a workplace setting, there's peer pressure for all of us. Is it that that drives us, or is it God's truth? Are you interested in becoming one of the crowd, or are you willing to stand out from the crowd when that's called for?

Blessed is the man, it says in Psalm 1 verse 1, talks about this company that we keep. It says, Psalm 1 verse 1, blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. It talks about a different company. Of course, it goes on that his delight is in the law of the Lord. There's a different company, there's a different council, there's a different crowd, there's a different community as a believer, a different country, and different countrymen and countrywomen, you could say. And Ephesians 2 19 talks again of that sense of citizenship. It says, now that you believe, now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners. We're not aliens, we're not foreigners here, we actually belong here. We've got citizenship.

Even if my accent was worse than what it is, and I could bung on my Coronation Street accent if you want to hear it one day. But you know, how I used to talk, my very bad Pommy accent from the slums of Manchester. That was my accent, that was my, where I came from. But now, I'm no more a stranger. You know, when I got to Australia, they used to pick on me and call me all sorts of names, including Pommy, you know, prisoner of mother England. You know, that was, that was

seen as a bad thing.

But now I'm no more a Pommy. I'm an Aussie, all right. Now I'm no more a stranger, a foreigner. And spiritually speaking, I'm being a bit light-hearted here, but spiritually speaking, we're fellow citizens. Amen. There's no one's different from another. We might have come from different cultures and countries, and we might have different skin complexions and backgrounds and status from where we've come from. But we're all equal at the foot of the cross. We're all, we're fellow citizens. No one is more than another. We're believers together. We're saints together.

We're in the household of God, the family of God. And that's something special, isn't it? So we have a new country, a new king, a new family, the household, the family of God. And we made fellow citizens together. Speaks of that new community that we've got together, to which we belong to.

[10:39] And it takes that choice. It takes that decision. Are you interested in pleasing the crowd or God? Do you want to have that new company? Do you want to have that new country? It tells us Proverbs 13, verse 20, that he that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Now the people we hang around with will either drag us down into the gutter, or they'll be the ones who help us to rise up and strengthen us in the faith. We're told that friendship with the world is hateful towards God. But so we ought to be careful of the company that we keep. Now that's not to say we want to reach those that are in the gutter. Now those that know not Christ, we want to reach them.

But we don't have our mateship there. We have a company that's different. We want to have that company with wise men. We want to walk with the wise, with the godly, with God's people. We want to be there. So be careful what company you keep. It's a bit like the bad apple in the bunch, isn't it? That there's a corrupting that can happen when a bad apple sits in the fruit bowl at home. I know I've had it happen. And what you have to do? Get rid of the bad apple to keep the fruit good. And it tells us here in this scripture, 1 Corinthians 15, 33, be not deceived. It says evil communications corrupt good manners. So in other words, if we're hanging around those that are going to corrupt us and hurt us and spiritually drag us away from God, then that's not a good thing. We should avoid that.

There was a young minister who entered a crowded bus with a Bible under his arm. And there were some people there that started sneering and mocking some rough fellas. And they said to him, Mr, how far is it to heaven? And gently and calmly, the minister replied, it's only a step. Will you take it now? And the minister later had the joy of bringing that young man to the Lord. You know, there's a Bible verse that says there's just one step between us and death, isn't it? Just one heartbeat, just one breath. And then we're gone. Like that fellow I was talking about before, riding his motorbike.

[12:46] He could be gone into eternity now. Thankfully, he's still got time to think about his soul, to get ready for heaven. There was a man who once asked the preacher D.L. Moody, now that I am converted, have I got to give up the world?

You know, he was kind of thinking, oh, I've got to let go of some things because his friends were not Christians. And Mr. Moody replied like this. He said, if you live a true, consistent life for the Son of God, the world will give you up pretty quick. They won't want you around. Now, stand for Christ and you won't have to worry about such a thing happening. It tells us in Ephesians 5.11, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. It tells us there that there's no fellowship there for us with the unfruitful works of darkness. That's the old life.

That's the life of darkness. We're walking in the light now. We're children of God. We're children of the light. So develop Christian friendships. There'll be something different for you as a citizen of heaven, something different about the company, the company. Secondly, there'll be something different about your culture and conduct. As a Christian, your culture is different. You know, I was reflecting before with someone in the car park, even there's different cultures within Australia, isn't there?

Queenslanders say some peculiar things to Victorians. And of course, South Aussies say it all correct. You know, as a Christian, your culture is different. Even the lingo, your words, where you're coming from, what you're used to doing and being, what you call things. Your culture is different as a Christian.

Where you're coming from is different, your way of life. And if you've been made a citizen of heaven, you should be interested in conducting yourself in a manner worthy of that privilege. A manner worthy, a manner worthy of him who's called you out of darkness into his glorious light. There's a wonderful privilege you have to follow Christ. And to think of that truth that we are citizens of another kingdom.

[14:48] Think of that. So how you think is different from the worldly culture, isn't it? Really, or it ought to be more so as you're led by the word that you'll have a different mindset. You'll think different. Your attitudes will be different.

Your heart will be different. It might affect how you look, your appearance. What message does it send? Is it the latest fashion or is it something that's modest and becoming of a believer? How you act, your behaviour, your priorities, what you do for entertainment? What are your interests? How do you spend your time?

What are your activities, your sports, your music? Does it glorify God or is there maybe a clash there sometimes? How you speak, your language. It's interesting when you think about it, about swear words. In different languages, swear words are pretty much always blaspheming God, aren't they? Doesn't matter what language you speak, different countries, different language backgrounds that you might have, it's a common thing. They'll curse the name of Jesus, won't they? They'll use the name of God as a swear word. They'll blaspheme his name and it's a common thing. That's the world would disregard his name. Whereas for us that believe, we honour his name. Hallowed be thy name. We regard it as holy. So how you live, your lifestyle will be different. As to the things you choose to partake of, you'll avoid immorality because you want to honour and serve and bless and be commended by your God, that you're living to his pleasure and his goodwill, to his glory. Think of it as citizens of heaven. Our names are on the heaven's record.

Our name is written, it talks about in heaven. We speak heaven's language such that our speech should indicate. We want to be uplifting and blessing and imparting words that are rightful and proper, not pulling down and cursing words. We obey heaven's laws. We've got his word, he's given us his book, the law of the Lord. We're loyal to heaven's cause and we're looking for heaven's Lord. What's more, it tells us of this high priest that we have, Hebrews 4 verse 15. It tells of him, our Lord, it says, for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. So this great high priest, he's better than any priest that's a man. He's the awesome, absolute great high priest. He's the chief high priest and it says of him that he acknowledges our feelings. He's been there and done that. He's lived in a human body. He's endured suffering and pain and temptation, yet without sin. And he gives us direct access into the very presence of God the Father. He's the one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus. And we have direct contact with heaven. That's a great privilege that we have as citizens of heaven. And so we'll have a different relationship to the world. Now a preacher, John Wesley, was asked, what is the world? And he said, whatever cools my affection towards Christ is the world. If it's something that cools our affection to Christ, it's the world.

[18:11] We want to avoid that. That would cool our affection. That would reduce our devotion, our zeal for God. We want to put that away. What is going to cool our affection towards Christ. And we might have questions, well, what's the world and what's not the world? You know, where is there a gray area here that you can say, hmm, it is or it isn't? A man was looking at his shirt one day and he was holding it up as he was about to wear it.

And he talks to his wife and he says, my dear, is this shirt dirty? And she asked, does it look dirty? And he said, yes. She answered, if it's doubtful, it's dirty. You know, you don't want to wear a shirt that's got dirty collar or whatever, dirty parts.

If it's doubtful, it's dirty. And the same should be our thinking about what's right as a Christian, what's wrong as a Christian. If in doubt, don't. Best is a good advice is to not touch that which is doubtful.

Better to steer away. So, again, I'm not meaning to press on you my standards to dictate to you. But as a believer, come to that conviction yourself. If it's doubtful, no, I'm not going to go there. I'm not going to do that.

That's a good policy, isn't it? John writes in 1 John 3, 13, marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you. We can expect even opposition. As a believer, you can expect it. It's guaranteed.

[19:51] The Lord Jesus says, in the world, you're going to have tribulation. So, friends, we've seen as the citizen of heaven, something different about the company. You know, we've got different company here. We're among believers. We're among brothers and sisters who know the Lord.

That's a good thing. The company is good. Something different about the culture. We actually belong to heaven, not this earth. There's a sense where we're in the world, but we're not of it. Of course, we've done it to be crazy fanatics or anything. But we shouldn't be afraid to be different when it's called for, when it's rightful to say, no, I'm a Christian. I don't do that.

Okay? So, the third thing is our commitment is different. Our commitment. What drives you? Where is your sense of loyalty, your allegiance? You know, if war's declared, who am I going to stand for? Is it going to be Great Britain or Australia? I've got to make a decision. It's the same for you and me as believers, isn't it? Are we going to follow the world? Or are we going to say, no, I belong to Jesus.

[20:53] I'm actually a Christian. My allegiance is different. There's a different flag for me. A different national anthem. We can't barrack for two teams. You know, when it's a World Cup or Australia versus England, I've got to make a decision.

Who am I going to barrack for? It's the same Christian-wise, isn't it? What's important to me as a Christian? What's going to be that which matters for my use of my time, my energies, my resources?

Our commitment's different. Our motivation's different. Our priorities are different. Our purpose. Where do you pledge allegiance to? You know, who are you going to salute? Who's authority you're going to come under?

There's a man who is well known as really an explorer, Dr. David Livingstone. He was actually a missionary too. In fact, he was more so a missionary than an explorer, really.

And as the body of David Livingstone was being brought back to London to be buried in Westminster Abbey, you know, they put it in a box and carried it from Africa back to London.

[21:55] Throngs lined the streets to welcome the hearse as the carriage brought the coffin of Dr. Livingstone. And one man was obviously much moved.

And someone asked the man, did you know the missionary well? Yes, was the reply. David and I were boyhood friends. Later we went to Africa together.

David told me of God's call to him for Africa's souls. And I went for Africa's gold. And today I realise I concentrated upon the wrong world.

I put the emphasis on the wrong world. David Livingstone went to Africa to win souls for Christ. This man went to get gold, to make himself rich. And he says, I put the emphasis on the wrong world.

We can do that, can't we? We can do that. I can do that. As a citizen of heaven, we're subject to the king. Will we listen to his instructions? Will we care about what he says?

[22:52] Will we obey? Have we the same spirit as the three Hebrew children that faced the fire? The fiery furnace in Daniel 3. You know the story as the king ordered that people would all bow down to this golden image that he set up.

And they answered the king, if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. And he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

Now they faced going into this burning fiery furnace because it was required of them to bow down and worship this image that the king had set up. This statue.

And it goes on, but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

So here are these three standing as the whole population is on their faces, bowing down as the king struck up the music and the order was to bow.

[23:55] They did not bow. They would rather burn than bow. And that should be the same for you and me as believers in Christ. That we should

be rather willing to burn than to bow. That we'll trust Christ no matter what we are confronted with.

You know, this world's getting worse. I don't know if people might have seen some of the video clips from the opening of the Commonwealth Games of late. The Birmingham Commonwealth Games and this great big bull there and all the antics.

Look, they're kind of in a worship style gathering around this bull. And of course we know the molten calf of the exodus was the bull of Baal.

It was Baal. And we've seen many, there's many commonalities. There's Christian commentators talking about this bowing down to this bull and likening it to Baal. And it's almost like it's in your face. And a lot of kind of satanic or questionable symbols and signs that would again lead people to basically go that way against God.

[25:01] And it's celebrated and it's almost so obvious and yet people can't even see that. But this is the world we're living in where people are bowing down to falsehood.

Of course, that's just a picture of it, a symbol of it, but I think it's a very real one. And then we see the same stand that Moses took. In Hebrews 11 it tells us of Moses, Hebrews 11 verse 24, it reads, He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.

Now Moses could have had it quite easy to stay in the palace and just go along with the comforts of Pharaoh, but rather he stood. It says he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

It's time to make a choice. Moses had to make that choice. He could have made the easy choice. He could have taken the easy route, but he chose rather to stand with the people of God.

In effect, to stand for Christ. The world chooses the Baal, it chooses the treasures of Egypt, but as Christians we know we've got different riches as was talked about.

[26:39] There's one evangelist years ago who talked to a banker in New York. He was a preacher in D.L. Moody's church, evangelist Paul Rader.

And he had many a talk with a banker in this city of New York. And the banker would reply, he was too busy for religion. And time passed and the banker was seriously overworked.

And so one day he was sent to a sanatorium for complete rest. So a place where you had some kind of a mental health break that they put people who had kind of a breakdown, a sanatorium.

And one day God spoke to Paul Rader and the message was clear to the evangelist to go and speak to this man. And so he obeyed, he caught a train and he went with speed to the sanatorium where his friend was, the banker.

And as he arrived at the facility, he met the banker at the doorway and the man said, oh Rader, I'm so glad to see you. I received your telegram, said Rader.

[27:39] That's impossible, said the banker. I wrote a telegram begging you to come, but I tore it up. I didn't send it. And Rader said, that may be, but your message came by way of heaven. You know, he was impressed by God to go and speak to the banker.

And Paul found his friend under deep conviction of sin and he pointed him to Christ as his perfect saviour. And the man accepted Christ and his heart was filled with joy. And Rader, he said, did you ever see the sky so blue or the grass so green?

You know, he got converted and it's like his eyes were opened. And Rader said, sometimes we sing, heaven above is soft of blue. Earth around is sweet of green. Something lives in every hue Christless eyes have never seen.

So suddenly the banker leaned against Paul Rader and fell into his arms dead. So he only caught him at the end of his time, but he trusted Christ. So we've been talking today about being a citizen of heaven.

That something makes the difference for us. It's Christ in you. It's Christ in you. He saves you. And you're saved, eternally saved. You become a citizen of heaven. But not only so, there's another thing that happens.

[28:50] There's another truth we can talk about. Not only are you a citizen of heaven, but you're secondly an ambassador for Christ. An ambassador for Christ. Let me just share a few thoughts around this truth as we go to 2 Corinthians 5, where it reads, Therefore, if any man be in

Christ, he's a new creature.

All things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

So what is it saying? It's saying there that there's a new creation. We're born again. I like to picture it as like a caterpillar to a butterfly. We're made a new creature. When you trust Christ, you're made brand new.

You've got a brand new heart, a brand new star. Like a caterpillar into a butterfly. You're made a new creature in Christ. That's what happens when you're born again. And then it goes to tell us that he's given us a ministry.

He's given us a job to do. He's given us a responsibility. The ministry of reconciliation. It tells how God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. And it says he's given us this word.

[30:07] And then it reads 2 Corinthians 5 verse 20. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ. As though God did besiege you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead.

Be ye reconciled to God. That's the message. For he hath made him to be sinned for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Notice here this phrase, we are ambassadors for Christ. Now we've been talking about being a citizen, a citizen of heaven. And what a privilege. Made sons and daughters of the king, even.

Even so, he's given us this responsibility. Paul tells us we are ambassadors for Christ. Think about that. What's an ambassador? They represent their nation in a foreign land.

So, not only are we citizens, but he puts us in a foreign land as ambassadors. So, in effect, kind of spiritualising, kind of illustrating it, that in a sense we are ambassadors for heaven right here, aren't we?

[31:15] We're actually behind enemy lines. We're actually representing heaven in this foreign land that is Australia. And we are here to take and give the king's message.

Imagine if you were appointed to be an ambassador of Australia to another land. Being an ambassador is a very high privilege. If you were selected to be an ambassador for Australia in a foreign land, you would represent your prime minister.

You would represent your government, your country. What could be more important? That's a very high level kind of bureaucratic job, isn't it? To serve in such a responsibility.

But there is something greater to be an ambassador for Christ. Amen. That's greater, isn't it? That's something much more. And it says we are, present tense, an ambassador for Christ.

We are. What a special mission you have. Believer today. What a special mission that we have. What an honour to serve our king, to represent him and his kingdom.

[32:21] This is our privilege, brothers and sisters, that we would be so chosen by our king to be sent by him to carry his message. Friends, we represent someone. As a believer, when you walk about your daily life, you're a representative.

You're an agent of heaven. You represent someone with a capital S who's not present visibly. Do they see him in you? It's a question, isn't it?

Wow. I actually represent Christ? That's what Christian means. You're a Christ one. You're a Christ-like one. You represent Christ when you go about in the school place, Young Sydney.

You represent Christ. You say, wow, there's a Christian. He doesn't carry on like we do. In the workplace, Tim. There's something, wow. Not like you have to be wearing a halo or anything. But there's that sense where, yeah, I represent Christ where I am. In my workplace, in my family place, wherever I go. I'm taking his message. I'm a citizen of heaven.

[33:22] That's my homeland. That's my homeland. I don't really regard England as my homeland. Heaven's my homeland. And heaven is where we belong, isn't it?

And for the now, we're resident aliens here on earth. We're in this foreign land called Australia. All of us are foreigners here. And so an ambassador, think of it. You represent your king.

You represent God's people. You represent that nation. We represent a foreign government, the kingdom of heaven here on earth. And we are taking the place of our sovereign, the king in that foreign land.

You know, when they declare war, what do they do? They toss the ambassadors for that country out, don't they? They expel them because they represent the king, the queen, the president, the prime minister.

They represent the government. They represent that nation. And friends, it's the same for you and me. We represent another culture, another way of life as a believer. We represent the government of God, the kingdom of God.

[34:21] So think of it, friends, believers today, of that mission. You have a mission if you choose to accept it. That mission, that special, important task, every one of you.

Ambassadors do not come with their own agenda. They do not come on their own authority. We're not here to blab on about, oh, my opinion or I think this or that. Actually, what does the king say? What's his agenda? What's his directives? What's his authority? We don't come with our own agenda but the authority of another. So as an ambassador, we're living for a higher calling, a higher kingdom.

Think of that, brother, sister, today. As you go about Monday morning, yeah, I'm an ambassador for the kingdom of heaven. And an ambassador is a great honour. It's such that an ambassador is worthy of great respect.

You know, when the governor general walks into the room, all rise, you know. Or when the council meeting's about to start, they say, please stand for the man.

[35:20] When the ambassador of another country comes in the room, there's a sense why they all stand because there's an authority about you that is an ambassador. There's a great honour.

You're worthy of great respect. Well, we should command that, shouldn't we? That we would be such. I'm being a bit flippant here but it's that sense where there is an authority to an ambassador. He's respected like the prime minister of that nation walks in the room and such like that.

So think of it, the authority that we have. We're sons and daughters of the king of kings and the lord of lords. And we have an authority, we're authorised just as the representative of a sovereign.

The Australian ambassador in the United States holds the highest rank that an Australian can hold in that country. They're higher than any military rank or any special government role.

They've got the highest rank. And so there's a special authority that we have as an ambassador. So think of that as you live your life, how an ambassador is treated.

[36:22] An ambassador speaks for his country as if the sovereign is speaking. He holds the honour of his country in his hands. So in a way that can be a bad thing. When the ambassador fouls up, because you hear about sometimes an ambassador who acts unbecoming and is a shame to their nation.

But for us, God helping us, we'll have that great honour and we'll stand and not be ashamed of Christ. He won't be ashamed of us. So another thing about an ambassador is an ambassador is a full-time responsibility.

You don't clock on or off being an ambassador. You're always an ambassador. And an ambassador is conscious that others are always watching. Think of that as a Christian. Isn't that true? They're always looking at you.

Oh, he goes to church. She says she's a Christian. You know. And they'll notice that. They'll sometimes bag us for that, won't they? So our actions and our words are being watched.

Just like an ambassador gets watched. And so let's be an ambassador who serves faithfully. The Bible talks about a faithful ambassador. It says a wicked messenger falleth into mischief, but a faithful ambassador is health.

[37:34] So what it's saying there is that a faithful ambassador brings healing. A faithful ambassador brings God's message of peace, of reconciliation. As Paul told the Corinthians, he says, we are ambassadors for Christ.

We've got that message of reconciliation given to us. In other words, we've got the gospel. It's the greatest news that planet Earth can ever receive, that any soul can know. How do I get saved? How do I get to heaven? We have that message, the ministry of reconciliation. How a man, sinful and unworthy, can be reconciled, made to have peace with God. That God and man can be brought together. Sinful man can be saved and know a holy God and be a born-again believer. We have that message. So let's be a faithful ambassador of it. There's healing there. There's reconciliation. It's the message that we have. So oughtn't we to deliver it? Do we have a love for our king to serve him with faithfulness and commitment? [38:40] Now another thing about an ambassador is they work from an embassy. Here's a picture of a French embassy in Haiti. The Australian embassy is a little bit of Australia on foreign soil.

It's a home away from home. I believe when my parents applied to come to Australia, they went to a place called Australia House in, was it London?

It was the embassy, right? And they had to apply. We think of an embassy, it's a home away from home. You can run there if you want to get asylum.

You can be safe there because it's a little part of Australia. Whether it's in New York or London, it's a little part of Australia there. And we think of what does that mean for us as believers then?

We could think maybe the church is kind of like an embassy of heaven. It's like an embassy of heaven on planet Earth. A place where fellow countrymen can get together and meet and help and give help.

[39:37] An embassy shows people how to emigrate to the country and how they can apply. That should be our message. We should be like that embassy. I'm being picturesque here.

But also about that sense of being an ambassador. Here's some Chinese ambassadors in PNG. We think of ambassadors. They're speaking for their country, for their king.

They're a messenger. They carry the message, the king's message, the government's message. What about you and me? We are ambassadors. We carry the word of the king, the word of the king, the Bible message.

And God is appealing through us. We represent him all of the time. We should speak his message, that important message. You have an important assignment, everyone that is a believer.

And our message is that our king offers a treaty to his enemies. Our king offers a message of peace to whoever will receive that message of reconciliation. As believers, God sends us into a world at war with God to offer terms of peace.

[40:40] Think of that. And so you have an important assignment. It says in verse 20, be reconciled to God. That's our message. We plead with people. Be reconciled to God. That's why we care about witnessing in whatever fashion or form that you can.

To declare to people, be reconciled to God. Know the Saviour. Come to Christ. Accept his peace treaty. Accept his terms of unconditional surrender.

Yeah? And once you've made your peace treaty with God, he makes you his ambassador. He puts us in that role. He gives us that privilege. That position of being in his family, being made a citizen. What's more, being made an ambassador. Wow. You represent him. What a privilege. How are we as ambassadors? It's a challenge to think, am I fulfilling my role, my responsibilities?

Am I following my king's instructions? Am I really listening to what he wants me to do, to tell? Am I living in a way that honours my king, my lord? An ambassador is a temporary resident.

[41:45] We've got different customs and ways from the people of this land, in a way. When the world goes following after some rock star singing blasphemous lyrics, we're not part of that.

We've got a different way of thinking. We're a foreigner. We don't want that. We've got a different thinking, a different culture. And we are ambassadors for Christ. Think of that.

Brother, sister, think of that, just that thought. So how are we going to be an ambassador? First, make sure you're a citizen. Make sure you've got it sorted, that you've got it authorised, that you know, yeah, well, my name's written in heaven.

The book says so because I believe in Christ. I've trusted him as my saviour. I know that my name is written in heaven. I know that I've got citizenship in heaven. Make sure you've got citizenship.

Make sure you've got a passport with a visa in it. You're ready to go because, friends, the departure is soon, isn't it? Get ready for departure. Isn't it true? We don't know when that is.

[42:47] We've got to be ready. And you don't need your bags packed because you can't take any with you. But you've got to be ready for departure, all right? You need to know the way, the truth, and the life.

You've got to have your visa and the sense that God's made his way. And you're ready to go when he calls you to himself. So as a believer, think of how you can be an ambassador for Christ. Living here in Adelaide, South Australia, make sure you've got your citizenship. Make sure that you've got everything ready, that you're ready for departure. You know Christ and he has prepared the way for you.

And he will take you unto himself as he promises to. Friends, that you can be not only just a citizen of heaven, but an ambassador too. And live worthy of that.

Now, friends, I've been preaching to believers really. It's really important that you know that you're a citizen of heaven. How do I know that I'm going to heaven? Jesus says, believe in me and you shall have everlasting life.

[43:47] Put your trust in him. Trust that Christ died for your sins. He rose again. That he is the one you can call upon his name. And the Bible says, if you call upon the name of the Lord, you shall be saved.

It's a simple trust. And it's so simple, many miss it. And think it's too complicated or too far out of reach. But it's simple trust. You don't have to pass a citizenship test.

You don't have to be a worthy character. Or you don't have to spend certain time. You don't have to be a certain age. You don't have to be a certain kind of wealth or anything to do with who you are or who you are and what you have.

It's all about him. It's all about the one who is the king of kings. He's offering a pardon. He's offering terms of peace. He's offering, if only you would have unconditional surrender.

And say, yes, Lord, I receive your gift. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that your gift of salvation is so precious, Lord, for such as we can be made citizens of heaven.

[44:49] That we'll know that better country, as it were, as it is. And that we'll know that that country will be where we will depart to when we leave this time of earth and life as we know it.

We'll have eternal life in the present. And have it now and will be made such that we'll be preparing ourselves and delivering your message as ambassadors. Help us, Lord, with that, that we can represent you and be such that we can be called faithful, faithful messengers, faithful ambassadors of that.

Lord, help us, we pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen.