

# Citizens of Heaven

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Date: 13 February 2022

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] As always, we extend a very warm welcome to you all this evening to the service. And also, if you're joining us online, we're thanking you for your presence with us in that way.

And whether we're online or here, we pray that God will bless us as we come again under his word. Now, there are a number of things on the bulletin sheet I want to just mention briefly.

The Deacon's Court is due to meet tomorrow evening at 7 p.m. That'll be a meeting on Zoom. And then the Wednesday meeting at 7.30, the session will meet after that meeting.

And that session will then, after it opens, it'll remain open and will meet over the following days, as you can see from that, because of the communion next Lord's Day morning.

So the session will meet in the seminary on the Wednesday evening after the meeting and on the Thursday evening also after the meeting, the Gaelic meeting on the Thursday. The session will also, as you can see, meet on the Friday evening at 7.30 p.m.

[ 1 : 02 ] That'll be in the upper hall here beside us. Although there's no service on the Friday evening, the session will be anxious to give people as much opportunity as possible to meet with them, particularly any who wish to come to the Lord's Table for the first time.

And then the Saturday service will be at 7 p.m. Please notice that it's 7 p.m. and not 7.30, just to give the session time, the elders' time to set the communion table for the next day and also for any who may wish to come on the Saturday to meet with the session.

So 7 p.m. And the session again meets after the service on Saturday. The service is on the Lord's Day, the communion service itself at 11 a.m., which I'll take myself.

And the evening service will be taken by Reverend Colm Murdoch-Smith of North Uist Free Church. That means there'll be no Gaelic service in the seminary this particular coming Lord's Day morning, simply because of the communion.

The High Free are also having their communion, although I think it'll be in their evening service. However, there is no Gaelic service in the seminary this coming Lord's Day because of the communion.

[ 2 : 11 ] For the Women for Mission, just notice that intimation there. There is a brochure available. We run off copies here. It's to do with the work in Govan Free Church, the work that's been going on in Govan Free Church for a number of years.

And that's a really worthwhile work, of course, but also a very interesting brochure. Please take a copy if you haven't already done so today. There are copies available at the door, and you'll find it very, very interesting and sure.

If only just to inform you for prayer for the work in Govan Free Church. Now, for the communion itself, I should have also mentioned if anyone has children that they would wish to have baptized, we would be very happy to meet with them at any of these session meetings.

And I do know of some who are coming on the Friday evening. One couple coming on the Friday evening. But any other times, we'll be happy to meet with any couple who want to have baptism for their children and have not been given baptism already.

Communion details there. We're looking forward, of course, to this communion greatly because of the time that's elapsed since the last time we met for this. Now, you'll notice that there are some changes from the usual procedure for the communion.

[ 3 : 25 ] That's just to keep in line with our COVID restrictions or the situation as we have it. And just to make sure that everybody feels comfortable and safe during the time of communion.

We do not want anybody to feel in any way hampered from coming to the communion or to the services associated with the communion. So I'll leave you to read through these five bullet points, especially for yourselves, that you find they're set out regarding the communion.

And as I say there at the bottom, we are seeking the Lord's blessing upon these communion services. And we are greatly looking forward to them, God willing, after such a long time without having had a communion.

I think one of the things that it has certainly demonstrated to us is how precious communion is, how precious the Lord's table is to his people and what a meaningful means of grace it is in itself, along with the preaching of the word to feed our souls thereby.

So with that, let's begin worship this evening, firstly singing in Psalm 47, 47 on page 62 in the St. Sam's version. We sing to the tune, Warrington.

[ 4 : 39 ] All nations, clap your hands and shout. Let joyful cries to God ring out. How awesome is the Lord most high, great King who rules the earth throughout.

He has subdued beneath our feet the nations who had been our foes. In blessing Jacob, whom he loved, a heritage for us he chose. Psalm 47, the verses as they're marked there of the psalm.

All nations, clap your hands and shout. All nations, clap your hands and shout.

Let joyful cries to God ring out. How awesome is the Lord most high, great King who rules the earth throughout.

He has subdued beneath our feet. The nations, too, have been our foes.

[ 6 : 05 ] In blessing Jacob, whom he loved, a heritage for us he chose.

God has gone up with shouts of joy. The Lord, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, the trumpet sound.

In grace, in grace to God most high, to God our King, let grace abound.

For God is King of all the earth. Sing sounds of praise to him alone.

God rules the nations from on high. He sits upon his holy throne.

[ 7 : 40 ] The leaders of the nations come to yield themselves to Abram's God.

To him beyond the shields of earth. God is King of all the nations come to be. He is the Lord.

He is the Lord. Let's join us together once again in prayer to God.

O Lord, our gracious God, as we come once again into your presence, we thank you for the description these words have given us of you.

A God who is so high and so holy, so worthy of all our praise and all the praise of heaven itself. We thank you tonight for the privilege that we have in coming before you to worship you.

[ 8 : 50 ] And we pray, Lord, that we may do so humbly, that we may draw near to you, considering who we are and considering how undeserving we are of any mercy, of any blessing from you.

And yet we know, Lord, that it is your delight to bless your people. And we come tonight to receive your blessing as we do give thanks to you. Lord, our God, we thank you that we are able to come before you this evening.

And we give thanks for the number of us present here this evening and for the way that that itself testifies to the encouragement you give us to come together, despite the situation that we still face regarding the COVID situation.

And we give thanks, Lord, that that situation is improving week by week. We pray that you would continue to keep us protected and safe. That we ourselves, O Lord, will look to you and look to your own leadership by your Spirit to guide and conduct us in the coming days.

We give thanks, Lord, too, as we anticipate another Lord's Supper after such a long time without it. We thank you, O Lord, for the prospect of it. We thank you for all that it contains for your people by way of itself being a means of grace to them, a channel of your grace into their souls by which they spiritually feed upon Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death.

[ 10 : 16 ] And we thank you that the Christ that we remember in the Lord's Supper is one who has died and risen again from the dead. And we thank you that that death is complete and that it is not something that we ourselves find reenacted in the Lord's Supper, but rather an act of remembrance on our part.

And we pray, O Lord, that we be filled with a sense of wonder that it is your desire as well to come to share fellowship with your people, as well as they come to share fellowship with you.

Lord, we pray that it may be our delight and our blessing to come once again around the communion table. And we pray that you would encourage us to do so.

Enable us, Lord, we pray to come in faith. Enable us to come with that hope of heaven in our hearts. Enable us to come anticipating that we meet with the living Christ as we remember the death of that same Christ on the cross.

Lord, we give thanks for that mystery of the Lord's Supper. And yet we pray that you would help us to realize, too, that in the very simplicity of the actions that we find your blessing attached to them. [11:33] We pray that you would deliver us, Lord, from regarding your supper in some way as a mystique, in some way as something which we would fail to find the meaning of.

And grant, Lord, that we be thankful that you have explained it to us in your word, that while we cannot ourselves come to explain the workings of your Spirit, yet we give thanks that as we take these elements that you have ordained to be used to represent you in your death, we thank you for the blessing that accompanies them as you bless them to your people.

We pray that that will be our experience, O Lord, in this coming Lord's Day. We pray tonight for all who belong to your church throughout the world.

We acknowledge, O Lord, tonight in you that there are many who belong to your church and form your church in the world who have very different circumstances to ours. We think especially again of those in different countries of the world who find it so difficult to witness for you, at least in the sense in which they cannot openly meet as we do for fear of persecution or even being put to death. And we pray for the way in which, Lord, they still display your grace at great danger to their own lives, to those around them. And we pray that such may tonight know your blessing.

[13:00] And through this day, Lord, whether they have met in secret or in a semi-visible way, we pray that you would bless them. And we pray for the gatherings of your people that are allowed in countries whose regime is in opposition to the gospel.

And we ask, Lord, that these meetings will flourish and will be blessed by you. And so that people will carry into their neighborhoods the very light of the testimony of Christ in their lives.

And that they will shine as lights in the midst of the darkness of this world. We pray, O Lord, tonight for these parts of the world where we have such war and terror and strife, and places where that has been the case for a long time.

We pray for those who have refugees who have had to escape and leave their homeland, Lord, in these circumstances. We pray for them for whatever beliefs they may have.

Yet, Lord, we pray that you would bring war to an end, that you would bring terror to an end, that you would give us, Lord, to see the spread of your own kingdom and the peace of Christ coming to rule people's lives.

[14:14] And we bring before you tonight the situation in Ukraine and the tension between themselves and Russia. Lord, we know what potential that has, according to reports we hear, to escalate into a much wider conflict.

And we pray that that would be prevented by you. Lord, the world is so full of war, so full of death, so full of sad things. And we pray that it's time that you would prevent this from escalating into a full-blown war.

Lord, bring about, we pray, peace even through the efforts of those who are seeking to bring peace at the moment. But we pray especially, Lord, as your people, for the peace of the gospel, the peace of your kingdom.

And we ask that your will be done on earth as it is in heaven through the advance of your kingdom. Remember tonight, too, those who have difficulties to contend with by way of addictions and related problems in their own lives and in their family lives.

Lord, we pray that you would remember them tonight and ask that every effort made to help them in that regard would be blessed. We pray for the work of Road to Recovery.

[15:27] We pray for David Chisholm, our elder, who is seconded to that work by us. We pray that you would encourage him, Lord. We pray that his contact and his work will go on to be blessed.

And those who help him in that work, we ask that your blessing will be with them. We pray for the work of the shed and for those who, from time to time, meet there in different capacities, we pray. Your blessing will follow efforts made there, too, to meet with those who have such problems in their lives. And, Lord, we pray for all who have such problems. We ask that you would grant to them the release from that which the knowledge of Christ brings.

We pray, too, for any of your professing people who continue to have such temptation to contend with in their lives. And we pray that you would bless them, too. We ask, Lord, that you would bless those who are working with the homeless, both locally and also throughout our land.

We pray for those who staff food banks. And we ask that those who benefit from them, Lord, will be blessed even through that. And your people, as they show such practical love and kindness, may

they be able also, Lord, to convey the love of Christ through that.

[ 16 : 42 ] And we pray for the work of safe families. We ask that you would bless them and all who, especially, Lord, work for them and are benefiting from the work that they do.

Remember them, Lord, we pray. And remember them as they seek to carry that work forward into other areas of our land. And we pray for the work of Bethany. We pray that you'd bless them, too, and ask that you would continue to own and acknowledge that good work, O Lord, as it goes on from day to day.

We pray for the work of Pritchell in Glasgow. We pray also for that work in Govan. We ask, O Lord, that as they seek a replacement for Norman at this time, that you would bless, Lord, bless them and bless us as a church as we seek to have this replacement installed.

We pray that the work will continue. We pray that it will increase. We pray that it will be further blessed. Lord, we ask that in all of these enterprises that go forward in the strength of your name, that you would be pleased to own and acknowledge it to their benefit and to the glory of your name and to the deliverance of people from all types of personal problems that blight their lives at this time.

Remember those who govern us and rule over us and our nation. We ask that you would be pleased, we pray, to instill in their hearts a sense of your presence, of your own authority over them, and especially of the fear of God in their hearts.

[ 18 : 16 ] We long for the day, O Lord, when others will be raised up who will publicly acknowledge their faith in Christ and who will not be ashamed of it and who will not be led aside into the avenues of ungodliness and worldliness as they would seek to rule over us as a people.

We pray that you would be pleased, Lord, to be pleased, Lord, to be merciful to those who do not know you and are in such positions by your providence. Lord, we ask that you would change their lives.

We pray that they may be given new hearts, that they be born again, that they will come, O Lord, to know what it is, to truly have that freedom with which Christ makes us free.

And so we pray now that you would bless us here through this service and bless your word to us especially. Hear us and pardon our sins and cleanse us. In Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. Now we're reading tonight from God's word in the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians and chapter 4 at verse 13.

[ 19 : 25 ] And we'll read on into the first part of chapter 5. To verse 11. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and from verse 13.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive and who are left until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God.

And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

Therefore, encourage one another with these words. Now concerning the times and the season, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

[ 20 : 44 ] For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman.

And they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day.

We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night.

And those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober. Having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him.

[ 21 : 45 ] Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. And may God bless to us once again a reading of his own precious word.

Let's sing now from Psalm 89 in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 89, page 345. We'll sing verses 15 to 18. O greatly blessed the people are.

The joyful sound that know, in brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go. They in thy name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly, and in thy righteousness shall they exalted be on high. To the end of verse 18 from verse 15, O greatly blessed the people are. O greatly blessed the people are.

The joyful sound that know, in brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go.

[ 23 : 06 ] O Lord, they ever on shall go.

O Lord, they ever on shall go.

O Lord, they ever on shall go.

Almighty Him. The ESV translation has put that into one section.

So, Philippians 3 at verse 17. Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many of whom I have told you and now tell you, even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

[ 25 : 29 ] Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly and the glory in their shame. With minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven.

And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.

Therefore, my brothers whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved. Well, here is Paul following on from what we saw earlier in giving us his testimony, as it is effectively, throughout most of chapter 3.

What he himself experienced as he came to know the change from what he was as an unsaved man who trusted so much in his own ability to keep the law of God and how he met Christ who delivered him from that and took hold of him, as we saw last time, Jesus took hold of him so that he would then stretch forward spiritually in the exercise of his faith and his life then as a Christian towards what he called the prize of the high calling, the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

And now he's following that by saying, brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

[ 27 : 04 ] We often imitate people unconsciously. We find ourselves sometimes drawn to people whose character or whose behavior or whose style of life, if you like, draw us, and sometimes even unconsciously we find ourselves speaking the way they do or just looking at things in the way that they look at things or even in appearance actually following them as an example that we set for ourselves.

Sometimes we do that, of course, not just unconsciously. Even preachers can follow other preachers unconsciously. It's not a good idea and I hope it's not something I do.

We were warned against it in college, which seems a long time ago now, but it's not a good idea at all for anyone who sets out to preach the gospel, to model themselves by way of the way they speak or how they behave or how they act in the pulpit, their actions, to model themselves on anyone else.

We were told in college, be yourself or else you'll end up being a nobody. And that's true of the Christian life as well. Well, you be yourself, you be your own person in terms of your personality. Don't try and copy anyone else in that sense. That's not what he's saying here, as we'll see when he says, be imitators of me and join those and actually follow others as well as you see them identical or similar to ourselves.

[ 28 : 30 ] And of course, I suppose for young people, we tend at least to associate this with young people, who need not be confined to that, but certainly a lot of young people will model themselves on their favorite celebrities, whether these are film stars or pop stars or whatever kind of celebrity they are, and there's many of them nowadays.

But people will model themselves on these people, dress the way they dress and attach themselves to them in terms of how they look and what sort of fashion they follow.

All of these things in terms of modeling themselves on people they regard as role models. Let me ask myself and ask yourself tonight, who is your role model?

Who do you model yourself on? Who is it especially that you have in your life and your eye as a person to follow, as someone that you would like to be like?

Well, of course, Paul is going to tell us in this chapter, ultimately, that has to be Jesus. That's what the Christian life is actually moving towards as God works in their lives, because that's awaiting the people of God.

[ 29 : 39 ] That is what actually lies in store for them. That's their destiny. As he says here, he's going to transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body. Finally, to be like Jesus, the glorified Jesus, as he now is.

That's the destiny of God's people. And so, ultimately, that should be our role model. But then Paul, underneath the lordship of Christ himself and the ultimate model that Jesus is, he says here, brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

Because as we'll see in this passage, Paul is really saying, whoever it is we're following in terms of lifestyle says so much about who we are, what our priorities are, what kind of thinking we have going on in our heads and our hearts.

In other words, who we have as a role model, who we imitate shows where we belong. And what Paul is saying, when the likes of Paul is a role model, and especially when Jesus ultimately is our highest role model, we belong to heaven.

Paul is saying, when our citizenship, he says, is in heaven. So, there are three things here tonight that we can just briefly look at. First of all, he talks about examples.

[ 31 : 00 ] Follow, he says, imitate me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. Paul, he says, many walk of whom I've told you and now tell you even, told you often and now tell you, even with tears, they are enemies, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

So, he says, there are examples here to follow and there are examples here not to follow or to shun and to just keep clear of because they're enemies of the cross of Christ.

They're enemies, they're examples of enmity to the cross of Christ. That's the first thing. There are examples that we need to look at briefly. Secondly, he talks here of expectation.

Expectation on the part of people like himself and those who have come to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Expectation as citizens of heaven. Expectation of Christ's return and expectation of being like Christ at the end of the journey in heaven.

And then thirdly, in the first verse of the next chapter, he speaks here of an exhortation. He gives an exhortation, therefore, my brothers, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

[ 32 : 14 ] Examples and expectation and an exhortation to finish with. We'll briefly look at these, looking mostly at the examples and expectation. Well, here he is giving us examples, first of all.

Brothers, he says, join in imitating me. Now, he's not saying this out of a sense of pride, not out of a sense of saying, look at me, I'm better than most people in the world.

That's how Paul once used to think of himself. That's what we saw in the first part of the chapter, where he said that whatever he was like now, this is what he used to be like.

He thought of himself as to the righteousness under the law, blameless. He would have regarded himself as right at the pinnacle or at the top of self-achievement, of the achievement of righteousness by his own efforts.

But now he's saying, this is not how I see myself now, but I do see myself, he's saying, as an example. And there's nothing wrong with that if he's saying it with the kind of lowliness of mind that obviously Paul had when he was calling them in chapter 2, as we saw, to that mind to be in them as well.

[ 33 : 20 ] And, you know, that's something that we need to give place to. What God has made us into is not something to hide. It's not something to be embarrassed about being positive about.

Sometimes we have, particularly in our cultural background on the island perhaps, is something that we're reluctant to acknowledge when somebody might come and ask us, do you think you're going to be in heaven at last?

Do you have the hope of heaven in your heart? Are you really a Christian? Well, I hope I am. I trust I am. And there's a kind of hesitancy in saying that, even if we know deep down that Christ has changed our lives.

There's nothing wrong with coming to actually confess openly. In fact, that's what the Bible encourages us to do, to come and show what's in our hearts and be positive about saying, yes, I'm a Christian.

I'm a Christian because Christ has made me a Christian. I'm a Christian. I'm saved. I'm born again. Not because of what I have achieved myself, but on the basis of what he has achieved and done in me.

[ 34 : 25 ] And here is Paul without any sense of personal pride or embarrassment saying, brothers, join in imitating me. And God is saying to us tonight, even in this congregation itself, to go no further, actually do that for yourselves as well, especially those of you who are young in the faith, those of you who have not been on the way perhaps for as long as others.

Well, he's really saying here, notice the language he's using, keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. There are many godly people in this congregation. They would not necessarily acknowledge themselves that they are renowned for godliness. They find themselves very short of what they would want to be as Christians or the quality of holiness that they would want to have as Christians.

Nevertheless, they would not deny the fact that Christ has changed their lives. And you as younger folks, younger in the faith especially, can look tonight to them. They are examples to you. That consistent, godly life, that mature life in Christ, that's what we want our young folks to take note of. And for that, you and I who are further on the journey, we'll need to be consistent examples to them.

[ 35 : 40 ] That's what we want to be. Not in any way giving them the impression that we're not really serious about our Christian life, about our church attendance, about our prayer meeting attendance, about coming to the Lord's table, any of these things, or following Christ truly.

He's saying here, keep your eyes upon. So, young folks, keep your eyes upon those that you know are Christians, are godly people, are people who love Jesus, people who value the way that God is himself and what he's done for them.

And he will try and teach you as best they can what it is to be a Christian, what a godly life is about. It wouldn't necessarily be as positive as Paul is here.

After all, Paul is such a prominent apostle of Jesus. Nevertheless, keep your eyes upon, is the way he puts it. Don't be distracted from looking at those that are examples to you that God has provided, because the world is full of the wrong kind of examples.

The world is full of the celebrity example, the celebrity that you're not to keep your eye on, because that's not the way to go. The world that has, as we'll see in a minute, such a place for a materialistic outlook, and an outlook that really takes in everything that's opposite to the Christian life all too often.

[ 37 : 05 ] Keep your eyes not on the glossy adverts for this or that lifestyle, not on the celebrities that obviously don't love the Lord and don't believe in the Lord. These people here tonight are your examples, the godly people of God, the people who would want you to follow Christ and not be diverted and taken off that path of following Jesus.

Well, he says, keep your eyes upon such people. Join in imitating me and in their likes, because they won't actually lead you astray as long as they themselves are faithful to Jesus.

They will not lead you astray. They will be sure guides for you as far as human beings can be in Christ. So tonight that's important for us. There are examples for us that God has placed for us to follow.

And he goes on to specify more of the example that we ought to shun or avoid. For he says, many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, they walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

And then he describes them. He describes their destiny, their end as destruction. He describes presently their appetites, spiritually and morally as well as physically, their god as their belly and the glory in their shame.

[ 38 : 27 ] They take pride in things which are shameful. Their minds are set on earthly things. Doesn't that describe so much of the world that you see and is presented to you all too often in your daily life?

Doesn't that describe the way that the world sees itself in opposition to Jesus, to God and to the gospel and in the elevation of the human, the merely human mind and the human sense of

achievement?

That is what is described there. You see, it's saying very clearly to us, I've told you about this and I now tell you they are walking as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction.

They're destined for hell from which there is no rescue. And Paul is not in any way ashamed to say that the way they're living their lives just now, that's the route that they're on.

They're walking as enemies of the cross of Christ. And unless they're changed from that, unless they turn to Jesus, unless it becomes something the opposite of what they are, that is their destiny. Their end is destruction.

[ 39 : 34 ] Now, you and I have to take that word very closely to heart. Destruction. It's not annihilation.

It's not a cessation of being. It's not life just snuffed out so that you no longer exist. What the Bible means by this word destruction is a life of the terrible torments and death godlessness of hell.

And don't let anyone persuade you that that place is not real. It may not be fashionable to speak about it or read about it or preach about it today.

But it's enough for me that Jesus believed in it. That Jesus knew its existence. And that Jesus spoke of it more than anyone else in the Scriptures.

Destruction. Their end is destruction. Friends, I hope that there's nobody here tonight of whom this is true right now. That the way you're living your life shows the end for you is eternal damnation.

[ 40 : 50 ] Well, if you're not in Christ, let me say it as lovingly, as tactfully as I can. We're not saying this just to show ourselves up to be reformed in theology, though we hope we are.

Now, this is something that for Paul was critically important. To actually put before people life and death. Heaven and hell. Being with Christ as he was looking forward to.

Or being away from Christ without any prospect of return in hell. Make sure tonight that Jesus is your Savior. That you are found in Him.

That you are among His followers. Because he then goes on. Whose God is their belly. Now, that's a general description for sensual or physical appetites.

I'm not going to spend long on these at all. I want to get down to looking at the expectations.

Because that's the main thing in the passage. But don't just skip over these things. He's telling us here. Their end is destruction.

[ 41 : 54 ] Their God is their belly. And it doesn't just mean physical appetite. So, that's not excluded by any means. This really is just a term that describes both material, sexual, sensual appetites.

The things which characterize so many people still in this life. The things which are projected at us so frequently on our television screens. In films. In books that are read.

In magazines. In all kinds of sources. You'll find this kind of debauchery presented to you as being quite acceptable. And people who try to live godly lives as just being somewhat queer.

Somewhat funny. Somewhat really totally out of date. Whose God is their belly. They're worshipping the material.

The sexual. The things which God in his word denounces. And are unacceptable and ugly in his sight.

[ 42 : 59 ] Friends, our world is full of that. And we have the benefit tonight of the gospel. Of the teaching of God through his word. That demonstrates to us so clearly that when Jesus changes your life.

As I hope all of us tonight know. A change in our lives. When Jesus changes your life. It's not going to take away all the problems. It's not going to mean a life without temptation.

It's not going to mean a life without certain lapses from time to time. But it is going to mean a life that is set by the Lord to be a counter to that world. To show the opposite of the values of that world.

Of the thinking of that world. Of the lifestyles of that world. Of the idolatry of that world. Because that's what this is. Whose God.

Whose idol. Is their belly. Their sensual. Physical. Sexual. Appetites. And he goes on then. To. We could spend of course a whole lot of time on that.

[ 44 : 01 ] Opening that out. And that would in itself. In some ways be quite. Beneficial to us. To set against the world. And the context. Which we live our lives today. But he goes on and says. Whose glory.

Is in their shame. I remember when Paul wrote to the Romans. In chapter 6. He was describing there. Something of the transition. From being in Adam. To being in Christ. Being lost. And still in your sins. And now being in Christ. And saved. Well he goes on. Towards the end of the chapter. He says. When you were slaves of sin. You were free. In regard to righteousness. He's saying. When you were walking in the ways of sin. Or living for the God. That you had made for yourself. Whatever it was. You were free. In regard to righteousness. You were not attached to righteousness. Because even self-righteousness. As we saw. In the apostle. In this chapter of Philippians. [ 44 : 55 ] Is not righteousness in God's sight. The righteousness of Christ alone. Is that for us. Which we receive. When we receive Jesus himself. But you see.

This is what Paul said in Romans. When you were slaves of sin. You were free. In regard to righteousness. What fruit were you getting at that time. From the things of which you are now ashamed.

The end of those things is death. And we're living in a world. That really has largely dismissed. And rubbed out. That word shame. We're encouraged not to be ashamed of living a debauched lifestyle. If that's what suits us. If that's what we want to actually follow. If that's what we want to choose. Irrespective of who anyone else tells us. And especially irrespective of what the Bible tells us. I'm in charge of my own life. We're told. I live the life the way I want. And if somebody tells me. You should be ashamed of the behavior that you're showing. In a debauched lifestyle. [ 45 : 57 ] Well that's it. I'll just put up with that. I'll still live this life. But he's saying to these Christians. Now you're ashamed. You came to be ashamed. Of living a life that.

Dismissed the holiness that God requires. Of his people. This is what he's saying. Their end is destruction.

Their God is their belly. Their glory. In their shame. What do we glory in tonight? We don't glory in the things. That bring us shame in the presence of God.

We don't glory in the things that bring shame upon the name of God. We glory in Jesus himself. We glory in righteousness. We glory in holiness of life.

We glory in the things that are acceptable with God. That God himself approves of. You're back. You say back to the same emphasis.

[ 46 : 52 ] Join in imitating me. Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. So these are the examples. His mind is set on earthly things.

They're firmly earthed in their thinking. The grave is the extent to which they think of their life. That's the end of it.

It peters out. They are firmly earthed. They live for this world. But I do want you to notice. And I want to put it to myself as well.

That Paul is not just saying this dispassionately. He's not saying this as if there was no emotion in it for him. Many I tell you, he says, walking as enemies of the cross of Christ.

I've told you of them often. And I now tell you, even with tears. Weeping is what he's saying.

[ 47 : 50 ] You can just picture as his scribe or himself is writing these words in the scroll that he's going to send to the Philippians. There are teardrops on that page.

On that scroll. Why are there teardrops? Because it hurts the apostle Paul to think of people losing their souls. It gets to him in here.

The thought of people dying without Christ. The thought of people living as enemies of the cross of Christ. It's not something he can dismiss from his mind without it really turning him to weeping.

It hurts him. It causes him to cry. When did I last? When did you last weep? Over the lost. I don't mean turning on tears or trying to just manufacture tears.

When did we last wait in the presence of God on our knees? Praying for the world in which we live and waited there until the tears flowed. Until God impressed upon our hearts what it is to be a lost soul.

[ 48 : 52 ] Until God reminded us again of what we were ourselves before Jesus met us and changed our lives. God made us. Because lost souls ought to be a source of weeping for us.

A source of sorrow. God made human beings for fellowship with himself. God made human beings to spend eternity with himself.

God made human beings to think of it. God made human beings for us. God made human beings to find humanity and their lives. God made human beings to see everyone who were sinners. God

made human beings to understand him to sin, to take Jesus prayer, to seek God. To see the Ash, for coches.

situation from carrying out things which we had begun sometimes perhaps and had to actually leave aside. When we're thinking of getting back to that let it be with this passion in our souls that comes from the Holy Spirit's work within us.

Where Jesus himself, where God himself, where the Holy Spirit brings us face to face with a reality of lost souls that are laid on our hearts so as not just to pray for them but to pray with weeping and to engage in every way open to us that's acceptable to seek to bring Jesus to them.

[ 50 : 18 ] These are the examples and then he secondly goes on to the expectations. I spent more on that than I attended. Hope is blessed to us nevertheless. Expectation as citizens of heaven but he says, now he's saying this is the opposite to those who are enemies of the cross of Christ. He says but our citizenship is in heaven.

This is what we, where we really belong. Well, if you get through your door an electoral register of your names as they are on the electoral register, you're told to make sure for the next election whether it's local or national that it actually fits with the occupancy of the house. If your name is on that roll, if your name is on that paper that comes through the door, you're eligible to vote.

But what Paul is saying is we have our names on the citizen role of heaven. And it's not just to give us the opportunity to vote.

It's not about voting. It's about belonging. If you belong to Jesus, you belong to heaven. If Jesus belongs to you by faith, then you belong to these people. This is your citizenship.

This is where you belong to. This is the city. Now the Philippians would actually understand this very well. These Christians in Philippi would know themselves as living in Philippi, a very prominent city of the Roman Empire. There would be much in that city of Philippi itself to which their names were attached. But as citizens of Rome, their names would be on the list held in the capital city in Rome itself.

[ 51 : 53 ] And so you see this had special significance spiritually for these Philippian Christians. Because from this they would be saying, well, we're living in Philippi. That's the context in which we live our lives.

That's where our daily life is spent. But we don't belong to Philippi spiritually. We belong to heaven. We belong to this place of which God has given us citizenship.

When did God give citizenship to His people? You remember John, when John came to write his letter, his gospel, his gospel rather, he set out in the gospel at the beginning there to speak about Jesus as the true light.

And he says, He came to His own, His own people, His Jewish people. He came to His own and His own people did not receive Him. But to all, or to as many as did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

To all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave them this right to be the children of God. It's a God-given right. It comes with your adoption. They're part of your adoption papers, these papers that give you citizenship of heaven.

[ 53 : 18 ] What a privilege tonight to be here on earth. To belong to Stornoway, to Laxdale, to Point, to wherever it is you belong to, literally, and still be able to say, yes, that's where I'm presently situated, but spiritually, I'm a citizen of heaven.

My name appears in the citizen records of heaven itself. God looks into the role of citizens that He has in heaven, and He sees my name there because Christ has made me His own.

Now, is that your privilege tonight? Is Jesus yours? Have you embraced Him? Have you welcomed Him into your life?

It doesn't matter how we describe that and coming to faith in Him, to trust in Him, to entrust yourself to Him, all sorts of different ways of describing it, but it's really the same as receiving Jesus as He's offered in the Gospel, the Jesus of the Gospel, Jesus as He is in the Gospel, not a caricature, not a version of Jesus that is made up by other human beings, but the Jesus you read of in the Bible.

And when He's yours, then citizenship in heaven is yours too, even now. And you will go to be in that city when God brings you home.

[ 54 : 46 ] Expectation as citizens of heaven, expectation, secondly, of Christ's return. He says, this is the city we belong to, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We eagerly await, is really the meaning. It's a great challenge some of the words that Paul uses because there's such an intensity in them, and I find myself coming so far short when I come to preach the Gospel and study hopefully meaningfully for the preaching of the Gospel.

I come across these words like this one here, which really means, as it says here, from which we await, but the word means we eagerly long for the Savior to appear.

And that's the challenge to myself tonight, how eager is my longing for Jesus' return? How eager is my longing to see the Lord as He is, to come actually to meet with Jesus and to see and to look into His face as the glorified Christ?

How much are we longing for His return to this world to set everything right as it should be? And he gives him his full title, you see.

[ 55 : 57 ] He's thinking about His return, coming from heaven back to this world at the last day, the day of judgment, and he gives him his full title, the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the emphasis really there is on the Savior. We are awaiting a Savior. He has saved us already. He has saved us with an everlasting salvation, but we want to meet with Him and for Him to appear as our Savior.

It's as our Savior He's coming. He's coming as the King. He's coming as our great High Priest. Coming as our prophet. He's coming as all the things the Bible tells us. He's coming as in the splendor of His exaltation and His majesty.

But oh, what a precious thing it is. He's coming as the Savior. And you know Him as the Savior, your Savior, when you've come to trust in Him. And that's what the focus is on.

And you know, sadly, there are still some under the gospel, perhaps some even in this building tonight, who though they hear these words and know that this is part of the gospel, are still not saved.

[ 57 : 06 ] But I hope you're not like those who just dismiss the sound of the gospel, like you sometimes find when a briefing is given, whether it's on the ferry or on the plane, as you enter, and as it's about to set off, you have a safety announcement, and it's staggering to see how many people, however used they are to hearing that announcement, will just ignore it altogether and keep just either listening to music or else talking to their friends or whatever.

I remember being on the plane once and the cabin attendant, she was just about to give the message and she had started the message and there was a couple riding in front of her where they were just absolutely unaware or just totally ignoring what she was saying.

And she stopped and she said, look, this is a safety announcement. I need to do this for your safety. Please, please listen for half a minute to what I have to say.

Small talk doesn't become us when we're listening to God's safety message. That's too serious for that. Because if that plane went down, God forbid, those two people will be the first to get to their feet and say, what do we do?

We don't know what to do. We're bewildered. What's the next step? Don't be in that position with your life as you wait the return of Jesus.

[ 58 : 39 ] Wait for him in faith. Wait for him in hope. Wait for him in longing. And every single day, ask yourself, am I looking forward to that? Am I taking in his safety message in the gospel that I must be found in Christ and I must have him before I die?

Because he says, not only so are we in expectation as citizens and expecting of Christ's return, but we're expecting of being like Christ. Wonderful emphasis.

As we await the Savior who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him to subject all things to himself.

Now, lowly there means in our present state. It means in our present state this side of death with all the incapacity that we have and with all the sinfulness that still attaches to our lives, even as Christians, we're not what we will be one day, even bodily.

But he says he's going to transform our lowly body or literally the body of our humiliation to be like the body of his glory. That's the glorified Jesus, the human nature of Jesus, glorified in heaven.

[ 59 : 57 ] That's the pattern. That's the mark that God has that his glorified people will be brought into to be like himself. to shine forevermore in the likeness of Christ.

What a prospect. But then, that's really what God designed us for. That's what he created us to be. And although we fell from that in the Garden of Eden, God's people now, by faith in Christ, anticipate being like him, fully like him, perfectly like him, when he transforms our lowly body.

See how different this is to those that he had described earlier? Their God is their belly. They glory in their shame. This is the complete opposite.

And that's how it is when you compare enemies of the cross of Christ with those who follow Jesus. They are complete opposites. Their destiny is completely opposite, as is their lifestyle now.

And it's by the power with which he is able even to subject all things to himself. Just in a word, that means the energy of Christ's ability.

[ 61 : 21 ] How do you know this is going to come to place, people will ask you. Well, here you are. You're going to die. Your body is going to be laid into the grave. It's going to dissolve there. It's going to return to dust.

How do you know that that body is one day going to be like the body of the glorified Jesus? Well, one thing the Bible tells me. But the other thing is I believe in the energy of Christ's ability. I can put it that way. The energy of Christ's ability. The ability that Jesus has. Has the energy that brings about that change from the body that is placed in the ground to the body that is raised to be like him forevermore in glory in its glorified state.

What a prospect. What a loss if we die and that's not going to be our destiny. expectation as citizens of heaven of Christ's return of being like Christ.

Just in a word the exhortation in the first verse of the next chapter. Therefore my brothers who my love and long for my joy and crown stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved.

[ 62 : 44 ] Stand firm thus. What does the word thus mean? It means in this way. In the way that I'm setting out for you as imitating me and keeping your eyes on those who so walk.

Thus in the sense of following Christ faithfully trusting in him looking to his return expecting finally to be like him. Thus in that way stand firm in the Lord my beloved.

stand firm in the Lord my beloved. So there's the example the examples and there are the exhortation there's the exhortation to finish with and the expectation.

Let me come back to this first question we asked. Who is your role model? And the other question along with it what is foundational to your life?

And another question thirdly where is your home? Is Jesus your role model? Is the cross the foundation of your life?

[ 63 : 55 ] is heaven your home? May God bless his word to us once again to his own praise and glory. We're going to conclude our service this evening singing from Psalm 72.

That's in the Sing Psalms version Psalm 72 verses 1 to 7. Of course when we speak and read and sing of the king in this psalm which is a messianic psalm it's Jesus that we have in mind in his kingship.

Endow the king with justice Lord the royal son with righteousness your people your afflicted ones he'll judge with truth and uprightness.

To verse 7 the righteous then will blossom forth throughout his everlasting reign until the moon no longer shines peace in abundance will remain.

These verses endow the king with justice Lord. Endow the king with justice Lord the royal son with righteousness your people your afflicted ones you judge with truth and the brightness the mountains will bring peace to them the hills the fruit of righteousness he will defend and save the poor and crush all those who them oppressed as long as sun and moon endure so will he live time without end he'll be like showers on the earth like rings that on moon fields descend the righteous then will blossom forth throughout his death her lasting reign until the moon no longer shines peace in the blood and will remain friends it's wonderful and encouraging tonight to see more pews filled than there are empty and as we come back from this two year challenge that we faced with the

[ 67 : 43 ] COVID pandemic the most encouraging thing of all is to see people setting their face once again on this place of worship and on the Lord and on his worship and as we anticipate the communion next Lord's Day God willing may that also be further encouragement to us now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and ever more Amen happy God God can there hypp