



## **Stanground Baptist Church 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

### **Philippians 3 v 15 – 4 v 1**

#### **Citizenship.**

What does it mean to be a Citizen?

The dictionary says this.

*a person who is a member of a particular country and who has rights because of being born there or because of being given rights, or a person who lives in a particular town or city*

So, if you are a citizen of this country you are a United Kingdom Citizen, this is not to be confused with nationality. In the UK this means we can be either English, Irish, Scottish, or Welsh depending on where we see ourselves as part of.

But to be a Citizen of Heaven means more than just being, it is a conscious decision that we make when we come to know Jesus and are 're-born' with the Holy Spirit. A Citizen of Heaven means we have a future of eternal life, of being with Jesus when we die.

It is not easy living in two places, Heaven or Earth (metaphorically speaking) and which one of those places takes preference over the other?

The Bible is clear that we are called to live down here on earth, but we are not to let anything influence us away from God.

When asked the question 'whose law do we obey? The law of the land or God's Law?' Jesus' reply was 'both'. We are to obey the Law of the land we are living AND God's law, even though there may be conflicting arguments between the two. Which means as Citizens of both, we have the double responsibility of upholding both the Christian law and the earthly law.

Given our present circumstances we at the moment are having to obey the earthly law by staying 2 metres apart from everyone, and will change as the lockdown is lifted, however God's law is unchanging, it never waivers from its course. We are to love God with all our hearts and others as ourselves and spread the gospel of the Good News of Jesus.

This time has really been amazing in the way God has been working and how 'The Church' has been doing new things. There are a lot of people out there who have never stepped foot inside a church except for christenings, weddings and funerals, but just recently have been searching on line and joining in with services, which have had to change and adapt to the circumstances of today. They are searching for something that they feel is missing or to make sense of what is going on. My prayer is that they feel something is missing from their lives and that the message will help them to know that Jesus is alive and wants to welcome them as citizens into his kingdom.

There are many things that are sent to try us and this virus is just one of them. However, if we believe (as I do) that God is in control of everything as the Bible tells us He is, then our eyes and hearts should be focussed on Him, who can do more than we ever know, and not focussed on our personal circumstances at the moment.

I am not saying that we should not be concerned about what is happening within this country and the world, we should be and do everything in our power to help each other through these difficult times.

And although Boris is the leader of the country, God is and should be the leader of our lives. Because he is our helper, our comforter, our ever-present help in times of trouble and it is to Him to whom we should look to when the going gets tough.

Paul exhorts us to stand firm, in the Lord no matter what happens. Because there are times when our faith is tested to the finest degree, yet there is nothing that we could go through that compares with what Jesus did for us on the cross.



Without Him dying for us we would have no hope of a life eternal to come and all the people that have sadly died would have no chance of going to heaven, but Jesus said that following him would never be easy, there will always be times of trouble, but He did promise us that He would be with us to the very end of the age.

This is what I cling to, so that no matter what happens, I have a home that is there for me because it is promised by God who never breaks his promises.

So the question to think about is 'Where are you a citizen of? Heaven with all its glory or earth with all its pitfalls? Both bring with them their own responsibilities yet when they are combined with God's blessing, there is a chance that we can begin to live as God wants us to.

Amen

***Sue Saunders***