

Citizens of Heaven Here on Earth (Part 3)

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Date: 08 July 2018

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[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 3 beginning in verse 17 going through chapter 4 verse 1 though the primary text for this morning sermon will be on chapter 3 verse 21.

! 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 often told you and now tell you even with tears walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their end is destruction, their God is their belly, and they 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. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word.

Would you please be seated? So as we've been going over for the past few weeks now, we've seen from this passage of Scripture, we've been reminded that the goal of the Christian life is to become more like Christ.

[1 : 34] Christ, just like Christ. In this life, we've seen we are to live as citizens of heaven.

And the Bible tells us that we should always be in this life pursuing this goal, looking forward to this prize. Last week, we talked about the fact that citizens of heaven, a citizen of heaven, I should say, is not characterized by concern.

They're not characterized by worry about the future. But that the future for the citizen of heaven is something that they eagerly await. They can't wait for it.

They are eagerly expecting it because they know that in their future, they will be physically with Christ, their Lord and Savior.

So before we continue, I want to take a moment to reflect upon the fact that the prize in heaven that we are most eagerly anticipating is not streets of gold.

[2 : 42] It's not our heavenly dwelling place. It's not to see our loved ones who have gone before us. The heavenly prize on which we are looking forward to, on which we have set our hope, is Jesus Christ Himself.

That's what we're looking most forward to. Unfortunately, too many professing Christians long for Christ's return, primarily because of their hopes being set on the benefits that they will draw from His coming back.

And while those benefits are good things, things that should be hoped for, they aren't ultimate things. And without Jesus, who is our ultimate prize, all those other things would not exist.

We would not receive them. I have a feeling that once we see Jesus with our own eyes, we won't care to see anything else.

We'll just want to see Him. Too many, again, professing Christians have another point of view. Our prize is the Lord. In verse 20, Paul says, Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 07] So we need a little bit of context before we go back into verse 21. So in the first century Greco-Roman world, the only citizen, as we've talked about before, the only citizenship that really counted for anything was a Roman citizenship.

And so the titles there that Paul used, the first of Savior, Soter, and the second of Lord, Kyrios, in the Greek, were used exclusively to refer to the Roman emperor.

And the confession of a Roman citizen was Kyrios Kaiser, which means Caesar is Lord. That's how they were identified as a citizen of Rome.

And a common title for Caesar was Savior of the World. And so what Paul is telling the Philippian Christians here is that their heavenly citizenship matters infinitely more than their Roman citizenship.

Because whatever claims Caesar may make about himself, only Jesus Christ is truly Lord. And only Jesus Christ is truly Savior.

[5 : 12] Only He is truly able to set us free from the bondage of sin. Only He is able to truly cleanse us from our sins. And only He is able to transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body.

Only Him. You know, I've noticed over the years of being in ministry and preaching about glorification, preaching about what is going to happen to Christians in the future.

There's a lot of confusion. Confusion. There's a lot of uncertainty. The order of events. Or what exactly is going to happen. What heaven is going to be like. What hell's like. There's a lot of confusion.

And I think a lot of that is due to, I know they're not on TV anymore, but you remember those old Looney Tunes cartoons? And they still do it in cartoons today. What we see in those cartoons is they depict heaven as being those you die, you float up to heaven right on a flag, you have angel wings, you have a white robe, and you're given a gold harp, and you just sit there on that cloud and you just strum it all day long.

How boring is that? I'm not going to look forward to that. And thank God that's not going to be what heaven is like. Yes, we will be worshiping there, but it's not going to be in some cloud in the middle of nowhere with, you know, whatever, our thoughts and strumming harp.

[6 : 36] No offense to those of you who like to play the harp. Or conversely, there's this thought of hell being a place where, you know, bad people who die, they go down the escalator, and the devil is waiting there for them.

You know what I'm talking about. He's got a pitchfork, and he's just waiting to just poke them and prod them for all eternity. Here's the thing about that illustration that's wrong.

Satan is not in hell right now. Do you realize that? And hell is not his kingdom. The Bible says that Satan is the prince of the power of the air.

This evil world system is his kingdom, and I can tell you that Satan is not looking forward to going to hell one day because that is not going to be a place for him to rule. That is going to be a place for him to suffer torment forever.

Him, the fallen angels who fell with him, and those who ultimately reject the gospel. It's not going to be a pleasant place for any who inhabits that location.

[7 : 37] I don't have enough time to correct all of those bad theological thoughts this morning. Today we're going to focus on glorification. And so you might be asking, what is glorification?

Well, here's the main idea for this morning's sermon. Glorification is God's final removal of sin from the life of the believer.

At Christ's coming, the glory of God will be realized in those of us who belong to him. So glorification is an eschatological event.

That is your fancy pants theological term for the day. Eschatology. Eschatology is the study of future events. The Bible says a lot about what is going to happen in the future.

We read one of those passages in Revelations today. So eschatology is the study of future events. Events that the Bible says will take place but haven't taken place yet.

[8 : 37] And so there's an order of these events in the Bible. And I am one who submits to a pre-tribulational approach to eschatology. And I imagine that many of you are probably the same.

There are other approaches. And while I think those approaches and beliefs are wrong, you can still have those and still be a Christian, right? We're all looking at this and trying to sort it through.

The most important thing is that you know you're in Christ. And that however these events play out, you're in Christ. You will be glorified as he is glorified. So this event, what we're talking about, glorification will take place at the rapture of the church.

Jesus coming back halfway between heaven and earth. And he calls out to his church those who are in Christ and who are alive, those who have died and are in Christ.

And there will be a resurrection. Those who are living will be transformed in the twinkling of an eye. Those who will be brought out of the graves will likewise be transformed. God is going to call us.

[9 : 44] Christ is going to call us. And we're out of here. Thank God. Because we won't want to be here. Because the next thing that's going to happen is the Antichrist is going to arise. And there's

going to be seven years of tribulation.

And you're not going to want to be here when that takes place. So after that, rise of the Antichrist, the tribulation as we spoke about, there will be the battle of Armageddon, then the judgment of the nations, then the binding of Satan, then the millennial kingdom, then after that thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, there will be a final defeat of Satan, the great white throne judgment, where those who have been resurrected to eternal life will receive the new creation, and those who are resurrected to eternal death will be cast into the lake of fire.

Glorification also must not be confused with the intermediate state. So, for those who die in faith before the return of Christ, the Bible says that their souls immediately go to be with the Lord.

There is no such thing as soul sleep. I had a long conversation with a woman from my previous church, a beautiful, sweet old lady. She was convinced that there was soul sleep.

And I told her, I was like, well, when you do die, I don't think you'll be disappointed. And so the Bible says that when we die, when a believer dies, before Christ returns, our soul goes to be with him in heaven.

[11 : 20] If you remember, to the thief on the cross who was dying with our Lord, he said to him, right, he came to faith in Christ as he was dying on the cross, and Jesus said to him, today, this day, this very day, you will be with me in paradise.

Likewise, in Philippians 1.23, we weren't there that long ago, Paul said to depart, for him to depart meant to be with Christ physically.

And that was far better. Before glorification, or because I should say glorification involves both the body and the soul, it does not take place when a believer's soul enters the current intermediate heaven, but rather at the second coming of Christ.

So, let's unpack more of what glorification means. First of all, we see that glorification is the consummation of salvation.

It's the consummation of salvation. Back in verse 21, the Apostle Paul says, speaking of Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.

[12 : 33] Transform in the Greek is the word *metaschematizo*, which means to remodel or to transfigure or to transform oneself.

We will be transformed by him. Christ will totally transform our bodies. He will make us fit for heaven. Believers' bodies will have a new schematic.

This isn't a restoration, but a reformation. They will be refashioned. They will be redesigned. And we will talk about that more in just a little bit.

But the most detailed, probably the most detailed description of what believers' resurrected bodies will look like comes from the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 40 through 49.

And I want to look at those verses together. He says there, There are heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies. But the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another.

[13 : 36] There is one glory of the sun, there is another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. For star differs from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead.

What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power.

It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, The first man, Adam, became a living being.

The last man, Adam, became a life-giving spirit, speaking of Christ. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the natural. And then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust.

The second man, speaking of our Lord, is from heaven. As the man of dust, as was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust. As is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.

[14 : 39] Just as we have borne the image of the man of the dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. Hallelujah. The resurrection of the body, then, is the consummation of our salvation.

As the Spirit applies the completion of our redemption that the Father had planned, and that Christ has purchased for us.

It's the consummation of our salvation. Let's look at another verse. Romans 8.30. It features glorification as the climax of our redemption, as the consummation of our salvation.

There it says, And those whom He predestined, He also called. And those whom He called, He also justified. And those whom He justified, He also glorified.

So you see, in justification, those whom the Father predestined for salvation, have been freed from the penalty of sin.

[15 : 44] In sanctification, they are freed from the power of sin. In glorification, they are finally freed from the presence of sin, both in their body and in their soul.

Jesus declared Himself the intentions of the saving work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and included the redemption of body and soul in John 6, 39-40. There He said, So the combination of a redeemed spirit and a glorified body will enable all believers to perfectly manifest the glory of God. Sin, weakness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, suffering, fear, worry, doubt, hate, and failure will give way to joy, pleasure, knowledge, comfort, bliss, peace, and love.

Glorification is the consummation of our salvation. Next, the Bible says that glorification is also the fulfillment of Jesus' desire to see His church purified.

It's the fulfillment of Jesus' desire to see His church purified. Let's look at Ephesians 5, 25-27. There again, the Apostle Paul says, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

[17 : 55] So you understand that our marriages, Christians, our marriages reflect the gospel. They reflect the relationship that Christ has with His church.

This is why we take such a bold stance on marriage as it's defined in Scripture, between a man and a woman, because it reflects the relationship between Christ and His church.

And here we see husbands. How are we to love our wives? How are we to treat them? As Christ has treated His church.

How did He treat His church? By sacrificing Himself for the church. And so, husbands, we are to love our wives in this way.

And when we do, it reflects the gospel. And especially in the days that we live in now, with the redefinition of marriage by our world, husbands and wives, this is our opportunity to show them what marriage is about.

[19 : 10] The way we love and treat one another ought to reflect the way our Lord and Savior has loved and treated His church. He's going to present us to Himself, spotless and perfect and pure.

Whenever we get done with the book of Philippians, we'll go to Hosea. I don't know anymore when that's going to be. I thought we would already be there. I thought we'd be done with Philippians by now. So, I'm not going to say. Just that that's where we're going.

And you've heard me talk about this before. And you've probably read Hosea before yourself. God tells Hosea to go and marry, basically, the woman from the other side of the train tracks.

And He tells him, you're going to love her. You're going to have children with her. And she is going to leave you, commit adultery, and live the life of a prostitute.

But get this, even though she abandons you and goes and pursues other lovers, you are going to go find her. After all those lovers have abandoned her, and you are going to redeem her, you are going to bring her back into your house.

[20 : 29] You are going to love her. That pictures us in Christ. Do you understand? We are Gomer.

We are that prostitute from the other side of the tracks. We are the one who pursues other lovers. And thank God for His mercy and His grace, that while we were yet sinners, He died for us, drawing us to Himself.

And on this day, presenting us, purified, His bride. What an awesome thing that will be.

Thirdly, the glorified bodies we receive will have a new nature. They will have a new nature. Going back to 1 Corinthians 15, 49, Paul says, Just as we have borne the image of the Son of Man, or the Man of Dust, I should say, we shall also bear the image of the Man of Heaven.

Something is going to happen to us here. God's intention is that His people have restored fellowship with Him. In order for that to happen, we must undergo this transformation.

[21 : 37] So what will our resurrection bodies be like? Well, there's a few things that we can draw from Scripture to help us know a little bit. First of all, the resurrection body will have continuity with our natural body.

It will have continuity with our natural bodies. This is a mysterious thing. This is to say that the body we inherit in glorification will not be entirely different from the body that you have now.

But it will be different. Scripture says that God will also give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8, 11. That is to say our bodies will be changed, but not exchanged. Let's look at, again, 1 Corinthians 15, this time verses 50 through 53.

I tell you this, brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery.

[22 : 40] We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed.

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must also put on immortality. And so we see from Jesus who was the first fruits of the resurrection.

And since Scripture says that he will transform believers' lowly body into being his glorious body, as we talked about here, we can draw inferences about what we will be like in the resurrection based upon what he was like after his resurrection.

You will be you, but perfect. Version 2.0, if you will. Christ rose in the same body that he was crucified.

Though he could obscure his appearance, once he revealed himself to those who knew him before the crucifixion, they recognized who he was. He ate.

[23 : 55] Praise the Lord, Baptists, right? He ate in that resurrected body. We won't need to eat, but we like to eat. He ate. He passed through walls.

He was in very many ways the same, but at the same time, completely different. Jesus endured a lot of pain.

He endured a lot of trauma prior to his death, and he still, as we see through Scripture, bears those scars where he was pierced for our transgressions.

However, no matter the trauma that you endure in death, God still has the power to raise you up to perfection. I was talking about this with a good friend of mine.

He's a construction worker, and he had an accident. He lost a chunk of his finger, and he had them, he quickly grabbed it, put it on ice.

[24 : 53] They couldn't attach it, but he didn't know what to do with it, and so he kept it in a box, and he kept it on his dresser, and we were talking. He said, you know what? I don't know what happened to that box.

I don't know where that piece of my finger is, and I told him, you know, Percy, on the day when Christ comes back and we're glorified, I think we'll see your little sliver of finger floating through the air, and then pow!

It will just go right where it was supposed to be. Now, that's a joke. I don't know that it will be like that at all, but you know what I'm saying. It's neat to talk about these kinds of things. Another question that comes up with this that I often hear from Christians as well, should we be buried or cremated because there's concern about the resurrection.

You may have never heard of a guy named John Wycliffe. He lived quite a long time ago, 1320, and he died in 1384. He was an English theologian and scholar and pastor.

He was a pre-reformer. He translated the Bible into English, which was a big no-no back in that day, and he got himself in a lot of trouble with the Catholic Church. He died as an old man, but he got himself in so much trouble that in 1415, 30 years after this man died, they dug up his body.

[26 : 08] The Pope ordered his body to be dug up, to be exhumed. They burned it, and they collected all of his ashes, and they threw it into the river. There's an example of bad eschatology for you.

They're saying, we're going to destroy this guy's body so he can't be raised up on the last day, but I'm telling you that John Wycliffe will be there. He will be there. So will other believers who have been incinerated in fires.

So will other believers who have been torn to pieces. However, I will say that if you look at the burials in the Bible, we see that both for men and women, they were in fact buried.

They did not undergo cremation. So there you have it. Okay? You guys can debate yourselves. Don't send me any emails. If you want to be buried, I will be there, and you want me to do your

funeral, I will be there.

If you want to be cremated, and you want me to do your funeral, I'll be there. Okay? You guys can discuss that amongst yourself. There's other more important things to do. Let's continue on.

[27 : 18] The resurrection body will be significantly different from the natural body. It will be significantly different from the natural body, as we saw in 1 Corinthians 15, 42 through 44.

And there Paul outlines for us, he contrasts between our resurrection bodies and our natural bodies and what they will be like. And so there he says to us that our resurrection body will be imperishable.

It will be imperishable. Now in this life, it is painfully obvious that our bodies are subject to infirmity and deterioration.

And if you don't believe that, I've got some scars on my stomach where I had my gallbladder taken out, right? Because it didn't work anymore because this body was sown perishable.

Just as yours are. Man, and if you've seen somebody you've loved dying slowly from an illness, whether it be cancer or something else, you know that death is ugly.

[28 : 23] Death is not pretty. Death is not a pleasurable experience. And thank God that when we are raised, we will be raised imperishable.

our present bodies go through the corruption of sin. They grow old.

They wear out. They contract sicknesses, diseases. But our resurrection bodies will not endure any of those things.

Thank God. So, another question that I often hear is, well, we're raised imperishable, but how old will we be? I don't know.

I don't have any clue. But to say that it will be an immortal body, so who cares? Amen? Amen.

There wasn't many amens there. Many of you might still care about that.

[29 : 32] Well, you're not going to find that answer until you get there. I will share a story with you. My grandmother was terrified of dying. She lived by herself.

She was a Christian woman. She was scared of what was going to happen to her. When she died, she was just scared of the process. And so, she lived in Maryland and my family is out here in Kansas.

And so, she was just afraid of dying alone and going through all that. And she died in her sleep. She died painless. She died of natural causes. She died in her sleep. And so, that was an answer of prayer for my mom is that she wasn't, she didn't have to go through all that she could have gone through.

But what's interesting is that not much longer, my oldest sister had a dream. And in her dream, she had a door open to her and inside was this party.

Not a wild and crazy sinful party. You know what I'm saying? Just people having a good time. And the woman who opened the door was my grandmother but it wasn't my grandmother as we were used to seeing her in her 80s.

[30 : 41] She was a young woman, vibrant and full of life. God does speak to us in dreams. Now, I don't want you to think that every dream has some kind of message in it because we dream some really weird stuff sometimes, right? That is not coming from God.

But to say that we, you may know or have heard of stories like that. She's there. She's going to be like that and so are we. We will be raised imperishable.

The resurrection body will be marked by glory. The bodies which we now have ought to be set apart, consecrated as the temple of the Holy Spirit, but they are yielded to sin and they are often used as instruments of unrighteousness which brings dishonor to God and to ourselves, to our own bodies.

Even the most faithful believers will experience the ultimate dishonor of death. Again, death is not a pleasant thing. It is not a pretty thing. However, that imperfect body dishonored by death will one day be raised in glory.

Our resurrection bodies will be perfectly suited for heaven and able to please, praise, and fully enjoy the Creator who made us and the Redeemer who reformed us.

[31 : 58] Also, we see that the natural body is sown in weakness but the resurrection body is raised in power. We know this.

The body deteriorates. I was thinking of Michael Jordan, the greatest basketball player of all time, is no longer the greatest basketball player of all time. He's gotten old. He's gotten fat.

He's gotten slow. He can't do what he wants to do. You know, LeBron James is the greatest basketball player right now. Now, the same thing is going to happen to him. You already see he's losing his hair on top. He's going to get old.

He's going to get fat. He's not going to be able to compete like he once did. His body is getting weaker just as you and I. Our bodies are getting weaker but when we are raised, our bodies will be raised in power.

The resurrection body will be in perfect harmony with the Holy Spirit. Believers will be undefiled, undeterred, and undisrupted by sin.

[32 : 59] Our ambitions, desires, and aspirations will be for God and we will fully enjoy the new creation in our new form. Whatever infirmities you have in this life, whatever slows you down in this life, whatever disease or illness that you've battled in your life, you will no longer have that battle or that struggle in heaven.

You understand? We will be fully and completely restored and uncontaminated by sin in any way. Now, people hear this and they think, that sounds like wishful thinking to me.

Sounds good. But how do we know that that's going to happen? Well, I think Paul answers those objections at the end of verse 21. by saying this, Christ has the power to both create natural laws and he has the power to overrule them.

In verse 21, he concludes by saying, by the power that enables him, Jesus, to subject all things to himself. He created those natural laws. He has the power to overrule them and to do something tremendous as we saw take place in his earthly life as well.

And so, Paul's point is that if the Christian can subject the entire, if Christ, I should say, can subject the entire universe to his sovereign control, he has no problem with the ability to be able to transform believers' bodies into his image.

[34 : 36] So then, Christian, since this is awaiting you, you will experience this one day, the Bible says, without question.

You will be glorified. Your salvation will be brought to completion. You will see Jesus face to face. You will stand in his kingdom for thousands and thousands and ten thousands of millions of years forever.

forever. This is your destiny. And it's been accomplished by Jesus Christ for you. Since that is the truth, the question is how will you live now knowing that that awaits you?

How will you spend your days here knowing that that certain future is going to become your reality and it may happen sooner than you expect it?

How are you going to live your life now? Something I came across some time ago from Ravi Zacharias is a good reminder for me to try to keep things into perspective about the fact that we one day will die.

[35 : 56] Now if Christ comes back, we will be transformed. We've been through that. But we will one day, should he not come back before, our time comes, which he's already said, we will experience death.

And so I want to share this long quote with you from him. He says, death is the moment we all seek to flee. Yet it is a moment that the Bible says has been set for each of us before it ever comes to be. King David said it this way, for you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. And he continues, we must learn to live every day to the fullest in healthy recognition that one day it will be our last day.

Was it not ironic that one of the passengers who died in the American Airlines crash in Queens, New York in early November 2001 had escaped the inferno of the World Trade Centers in September.

[37 : 10] Another passenger on that plane he says was a young sailor who had just returned from extended duties overseas on the USS Enterprise. The Bible tells of the time when Lazarus, one of Jesus' friends, took ill.

His family sent word for Jesus to come and heal him. But by the time Jesus came, Lazarus was dead. His sisters greeted Jesus with these sharp words, if you had been there, our brother would not have died.

Jesus went to the tomb and he wept. But as he dried his tears, he performed the remarkable miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead.

And he goes on. Jesus said to the family gathered, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies.

His miracle is not to be there to keep us from dying. It is to take us from death into his eternal presence which is the place of ultimate communion.

[38 : 29] Then he goes on to say that some years ago I was in Israel and I visited the village of Bethany where Lazarus' body once lay before Jesus raised him.

So he went to the physical location. Then he says a few months ago I stood by the tomb of Lazarus in Larnica of Cyprus. So Lazarus went on.

He went on to be the bishop of that town. He lived later on after that resurrection. And then he continues that tomb of Lazarus was excavated nearly 1,000 years ago and the simple inscription on his grave said this Lazarus bishop of Larnica four days dead friend of Jesus.

The first tomb reminded me of the possibility of the miracle. The second tomb reminded me of the reality of death.

Then he concludes by saying the inscription spoke of the greatest miracle and reality of all.

Communion with the living God. That intimate friendship is the kind of communion that helps you face death knowing that your friend is with you beyond the grave.

[39 : 59] So you see we don't have reason truly to worry and be afraid in this life because we have hope in Jesus Christ and no matter what your struggle might be now or no matter how great you think life might be right now the hope the best days for the Christian are always still ahead and if you know Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior this is your future we know that should he tarry any longer and we die that we will go to be with him we know that one day we will undergo this transformation we will be glorified like him we will spend our days with him forever in heaven how are you going to live your life now man I would say that you should live it fully committed to the work of

Jesus Christ to what's going on here at this church you ought to let your light shine brightly for those who are around you that they might know the hope that you have in Jesus Christ and if you're here this morning and you don't know that hope or you're just not sure but as you've heard these words of God's word you feel God drawing you to himself I ask that you come down as we sing our invitation hymn I'd like to speak with you I'd like to pray with you and I want you to know that God loves you that he is looking forward to this day when he purifies his church Thank you.