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Today at MRC we continued our morning series in Philippians as Paul again urged the Christians there facing opposition to follow him and his own example as he follows Christ. We were exploring 3:15-4:3.

We started the sermon by thinking about the way films are able to ask big questions. We focused in on Jason Bourne in the Bourne trilogy and the big questions he needs to initially get to grips with - such as who am I...?, where am I from...?, where am I going...? And why are these people trying to kill me?!

As we considered our verses for this week we noted that 4:1 stands at the centre as he urges them, despite the pressures, to stand firm, but also that both of Bourne's questions are relevant for the Christian.

1. Be clear on who you are. 3:20-21

It's important to both know our identity as Christians, but also how this works out in the nooks and crannies of everyday life. Paul wants them to remember they are citizens of heaven, who serve a different person who will one day come back for them.

We've noted already in the series that the citizenship language is key for Philippi as a Roman colony - it was a city belonging to Rome... But based in Italy. Inhabited by citizens of Rome but away from Rome.... Well so for Christians - citizens of heaven but living on the earth. At home - but not at home.

We noted that our heavenly citizenship is all about Christ. He is both in charge and powerful now, but also the goal of our existence - one who will transform our sinful broken bodies and to be transformed into glorious bodies like his.

2. Be clear on what your challenges are. 3:18-19 and 4:2-3

As well as knowing who we are - we need to be aware of the challenges. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

He outlines 2 in this section. The first in v18-19 are most likely very immature believers or unbelievers outside the church who think as God is bound to forgive you can do whatever you want. He says their minds are on earthly things - they are ruled by their appetites and they are destined for destruction. Note the huge contrast with those whom he describes as heavenly citizens. These people are very much citizens of earth...

The second challenge is division within the church. As Paul calls the Philippian Christians to stand firm it is a corporate call - to together stand firm. The evidence is they are not doing this - they are dividing.

Shockingly Paul publically calls out 2 prominent women who have squabbled. Paul calls on them to be united in the Lord. Reminding them both of their unity in the Lord but also their both being in the book of life. He calls them to remember who they are and live accordingly.

Here are a few questions to start your group off. As always feel free to adapt, add to or ignore as you see fit.

Where do people find their identity in this world?

Why do you think so many films deal with this topic?

From v20-21 how would Paul answer the question 'who am I' as a Christian?

How can we get this truth to filter down into the nooks and crannies of everyday life?

Do you think we as the 'Western church' are affected by the first challenge? Has the world crept into the church? In what ways? Why / why not?

Why is unity so important? How does Paul seek to deal with it here?

Are there people you need to be reconciled with?