



**KING'S  
CHURCH**  
EDINBURGH

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# Total Imitation

## Philippians 3: 17-21

The Bible repeatedly encourages us to learn from others (Psalm 145:4, John 13:15, Hebrews 13:7, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6). This isn't a form of hero-worship and shouldn't lead to despairing comparison (each one of us has our own gifts and measure of ability), it's about imitating their faith. Being an example is a leadership responsibility but all of us should try to encourage each other through how we live. This is part of how God loves and cares for us.

Paul also gives a strong warning of a different kind of living (18-19): people who are opposed to God's revelation and salvation through the cross, whose agenda is set by their own desires and the here-and-now, and whose rejection of God will have eternal consequences. We need to consider whether we are being affected by this way of thinking: What are the things you are living for, hoping in, allowing to set your agenda, giving your best energies to?

Christians are to be humble and hopeful. All that Paul has said in chapters 2 and 3 points to this, and 3:20-21 focuses again on Christian hope.

- **“Our citizenship is in heaven.”** Just as Philippi was a Roman colony, a display of another way of living, so the church is to demonstrate that we belong to Jesus, not this world. Our allegiance is to God alone.
- **“We await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”** The word *“await”* here has a strong sense of eagerness, like an event that you are counting the days down to in excited anticipation.
- **We will be changed.** The frustrations with ourselves that we currently experience will be over when Jesus transforms us to make us like Him. The resurrection body

He has is a demonstration of what we will experience too. As different but related as a seed is to a blossoming plant, and as a fertilised egg is to a mature adult, so we will be gloriously changed.

The imitation of Christ that we practice now is an anticipation of our complete transformation into the likeness of Christ.

## Questions

- Who are the people who have inspired and encouraged you in your walk with God?
- How do we work out what to imitate in someone and what is uniquely them?
- What are the things you are living for, hoping in, allowing to set your agenda, giving your best energies to?
- How can we fill our minds with the hope that Paul encourages us to have? What encourages this, and what makes it harder?



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