

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

Kansas City, Missouri

A SIX-DAY DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY

Naturalized:

Your Permanent Citizenship in the Kingdom of God

“Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.”

Hebrews 2:11 (NIV)

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WEEK OF AUGUST 16, 2026

DAY 1 — THE POLITICS OF HEAVEN: KNOWING THE KINGDOM YOU BELONG TO

SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 1:13–14 (NIV)

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Most of us do not understand how policy shapes our daily lives. We move through our days assuming that whatever desires, thoughts, and expectations we carry will automatically apply to us, and we rarely look up at the horizon to see what is shifting in our relationship to the governing documents under which we live. Then something moves. Hundreds of thousands of Haitian residents in this country learned, almost overnight, that a protection they had built a life upon could be reconsidered and withdrawn. Suddenly a question that felt academic became personal: what exactly is my standing, and who decides it? Nations are driven by their policies. Kingdoms are governed by their covenants. And what is true of nations is true of the kingdom of God.

Here is what may surprise you: there is politics in heaven. Not partisanship, not campaigning, but governance — a throne, an order, a set of terms that determines who belongs, what they may access, and what their belonging obligates them to do. What determines your relationship with Scripture is the political order that governs God's kingdom. So let us state the matter plainly: living by God's Word is essential to fulfilling our position and God's purpose in the kingdom covenant. Notice the order of that sentence. No citizen has a purpose in the Constitution; the Constitution has a purpose, and the citizen finds their standing inside it. The document does not exist to serve us. It describes the kingdom, and it determines who qualifies for the kingdom it describes.

Someone in heaven decided the policy did not suit him. Satan looked at an order in which God alone was head of all things and glory flowed to God alone, and he concluded that he was good enough to deserve some of it. He did not merely disagree; he violated the policy, and in violating it he forfeited his citizenship. So he came down to build a rival kingdom on this earth — but the earth already had an assignment. It was made to become the place where God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. The rebellion could relocate, but it could not escape. The standards of heaven will eventually govern this ground.

“Nations are driven by their policies, and so is heaven. What determines your relationship with the Word of God is the governing order of the kingdom you claim to belong to.”

Which raises the question this week is built to answer. How do we qualify for a kingdom that some of the angels no longer qualify for — a kingdom that was never promised to angels as an inheritance in the first place? Colossians gives us the shape of the answer before we ever get to the mechanics. We were rescued. We were transferred. We did not apply, we did not earn a place in line, and we did not present credentials. God moved us out of one jurisdiction and into another, and He did it at the cost of redemption and the forgiveness of sins. Every right we hold in this kingdom traces back to that transfer.

But a transfer you never learn about is a transfer you never live in. Far too many believers are carrying a passport they have never opened, holding privileges they have never claimed, and bearing responsibilities they have never accepted — and then wondering why their spiritual life feels so thin. You either live your life on purpose, or you live it by accident and circumstance. This week we are going to read the terms of our citizenship carefully, because a people who do not know their standing cannot exercise their authority.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. *When I look honestly at the last month of my life, what evidence is there that I actually know the terms of the kingdom I claim to belong to — and where have I simply been living on assumption?*
2. *What have I quietly assumed God owes me without ever finding it in His Word? Where did that assumption come from, and what has it cost me to hold onto it?*
3. *If I began treating Scripture as the governing document of my life rather than as inspiration I consult when convenient, what would visibly change in my week?*
4. *Where am I still trying to build a small kingdom of my own on ground that belongs to God — and what would it look like to surrender that territory this week?*

DAY 2 — DON'T DRIFT: THE COST OF CARELESS ATTENTION

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews 2:1 (NIV)

We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

Proverbs 4:25–27 (NIV)

Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Our kingdom position requires careful attention to our covenantal responsibilities to God's Word. The writer of Hebrews begins the chapter with a therefore, and a therefore always points backward. Because of everything God has established — the Son who is the radiance of His glory, the salvation He announced, the position He has prepared — we must pay the most careful attention to what we have heard. And notice what he warns against. He does not warn us against rebellion. He warns us against drifting.

Drifting is the sin that never requires a decision. Nobody wakes up and resolves to drift. Think about how you drive. You get in the car fully intending to obey every law on the road. Then the music gets good, the conversation gets interesting, your mind travels to the meeting you have at ten, and without any act of the will your speed climbs and your lane wanders. You did not decide anything. You simply stopped paying attention, and the current did the rest. Now drift long enough and get caught often enough, and the state will take your license. It will not take your citizenship — you are still an American — but it will take some of the freedom that comes with your citizenship.

That is precisely what God is saying to some of us. You have drifted from your kingdom responsibilities, and I am not going to put you out of the kingdom — but I will let you experience what it is like to live without some of the privileges that belong to you. That is why so many believers are saved and powerless at the same time. It is not that God revoked the promise. It is that attention was never paid, and privileges that go unused eventually go unfelt.

“Drifting never requires a decision — and that is exactly what makes it dangerous. No one sets out to drift. We simply stop paying attention, and the current does the rest.”

So let me ask you a question I want you to answer honestly. If your Christian walk were a boat, which boat would it be? Some of us are rafts. We are simply sitting on the water, and wherever the current goes, we go — no rudder, no destination, no resistance, just motion we did not choose. Others of us are sailboats. We have more dignity than a raft, but we are still at the mercy of the wind. When the culture blows one direction we lean that way, and when it shifts we shift with it, and we call our inconsistency being open-minded. But there is a third boat. The motorboat has an engine and a heading. The wind still blows and the current still pulls, but neither one determines where that boat lands. Which one most looks like you?

My fear is that some of us do not have the power God has already given us in our citizenship, and the reason is not persecution or opposition. It is drift. Proverbs tells us to fix our gaze directly ahead and to give careful thought to the path of our feet, because the direction of your attention eventually becomes the direction of your life. What you keep looking at, you will eventually drift toward. Pay attention.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Am I a raft, a sailboat, or a motorboat right now? What specific evidence from this past month supports my answer, rather than the answer I wish were true?
2. Where have I stopped paying attention — a spiritual discipline, a relationship, a commitment — not because I rejected it, but because something else simply got louder?
3. Which privilege of my kingdom citizenship do I sense I am no longer walking in, and what drift preceded the loss of it?
4. What one habit of attention will I re-establish this week to put a rudder back in my hand — and when, specifically, will I do it?

DAY 3 — HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE? THE WEIGHT OF DIVINE CONSEQUENCE

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews 2:2–4 (NIV)

For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Our covenantal responsibility carries both practical and divine consequences. When we are not where God has positioned us to be, it does not only affect us — it slows the movement of the kingdom itself. The writer makes his argument from the lesser to the greater, and he begins with what heaven already witnessed. The message spoken through angels was binding. When the angels chose, their choice was a signature. There was no appeal, no probation, no explaining that it had been a difficult season. Their decision was binding, and every violation received its just punishment. That is how policy works in heaven. What God does about it is permanent.

So the question lands with real weight: how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? Notice the verb. He does not say if we attack it, mock it, or preach against it. He says if we ignore it. There are people who love living in the country but have no interest in the responsibilities of citizenship. They will enjoy the roads, the safety, the opportunity, and the protection, but they will not do the paperwork, will not learn the terms, and will not stand for the oath. What they do not always realize is that at some point standing gets reviewed. Jesus said plainly that a day comes when the wheat is separated from the chaff and the sheep from the goats — when those who are His remain and those who are not are removed. And there is only one other jurisdiction to be removed to.

Understand what that place is and what it is not. When Satan and his angels fell, God prepared a place of eternal separation for them; Jesus described it as the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. It was not designed for you. But if a person spends a lifetime declining the adoption God offers and choosing another allegiance, God finally honors the choice and places them where that allegiance leads. And here is a sobering thought: if the torment is severe for beings who beheld God's glory and still rejected Him, we should tremble at the thought of joining them there when we never had to.

“The angels had no conception of redemption, no experience of grace, no category for forgiveness. When Christ announced it, He was revealing an attribute of God that heaven itself had never seen.”

But God is not willing that any should perish, and so the offer goes out to all mankind — and He backed it with evidence. This salvation was first announced by the Lord Himself, confirmed by eyewitnesses who heard Him, and then testified to by God through signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will. Heaven did not whisper this and hope we noticed. God signed His own announcement.

And here is what makes it more astonishing still: the angels had never heard of such a thing. They had no conception of redemption, no experience of grace, no category for forgiveness — not because God lacked those attributes, but because heaven had never needed them displayed. So when Christ came announcing redemption from sin, He was revealing dimensions of God's character that the heavenly host had never seen. The fallen angels heard it and discovered they did not qualify. Now let me tell you the secret at the center of this week: neither did we. He announced a salvation none of us had standing to receive, and then He gave us the standing.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. *Is there any part of my salvation I have been quietly ignoring — not denying, simply neglecting — and what has that neglect been costing the people around me?*
2. *Do I live as though my choices are binding signatures before God, or as though there is always more time to get serious? What does my calendar say about the answer?*
3. *If God has confirmed His word to me by evidence in my own life, what specific evidence would I name — and when did I last thank Him for it out loud?*
4. *What responsibility of kingdom citizenship have I been enjoying the benefits of without carrying the weight of, and what will I take up this week?*

DAY 4 — WHAT IS MANKIND? THE POSITION THE ANGELS NEVER RECEIVED

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews 2:5–8a (NIV)

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

We were designed to use God’s Word to bring His kingdom into this world — and that design provoked the greatest astonishment heaven has ever known. The writer says it flatly: it is not to angels that God has subjected the world to come. The fallen angels had assumed that since they were cast down to the earth, the earth would become their domain. The angels who remained in heaven reasoned that if the earthly kingdom did not belong to the rebels, surely it belonged to them. God answered both: the kingdom I am building is not the inheritance of the angels who stayed or the angels who fell. Then they look around the room and ask the obvious question — who else is even qualified?

That is when the psalmist’s words become the angels’ words. What is mankind that You are mindful of them? What separates these creatures from the animals, the trees, the grass, and everything else You spoke into being? You made them lower than us — and You did it on purpose. You did not make more of us; You made something less than us. And then You crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet. You gave them dominion. You told them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, when we do not multiply because we are already here.

If you want to feel what the angels felt, remember the last time you watched a company pass over the people who had carried it for years and hire from the outside. You know the operation. You have given it your best seasons. And leadership brings in someone who does not know the building, the history, or the work, and places them above you. Something in you comes undone — not just disappointment, but a sense that the order of things has been violated. Now multiply that by eternity and you begin to understand the astonishment in heaven when God crowned dust with glory.

“The angels were citizens of heaven; we never were. Everything we hold in this kingdom, we hold by grace — we are the foreigners God decided to bring home.”

But here is the difference that changes everything, and it is the heart of today’s reading. The angels were citizens of heaven. We never were. They had standing to lose; we had no standing at all. So when God grants us a place in His kingdom, He is not restoring something we once held — He is conferring something we never had. Grace gives us a birth certificate in a country we were not born in. That is why God’s goodness spills so freely over people who have not yet acknowledged Him: He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Asaph nearly slipped watching it, admitting in Psalm 73 that his feet almost gave way when he compared the prosperity of the wicked to his own trouble — until he entered the sanctuary and understood their end.

So do not resent the grace that lands on people who do not deserve it. God told Israel to treat the foreigner among them with dignity and to love him as one of their own, and we should remember why that command should silence us. Every one of us was the foreigner. We are only in the household because Someone who did not owe us anything decided to be mindful of us.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. *Do I actually believe I was crowned with glory and honor — or do I live beneath the dignity God assigned me? Where does that low view of myself show up most?*
2. *Where have I quietly resented God’s goodness toward someone I felt had not earned it, and what does that resentment reveal about how I think I earned mine?*
3. *What territory has God given me dominion over — my home, my work, my influence, my body — that I have been managing carelessly rather than stewarding as a kingdom assignment?*
4. *Who is the “foreigner” in my life right now — the person on the outside of my circle — and what specific act of welcome will I extend to them this week?*

DAY 5 — WE DO SEE JESUS: THE ONE WHO OPENED THE DOOR

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews 2:8b–9 (NIV)

Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Scripture is honest with us in a way we are rarely honest with ourselves. God has put everything under our feet and left nothing outside of that subjection — yet at present we do not see it. We do not experience the full benefit of our citizenship. We do not walk in the full authority. We do not carry the insight that ought to accompany people who belong to the King. The Bible does not pretend otherwise. It admits the gap between our position and our experience, and then it tells us exactly where to look while we are living in that gap.

But we do see Jesus. That is the pivot of the entire chapter. To understand your citizenship, you do not study other people, you do not survey the culture, and you do not measure yourself against your circumstances. You look at one Person. And this is precisely where the enemy fights hardest, because he cannot revoke what Christ secured — he can only distract you from looking at it. So he fills your day with other algorithms. Voices that tell you that you are not enough. Voices that tell you the church has nothing to offer. Voices that catalog your failures with an accuracy that feels like truth. Do not give them your gaze. Look at Jesus.

And look closely at what the verse says about Him. He was made lower than the angels for a little while. You do not have to look at angels to understand your standing, because the Son came down into the same category you occupy. He is now crowned with glory and honor — and the reason given is startling. Because He suffered death. Do not rush past that. Somebody had to suffer death. Satan's accusation against us had always been that sinners cannot occupy a kingdom position; death stood between us and the throne as the obstacle nothing in us could remove. So Christ removed it Himself.

“You were locked outside a door you could never open. Jesus walked up with the card that works, held it open, and said, “Come in with Me.” That is the whole gospel in a single gesture.”

Picture standing outside a building you have every reason to enter and no ability to open. You pull the handle and nothing moves. You have no badge, no code, no key. Then someone who actually works there walks up, swipes the card, holds the door with His shoulder and says: come on in with Me. That is what happened at the cross and the empty tomb. Jesus swiped a card you could never carry and made a pathway into the kingdom for everyone who follows Him through the door. By the grace of God, He tasted death for everyone. He paid a price that was ours.

So when your experience does not yet match your position, do not conclude the position is a lie. The gap between what is legally yours and what is presently visible is exactly where faith lives. We do not yet see everything under our feet. But we do see Jesus — crowned, glorified, and holding the door open — and that sight is enough to keep walking on days when nothing else confirms it.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Which voices have been getting my attention this week — and what have they been telling me about who I am? Whose report have I actually been believing?
2. Where does the gap between my kingdom position and my daily experience discourage me most, and what have I concluded about God in that gap?
3. What would change about how I begin my day if the first face I looked into were the face of Jesus rather than the feed on my phone?
4. What door am I standing outside of, exhausted from pulling on a handle that will not move? What would it mean to stop pulling and follow the One who already opened it?

DAY 6 — NATURALIZED: A CITIZENSHIP THAT CANNOT BE REVOKED

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews 2:14–15, 17–18 (NIV)

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death... For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

There is a difference between a status that is granted and a status that is family, and the difference is what can be contested. A certificate can always be challenged. Somewhere down the line, somebody can question the paperwork, dispute the standing, and file to have it voided — and that is precisely the accuser's business. Satan is not merely tempting you; he is litigating against you, working to have your papers thrown out and your protections repealed. So God did something no court can undo. He did not simply certify us. He naturalized us.

Watch how He did it. It was fitting, the writer says, that God should make the pioneer of our salvation perfect through what He suffered — the pioneer being the first one to travel the road, the One who came down below the angels and went back up crowned. Under the old covenant, sacrifice worked something like posting bond: the offering was imperfect, so it purchased a continuance rather than a verdict, and grace kept moving the trial date while the debt remained. Christ ended the continuances and settled the case. And then came the words that ought to steady you every day of your life: both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family, so Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. He stands in the assembly and says, here am I, and the children God has given me. You were not merely processed into the kingdom. You were adopted into the family of the King.

That adoption sealed the loophole. Free will had been the opening through which rebellion entered heaven, and flesh and blood was the vulnerability the enemy exploited on earth. So the Son took on flesh and blood Himself, and by His death broke the power of the one who held the power of death, freeing all who had spent their lives enslaved by the fear of it. This is why Paul tells us we do not grieve as those who have no hope. For those outside the kingdom, death is the moment allegiance becomes permanent. For us, death is nothing more than the transition into the kingdom Christ died to place us in.

“A certificate can be challenged. A family cannot. God did not merely issue you papers — He adopted you, so that the One who saves and the ones who are saved belong to the same household.”

And He did not leave us to figure out the journey alone. He became a merciful and faithful high priest, fully human in every way, and because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted. Your High Priest is not a distant official reviewing your file. He has walked the ground you are walking. He knows the weight of the temptation you are carrying right now, and He is present with you in it — not to shame you, but to help you.

So here is the charge as this week closes. God has given His citizens a governing document — sixty-six books — and He is asking us to live by it every single day. The tragedy is not that we lack standing; it is that so many of us have never read the terms of the standing we have. Do not spend another season powerless in a kingdom where everything has been placed under your feet. Go and teach others to observe everything He commanded, and hold onto the promise attached to it: surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. *Do I live like an adopted child of God or like someone whose papers might not hold up? Where does that insecurity show itself most clearly in how I pray?*
2. *What has the fear of death — or the fear of loss, ending, or failure — been quietly dictating in my decisions, and what would freedom from that fear look like?*
3. *In what specific temptation do I most need to remember that Jesus has walked this exact ground and is able to help me — and have I actually asked Him for that help?*
4. *What is my plan to live by the constitution God has given me this coming week — when will I read it, and who will I teach to live by it alongside me?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we come to You this week as people who have not always understood the kingdom we belong to. We have taken our standing for granted. We have assumed that what we inherited would always be there, and we have rarely looked up to see what was shifting around us. Teach us the terms of our citizenship, Lord, and give us the humility to learn them from Your Word rather than from our assumptions.

We confess that we have drifted. Not in rebellion, but in inattention — the music got good, the days got full, and we stopped paying the most careful attention to what we have heard. Some of us have been rafts on the current, and some of us have been sailboats bending to whatever wind the culture sends. Put a rudder back in our hands. Restore to us the power that belongs to our citizenship, and forgive us for treating so great a salvation as something ordinary.

Lord, we stand amazed at what You revealed in Christ. Heaven had never seen redemption. The angels had no category for grace, no experience of forgiveness, no conception of a God who would stoop to rescue what He could have replaced. And yet You looked at us — lower, later, and unqualified — and You crowned us with glory and honor. What is mankind that You are mindful of us? We do not know. We only know that You were, and we thank You.

We admit today that we do not yet see everything under our feet. Our experience has not caught up to our position, and there are days the gap between them discourages us. But we do see Jesus. We see Him made lower for a little while, crowned now with glory and honor, tasting death for everyone, holding open a door that we could never open ourselves. Keep our eyes there, Lord, when other voices are louder and other reports feel truer.

And thank You, Father, that You did not merely certify us. You naturalized us. You made Your Son like us in every way so that He would not be ashamed to call us brothers and sisters, so that the fear of death would lose its grip on us, and so that we would have a High Priest who knows the ground we walk on. No accuser can void that adoption. No court can repeal that family.

So here we are. Citizens by grace, family by adoption, students of Your Word. Teach us to live by the constitution You have given us, to bring Your kingdom onto this ground as it is in heaven, and to walk in the authority You placed under our feet. Send us, Lord. And keep Your promise to be with us always, to the very end of the age. In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

Christian Fellowship Baptist Church · Kansas City, Missouri

Week of August 16, 2026