

“Go BE a Gospel-Worthy Witness!”

Philippians 1:27 – 2:2

September 24, 2017



INTRO: *“Come & See Christianity”*

- Welcome to week #39... Our Journey with Jesus!
- Today is 1 of 4... maturation thru saturation...
- I hope to help you fix last 12 weeks into focus...

T/S: To do that, today we'll look at **Philippians 1:27 – 2:2**

TITLE: ***“Go BE a Gospel-Worthy Witness!”***

BIG IDEA: Gospel-worthy lives look, live, & love like Christ!
(ALL by His grace & ALL for His glory!)

PREVIEW: 5 Essentials of a Gospel-Worthy Witness

An Uncompromising Army of Unified Ambassadors

Clarifying Courage

Suffering Servants

Combatting Corruption

BE-ing ONE in Work & Worship

TEXT: Philippians 1:27-30 (one Greek sentence)

Only

let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you (your witness) that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, 28 and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. 29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, 30 engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

I. A Gospel-Worthy Witness Requires:
An Uncompromising Army of Unified Ambassadors

A. MILITANT

Only

let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm...

Only

= used 333 times in the ESV... 4X in Joshua 1!

QUOTE:

Tony Miano (*A Life Worthy of the Gospel*)

The most essential thing a Christian must do, this side of Heaven, is to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Only this matters as a practical outworking of their justification, which, by design, fuels every aspect of their sanctification.

conduct yourselves

- Primary verb of the sentence...
- This is a **COMMAND / imperative**...
- Paul is emphasizing & utilizing a military motif...
- He is speaking to **EVERY facet** of their lives...

in a manner

- God has desired design! (**1 Corinthians 12:18**)
- See M.P. motto: *We set the standard for excellence!*
- God's Word tells God's family how to walk!
- God's missionaries have a missional "manner"
- Citizens of Rome & citizens of heaven have a manner

Paul reminds the congregation that they should look to Christ, not Caesar, for their model of behavior, since their primary allegiance is to God and his kingdom.

- ESV Study Bible

worthy of the gospel

A “value” based command that begs a value defining question:
What value do you put on the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Our lived-out-lives answer our value-defining question. - JDP

Remember: lips lie, lives tell the truth...

of Christ,

VIDEO: “Not Every Jesus”

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of which a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price, to buy which, the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.” — **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you
(a.k.a. your witness) *that you are... **standing firm** (13X in ESV)*

Charles Spurgeon about perseverance:

“Conversion is a turning into the right road; the next thing is to walk in it. The daily going on in that road is as essential as the first starting, if you are to reach the desired end... To start in the race is nothing, many have done that who have failed... Perseverance is as necessary to a man’s salvation as conversion.”

VIDEO: *“Back-slidden Christian or Unbeliever?”*

B. MISSIONAL

Only
*let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm **in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,***

"in one spirit" = believer’s unified Ambassador’s attitude.

QUOTE: Tony Miano (*A Life Worthy of the Gospel*)

A gospel-worthy life is not a nomadic existence. It is a life that cherishes fellowship (“koinonia”) with a congregation of followers of Christ. It is a life that welcomes the accountability of other Christians. It is a life that welcomes the opportunity to submit to the authority of God’s under-shepherds... It is a life that feeds on opportunities to fight the good fight of the faith, shoulder-to-shoulder with brothers & sisters in Christ. It is a life that desires unity with the Church and within the Church.

with one mind striving together (fighting/contending)

Lit. "same soul" = believers share "life."

ILLUSTRATION: picture striving together as a 3 legged race for life or death – winner take, loser lose... ALL!

Harmonious Homothoomadon!

*for the faith of **the** gospel:*

When Did a Message of Love Become a Message of Hate?

By **Shane Idleman**

*One of my greatest concerns is for the **pulpits of America:** many are **exchanging** truth for tolerance, boldness for balance, and conviction for cowardice.*

*We don't want to be offended lest we lose our audience.
But truth is controversial—its convicts and challenges...*

(The gospel divides the crowd & unifies the Church! - JDP)

*My goal is to simply share God's gracious gift. If being labeled narrow-minded, legalistic, judgmental, arrogant, and intolerant is the cost of speaking the truth in love, so be it. In **2 Timothy 4:1-4** Paul instructs Timothy, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead... **preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth... This should sound an alarm in the heart of every preacher, pastor, and teacher/discipler to seriously reevaluate their ministry—are we encouraging sin by not warning (against it)? If so, we're heading down a dangerous path.*

- Shane Idleman

II. A Gospel-Worthy Witness Requires:

Clarifying Courage

***28** and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.*

The Philippians perseverance and courage, as well as their suffering, served as absolute proof that those opposing and persecuting the Philippians had signed their own death warrants. They would be destroyed and spend eternity in Hell for their opposition to those who were living lives worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. A Gospel-Worthy Witness Requires: *Suffering Servants*

29 *For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*

We saw a few weeks ago: **Christ came to suffer & call us to it too**

Matthew 24:13

But the one who endures to the end will be saved. - Jesus

IV. A Gospel-Worthy Witness Requires: *Combatting Corruption*

30 *experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

God's Word says, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" ([1 Tim. 3:11-13](#)).

CLOSE:

V. A Gospel-Worthy Witness Requires:

BE-ing ONE in Word, Work, & Worship!

Philippians 2:1-2

*So/Therefore, if there is **any** encouragement in **Christ**,
any comfort from love, **any** participation in the Spirit,
any affection and (any) sympathy,
2 complete my joy by **BE-ing** of the **same** mind, having
the **same** love, **BE-ing** in **full accord** and
of **one** mind.*

VIDEO: "Francis Chan – Multiply 2012"

Ekklesia = koinonia + homothoomadon!

"In the end, when we bow before Jesus, voluntarily OR involuntarily, ALL that will matter is whether or not, by His grace & for His glory, we lived (vs. merely learned about) a life worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In that moment of judgement before Jesus, no other question or distraction will matter. Oh friend... I pray you will BE ready & stay focused." - JDP

Let's Pray

Sessions:

Content:

1

IMMERSED IN THE WORD

- Immersing ourselves in God's Word provides the foundation for our identity and life."

2

CONNECTED THROUGH PRAYER

- Prayer is our response to God's constant invitation to interact with Him.

3

LIVING IN COMMUNITY

- We are called to live authentically and interdependently with one another in biblical community.

4

SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

- The Holy Spirit indwells, empowers, and transforms us to live in tune with God.

5

SERVING HIS KINGDOM

- Disciples serve Jesus by expending time, talents, and resources in His kingdom.

6

SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

- As disciples, we are sent by Jesus to embody the good news of the gospel with both our words and our lives.

7

CHRIST CAME TO US

- We are His mission; He is our solution.

8

CHRIST CAME WITH A MISSION

- Jesus came to serve God and set us free.

9

CHRIST CAME TO DIE

- Jesus came to suffer and sacrifice – and to call us to do the same.

10

WE DIE WITH CHRIST

- Death to self is the first step in following Jesus.

11

WE GO WITH CHRIST

- Jesus sends us out as disciples in order to make disciples

WE GO TOGETHER WITH CHRIST

- Jesus sends us out as a community/family of disciples in order to make disciples.

Philippians 1:27 – 2:2

27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

28 in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. 29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Be Like Christ

*1*Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, *2*make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

REFERENCES & NOTES:

Verse 27. *Only let your conversation.* The word conversation we now apply almost exclusively to oral discourse, or to talking. But it was not formerly confined to that, and is never so used in the Scriptures. It **means conduct in general**-including, of course, our manner of speaking, but not limited to that-and should be so understood in every place where it occurs in the Bible. **The original word here used πολιτευω-politeuo, means, properly, to administer the State; to live as a citizen; to conduct one's self according to the laws and customs of a State.** See [Acts 23:1](#). Comp. examples in Wetstein.

It would not be improperly rendered, "let your conduct, as a citizen, be as becomes the gospel;"

and might without impropriety, though not exclusively, be referred to our deportment as members of a community, or citizens of a State. **It undoubtedly implies that, as citizens, we**

should act, in all the duties which that relation involves—in maintaining the laws, in submission to authority, in the choice of rulers, etc., as well as in other relations—on the principles of the gospel; for the believer is bound to perform every duty on Christian principles. But the direction here should not be confined to that. **It doubtless includes our conduct in all relations in life**, and refers to our deportment in general; not merely as citizens of the State, but **as members of the church, and in all other relations**.

In our manner of speech, our plans of living, our dealings with others, our conduct and walk in the church and out of it—all should be done as becomes the gospel.

The direction, therefore, in this place, is to be understood of everything pertaining to conduct.

As it becometh the Gospel of Christ.

- (1.) **The rules of the gospel are to be applied to all our conduct** - to our conversation, business transactions, modes of dress, style of living, entertainments, etc. **There is nothing which we do, or say, or purpose, that is to be excluded from those rules.**
- (2.) There is a way of living which is *appropriate to the gospel*, or which is such as the gospel requires. **There is something which the gospel would secure as *its proper fruits*** in all our conduct, and by which our lives should be regulated. It would distinguish us from the gay, and

from those who seek honour and wealth as their supreme object. *If all Christians were under the influence of the gospel, there would be something in their dress, temper, conversation, and aims, which would distinguish them from others.*

The gospel is not a thing of naught; nor is it intended that it should exert *no* influence on its friends.

(3.) It is very important that Christians should frame their lives by the rules of the gospel, and, to this end, should study them, and know what they are. This is important,

(a.) *because they are the best and wisest of all rules;*

(b.) *because only in this way can Christians do good;*

(c.) *because they have solemnly covenanted with the Lord to take his laws as their guide;*

(d.) *because only in this way can they enjoy religion; and*

(e.) *because it is only by this that they can have peace... on a dying bed. If men live as "becometh the gospel,"*

they live well. *Their lives are honest and honourable; they are men of truth and uprightness; they will have no sources of regret when they die, and they will not give occasion to their friends to hang their heads with shame in the remembrance of them. No man on a dying bed ever yet regretted that he had framed his life by the rules of the gospel, or felt that his conduct had been conformed too much to it.*

That whether I come and see you. Alluding to the possibility that he might be released, and be permitted to visit them again.

Or else be absent. Either at Rome, still confined, or released, and permitted to go abroad. I may hear of your affairs, etc. I may hear always respecting you that you are united, and that you are vigorously striving to promote the interests of the gospel.

(*) "let your conversation" [Ephesians 4:1](#), [Philippians 3:20](#)

(*) "conversation" "Conduct"

(*) "stand fast" [Philippians 4:1](#)

(*) "striving together" [Jude 1:3](#)

- Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

[Philippians 1:27-2:30](#)

Family Business

Unity and Faithfulness [1:27-30](#)

Humility [2:1-11](#)

Upright Living [2:12-18](#)

Godly Examples [2:19-30](#)

Setting Up the Section

This section marks the beginning of the body of Paul's letter. Greetings and personal information out of the way for now, **Paul begins his exhortation about the kind of lifestyle the Philippian Christians are called to live.**

[1:27-30](#)

Unity and Faithfulness

The Philippians needed to be reminded of their calling to live holy lives worthy of the gospel. When Paul writes of their conduct or lifestyle, he uses Greek language from which modern English words such as *politics* are derived. **Paul is hearkening to the citizenry of the Philippians.** Philippi was a Roman colony, so **these people were citizens of Rome, though they didn't live there. Paul is pointing out to them that they are also citizens of the kingdom of heaven.** He refers to this citizenship more directly in [Philippians 3:20](#), but the foundation of the theme can also be found here.

- Layman's Bible Commentary

1:27-30 Encouragement to Walk Worthy of the Gospel. Paul's sacrifice will be futile, however, if the Philippians do not continue to live in a way that is "worthy of the gospel of Christ."

1:27 The phrase ***be worthy of the gospel*** translates the Greek word *politeuesthe*. As the ESV footnote indicates, the Greek can also be translated as ***"only behave as citizens worthy [of the gospel of Christ],"*** a phrasing that nicely captures Paul's play on words here and in **3:20** ("our citizenship [Gk. *politeuma*] is in heaven").

Philippi prided itself on being a Roman colony, offering the honor and privilege of Roman citizenship.

Paul reminds the congregation that they should look to Christ, not Caesar, for their model of behavior, since their primary allegiance is to God and his kingdom.

They need to stand together with one another and with Paul in *striving* for the gospel.

Paul's emphasis on unity may suggest some division within the Philippian congregation (cf. 4:2-3).

Perhaps the disunity is one reason he mentions the “overseers and deacons” at the outset of the letter ([1:1](#)), for they are required to minister in a way that promotes unity.

- ESV Study Bible

[1:27-28](#) *Live your life* (lit "conduct yourselves as citizens"; cp. [Ac 23:1](#)) alludes to Philippi's political history, reminding the church of its higher citizenship (in the kingdom of God).

Paul's primary concern, that you are standing firm in one spirit, reflected military pride.

Roman armies stood ready for combat regardless of the enemy's level of strength and preparedness or the distracting enticements of culture. The church must manifest the same readiness.

"One spirit" expresses the believer's unified attitude.

One mind...

Literally "same soul" - means that
believers share "life."

Together they prevent divisiveness like Paul witnessed at Rome (vv. 14-17).

Standing firm involves *working side by side*.

"Working" comes from athletics where teams contended for a prize (cp. 4:3).

*Harmony, not individualism,
achieves God's purposes.*

Standing also involves not being **frightened... by your opponents**. Soldiers used "frightened" to describe horses that might easily be startled.

euangelion

Greek Pronunciation [yoo ahn GEHL ee ahn]

HCSB Translation gospel, good news

Uses in Philippians 12

Uses in the NT 76

Focus passage [Philippians 1:27](#)

The Christian *euangelion* (*gospel*) is the universal message of God's saving grace through faith in Christ, and the message of His kingdom over which Jesus reigns. Jesus preached the *good news* of God's coming kingdom ([Mt 4:23](#)), and substantiated His message by miracles ([Mt 9:35](#)).

This *good news* of the kingdom's arrival will be preached to the world ([Mk 13:10](#)) and is worthy of sacrificial labor ([Mk 8:35](#)). Paul believed the *gospel* was an extension of OT promises, where it lay hidden in mystery form ([Rm 1:1-3](#); [16:25-26](#)).

Paul's *gospel* encompasses Jesus' entire life: His incarnation, sacrificial death, burial, resurrection, post-resurrection appearances, and ascension ([Rm 1:1-6](#); [1Co 15:1-8](#); [Php 2:9](#)). It is the Spirit-empowered message ([1Th 1:5](#)) by which God calls the elect ([2Th 2:13-14](#)) and reconciles people to Himself ([2Co 5:18-21](#)). Men will one day be judged by it ([Rm 2:16](#); [2Th 1:8](#)).

[1:29-30](#)

*Given/Granted (lit "by grace") indicates that God "graces" Christians to **believe** and **suffer** on **Christ's behalf**. Both contribute to Christ's glory.*

- HCSB Study Bible.

1:27 Paul encouraged the believers to be unified, as they stood "side by side, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News."

How sad that much time and effort are lost in some churches by fighting against one another instead of uniting against the real opposition! It takes a courageous church to resist infighting and to maintain the common purpose of serving Christ.

1:29 Paul considered it a privilege to suffer for Christ. We do not by nature consider suffering a privilege. Yet when we suffer, if we faithfully represent Christ, our message and example affect us and others for good (see [Acts 5:41](#)). **Suffering has these additional benefits:** (1) It takes our eyes off of earthly comforts; (2) it weeds out superficial believers; (3) it strengthens the faith of those who endure; (4) it serves as an example to others who may follow us.

When we suffer for our faith, it doesn't mean that we have done something wrong. In fact, the opposite is often true—it verifies that we have been faithful. Use suffering to build your character. Don't resent it or let it tear you down.

1:30 Throughout his life, Paul suffered for spreading the Good News. **Like the Philippians, we are in conflict with anyone who would discredit the saving message of Christ. All true believers are in this fight together, uniting against the same enemy for a common cause.**

Paul never urges Christians to seek suffering, as if there were virtue in pain. But we should not forget those who suffer. If your cupboard is full, share your food. If you control the wheels of power, work for justice and mercy. If you are wealthy, give generously to the poor. When life is comfortable, willingly take a share of someone else's pain, and so tell the world that the gospel is true.

- Life Application Study Bible.

Philippians 1:27

Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel — The apostle considers the Church at Philippi as a free or imperial city, which possesses great honors, dignities, and privileges; and

he exhorts them to act, *αξίως*, worthy of or suitably to those honors and privileges. This is the idea that is expressed by the word *πολιτευεσθε*, act according to the nature of your political situation, the citizenship and privileges which you possess in consequence of your being free inhabitants of Christ's imperial city, the Church. The apostle resumes the same metaphor, [Philippians 3:20](#): *ἡμῶν—το πολιτευμα εν ουρανοις ὑπαρχει*. For our citizenship is in heaven; but in this last verse he puts heaven in the place of the Church, and this is all right; for he, who is not a member of the Church of Christ on earth, can have no right to the kingdom of heaven, and he who does not walk worthy of the Gospel of Christ cannot be counted worthy to enter through the gates into the city of the eternal King.

Whether I come and see you—Leaving the matter still in doubt as to them, whether he should again visit them.

In one spirit — **Being all of one mind under the influence of the Holy Ghost.**

Striving together — *Συναθλουντες*: **Wrestling together, not in contention with each other, but in union against the enemies of the Gospel faith** — the doctrine of Christ crucified, and freedom from all Mosaic rites and ceremonies, as well as from sin and perdition, through his passion and sacrifice.

- Adam Clarke's Commentary.

Paul's Exhortations (1:27-2:18)

A. To Stand Firm Amid Persecution ([1:27-30](#))

[1:27](#) *worthy of the gospel*. Believers are to have integrity, i.e., to live consistent with what they believe, teach, and preach. Cf. [Ephesians 4:1](#); [Colossians 1:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:11, 12](#); [4:1](#); [Titus 2:10](#); [2 Peter 3:11, 14](#).

one spirit... one mind. This introduces Paul's theme of unity that continues through [2:4](#). His call for genuine unity of heart and mind is based on:

- (1) **the necessity of oneness to win the spiritual battle** for the faith ([vv. 28-30](#));
- (2) **the love of others** in the fellowship ([2:1, 2](#));
- (3) **genuine humility and self-sacrifice** ([2:3, 4](#)); and
- (4) **the example of Jesus Christ**, who proved that sacrifice produces eternal glory ([2:5-11](#)).

striving together. Lit. "to struggle along with someone." Paul changed the metaphor from that of a soldier standing at his post ("stand fast") to one of a team struggling for victory against a common foe.

the faith of the gospel.

- The Christian faith as revealed by God and recorded in the Scripture
- See [Jude 3](#); cf. [Rom. 1:1](#) & 1:16; [Gal. 1:7](#)).

[1:28](#) *proof of perdition.* When believers willingly suffer without being “terrified,” it is a sign that God’s enemies will be destroyed and eternally lost (*see notes on [2 Thess. 1:4-8](#)*).

[1:29](#) *granted... to suffer.* *See notes on [3:10](#); [1 Peter 2:19-21](#)*; cf. [Matthew 5:10-12](#); [Acts 5:41](#). The Greek verb translated “granted” is from the noun for *grace*. Believers’ suffering is a gift of grace which brings power ([2 Cor. 7:9, 10](#); [1 Pet. 5:10](#)) and eternal reward ([1 Pet. 4:13](#)).

[1:30](#) *same conflict.* The same kind of suffering Paul had experienced ([vv. 12-14](#); [Acts 16:22-24](#)). *you saw*. This refers to what the Philippians witnessed when Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi ([Acts 16:19-40](#)).

B. To Be United by Humility ([2:1-4](#))

[2:1](#) *consolation in Christ.* *Consolation* can also be translated “encouragement,” and is from the Greek word that means “to come alongside and help, counsel, exhort” (*see notes on [John 14:26](#); [Rom. 12:1](#)*), which our beloved Lord does for His own. *comfort of love*. The Greek word translated “comfort” portrays the Lord coming close and whispering words of gentle cheer or tender counsel in a believer’s ear. *fellowship of the Spirit*. *Fellowship* refers to the partnership of common eternal life provided by the indwelling Holy Spirit ([1 Cor. 3:16](#); [12:13](#); [2 Cor. 13:14](#); [1 John 1:4-6](#)). *affection and mercy*. God has

extended His deep affection (*see note on [1:8](#)*) and compassion to every believer (cf. [Rom. 12:1](#); [2 Cor. 1:3](#); [Col. 3:12](#)) and that reality should result in unity.

[2:2](#) fulfill my joy. This can also be translated “make my joy complete.” Paul’s joy was tied to concern for the unity of believers (cf. [Heb. 13:17](#)). ***like-minded.*** Cf. [3:15, 16](#); [4:2](#); [1 Pet. 3:8](#). The Greek word means “think the same way.” This exhortation is not optional or obscure, but is repeated throughout the NT (cf. [Rom. 15:5](#); [1 Cor. 1:10](#); [2 Cor. 13:11-13](#)). ***same love.*** Believers are to love others in the body of Christ equally—not because they are all equally attractive, but by showing the same kind of sacrificial, loving service to all that was shown to them by Christ ([John 15:13](#); [Rom. 12:10](#); [1 John 3:17](#); cf. [John 3:16](#)). ***one accord.*** This may also be translated “united in spirit” and perhaps is a term specially coined by Paul. It literally means “one-souled” and describes people who are knit together in harmony, having the same desires, passions, and ambitions. ***one mind.*** “Intent on one purpose” is an alternative translation.

[2:3](#) selfish ambition. This Greek word, which is sometimes rendered “strife” because it refers to factionalism, rivalry, and partisanship (*see note on [Gal. 5:20](#)*), speaks of the pride that prompts people to push for their own way. ***conceit.*** Lit. “empty glory,” and often translated “empty conceit.” This word refers to the pursuit of personal glory, which is the motivation for selfish ambition. ***lowliness of mind.*** This translates a Greek word that Paul and other NT writers apparently coined. It was a term of derision, with the idea of being low, shabby, and humble (cf. [1 Cor. 15:9](#); [1 Tim. 1:15](#)). ***esteem others better than himself.*** The

basic definition of true humility (cf. [Rom. 12:10](#); [Gal. 5:13](#); [Eph. 5:21](#); [1 Pet. 5:5](#)).

C. To Remember the Example of Christ ([2:5-11](#))

- The MacArthur Bible Commentary.

27-30. Only let your conversation. Your manner of life. Whether absent, or present, he wishes to know that they are perfectly united.

- Johnson's Notes on the New Testament.

When Did a Message of Love Become a Message of Hate?

by

Shane Idleman

Pastor, Westside Christian Fellowship

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There is a cost to speaking the truth. This realization came nearly

13 years ago when I was asked to speak at the annual Conference for the American Baptist... unaware that they were about to divide over ordaining those who embrace the homosexual lifestyle.

Within minutes of beginning my message, people began to leave the large auditorium. Although it was clear that I had struck a nerve, the clearest message came when a woman approached the platform and attempted to disrupt the service. I told her that I would be happy to talk with her after the service.

Afterwards, a large line of people waited to talk to me. I will never forget the very angry 12-year-old girl. My heart sank when she said, "I hate everything you had to say. It was mean and hateful!" Though shocked by her comment, I was moved with compassion for such a young life filled with passion for the wrong things. Others asked if I ever received death threats.

As I boarded the plane, I was perplexed and confused. I prayed, "Lord, what's wrong? I'm simply speaking Your Word and genuinely loving these people." **The words of Titus Brandsma (martyred at Dachau under Hitler)** began to ring true,

"Those who want to win the world for Christ must have the courage to come into conflict with it."

I buckled my seat, anxious to head for the familiar comfort of home... but I knew that my life had made a turn. This gospel of love had, ironically, become a message of hate to those who oppose it: **"A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God"** (John 16:2).

Speaking the truth was going to cost me (and it will cost you). I knew that my kids would someday be old enough to ask why the hate mail, mean remarks, indignant looks... While most feedback is very encouraging, those who are upset will often stop at nothing to get their point across.

Do I enjoy this? That goes without answer. Although many applaud boldness, if the truth be told, life would be much easier if I took a secular job and avoided controversy. But I cannot.

God radically changed my life by the power of His Spirit through His truth: *"It's like a fire in my bones! I am worn out trying to hold it in! **I can't do it!**"* (Jeremiah 20:9).

One of my greatest concerns is for the pulpits of America: many are exchanging truth for tolerance, boldness for balance, and conviction for cowardice.

We don't want to be offended lest we lose our audience.

But truth is controversial—its convicts and challenges... We are not to seek the applause of men but the applause of God.

The pulpit inevitably sets the tone of the religious climate of the nation...

Our lukewarm, sex-saturated culture simply reflects the lack of Christ-like conviction in our pulpits & pews.

Granted, there are many wonderful [pastors](#) and churches—I appreciate their ministry, but, as a whole, the church has drifted off course.

The only difference between believers and unbelievers is that believers are simply forgiven—they have embraced God’s gracious gift of forgiveness, wholeness, and restoration through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Because of the cross, sin has been conquered and atoned for (cf. [Romans 6](#)). “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” ([Romans 10:9](#)).

My goal is to simply share God’s gracious gift. If being labeled narrow-minded, legalistic, judgmental, arrogant, and intolerant is the cost of speaking the truth in love, so be it. In [2 Timothy 4:1-2](#), Paul instructs Timothy, “*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.*”

Paul is saying to preach the difficult truths as well as the joyful ones; preach the cross and the new life; preach hell and preach heaven; preach damnation and preach salvation; preach sin and preach grace; preach wrath and preach love; preach judgment and preach mercy; preach obedience and preach forgiveness; preach that God is love, but don't forget that God is just. It is the love of God that compels us to share *all* of His truth.

Paul continues, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). This should sound an alarm in the the heart of every preacher, pastor, and teacher to seriously reevaluate their ministry—are we encouraging sin by not warning? If so, we're heading down a dangerous path. **A.W. Tozer reminds us** that we'll stand to be judged someday: "That makes me both love Him and fear Him! I love Him because He is my Savior, and I fear Him because He is my Judge." We must speak the truth in love despite the cost.

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Philippians 1:27-30: *A Life Worthy of the Gospel*

By [Tony Miano](#)

Many Christians in the west believe [Christians](#) in persecuted areas would have us pray for the end of their persecution. The opposite is true. Christians living and dying in areas where authentic persecution is commonplace would rather western Christians pray the Persecuted [Church](#) would suffer well, to bring glory and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, I have heard multiple reports of Christians living in areas of persecution praying for their western brethren. Our persecuted brethren pray their brothers and sisters in the west—amidst all of the sinful distractions of wealth, ease, perversion, and gluttony the west has to offer—would learn to suffer well. They pray that we, the sophisticated Christians of “first world” countries, would repent of our worldliness and live a life worthy of the gospel of [Jesus Christ](#).

And, in the end, that’s all that really matters in this life. Have I lived a life worthy of the [gospel](#)?

In our passage for today, the apostle Paul does not merely exhort, but commands the believers in Philippi to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

And the expression of that gospel-worthy life will be seen in every Christian as a life of perseverance, a life of courage, and a life of suffering.

Before we look at the expressions of a gospel-worthy life, we need to first determine what Paul means by his command to *“let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.”*

A Manner of Life Worthy of the Gospel of Christ

Paul begins verse 27 with the word “only.” The word “only” appears 333 times in the English Standard Version of the Bible. It is often used in a very emphatic way, as it is used, here, in verse 27. For instance: It is used by God in [Genesis 6:5](#) to describe the continuous evil of man’s heart.

“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” ([Genesis 6:5](#))

It is used by God in [Joshua 1:7](#) to command Joshua to live a valiant and courageous life as he led God’s people.

“Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.” ([Joshua 1:7](#))

It is used by God in [Job 1:12](#) and [2:6](#) to emphasize to Satan the permitted limits of his assault on Job.

“And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.’ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.” ([Job 1:12](#))

“And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.’” ([Job 2:6](#))

It is used by David in [Psalm 51:4](#) to express the depth of the knowledge of his sin against God.

“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.” ([Psalm 51:4](#))

It is used by Jesus in [Matthew 19:17](#) to correct a rich, young ruler’s misunderstanding of the true nature of goodness.

“And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.’” ([Matthew 19:17](#))

It is used by Jesus in [John 17:3](#) in His high, priestly prayer to emphatically affirm there is only one God and He and God are one.

“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” ([John 17:3](#))

And, in the magnificent revelation received by John ([Revelation 21:27](#)), the word is used to emphatically declare that only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will enter Heaven.

“But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.” ([Revelation 21:27](#))

Paul couldn’t make himself clearer to the Philippians. And he wrote to them in a language they would understand. The most essential thing a Christian must do, this side of Heaven, is to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Only this matters as a practical outworking of their justification, which, by design, fuels every aspect of their sanctification.

To be “worthy of the gospel” in no way implies any human being is capable of meriting the gospel’s rewards and benefits. No one has been, is, or ever will be worthy to receive the salvific gift of the gospel of Jesus Christ. No life can be lived with the perfection required to merit forgiveness of sin and the granting of eternal life. In this sense, man’s depravity forever excludes him from being “worthy of the gospel.”

What Paul is communicating to the Philippians is that they are to live their lives (and again, this is a command, not a suggestion) as people redeemed by the Author of the gospel and the Author and Perfecter of their faith. It's the gospel and the gospel's Author that is worthy of them living this way. Their salvation merits their uncompromising, unmitigated, undying commitment to live as those who are saved by the only One able to save and the only One who is worthy of praise.

This is the command of God—not only for the Philippians believers of two millennia ago. This is the command of God for every born-again follower of Jesus Christ. And if this command seems too burdensome to anyone professing to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, then they are in peril. They are in jeopardy of forfeiting their soul. They must examine themselves, test themselves, to see if they are even in the faith. The gospel belongs to Christ. He authored it. He owns it. He is the content of the gospel. Jesus Christ is the gospel. Believers are the humble, unworthy recipients of the gospel.

The other side of the coin is that Jesus Christ and His gospel are worthy of the Christian's love, honor, respect, and sacrifice. Jesus Christ and His gospel are worthy of every Christian's denial of and death to self. Christ and His gospel are worthy of every Christian's perseverance, every Christian's courage, and every Christian's suffering.

Perseverance, courage, and suffering—this is the kind of fruit Paul not only wants to see, but wants to hear about, in the lives of his Philippians brethren. Paul says as much in the rest of verse 27: "...so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you are..."

A Life of Perseverance

The last part of verse 27 reads: "...standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel."

A life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life marked by perseverance.

Charles Spurgeon once said the following about **perseverance**:

“Conversion is a turning into the right road; the next thing is to walk in it. The daily going on in that road is as essential as the first starting if you would reach the desired end. To strike the first blow is not all the battle; to him that overcometh the crown is promised. To start in the race is nothing, many have done that who have failed; but to hold out till you reach the winning post is the great point of the matter. Perseverance is as necessary to a man’s salvation as conversion.”

“But some, who do run well at first, have hardly breath enough to keep the pace up, and so turn aside for a little comfortable ease, and do not get into the road again. Such are not genuine Christians; they are only men-made, self-made Christians; and these self-made Christians never hold on, and never can hold on, because time wears them out, and they turn back to their former state.”

In addition to verse 27, the phrase **“stand firm”** appears **thirteen times in the ESV** translation of the Bible.

In [Exodus 14:13](#), Moses used the phrase when addressing the fickle and fearful Israelites, when they thought for sure they were doomed on the shore of the Red Sea.

“And Moses said to the people, ‘Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.’”([Exodus 14:13](#))

In [2 Chronicles 20:17](#), A Levite priest by the name of Jahaziel used the phrase as he stood in the midst of the people of Judah. They were fearful as a conglomeration of armies were amassing to attack them.

“And he said, ‘Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the Lord to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's.’”(2 [Chronicles 20:17](#))

In [1 Peter 5:12](#), Peter uses the phrase to exhort the recipients of his letter.

“By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.”([1 Peter 5:12](#))

As the example in Exodus shows us, a persevering life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life in which a person stands firm in the face of seemingly insurmountable circumstances, trusting God to get them through those circumstances.

All-too-often, Christians recite [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) to emphasize the idea that God will never give the Christian more than they can handle. The reality is, in our own strength, there are no circumstances we can handle in such a way as to glorify Christ and claim spiritual victory. And when reciting the verse, many Christians fail to recite the last phrase of the verse, which is the key to the entire verse.

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”([1 Corinthians 10:13](#))

That you may be able to endure it!

Yes, the Lord destroyed the Egyptian army; but not until He made His people pass through the Red Sea. The Lord could have evaporated the Red Sea. He could have crushed the Egyptian army before they ever left

Egypt. But, according to His sovereign plan, His design for His people was to pass through the waters.

The people of Israel were tempted to return to Egypt in disobedient unbelief. God enabled them to stand firm, to wait and see the salvation of the Lord, and to endure what must have been a frightening walk between two massive walls of water. A life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a persevering life that, with God's help, endures the trial of life.

As the example in 2 Chronicles shows us, a persevering life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life in which a person stands firm in the face of any and all enemy attacks—knowing God is fighting on behalf of and in front of His children, with the outcome predetermined from eternity past.

And, as the example in 2 Peter shows us, a persevering life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life in which a person stands firm in the true grace of God. God's grace is amazing. It is sufficient in any time of need. Without the grace of God no man will ever see Him. Without the grace of God no man would ever be saved. No one can persevere to the end without the grace of God.

Not only is a gospel-worthy life a persevering life evidenced by the way we stand firm—refusing to give any ground to the enemy, refusing to take our eyes off Christ, refusing to relinquish our trust and faith in Him in any and all circumstances—it is a life marked by a real and active striving with other Christians to represent and defend the faith.

Those of you who know me know that I bang the drum loudly and frequently regarding the importance of street evangelists (and every Christian, for that matter) being rooted in and accountable to the fellowship of the saints, in one of God's local assemblies.

A gospel-worthy life is not a nomadic existence. It is a life that cherishes fellowship with a congregation of followers of Christ. It is a life that

welcomes the accountability of other Christians. It is a life that welcomes the opportunity to submit to the authority of God's under-shepherds—pastors and elders. It is a life that feeds on opportunities to fight the good fight of the faith, shoulder-to-shoulder with the brethren. It is a life that desires unity with the Church and within the Church.

The Greek word Paul uses, which is best translated as “striving,” carries the idea of fighting, battling, and contending. A gospel-worthy life is a life that is engaged in the personal laborious struggle against sin, the corporate laborious struggle for unity among the brethren, and it is a laborious struggle in defense of the faith.

In addition to being an intensive word that connotes fighting, it also carries with it the idea of an athletic contest. Picture, if you will, a distance runner straining his neck and chest forward to cross the finish line to win a race. Now, add to that Paul's exhortation to strive together (to strive side-by-side) with other believers, and you have a picture of an entirely different race.

Instead of an individual runner straining and striving for an individual prize, picture a three-legged race. But don't picture it in the sense of the age-old, goofy picnic contest. Paul tells the Philippians that their striving should be “side-by-side.”

If you've ever been in a three-legged race, you know it is impossible to win the race as an individual. Your team, your partnership, is only as good as the slowest runner, or the weakest person. If one of the two people tied together or paired in a sack falls to the ground, the other person has no other option but to help their partner to their feet and then the two begin again to move as one.

Paul often used terms in his epistles that, outside the Bible, were used in reference to sporting events. Growing up in a Greco-Roman world, Paul

had those games of old, in mind. But the sporting games of two millennia ago, while similar to some of today's Olympic Games, were, in other ways, very different.

[Describe boxing and wrestling matches of old]

These were fights to the death.

Paul expectation of the Philippians was that they would endure together; that they would fight together and, if necessary, die together for their shared faith in Christ and belief in His Word; that they would persevere together.

A life worthy of the gospel is a life marked by perseverance. And, it only stands to reason that such a life would, therefore, be marked by courage. A life worthy of the gospel is a courageous life.

A Life of Courage

“...and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God” ([Phil. 1:28](#)).

Courage is a necessity in the gospel-worthy life. You can't stand firm and united with your Christian brethren without courage. You can't strive in defense of the faith, let alone sometimes carry some of your brothers and sister in Christ as you strive together, without courage.

C.S. Lewis:

“Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.”

Socrates wrote: “He is a man of courage who does not run away, but remains at his post and fights against the enemy.”

Ronald Reagan:

“There are no easy answers' but there are simple answers. We must have the courage to do what we know is morally right.”

Four times in the first chapter of Joshua, God commanded Joshua to “be strong and courageous.” Toward the end of the Book of Joshua, Joshua exhorted the people of Israel to do the same.

Nehemiah, one of the great leaders of Scripture, encouraged those rebuilding the walls and the gates of Jerusalem with these words:

“And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, ‘Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes’” ([Nehemiah 4:14](#)).

It was with courage that Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Jewish Council, went directly to Pilate, the man who ordered the execution of Jesus, and asked for Jesus’ body.

Fear is probably one of the most prevalent sins in the life of most Christians. When present, it permeates literally every aspect of life and every relationship we have. But fear, unless it is the fear of the Lord and the consequences of sin, is not from God. The apostle Paul exhorted Timothy with these words:

“for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” ([2 Timothy 1:7](#)).

Paul commands the Philippians that they are not to fear anything their enemies (and the enemies of God) throw at them. Nothing. Jesus told His disciples as much. Jesus said,

“So have no fear of them [anyone], for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the

soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell”
([Matthew 10:26-28](#)).

Paul then makes a very interesting statement. On the heels of exhorting the Philippian believers to be fearless in the face of any opposition to their faith in Jesus Christ, he writes: “This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that is from God.”

The phrase “clear sign” is better understood as “absolute proof” or “certainty.” The Philippians’ perseverance and courage, as well as their suffering (of which Paul would speak next), served as absolute proof that those opposing and persecuting the Philippians had signed their own death warrants. They would be destroyed and spend eternity in Hell for their opposition to those who were living lives worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Not only did the Philippians’ gospel-worthy living serve as proof of the inevitable destruction of the enemies of Christ, but it also proof of the genuineness of their faith and the security of their salvation. Now, it is extremely important to note what Paul is not saying. **Paul is not saying that the Philippians’ salvation was secured by their gospel-worthy living. On the contrary, Paul is saying that the Philippians’ gospel-worthy living was evidence (proof) they were, in fact, soundly saved.**

“...and that from God.” Quite literally, what Paul is saying is the Philippians’ perseverance, their courage, the destruction of those who oppose them and the gospel, the Philippians’ privileged suffering (which we will consider next), and the evidence of the Philippians’ faith in Jesus Christ—all of it, is from God. God is sovereign.

Nothing subverts the sovereign will of God. Everything in life, in everyone’s life, is either caused or allowed by God. God blesses. God disciplines. God punishes. God saves. God destroys. And everything He

does is good. So is God the author of evil? No! While God is sovereign over evil, He in no way is the creator of it.

John Calvin wrote the following in his Institutes:

“. . . the Lord had declared that "everything that he had made . . . was exceedingly good" [[Gen. 1:31](#)]. Whence, then comes this wickedness to man, that he should fall away from his God? Lest we should think it comes from creation, God had put His stamp of approval on what had come forth from himself. By his own evil intention, then, man corrupted the pure nature he had received from the Lord; and by his fall drew all his posterity with him into destruction. Accordingly, we should contemplate the evident cause of condemnation in the corrupt nature of humanity-which is closer to us-rather than seek a hidden and utterly incomprehensible cause in God's predestination.”

And **John MacArthur** wrote:

“God is certainly sovereign over evil. There's a sense in which it is proper even to say that evil is part of His eternal decree. He planned for it. It did not take Him by surprise. It is not an interruption of His eternal plan. He declared the end from the beginning, and He is still working all things for His good pleasure ([Isaiah 46:9-10](#)).

“But God's role with regard to evil is never as its author. He simply permits evil agents to work, then overrules evil for His own wise and holy ends. Ultimately He is able to make all things-including all the fruits of all the evil of all time-work together for a greater good ([Romans 8:28](#)).”

There seems to be more professing Christians these days who are annoyed, angered, even offended by the theological truth and biblical reality that God is completely sovereign—sovereign over everything; that the free will of man is not sacrosanct. Be that as it may, what professing Christians believe about the character, nature, and authority of God is subservient to whether or not what they believe is true.

And God is true, though every man be found a liar. If God is not sovereign over everything, then He ceases to be God. If man can in any way subvert or circumvent His desire to save or His determination to judge, then, in the moment of that subversion or circumvention, man becomes god.

May it never be! And it will never be.

A life worthy of the gospel is a life of perseverance. It is a life of courage. And, finally, it is a life of suffering.

Napoleon Bonaparte

“It requires more courage to suffer than to die.”

A Life of Suffering

Paul finishes our passage for this morning with these words, in verses 29 and 30.

“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.”([Philippians 1:29-30](#))

Paul articulates his next thought by reasserting the sovereignty of God in all things, including belief and suffering. Yes, even belief is a sovereign act of God. Man’s response to the gospel by faith and belief, as merely an act of his own will, is utterly impossible for man.

After the episode with the rich, young ruler Jesus spoke to His disciples.

“And Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.’ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus

looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible’” [Matthew 19:23-26](#)).

To those of us who are saved, to those of us who have been born from above, it has been granted to us, as a precious gift, to believe the gospel. If God had left us to ourselves, if He had left us to our own devices and the determination of our own will, not only wouldn't we have believed the gospel; we couldn't have believed the gospel.

But not only is belief and faith granted to us by God as precious gifts; suffering is also granted to us as a precious gift. In fact, the root of the Greek word here translated in the ESV as “has been granted” is most literally translated “to grace.” So, we can rightly translate the first part of verse 29 this way: “For it has been graciously granted to you.”

The implications are massive and utterly foreign in much of western culture and American evangelicalism. Some Christians in America have a deep enough understanding of Scripture to realize that suffering in the Christian life is granted by God, as an act of His sovereign will—sometimes as a means of divine discipline; sometimes as a means of sovereign sanctification. But, I fear, fewer Christians see the beauty in the depth and breadth of Christian suffering. Fewer Christians realize that authentic suffering for Christ's sake is a golden thread of grace woven through the tapestry of the Christian's life.

Many people confuse suffering for Christ's sake with suffering for sin's consequences. Peter wrote in [1 Peter 2:19-25](#):

For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in

his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

And in [1 Peter 4:12-17](#), Peter wrote:

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

Suffering for the consequences of sin is not remotely equivalent to suffering for Christ's sake. Yet, many Christians—maybe even some of us here—from time to time, try to elevate the consequence for sin to the level of persecution. Here's an example that maybe all of us can relate to.

So, why, especially here in the United States, do so many Christians try to elevate discipline, consequence, or worse yet, inconvenience to the level of persecution? The answer is a simple one, really.

Most American Evangelical Christians have never experienced real persecution. The Persecuted Church is always somewhere else, in the eyes, heart, and mind of the average American Evangelical. And, by and large, that is true. Most American Christians know very little, if anything at all, of what it is like to experience persecution for their faith—even once, let alone as a way of life, like many of our Christian brethren in other parts of the world.

Most of those same Christians who have never experienced real persecution for their faith would likewise probably not consider persecution as something graciously granted to followers of Christ. In

fact, I think Christians in the west are so busy focusing on the material blessings of life, making the assumption they are blessings, and trying to accumulate more, it is counter-intuitive for them to see suffering as a form of blessing.

And, at the risk of offending some, I will go as far as to say that a primary reason American Christians are both confused regarding what real persecution is and unable to see blessings and grace in the mist of suffering is this. Many American Christians don't take their Christianity outside of the four walls of the church. Too many American Christians refuse to represent Christ publicly. They are unwilling to sacrifice reputation, relationships, and comfort for Christ's sake.

Just like any team, a church family is only as strong as its weakest link. And if you look at the chains of ministry in the majority in most American churches, you will see a sad common denominator. The weakest link is typically evangelism.

The smallest line item in the budget; the smallest Bible studies; the smallest presence in the community; the smallest topic of conversations within the body life of the church—is often local evangelism. Invariably, the stated purpose and vision of the church includes the evangelization of the lost, within the community where the church lives, breathes, serves, and worships. But **the longer the church exists the blinder the congregation becomes regarding the stated purpose and vision.**

A reason for this is one word: comfort. Ridicule is uncomfortable. Loss of reputation, friends, and other relationship is uncomfortable. Fear is uncomfortable. Persecution is uncomfortable. Suffering is uncomfortable. And evangelism can, and often does, bring about all these discomforts and more. **So, most Christians simply decide not to do it. They choose to live in disobedience instead of even the potential of discomfort.**

Yet God's Word makes it clear that He has graciously given; He has allowed for His glory and His good pleasure; He has permitted for our sanctification and because of His great love for us; He has granted us the privilege of suffering for His name's sake.

Instead of viewing suffering through the lens of what it might cost us, we should view suffering through the lens of what it has already cost the Father. It cost the Father the humiliation and death of His one and only Son, Jesus. And the Son is infinitely more precious, beautiful, and valuable to the Father than all of humanity combined.

Whatever we, as Christians are unwilling to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ is evidence that we value our physical lives more than the honor and glory of our Lord and King, our Master and Messiah, our God and Savior. And whatever loss we are unwilling to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ is, at the moment of refusal, is, for all intents and purposes, is our god.

Conclusion

A life worthy of the gospel: are you living it?

A life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life marked by perseverance. Jesus said those who endure, who persevere to the end will be saved. Not might be saved. Not could be saved. Will be saved.

Now, understand this. Make no mistake. Jesus is not saying perseverance is required to receive or maintain salvation. Salvation is of the Lord. And He has promised in His Word to maintain, secure, and quite literally guard the salvation of everyone He saves. No. Those whom the Lord saves are and forever will be saved. And the evidence of the genuineness of one's faith will be seen in their ongoing (not perfect—on going) repentance, faith, and perseverance.

A life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life marked by perseverance. Are you living it?

A life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life marked by courage. Courage is not the utter absence of fear. Courage is obeying God's Word and following Christ wherever following Him will take you, in spite of any and all fear that may come with the obedience and faith exercised by the believer. **The Word of God declares that cowards will have their part in the lake of fire** ([Revelation 21:8](#)).

Those who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are filled with a spirit of love, discipline and self-control. They are not filled with a spirit of fear. They are courageous enough to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow Christ. They will kill and destroy the god of self, no matter what the personal cost, because they love Christ more than they love themselves.

A life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life marked by courage. Are you living it?

A life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life marked by suffering. God's Word says, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" ([1 Timothy 3:11-13](#)). And Jesus comforts us with these words: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" ([John 15:18](#)).

If we, as Christians, desperately seek and desire to have lost people in the world like and accept us, then it is likely evidence that we are trying to flee the graciousness of our God. We would rather be loved by the world than suffer at the hands of the world, for Christ's sake. We would rather be accepted by the world than be persecuted for our faith in Christ. May it never be! But if this is the case in your life, examine yourself to see if you are even in the faith.

A life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life marked by suffering. Are you living it?

Is your life and is the way you are living it an act of worship before almighty God? Are you willing to die to self and live for Christ, regardless of the cost? Will you persevere or will you quit? Will you live

in fear or live by faith? Are you willing to suffer loss—never seeking it, but willing to experience it? Are you willing to do it all for Christ’s sake? Will you exalt His name? Will you glorify His name? Will love His name and His person?

A life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ: are you living it?

FROM **BIBLE.ORG’S** SERIES:

THE BIBLE TEACHER’S GUIDE, PHILIPPIANS: PURSUING SPIRITUAL MATURITY

How to Live Worthy of the Gospel

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. ([Philippians 1:27-30](#))

How can we live a life worthy of the gospel? How can we live a life that demonstrates its immense value?

In this text, Paul reminds the Philippian church of their responsibility to walk in a worthy manner. He says: “Whatever happens, conduct

yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” ([Philippians 1:27](#)).

He said as recipients of the gospel—the good news of Christ’s life, death, burial, and resurrection for the sins of the world ([1 Cor 15:2-4](#))—we have a responsibility to it. We are responsible to walk “worthy” of it. John MacArthur said this about the Greek word for “worthy”:

Axios (worthy) has the root meaning of balancing the scales—what is on one side of the scale should be equal in weight to what is on the other side. By extension, the word came to be applied to anything that was expected to correspond to something else.¹

Similarly, the root of the English word “worthy” is “worth”—the value of something, how much something costs, or, in this context, how much something really matters. We should walk in a way that demonstrates the extreme value, the extreme worth of the gospel in our lives. The implication of this exhortation is that some in the Philippian church were not walking worthily. In this context, Christians were being persecuted for the gospel. They were being tempted to compromise their beliefs and their lifestyle, and some had probably even fallen away.

Likewise, we also are always being tempted to walk in an unworthy manner by the world, our flesh, and the devil. However, we must always demonstrate the extreme worth of the gospel—the fact that Christ saved us from this world, sin, Satan, and death.

How do we walk in a manner worthy of the gospel? In this text Paul describes what it means to walk worthy of this gospel so that we can live in a manner that honors Christ and his sacrifice for us.

Big Question: What does it mean for a Christian to walk worthy of the gospel of Christ as seen in [Philippians 1:27-30](#) and how can we practically live out this reality?

Christians Walk Worthy of the Gospel by Living as Citizens of Heaven

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. ([Philippians 1:27](#))

In order to walk worthy of the gospel, we must remember our citizenship is in heaven. John MacArthur's comments about the word "conduct" are helpful. He said:

Politeuomai (conduct) is the main verb in verses 27–30, which in the Greek is a single sentence. It comes from the root word polis (city), which in earlier times usually referred to the city-states to which inhabitants gave their primary allegiance. The verb carries the basic meaning of being a citizen. But, by implication, it means being a good citizen, one whose conduct brings honor to the political body to whom one belongs.²

The New Living Translation translates verse 27 this way: "Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ."

One of the ways that we walk worthy of the gospel is by making our aim and focus to reflect our citizenship in heaven. This would have resonated with the Philippian church. Philippi had earned the distinction of a Roman colony. It was considered a "little Rome." When Rome was in power, it established many colonies outside of the city in order to protect Rome from barbarian invasions. In fact, it would grant veteran soldiers citizenship if they went out to settle these colonies. After years of faithful service, these colonies established by Rome eventually became Roman colonies—with all the rights and privileges of Rome.³

These colonies took great pride in their citizenship. They spoke the Latin language, wore Roman clothes, and their magistrates bore Roman titles. It didn't matter how far the colony was from Rome; they lived as Romans. We see something of how important Roman citizenship was in [Acts 22](#). Paul was in Jerusalem and his presence in the temple caused a great uproar. Therefore, he was taken into custody by the Roman

guard. As they were about to flog him, Paul said, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen?” (v. 25). When the soldiers heard this, they were shocked, and no one would flog or question him. Great privileges and esteem came with being a citizen of Rome. Therefore, when Paul used the word “conduct,” it would have challenged the Philippians, as they were reminded of their greatly esteemed Roman citizenship. Paul was reminding them that their heavenly citizenship was even greater than Rome’s, and it came with greater privileges.

Likewise, we should take great honor in our heavenly citizenship. It was purchased at great price through our savior’s blood, and this reality should never leave our minds. As citizens of heaven we must have a new language, different clothing, and different attitudes. Paul essentially says, “Whatever happens in life, whatever you go through, always remember your citizenship. Always live as citizens of heaven.”

How do we daily reflect this citizenship?

Application Question: How do we live as citizens of heaven with new language, clothing, and character?

1. As citizens of heaven, we must change our thinking.

[Romans 12:2](#) says,

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Paul says that one of the ways we stop conforming to the ways of this world is by changing our views. We must change our thinking on what it means to be a success in life. In [Luke 22:26](#) Christ describes greatness as being the “youngest” or the one who serves. In the Jewish culture the youngest served everybody, and therefore age was desired so one would no longer have to serve. However, Christ confronted their understanding of greatness—their understanding of success. He said greatness in the kingdom of heaven is the opposite of the world. Greatness is in being last—it is in serving everybody. Christ said this was true greatness. Let

your understanding and pursuit of success reflect your heavenly citizenship, not your earthly citizenship.

We must change our thinking on what it means to be a man or a woman. Often the world perverts things. Men walk around thinking they must conquer as many women as possible. Women walk around thinking that they must be perfect—“perfect skin” and “perfect bodies.” They must be “sexy” drawing the attraction and applause of men. This thinking does not reflect the ethos of heaven. God said, “Man looks at the outside but I look at the heart” ([1 Sam 16:7](#)). Solomon’s mom said, “Beauty is fleeting but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” ([Prov 31:30](#)). Peter said this to Christian women:

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ([1 Peter 3:3-4](#))

Citizens of heaven are focused on the inward because this is the aspect that pleases God, not the outward.

We must change our thinking by constantly studying and thinking on the Word of God. The Word of God teaches us what a citizen of heaven should live and think like. Are you constantly transforming your thinking according to the Word of God? This is how a citizen of heaven should think.

2. Citizens of heaven must get rid of wrong character traits.

Consider what Paul said to the Colossians:

You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ([Colossians 3:7-9](#))

Being a citizen of heaven means continually taking off wrong thought patterns, wrong attitudes, and wrong actions in order to conform to our

new citizenship. James said this: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” ([James 1:27](#)).

As citizens of heaven we must keep ourselves from the pollution of the world. We must daily get rid of character traits unfitting of our new citizenship.

3. Citizens of heaven must continual put on the right character traits.

Paul exhorted Timothy to not only flee evil desires but to pursue righteousness—to run after it. Listen to what he said in [2 Timothy 2:22](#): “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Being a citizen of heaven does not mean that you are perfect, but it should mean that you are in pursuit of perfection. It means that it’s your daily desire to look like Christ. You are pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Can people tell that you are different? Can they tell that you talk differently, think differently, and have different goals in life? We must walk worthy of the gospel. The gospel has made us citizens of heaven, and we must live in a manner that represents that. We should constantly be changing our thinking and getting rid of wrong attitudes and sin in our life. We must pursue godly character as a citizen of heaven.

Christ purchased our heavenly citizenship, and it would be dishonoring to him and his gospel to live with disregard for it.

Application Question: What are some other ways in which citizens of heaven should think and act differently than the world? What characteristics of the world is God calling you to get rid of?
Christians Walk Worthy of the Gospel by Standing Firm

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in

my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit ([Philippians 1:27](#))

Interpretation Question: What does Paul mean by standing firm?

Paul says that one of the things that Christians should do in order to walk worthy of the gospel is to stand firm. But, what does it mean to stand firm?

Standing firm is war terminology. It is a picture of an army advancing against the gates of a kingdom and the soldiers standing firm fighting at the gates—not giving up any ground. This is the reality of the Christian life. Christians are always under attack both individually and as a community.

In the context of Philippians, the church was receiving persecution, much like Paul was. Paul, at this time, was in prison for preaching the gospel. Some Christians might have been tempted to fall away from the faith—to go back to their former life styles—instead of continuing to follow Christ amidst persecution. However, Paul called for them to “stand firm.”

This is not only true with persecution, but it is also true with the influence of the world system. The world system is always trying to conform Christians into its very image ([Rom 12:2](#)). It confronts Christians in the classroom, the work place, the media—through TV and music—in order to make Christians give up their ground.

Today we see the church being confronted with many issues. It is confronted on the issue of marriage. Scripture teaches that marriage is between a man and a woman, but many Christians have given up this belief in order to conform and show compassion for the world and their beliefs. Some have given up their beliefs because they realize this view could cost them opportunities. It could cost them a promotion or a friendship. Therefore, many Christians have chosen to not stand firm. The church is confronted with issues like abortion—the value of life. It is confronted constantly on exclusivity of the gospel. Christians are told

that the gospel is too narrow—too bigoted. They are challenged to accept many ways to God—to be pluralistic.

Paul challenges this church and us to stand firm—to stand our ground in following God. Don't retreat. Don't turn away from God. Don't turn away from the truths of Scripture. Don't turn away from the exclusivity of the gospel.

But we should also realize our attacks are not just from the world, but they are also from Satan specifically. This is what Paul taught in [Ephesians 6:11-12](#):

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Certainly, Satan's attacks come against the church through the world, but they also come in many other ways. Sometimes his attacks come emotionally through spiritual depression. They come physically through sickness, sleeplessness, and weariness. They come through harassment and sometimes persecution. These attacks come to push a Christian away from the faith. Remember what Christ said to Peter when Satan asked to sift him like wheat. He said, "I have prayed for you that your faith would not fail" ([Luke 22:32](#)).

Christ prays for Peter's faith because that was the very thing Satan was after. He wanted Peter's faith. He wanted Peter to doubt God. He wanted Peter to ultimately turn away from Christ, and it is the same with us. Satan's attacks come to make us leave the precious holy ground of our relationship with God. Many Christians have left the church. They no longer believe the Bible. They have accepted the liberalism of the world and turned fully away from God. This is the purpose of the enemy's attacks, and therefore, Christians must stand their ground.

Interpretation Question: How can Christians stand their ground against the enemy?

1. Christians stand their ground by being unified.

Again [Philippians 1:27](#) says, “I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.”

When Paul says “one spirit” and “one man,” it is clear he is calling this church to be unified. One of the ways that Satan turns people away from the faith is by division. He brings conflict and discord in a church in order to conquer it. We cannot fight this battle if we are walking in discord with our brother or sister. Like any good military general, Satan’s plan is “to divide and conquer.”

The Philippian church, though in many ways was a model church, it also had problems. In [Philippians 4:2](#) two women were fighting. Since Paul mentions this in the letter, it must have been a serious situation that was probably causing the church to separate into factions. In chapter 3 some false teachers were teaching circumcision in the church. The enemy was very much involved in this church trying to divide it. However, while under attack, they needed to stay unified—walking in one spirit and as one man.

Paul said this in [Ephesians 4:26-27](#): “‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”

Paul realized that anger and unforgiveness in the church simply opened a door for the evil one to bring destruction. “Foothold” is war terminology. Anger and unforgiveness give Satan a strategic piece of property that he can attack from and potentially bring total devastation through. Christians stand their ground by being unified.

2. Christians stand their ground by being empowered by the Spirit of God.

Many commentators believe that when Paul says “one spirit,” he is actually referring to the Holy Spirit as in [Ephesians 4:4](#)—“There is one body, one Spirit.” In fact, the NIV 2011 version capitalizes the word “Spirit.” As you may know, in the New Testament the word “spirit” can

either refer to the human spirit, spirits such as angels and demons, or the Holy Spirit. We have to look at the context to tell how the word is being used.

One of the reasons many believe this could be referring to the Holy Spirit is because of similar language Paul used elsewhere. Consider what Paul says in [Philippians 4:1](#): “Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!” He calls them to stand firm “in the Lord.” This could be synonymous with [Philippians 1:27](#). Another support could be how Paul calls the Ephesian church to stand firm against spiritual warfare, not in their own power, but by putting on the full armor of God. He says, “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes” ([Ephesians 6:11](#)).

If the Philippians were going to stand their ground against the attacks of the evil one, it had to be in the Spirit’s power. We need supernatural power to not be conformed to this world. We need supernatural power if we are going to stay unified in the church. We need supernatural power to stand against the growing animosity and persecution coming from the world.

We gain this power by being filled with the Spirit of God on a daily basis as we live in worship, prayer, the Word of God, and fellowship with the saints ([Ephesians 5:18](#)). We, as branches, must abide in the Vine, Jesus Christ, to have his power flow through us ([John 15:5](#)).

If you are a person that is not daily being filled with the Spirit of God by prayer, time in God’s Word, and fellowship with the church, you are a Christian that will not stand. You will find anger, jealousy, lust, and selfish ambition ruling over you. You will find yourself slowly being drawn away from God and living more like the world. You can only fight this battle through the power of the Spirit of God.

If we as a church are going to stand our ground, we must fully depend upon God. This is why the early church was a praying church. When persecuted, they would throw prayer meetings as in [Acts 4:23-42](#). After the apostles were threatened to no longer preach the Word of God, they

called up the members of the church to pray, and God empowered them by the Spirit. Acts says this:

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had” ([Acts 4:31-32](#))

This was the very thing that Paul challenged the Philippian church to do—to contend as “one man.” When the early church prayed, the text says they were filled with the Spirit, and they had “one heart and mind.” They needed the Spirit of God to stand as one against the attacks of the world, the devil, and the flesh, and we need the Spirit as well.

To be honest, as I look at the persecution the church is going through even in Western society, with homosexual marriage and the like, I cannot but feel it is a serious time to pray and fast. It is a time for the church to stand firm in the Spirit of God, because if we don’t, we will not be able to stand. There will be a great exodus and a great falling away. In this hour we must stand firm in the Holy Spirit. We must be a praying church, an abiding church—otherwise we cannot hope to stand. The time where complacent Christianity could survive is no more; we must be full of the Spirit, or we will not stand at all.

Furthermore, as we look at the church today in comparison to the early church, we can easily tell why the church is no longer advancing. While the early church was dependent upon prayer and the Holy Spirit, we are dependent on programs, entertainment, and business principles instead of the power of the Spirit of God. Paul said the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for casting down strongholds ([2 Corinthians 10:4](#)). Our weapons are not secular—they do not come from secular wisdom. Our weapons are the weapons of God himself.

If we are going to stand as a church in this increasingly dark age, we must be unified in truth, and we must be filled with the Spirit of God. We need his power to stand.

Application Question: Do you agree that much of the contemporary church relies on secular wisdom and tactics instead of the power of God to stand and therefore is giving up much ground to the enemy? If so, in what ways do we see this happening? How can the church again begin to be filled with the Spirit and the power of God in order to stand?

Christians Walk Worthy of the Gospel by Working as a Team

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ([Philippians 1:27](#))

The word “contending” can also be translated “striving together.” It comes from the Greek word “sunathleo” from which we get the word “athlete.”⁴ Paul commonly used athletic illustrations in his preaching and teaching (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24, [Ephesians 6:12](#), [1 Timothy 4:7](#), [2 Timothy 2:5](#)), and here he calls for them to work together as an athletic team for the faith of the gospel.

Interpretation Question: What does “faith of the gospel” refer to? “The faith of the gospel” is somewhat ambiguous. It could refer to faith as in trusting the gospel. It could refer to faith as in the doctrines in the gospel—the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Or it could refer to the “faith” as in everything the Bible teaches like in [Jude 1:3](#). Jude says, “Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” There is sense in which we as a church need to contend for all these aspects of the gospel because they are all under attack.

In the early church there were many attacks on the faith, just as there are today. In the church of Colosse a cult was attacking the deity of Christ. That is why Paul taught that “all things were created by him and for him” ([Col 1:16](#)) and that Christ was the very “image of the invisible God” (v. 15). In the Corinthian church some were teaching that there was no resurrection at all ([1 Cor 15](#)). In the Galatian church some were teaching salvation by works ([Gal 1:6-9](#)). Cults were attacking the foundation of the gospel.

It's the same today. We have the attacks of salvation by works—some teach salvation comes by faith plus works. We have attacks on the exclusivity of the gospel—some teach that Christ is just one way to salvation or that all will ultimately be saved. Some have attacked the very need for salvation by saying there ultimately is no judgment at all—there is no such thing as hell. Many attack the foundation of the gospel primarily by attacking the reliability of the Word of God. They declare it not true, that it can't be trusted, and it is full errors. This was the very first attack of Satan on Adam and Eve. He said, "Did God really say that man could not eat of any tree in the garden?" He wanted them to doubt the Word of God. In the same way, liberalism is attacking the foundation of the gospel in churches throughout the world. If the enemy can get us to doubt the Word of God, then soon we will doubt the gospel itself.

The enemy also attacks the gospel by bringing persecution. If you share that you are a Christian or your belief in the teachings of the faith, you will be attacked—left out when it comes time for promotion and mocked by friends. Satan works hard through shame and fear of retaliation to keep believers from sharing their faith. As in the early church, there is still a need to contend for the faith of the gospel. Are you willing to contend for it? Are you willing to work together as a team to do so?

Application Question: How can we contend for the faith of the gospel like an athletic team?

1. Christians contend for the faith like a team by developing chemistry as each person does his part.

No team can excel unless each person fulfills his role. This includes praying, giving, encouraging one another, and using our spiritual gifts. Every person must do his part in order for a team to be successful.

One of the reasons the gospel doesn't spread is because much of the church is not willing to work together. When Christ sent the disciples out to share the gospel, he sent them out in twos in [Mark 6](#). When the

Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Paul to missions, he didn't call them to go separately. He called them to go as a team in [Acts 13](#). The gospel advances as we work together—each person doing his part.

We see this need for team work clearly in the life of Paul. While Paul was in prison, he constantly asked for prayer for open doors and for the Word of God to be spoken clearly and boldly through him. Look at what he said to the Colossians:

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ([Colossians 4:2-4](#))

Paul knew that if the gospel was going to advance, it would only happen with a team effort. He could not do it on his own. He needed the support of the church. Jesus said this in his prayer before going to the cross:

“May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” ([John 17:23](#)).

The church must be brought to complete unity in order for the work of the gospel to prosper. This is not just referring to the local church but churches throughout the world working together. Instead of competing, they must pray together, put their resources together, and support one another so that the world will know that God sent the Son.

2. Christians contend for the faith like a team by playing holy defense as they guard the gospel.

One of the ways that Christians contend for the faith of the gospel is by guarding it. Look at what Paul said to Timothy:

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. ([2 Timothy 1:13-14](#))

How did Paul guard the faith—the teachings of the gospel? (1) He did it by teaching it to others. He passed down the pattern of sound teaching to

Timothy, and he commanded Timothy to do the same ([2 Tim 2:2](#)). We are only a generation away from losing the deposit that was handed down to us from our parents and our teachers.

We saw this in the book of Judges right after Israel took over the land of Canaan. A generation arose that did not know God or what he had done for Israel (2:10). There arose a generation that no longer knew God's Word or obeyed his commands. Israel then went into one of the most corrupt seasons of its history. The deposit had not been guarded. It had not been faithfully passed down.

We not only guard the faith of the gospel by teaching it but also (2) by confronting false doctrine. It's not something we like to do, but it's something that must be done if we are going to keep the faith from decay. Listen to what Paul told Titus the job of an elder was: "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." ([Titus 1:9](#)).

Many of the New Testament epistles are written for this very purpose. Paul confronted those corrupting the gospel in Galatia, Corinth, and Colosse. John in his epistle confronted the attack on the gospel by the Gnostics. The writer of Hebrews confronted the attacks on the gospel by people who taught the law. In confronting these false doctrines the apostles sometimes were very harsh. Paul said anybody who taught a new gospel should be accursed—eternally condemned ([Galatians 1:8-9](#)). The apostles handed false teachers over to Satan by kicking them out of the church ([1 Timothy 1:20](#)). They warned the sheep by naming names ([1 Tim 1:20](#), [Phil 3:2](#), [2 John 1:9](#)). All this may be a bit uncomfortable, but at times it is necessary. The gospel must be guarded like a team playing defense.

3. Christians contend for the faith like a team by playing holy offense as they spread the gospel.

Listen to what Paul told Timothy: "But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" ([2 Timothy 4:5](#)).

No team can win games with only defense; there is a need to play offense. Sometimes I think the church is only playing defense, only trying to not give up ground and because of this, we are losing. There is a need to be offensive. As Timothy, we often need reminders to do the work of an evangelist as well. We must share the faith with others. We must be strategic with missions locally, and we must be strategic with missions abroad. As a team we must work together to spread the gospel.

Application Question: What are some attitudes that will hinder the team work of Christians?

- Christians must be careful of selfish ambition. Anybody that has played in sports knows that one thing that makes a team ineffective is selfish individuals who are seeking all the glory. In basketball we call this person a “ball-hog.” Individualism destroys teamwork. This is also true of individuals who want to be first in the church. They want to be seen. They always want to get their way, and they get mad when others don’t listen to or honor them. John described a person like that in his third epistle. He said,

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church ([3 John 1:9-10](#))

There was a man in the church who loved to be first. He was causing division and gossiping against the apostolic leadership. He was selfish. He wanted his way, and it was hurting the team and therefore the mission of the church. I have seen people leave a church because they weren’t selected to be an elder or a deacon. Successful teams have individuals that don’t care who gets the glory. They don’t need to be seen as long as the team is successful.

Are you comfortable with never being acknowledged for your contributions?

- Christians must be careful of laziness.

One aspect that always destroys a team is when some members are lazy. It destroys the synergy of a team when one person is not doing his part. Paul said this: “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord” ([Romans 12:11](#)).

Zeal is contagious. One person on fire can get a whole team on fire. In the same way, one person who is lazy, lethargic, and lacking energy can zap the zeal of the team. We must keep ourselves zealous for the work of God in order to faithfully contend for the gospel.

Are you still zealous for God’s work?

- Christians must be careful of complaining.

Words are very powerful. Solomon said the power of life and death is in the tongue ([Proverbs 18:21](#)). Words can either build up or destroy. This is especially true on a team. A team that is always giving positive affirmation can work wonders.

I remember being an assistant coach for a women’s college basketball team, and we practiced something called “props.” After every practice and game, we got in a circle and each member of the team said something positive about another and then we would clap. Also, in practice or a game if some of the players were not playing, they were required to clap and give praise to those playing. The encouragement became contagious, and if it wasn’t initially genuine, it became genuine. I loved coaching that team. However, I have also been around teams where bitterness and complaining took over and destroyed the community. Look at what the writer of Hebrews said: “See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” ([Hebrews 12:15](#)).

With Israel, the complainers stirred up a rebellion against Moses and God. Complaining can destroy a good work. It seems this complaining spirit had entered the Philippian church because in 2:14 Paul said, “Do everything without complaining or arguing.”

Are you a complainer or a bitter person? The remedy for complaining is to choose to always give thanks in everything ([1 Thess 5:18](#)) and also to let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth but only what edifies others ([Eph 4:29](#)). Are you constantly building others up with your words?

Application Questions: How have you seen these types of attitudes negatively affect a church, a workplace, or a family? How is God challenging you to get rid of certain attitudes and to develop others in order to better contend as a team for the gospel?

Christians Walk Worthy of the Gospel by Being Confident in the Face of Opposition

without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

([Philippians 1:28-30](#))

One of the ways that we walk worthy of the gospel is by living confidently in the face of opposition without fear. The word Paul used for “frightened” was a word used of horses being startled and beginning a stampede.⁵ As mentioned previously, it is clear that the Philippians were receiving persecution for their faith, as were other Christians throughout the Roman Empire. Paul calls them to not panic, be shocked, or flee from the opposition.

Paul taught his disciple Timothy that everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted ([2 Tim 3:15](#)). Jesus similarly said this to all who would follow him: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” ([Mark 8:34](#)).

We could quote Scripture after Scripture that teaches that persecution will be the lot of believers in this life.

At this period of time Nero was on the throne in Rome setting Christians on fire to light his garden or placing animal flesh on them before sending dogs after them. Today, statistics say around 400 Christians die for the faith every day. However, in some nations, specifically western nations,

the persecution is not that overt. This persecution may show up in being considered strange, not being promoted, being hated or ridiculed because of our values. This should not startle Christians at all. Peter said this: “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you” ([1 Peter 4:12](#)). A Christian that is surprised or frightened at this might be tempted to compromise his values and beliefs to conform to the world. He might be inclined to get mad at God or fall away from him altogether. The gospel message that is often taught in churches today is that following God will make everything better. Following Christ will make you wealthy and healthy. By overtly teaching this or implying it, we leave Christians unprepared for the reality of following Christ. And like the soil on shallow ground, we raise up Christians with shallow commitment to Christ. Therefore, when persecution comes, they fall away. Jesus said:

The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. ([Matthew 13:20-21](#))

I personally believe the “prosperity gospel” is severely weakening the church and as persecution comes we are going to see a stampede of Christians falling away from the faith. Paul said don’t be frightened or shocked at those who oppose you for your faith and commitment to Christ. We walk worthy of the gospel by living confidently in the face of persecution.

Observation Question: What are the reasons that Paul gives for being confident in the face of opposition?

without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

([Philippians 1:28-30](#))

1. Christians should be confident in the face of opposition because it is a witness to the world.

[Philippians 1:28](#) says, “This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.”

By watching the response of Christians during persecution—their boldness, their willingness to suffer for Christ without fear—many unbelievers will be convinced of their coming destruction and the salvation of believers. One ancient observer said this about Christian martyrs: “They die so well.” When Christians are bold for Christ, it is a challenging witness to the world. Moreover, when Christians compromise their faith in the face of opposition or simply worldliness, it pushes people away from Christ. No doubt the world thinks, “If it’s not worth suffering for, it must not be real.” They think, “If she claims to be a Christian and yet lives just like everybody else, the gospel must not be true.” When Christians are confident in the face of persecution, it is a witness to the world.

2. Christians should be confident in the face of opposition because it is a blessing.

Paul says, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him” (v. 29). “The word ‘granted’ can literally be translated ‘graced.’ It means ‘to give freely or graciously as a favor.’”⁶ Paul taught that persecution was a work of God’s grace.

Interpretation Question: Why should persecution be considered a work of grace?

- Persecution is a work of grace because it confirms our salvation. Not only does it confirm our salvation to those who persecute us, but it confirms it to us as well. Jesus taught that persecution for righteousness was the stamp—the gold seal—on those who were part of the kingdom of heaven. Consider what he said in the Beatitudes: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” ([Matthew 5:10](#)).

Christ said that those who are persecuted for righteousness, and those alone, are part of the kingdom of heaven. It's a proof of salvation. The Beatitudes give the characteristics of those who are part of the kingdom of heaven, and persecution is the gold seal. If we are without any form of persecution, then we may not be part of the kingdom of heaven. God uses persecution for righteousness to confirm our salvation.

- Persecution is a work of grace because it will be richly rewarded by God.

Jesus gave this promise to those who were persecuted for righteousness right after the last Beatitude. He said,

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ([Matthew 5:11-12](#))

God will richly reward all those who are persecuted for righteousness. In the book of James he promises that they will receive the crown of life ([James 1:12](#)). In [Revelation 2:10](#) Christ promises the same to those who are about to be imprisoned for their faith. All that is suffered for the name of Christ and for the sake of righteousness will not be forgotten by God—it will be abundantly rewarded.

- Persecution is a work of grace because it leads to the development of godly virtues.

[Romans 5:3-4](#) says, “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

It says perseverance—the bearing up under of difficult things—creates character. Dealing with difficult people helps us develop patience. It stretches our love. It helps us depend on God more. Character leads us to hope. Sufferings in life help us hope more in God and not be so focused on the temporary things in this world. Certainly, we see this with believers who have been laid up in the hospital for months with a terminal disease. All of a sudden they can't wait to go to heaven. Their hope is fully resting on being with God. Not only persecution for the

faith but also trials in general are a grace from God. They lead us to develop godly virtues and to hope in God. Let us consider John Calvin's wise and challenging words about persecution:

Oh, if this conviction were fixed in our minds, that persecutions are to be reckoned among God's benefits, what progress would be made in the doctrine of godliness! And yet, what is more certain than that it is the highest honour of the Divine grace, that we suffer for His name either reproach, or imprisonment, or miseries, or tortures, or even death, for in that case He decorates us with His insignia. But more will be found who will order God and His gifts to be gone, rather than embrace the cross readily when it is offered to them. Woe, then, to our stupidity!⁷

We should not be frightened at persecution because it is a gift of God's grace. For what other reasons does Paul say we should not be frightened?

1. Christians should be confident in the face of opposition because other believers are also suffering throughout the world.

[Philippians 1:29-30](#) says this: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have."

While Paul was in Philippi in [Acts 16](#), he was stripped, beaten, and thrown into prison for his ministry. The Philippians had witnessed his struggles for the faith, and they partnered with him while he was imprisoned in Rome. Paul encourages them with the fact that their struggles were also his.

Similarly, Peter encouraged the Christians scattered and suffering in Rome. He said,

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings ([1 Peter 5:8-9](#))

One of the most common attacks of the enemy is to make us feel isolated—to make us feel like nobody else is going through the same sufferings as us. But Scripture says the trials and difficulties we go through are common to man ([1 Cor 10:13](#)). And therefore, we should be encouraged and emboldened, especially in the face of opposition. Other godly people are suffering the same things all throughout the world. We don't have to feel alone or isolated.

It is common for people to think that God made a mistake or is angry when they are going through suffering or persecution for the faith. However, persecution for the faith is actually a gift of God's favor. We shouldn't run or retreat from it (cf. [James 1:4](#)) but allow it to complete its sanctifying work in our lives. It is a proof of our salvation, and it brings great reward in heaven. Let us rejoice in it if God so graciously allows us to suffer for his name (cf. [Matt 5:12](#)).

Application Question: Do you feel that persecution for Christians is increasing? If so, in what ways? In what ways have you received persecution for the faith?

CONCLUSION:

[How do we walk worthy of the gospel of Christ?](#)

1. Christians Walk Worthy of the Gospel by Living as Citizens of Heaven
2. Christians Walk Worthy of the Gospel by Standing Firm
3. Christians Walk Worthy of the Gospel by Working as a Team
4. Christians Walk Worthy of the Gospel by Being Confident in the Face of Opposition

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1986). *Ephesians* (p. 119). Chicago: Moody Press.

² MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 84). Chicago: Moody Press.

³ The Teacher's Outline and Study Bible – Philippians

⁴ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 91). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁵ Hughes, R. K. (2007). *Philippians: the fellowship of the gospel* (p. 68). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

⁶ Hughes, R. K. (2007). *Philippians: the fellowship of the gospel* (p. 69). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

⁷ Hughes, R. K. (2007). *Philippians: the fellowship of the gospel* (p. 70). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.